Maria Lipovskaya

Maria Mordukhovna Lipovskaya is a short, gray-haired elderly woman. She is wearing loose clothes – dressing gowns, warm jackets – and a head kerchief.
Maria Mordukhovna walks leaning on a walking stick. She lives in a small room of a two-room apartment, which she shares with her daughter and son-in-law.

Her room is very clean and orderly; everything is in its right place. A big ottoman is covered with a beautiful motley blanket;
photos of her grandchildren and great-grandchildren are standing on her bedside table and hanging on the wall above her bed.

At the foot of the bed there is an enormous antique sunduk [chest] where young Maria's attires were kept a long time ago.
An old writing-table is standing by the window: medicines are kept on it, and old photos and documents of Maria Mordukhovna and her relatives inside its drawers.

At the age of 93, she still takes a keen interest in world events, watching news, reading papers and magazines and sharing her impressions on all that with her children, grandchildren and acquaintances.
She has a strong, clear voice and her speech is vivid and emotional. She carries away her audience with her stories.
Many events of her life and the life of her relatives are preserved in her memory.

She is very open and sincere in her reasoning and evaluations.
Maria is capable of displaying her feelings which makes her story all the more interesting.

My family history

I believe my family settled down in Belarus a very long time ago. I know nothing about my great-grandparents, but I know a little about my grandparents both on my mother and father's side. My paternal grandfather's name was Girsha Lipovski; unfortunately, I don't know the name of his wife, my paternal grandmother. I only know that she was a very kind person, while my grandfather's character was somewhat worse.
My maternal grandfather's first name was Meer; as for my maternal grandmother, I don't know anything about her. They both died at an early age – Grandfather Meer died of liver insufficiency, the reason of my maternal grandmother's death I don't know. My mother became an orphan at the age of 15.

My father's name was Mordukh Girshevich Lipovski. I don't know the exact date of his birth. Father was very good-looking, even handsome; he wore a small beard. He wore secular clothes. I don't remember if my father wore a kippah. But I remember that he had a tallit. Everybody in the village respected my father. He was noble and delicate. He was very kind and polite, kind of intellectual. I show some resemblance to him. I think he was even naïve, but clever. He liked to joke. He and his brother Isroel had two turpentine plants – one 6 kilometers away from the town of Bykhov [a town in the eastern part of Belarus, on the Dnepr river], the other one 4 kilometers away from the village of Sledyuki.

My father had three brothers and one sister. His brothers' names were Isaac, Isroel and Shender; his sister's name was Seina or Sonya. Shender left for America yet before the [October] Revolution 1, but I don't know the year exactly. His brother Isroel, the co-owner of the turpentine plants, didn't work very much, he often complained about feeling unwell. Therefore his son Lev worked at the plants together with my father and his brother Isaac, who was called Iche at home.

Father pitied poor workers and always paid them more than had been agreed. His brother Isroel sometimes scolded him, 'You will have no money, you give away everything! You have four girls. Who will marry them without dowry?!' And Father would reply, 'I have good girls. My girls will be all snatched away without any dowry.' And so it happened: all of us were 'snatched away' without any money.
My father and his brothers Isaac and Isroel had inherited a house in Bykhov. The house was very big: my father and his two brothers had two rooms each.

My father's sister Seina was married to Kalman Ginsburg, a joiner. They were very poor. They had 12 children. All their children were very gifted; they were able to educate themselves in any field they wanted. So they educated themselves to be bookkeepers, tailors… Their whole family was very fond of music. Each of them played some musical instrument or sang. They had no money to

buy the instruments. My father brought them some instruments sometimes or gave them as presents for holidays. My father loved children and he tried to ‘catch up’ with his sister in this respect.

Long before the [October] Revolution, father was a soldier. He served in the Tsar’s Army. At the times of Nikolai II, Jews were recruited to the army, if there was more than one son in the family. Though, to tell the truth, a Jew was not entrusted with a rifle – they thought that a Jew could not shoot. He was a cook; he cooked food for the soldiers. He worked with civilian peasant men. Nevertheless, my father learned to fire. But he wasn’t at any war, I believe.

My mother’s name was Tsire Meerovna Lipovskaya. I don’t remember her maiden name. She was born in Rogachev, a town not far from Bykhov, in the 1870s. My mother became an orphan at the age of 15. After the death of her parents, she lived in her brother Ariveliul’s house. Her brother married a rich woman; she was the daughter of a timber merchant, but I don’t remember her name. Mother’s brother and his wife treated her well, but made her work a lot. Mother got used to working so hard that sometimes she saw it in her dream that she was working, so she rose without waking up really, and tried to carry firewood or do something else in her sleep. My mother was a housewife. She kept the house and brought up children.

My mother had three brothers: Ariveliul, Nokhem and an elder brother, whose name I don’t remember. She also had a sister, Rosa, whom she loved very much. Rosa died in circa 1910, when I was born already. Rosa died at a young age, leaving behind four kids: Boris, Sarah, Gnesya and Basya. My mother grieved for her so much that she lost the use of her right hand. Then my father’s friend, the village doctor Ratner, prescribed her drinking five liters of milk daily. And owing to this milk, my mother got well soon.

My parents got to know each other with the help of the Jewish community. They married in a synagogue, of course – it happened long before the [October] Revolution, and synagogues were still operating then.
My parents had five children: my elder sister Basya, Jewish name: Berta, brother Lev, Jewish name: Leibe, later on I was born – Maria, Jewish name: Mirra, then my sisters Zinaida, Jewish name: Zysya, and Rosa, Jewish name: Reizel. So I was born in 1910 in the village of Sledyuki, Bykhovsky district of Mogilev province [eastern part of Belarus], into the family of a merchant of the Guild I 2.

My childhood in Belarus

Our village was 12 kilometers away from Bykhov. We had a big house in the village – there were five rooms in it. The water was taken from a well, and the house was lit with kerosene lamps. We had an icehouse in our village house. When I and my sisters and brother grew up a little, we made ice cream ourselves. The house was heated with stoves, some of which had stove-benches, and some resembled German fireplaces.
We had a vegetable garden near the house. We also kept cattle: two cows and a few calves. We kept the whole household ourselves; we had no servants.
It was very nice in the village of Sledyuki. Father and I would often go to Bykhov in a cart or riding a horse. The road to town was a good one – a surfaced road. We would pass very beautiful places.

There were so many berries there! Sometimes when we were riding to his plant, Father would take me to a glade rich with berries and leave me there for a couple of hours. I would eat berries to my fill and gather them in something. When Father came back, we would eat them together. The air was very fresh and pleasant. We had a very nice horse. I remember horseflies twining around her and her brushing them off with her tail.
As a child, I often played with my cousin who was the same age as me. Near our house in the town we had a ‘zavalinka’ [mound of earth round a Russian peasant house used for sitting out, and in former times – also as protection from weather] and a hillock of sand. We would play in this sand, making different ‘food’ from it.
We, children, were showered with love. Our parents loved us very much. They taught us to labor. And the most important was that we were polite and good to people. And if someone did us good, we always thanked them.

Mother always worked a lot. My sister Rosa loved her very much. Rosa always told her how she would be building bridges when she would grow up. My sister Rosa was named after Mom’s sister. Mother was a kind person, but we, children, thought that our father was a little more kind. My parents had friends, of course, but I remember them very poorly.
Father often went to Mogilev, sent wagons of turpentine for sale and brought Jewish sausage, challah and different presents from there. He gave mother shawls, material for dresses. I will never forget how tasty that Jewish sausage and challah was! We even did not sleep at night, waiting for Father to come from Mogilev. It was a holiday for us. Father bought almost everything himself. Mother hardly ever left the village, only on major Jewish holidays. She took care of the children and household.

Our parents strived to give us education. They had almost no education themselves. Father could write, and Mother could only sign: she was an orphan, nobody taught her.
When I turned seven or eight years old, I went to school in Bykhov, the first preparatory grade. This happened at the same time as the October Revolution.

My parents took me to Bykhov, to our family house. All the children of my father’s brother Isroel lived there: Ruvim, Naum, Lev, Iasi, Efim, Grigory. The two rooms that belonged to my father were occupied by me, my sister Berta, my brother Lev, and there was also my sister Berta’s friend living with us – Nadezhda Senkevich. Her mother was Russian and her father was Polish.

Mother and Father stayed in the village. Father came to visit us in Bykhov once or twice a week, and Mother remained in the village with our younger sisters, Zinaida and Rosa; she could not leave the household. During all the time we studied we lived in Bykhov, we only went to the village for holidays. We had a garden around our house in the town with all kinds of fruit trees – pears, apples…

When we lived in Bykhov, there was a whole library in Uncle Isaac’s room. There were secular books in Russian and Yiddish. I would get absorbed in reading. I liked books by Pisemsky [Aleksey (1821-1881): a famous Russian novelist and dramatist] very much. But I don’t know if my uncle read those books.

In the village, we had everything we needed. Father laid in a lot of stores of provisions, so we did not go to the market very often in Bykhov. When we stayed alone in our town house, it was our elder sister Berta who would go to the market and store. Father agreed about it with the butcher that he would give us meat, and later he came from the village and paid the butcher. All the food was kosher. We were given all the products we needed on credit. Father came to visit us once or twice a week. When he came, he would cook food. Father worried about us very much.
The air in Bykhov was fresh. There were few cars. The houses were one-storied, some were two-storied. There were gardens around some houses.
There was a synagogue in Bykhov. My parents went to the synagogue on high Jewish holidays like Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Chanukkah and Pesach. I would also go there with my mother to pray. There was a men's section and a women's section in the synagogue.

In Bykhov, Jews lived in the main streets. Well, there was also Bannaya Street: there was a banya 3 where the Jewish community was situated. I cannot remember how many Jewish families lived in the town at that time. The poorest Jews lived in this street. Our home was near the market, in the main street, where prosperous Jews lived.

In Belarus, Jews were generally engaged in buying-and-selling. You could also come across Jewish beggars. They would go beg around the houses. They were swearing like hell. If someone did not give them alms, they swore terribly. At seeing a beggar, mother would immediately take some bread and ask us to carry it to that person. Mother could not stand swearing. We [children] were never scolded.
We did not face anti-Semitism then. Mother said that anti-Semitism existed in Ukraine, but in the village and in Bykhov we didn't feel it.

Life during the Soviet Power

When the Soviet power came, my father was deprived of his right to vote. He became a 'lyshenetz' ['deprived': lyshentzy are those who were disfranchised and incapacitated from their civil rights, in particular, when entering higher and secondary educational institutions.] The local authorities also wanted to deport my father from the village together with the whole family, but the whole village rose to protect him. Fellow villagers went to the 'selsovet' [village council: the primary organ of the Soviet power in the villages], and representatives of the 'selsovet' went to Bykhov to tell the authorities that Father and all his relatives worked themselves every day, that they had no farm-laborers or workers.

Father gave peasants an opportunity to earn some money – he ordered to carry stumps of wood, which were used for producing turpentine. Volunteer peasants took orders and brought as many stumps as they could, and he paid them for this. Father was a specialist and not just an owner of a business. He controlled the technological process himself. We had only one hired worker at the plant – a watchman.

After the October Revolution of 1917 father was deprived of his plants. Father remained a chief engineer at one plant. There were several turpentine plants in Belarus, but Father had the best ones. They supplied these goods to Mogilev and Mogilev region, and from there it was supplied further – to Moscow, Leningrad. After the [October] Revolution, a former shoemaker became the

director of the plant. We had ordered shoes from him before the Revolution, had given him the opportunity to earn money. When the shoemaker became the director, he sometimes mocked at my father being so mild, delicate and polite. Father got very upset because of his boorishness.

After the [October] Revolution, in the lean years, when I was already a kid, we saw people starving. Father would come home, cut half a loaf of bread and carry it to the starving. He would tell Mother, 'You have half the loaf left, and tomorrow you bake skovorodniki. I will bring you flour.' Mother baked skovorodniki, mixing dough and water like the one for pancakes, only thicker, as a skovorodnik was very thick. People respected Father so much that they always gave him flour, even on credit. Mother did not scold him very much for giving away bread to the starving, but still she got upset.

My cousin Ekhiel, Uncle Isaac's son, wanted to leave for America. Uncle Shender sent him an invitation; he did not have children himself. Then all of a sudden, my cousin got acquainted with a girl. Her name was Gita. She was an orphan and lived together with her sister. Ekhiel fell in love with her. Sometimes he called me to go for a walk with him and Gita. I was fourteen then; he must have felt more confident in my company. Ekhiel wanted to marry her and didn't go to America; he stayed in Russia. He lived together with his father on a small farm, where Latvians were living. They were farmers, so they weren't 'lyshentzy' and were not threatened with deportation. After the [October] Revolution, he was taken to work at a plant. He also helped my brother Lev to get a job at that plant because Lev could not find any job then, as a son of a 'lyshenetz.' Our cousin helped us very much then. Soon he died of typhus. It is such a pity.

My father used to read the papers. He seldom said bad things, but the Soviet power deprived him of his plants and destroyed him. He had been a proprietor, and after the [October] Revolution, though he was a chief engineer, he was reproached for his merchant origin.

Of course, Father liked his life before the [October] Revolution better. He tried to speak about it with Mother or his close friends in intimate talks, but mother would stop him from doing it. When the authorities started organizing kolkhozes 4, some neighbors came to Father for advice, if they needed to join the kolkhoz or not. Father told them that they should not hurry with it. And Mother got scared and started to scold him for his straightforwardness. She was afraid that Father would be arrested. But in spite of this, Mother was loyal to the Soviet power. She said the reason for it was that with the Soviet power Jewish pogroms 5 ceased, and there was no more persecution of Jews.

I remember my parents' friends very poorly. I only remember the village doctor, Ratner, who had cured my mother from paralysis, and his son Eugeniy. In hungry times, they came to us to the village sometimes to get some food.

My school years

In 1917 my parents didn't know where to bring me to study. I could not get admitted to the school in Bykhov because of my merchant origin, so my father wanted to fix me in a village school where a priest was teaching. I was afraid that the priest would make me pray to the Orthodox God and

started crying. And father said that a person cannot afford not studying at all.

When my parents brought me to Bykhov to study, my sister Berta, my brother Lev and I studied at school. Lev studied in another school, so I know nothing about his school years. After the death of Lenin 6 [in 1924], oppression of Jews and 'the former' ones [former proprietors, merchants, landlords, noblemen were called 'the former'] started. They started forcing me and my sisters, both the younger and the elder one, out of the Soviet school as 'merchant children.' But I went to school anyway, and I was the third sitting at the desk, together with my two friends. Teachers were good to me. They did not send us away from lessons. So I attended school 'unofficially.'

We had one teacher, Anna Nikolaevna, who was very beautiful and loved me very much. But her bridegroom came for her and took her to Leningrad. We, pupils, bought her an inkpot as a souvenir. I cried bitterly. Finally, the school staff started sending me away from lessons. But I continued going to school, because I had friends there.

In two years after the [October] Revolution, owing to the efforts of our fellow villagers, Father resumed his rights. We could take part in the elections of the Soviet power, we were not threatened with exile in Siberia, and we were officially admitted to the school. I finished seven grades.

I had a friend at school – she was Russian, a Komsomol 7 member. Her name was Evdokiya Selitskaya. She wrote poems. She was respected at school. She was one year older than I, and guys – Komsomol members – already courted her. They would tell her, 'Take your friend with you, bring her to our organization as well.' But still, I was a 'lyshenka,' though a former one. And she got married to a military man, already at seventeen.
I did not have any favorite subject at school. I was not a very hard-working pupil. My parents did not control my studies. If I didn't do some homework, I just would not go to that lesson: I did not want to get a bad mark. And Rosa, unlike me, was a diligent pupil.

One day, after school, pupils were listed for music lessons. I went to get listed. The teacher looked at my hands and said that I have good hands and she would teach me. But she had no vacant time left during the day. And for evening lessons, I had to bring kerosene with me. But I was silly and did not take music lessons. Now I regret it. At home, I did not do anything special. Sometimes I was just fooling around. Once I took a glass and started blowing into it. The glass got broken and cut my lip.

Mother taught us to wash the floors. We tried to wriggle out of it and delayed washing the floors till the very evening. Mother would remind us, 'It is Sabbath soon! Go wash the floors now!' We realized that evening was approaching, and then we started washing the floors. It was clean in our house – well, there were four of us, girls! It is a shame to live in a house with dirty floors.

Sometimes after school we met our friends, girls and boys, and went to the bridge across the Dnepr River. Boys made declarations of love to us on the bridge. I was courted by Stankevich – a tall, handsome guy. I was in the fifth grade, and he was in the seventh grade. In the evenings, we used to sit on the porch, but we did not kiss. I was very shy, and he was shy as well. He taught me

to ski. Guys organized parties, but we did not go to those parties with him. And I wasn't a member of any youth or sport organization.

My sister Zinaida studied in cheder, not in an ordinary school. There was one very strict teacher there. Sometimes he slapped pupils on their hands, if something was wrong. He didn't beat my sister; she was a diligent pupil. But in general, beating pupils was normal in cheder. Pupils were punished for everything. They were taught to read and write [in Hebrew] there. Zinaida didn't study in cheder for a long time. I believe she could read and write in Hebrew. No one else in our family could. My sister Berta studied in a gymnasium before the October Revolution, and after that she studied in a Soviet school. My parents spoke both Yiddish and Russian to each other and to us. We understood everything.

Father prayed every day, although he wasn't very religious. It was Mother who reminded him to pray. Father and Mother observed Sabbath. On Friday, the stove was heated twice in our house, and on Saturday it wasn't heated. A lot of food was cooked for Sabbath. On Friday my mother lit candles. On Saturdays, Father didn't go to the plants, and Mother would rest on this day. She often had a headache, so she would lie down and ask everybody not to disturb her. But we did not obey and bothered her with different questions.

Observance of Jewish traditions and holidays

There was no synagogue in our village. Three Jewish families would gather, about ten persons all in all, and we prayed together every Saturday. We gathered in the big hall of our village house. There was one Afro-American Jewess living 10 kilometers away from us, and she came to pray with us too. Sometimes her husband came with her; he was also somewhat dark.

We only ate kosher food. And we celebrated all Jewish holidays: Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Simchat Torah, Chanukkah, Purim, Pesach and some others as well. On high holidays, Father and Mother came to Bykhov. We had relatives there, and we visited each other. I liked Jewish holidays very much. Such tasty dishes were cooked then! Different 'nuts' made of dough and honey; gefilte fish was cooked on Sabbath. We ate milk products the whole week, and on Saturday we ate meat.

Our parents did not teach us to pray and observe Jewish traditions. We saw Mother and Father doing it and learned ourselves. Then the Soviet power came, and it became more difficult to observe traditions. Many synagogues were closed. Of Jewish holidays, I remember Pesach and Sukkot best of all. A small hut [sukkah] was built in our yard, and we would dine in it.

Studying in Leningrad

After Vladimir Lenin's death, Jews started getting oppressed. My elder brother Lev wanted to become a military man very much. After he had finished school in Bykhov, nobody wanted to hire him for any job. That was all because of his 'merchant origin,' and anyway, Stalin didn't like Jews. Lev managed to get a job at some plant as a worker, thanks to our cousin Ekhiel. Lev suffered from a heart disease. He died at a very young age, in 1932; he was only 25 then. There is one story

connected with his illness.

In 1927, my parents were called to the NKVD 8 for a 'talk.' I was 17 then, and my brother Lev was 20. My parents were afraid to go there themselves, and they sent two kids instead: my brother Lev and our cousin, Uncle Isroel's son, whose name was also Lev. Those who talked with them yelled fiercely and threatened them. Lev took it so hard that he fell ill and, lying unconscious, was screaming all the time, 'Don't bang with your fist! Don't shout!' When Lev fell ill, our father sent him to Leningrad to a very good cardiologist. It was father's good friend, Doctor Ratner, who advised him to send Lev to that specialist. The doctor said that Lev had endocarditis. This illness was incurable at that time.

There is one more family story connected with the NKVD. In about the same year my parents and my uncle Isroel were arrested as potential enemies of the revolution. I was already studying in Leningrad at that time. My mother's elder brother, whose name I don't remember, kept watch over our house and household. My parents spent almost two months in prison. My uncle Isroel's son-in-law had influence in the NKVD. This was the only reason why they all were freed.

I finished seven grades, as did my brother and sisters. We wanted to go on studying. But we were not admitted to any technical school neither in Bykhov nor in Mogilev. We were 'lyshentzy,' though former ones, and many people there knew us. We had to go to Leningrad and try to enter somewhere there.

Father was given a document at the 'selsovet' certifying that we had a hectare of land and were farmers; and they kind of 'forgot' that we also had plants. Later, when my sister Rosa went to Leningrad as well, the 'selsovet' also issued a certificate for her saying that she was the daughter of a tar-extraction plant worker, and nobody recalled who had been the owner of this plant before. People loved and respected my father very much; this is why they helped us.

We went to Leningrad with these forged certificates. First my sister Basya left. Then I did. Basya already worked as a bookkeeper at that time. Later she came back home to her fiancé and married him. Her husband was a Jew originating from a family of prosperous traders, and he was engaged in trading as well. His name was Mikhail Ivanovich Zlatkin.
I entered a technical school. I was fifteen when I came to Leningrad, and I entered the technical school at sixteen. First I entered preliminary courses; this was where I met Sonya and Fira. They were also Jewish. They also came to Leningrad from Belarus, they were from Lepel [a town 140 kilometers to the north-east of Minsk].

Sofia, I and three other girls, whose names I do not remember, rented a small room in an apartment at that time. We paid rent, though money was constantly lacking. One of my friends lived in a room in another woman's apartment for free, because this room was taken away from that woman – nationalized. Then Sofia, I and one more girl moved to another apartment. We started living in two rooms in the apartment of Sofia Mikhailovna and Daniil Markovich. They were a Jewish family; he was an engineer. Their apartment was situated on Mira Street, on Petrogradskaya side.

We had a teacher of Russian at the preliminary courses. You see, we came from Belarus and didn't know Russian so well as to pass an entrance examination in a technical school. The teacher's name was Nikolai Ivanovich; he was a young man. His mother was a common peasant woman, and his father was a landlord. Nikolai Ivanovich taught at preliminary courses and also gave private lessons. I went to him and asked him to help us prepare for entering the technical school. He agreed at once. He lived together with his mother somewhere in the upper stories. We came to his place to study, and about twelve or fifteen guys at once were sitting in his room. Everybody paid him money. Our father also sent us money. That was the period of the NEP 9, and he worked as a chief engineer at the plant. But he only sent a little money and not regularly. We often had no money at all.

Our teacher did not take money for lessons from me and Sonya. He would tell other pupils, 'Guys, it's time to pay.' Sonya and I blushed and got upset, because we didn't have money. I went up to teacher and said we would pay when our parents would send us money from the village. And he replied, 'This doesn't concern you.' Such a kind man he was, he pitied us. He had a bride, though for some time it seemed to me that he tried to court me. Once Sonya and I rode in a tram without paying for a ticket – we had no money for tickets. Suddenly, our teacher came up to us and asked us if we had money to ride in the tram. We started worrying, and he laughed and paid for us.

Later, in 1928, Sonya, Fira and I entered the technical school. We were actually starving. We worked at factories as students of the technical school, cleaning the machines. The factories produced different manufactured goods. We cleaned the machines at night. I was healthy and strong, and I worked a lot. And Sonya was weak; she would work for some time and then lie down under the machine. Sometimes we were paid for our work, and sometimes we were not. In the evenings we studied in the technical school, and during the day we took a rest.

My first marriage

I met my first husband, Serafim Ivanovich Bogoyavlensky, in our technical school. Our technical school admitted those who had not been admitted to the economical department of some institute – 'lyshenzy,' 'former ones' [former noblemen – landowners, etc.] and so on. In our technical school, the staff didn't pay a lot of attention to their documents. The guys who studied with us were all handsome, tall and slim. They were not admitted to any institute because of their origin. They entered our technical school with forged documents.

Then suddenly a checkup started in our technical school. A guy from a senior course came to us; his name was Volchanski, he was the son of a diplomat. He gathered all of us and said, that the technical school partkom 10 suggests everyone who studies with forged documents confess it. Then everybody would be left to study. And if somebody does not confess, everybody will be expelled. There was a German guy studying with us; he spoke hardly any Russian. And suddenly he says to one guy in Russian, 'You have a ram at home, confess it.' My future husband confessed then that he was the son of a priest. And before that he had been hiding from everyone, who his parents were.

When he courted me, I also didn't know that he was Russian and the son of a priest. Jews had very

strict rules about it at that time: we could marry only ‘each other.’ Serafim Ivanovich looked like a Jew. He was brought up in such a way that I thought he was from a Jewish family. He knew when Jewish holidays were celebrated. Many people took him for a Jew. We never spoke to each other about our nationality.

Formerly, his father Ivan had a common Russian last name, something like ‘Kopeikin.’ He was a teacher at school and he was married to the daughter of a priest. But soon his father-in-law got too old and couldn’t perform his duties properly. Then Serafim’s father was forced to become a priest; otherwise his wife’s family could have been deprived of their estate. This was how he became a priest and got the last name Bogoyavlensky.

Serafim Ivanovich had an elder brother, Sergey. His fate is tragic indeed. In Soviet times, he was teaching at some institute in Moscow. I don’t remember at which one exactly. Then he became a ‘dissident’ [nonconformist]. He was arrested by the KGB 11 and was put in a mental hospital. I don’t know what became of him later and I don’t want to speak about it.

My husband had another brother called Ivan, who was older than him as well, and two sisters, Maria and Klavdiya. Ivan was a veterinary surgeon. He fought in World War II, but I don’t know where, and after the war he did not live in Leningrad, but in some other city. He died around 1960. Maria was a biologist; she worked as a teacher at some school in Leningrad. She also died after the war, but I don’t remember when exactly. Klavdiya graduated from an agricultural institute in Moscow, she worked at some kolkhoz in Moscow region. She also died a long time ago, after World War II.

I finished technical school in 1930 and married Serafim Ivanovich Bogoyavlensky. We registered our marriage in ZAGS [Civil Status Registry Office, an institution where birth, death, marriage and divorce are registered]. My husband took my last name, because his own last name betrayed his ecclesiastic origin, and he didn’t want it. It could hinder him from finding a job.

At first, my parents didn’t know that my husband was Russian. He wrote a letter to them saying he wanted to propose to me. The letter was very nice. In his letter he called me gently Mirra and Busya. When my parents read the letter, they couldn’t understand anything: who was Serafim Ivanovich going to marry, their daughter Mirra or some Busya? I had a cousin called Lev, the son of Uncle Isroel. He lived in Belarus then. He was handsome and very smart. My parents invited him, gave him the letter to read and asked, which way he understood it. But Lev didn’t understand anything either. When he came to Leningrad and came to visit me, he asked me, ‘Mirra, who is your husband going to marry? What does ‘Busya’ mean?’ I was very surprised that my parents and my brother did not understand what ‘Busya’ meant. Calling me by this name, Serafim Ivanovich expressed his love to me. And my parents, as it turned out, did not guess it.

In 1931, I gave birth to my daughter. I named her Lyubov. In the same year, my brother Lev came to Leningrad to consult the cardiologist and stayed with us at our place. My husband and I told Lev that Serafim Ivanovich was Russian. My brother didn’t say anything bad about it. He liked my husband. But we didn’t tell my father anything about it then.

Next year, in 1932, my brother Lev died. My husband and I went to my parents, to attend my brother's funeral. They knew about my husband already, because Lev had already told them everything. My parents liked my husband very much. They didn't say a bad thing about him; they treated him very well. He was a highly cultured man; he had very cultured parents. My husband offered an adventure to my parents and me. Our relatives started visiting us, and my husband suggested not telling anyone that he was Russian, but telling everybody that he was Jewish. He wanted to please my parents. Once Aunt Sonya, my father's sister, came to us and started speaking Yiddish to my husband. And Serafim Ivanovich knew German, so he could understand Yiddish. He told my aunt that in his family they only spoke Russian, though they understood Yiddish, and therefore he understood Yiddish but didn't speak it. Such an adventure he invented. My parents loved him very much anyway. He sent them parcels from Leningrad, wrote them nice letters. My parents used to say that he was even better than me.

My husband's brothers and sisters also loved me and treated me very well. My husband cared about Jews, he was a friend of many Jews. He even wanted me to teach him Yiddish. He had the soul of a Jew.
Before my daughter Lyubov was born, I had worked as an economist at the Leningrad 'Nevgvozd' ['Neva Nail'] plant. My husband worked as a deputy director of the military shooting range at the 'Economizer' plant. He was a very good employee. If my husband had agreed to join the Communist Party, he would have become the director of the military field. His director was a member of the Party, but he had a serious drinking problem. Therefore my husband did almost his entire job.

After my daughter was born, I went on working at the Leningrad 'Nevgvozd' plant. My husband would fix me up with a position as an economist for the winter period,
and then I rested for the whole summer and the beginning of autumn. He took good care of our daughter and me.
In Soviet times, it was difficult to observe Jewish traditions.
Therefore I didn't try to teach my daughter Lyubov to do that. But we celebrated Pesach and bought matzah. Matzot were baked by Jews at home.

Evacuation during the Great Patriotic War

When the Great Patriotic War 12 started, we, members of Lipovski family, found ourselves in different places.
In 1941 I evacuated together with my sister Rosa to the Urals, to the village of Chisto-perevoloka, Chernovskoy district of Perm region. In evacuation, I gave birth to daughter Margarita. I worked for a year in the kolkhoz, and I took my daughter to a day nursery. When my daughter turned one, I managed to get a job as the manager of the Chisto-perevoloka post office. I was responsible for serving about five to seven villages. Each village was about 5-6 kilometers away from the other. In each village there was a kolkhoz postman who came to me. I gave the postmen money; they delivered it to the houses and then reported back to me.
There was a savings bank department at our post office. Money was brought to us from Chernovskoy district, and it was about 40 or 50 kilometers from our village. There was a man responsible for bringing the money to us, but he often sent his 18-year-old daughter instead. I was

anxious every time that she might be robbed, because it was me who was responsible for the money. I often had to walk that distance in order to be present at the meetings, though I didn't know the way very well and was afraid to get lost. It was very seldom that I managed to get a horse to ride there.

My younger sister Rosa was a smart girl. She was appointed the secretary of 'selsovet.' She had to endure conflicts with a very nasty woman, the secretary of 'partkom.' The head of 'selsovet' was a weak-spirited man, and Rosa was a very just person. She did a very important and noble thing. There were seven people in the village who were in terrible need, they didn't get the ration and starved. And the head of selsovet was also a very poor man; he had twelve kids. There was also a priest's wife, whose husband died and nobody helped her, so she was starving. So Rosa went to Kukushkin, the head of the NKVD, and fixed all these seven people up with a ration, 300 gram of bread per each.

Rosa was in poor health. Sometimes she felt really ill, but she endured it very courageously and did her job very well. She was greatly appreciated both by the new kolkhoz chairman and by the district authorities. She could harness a horse, she went to different villages to mow the grass... She proved to everybody in the village that she was able to do everything herself and gained respect this way.
One year, the river overflew its banks considerably. The flood lasted for a long time, and it was impossible to bring our bread rations to our village. All evacuated people were starving, and so were Rosa and I. Rosa was the secretary of the 'selsovet' and could have asked the chairman to give us bread, but she never did. We went to the field, just like everybody else, and picked the grain that was left after winter. And this grain could be poisonous sometimes. Many people in our village died from it. We survived because I had a goat, and we drank the goat's milk and also boiled the grain in it. In two weeks, when the flood sank, people brought us food and told us that if we had a dry throat, we had to come to the hospital immediately, because in case of a poisoning a person could be saved in the period of two days. For the next two days, my sister and I were trying to recognize if we had a dry throat or not.

When I was pregnant, I was once in 'sel'po' [village consumers' society; a village shop] for some business. I heard one man slandering the Soviet power there. When I gave birth to my daughter and was in hospital, suddenly Kukushkin [the head of the NKVD] came to me and started interrogating me about what I heard that man saying. I answered him that it was no concern of mine, my elder daughter and all my relatives were on occupied territory in Belarus and I knew nothing about them, and my husband was at the front, so I walked around without noticing or hearing anything. Kukushkin went away, and then came back again another time. I asked him not to torture me with interrogations and not to come again. He really didn't come anymore. I think this Kukushkin was not a real chekist 13, but was a 'former one.' Otherwise he would neither have given me rations nor left me alone.
In evacuation, we lived at a local woman's apartment. She had a son, a very delicate boy. They were starving. I shared my ration with them, but still the child died. Rosa fixed her up with a job at a bakery. But the woman was too weak. She was a very honest person and didn't take a single piece of bread from the bakery.
At the very beginning of the war, my daughter Lyubov found herself in occupation in Belarus

together with my parents, my sisters and their families. Shortly before World War II I was bringing up my elder sister Berta's daughter, whose name was also Lyubov. Berta had difficult times then, her husband was arrested for illegal business activity and put into prison. And on 20th June, 1941 my relatives took both girls, my daughter and my niece, to Belarus for vacation. They took them from Leningrad to Bykhov. Lyubov wrote me a letter in a couple of days saying that they all went to the village [Sledyuki] from Bykhov. They found themselves in the ghetto there. She wrote, 'Mother, don't worry for me, though I miss you a little.' She was ten years old. These words from her letter still hurt me. Lyubov was interested in politics at the age of ten already. She knew about fascists and said that they could attack us.

My husband was at war; he wrote letters to me to the Urals. He was also mourning for our elder daughter and all our relatives when he learned about it.
Eleven of my relatives died during the Great Patriotic War. My father could have saved all of them. People had been hiding him all that time. He sent peasants to the ghetto to give food to his family. I think he could have hid everyone, because everybody in the village treated him well. Of course, it is hard to hide eleven persons... My father didn't find himself in ghetto. Lyubov was together with him in the village. She had fair hair and she didn't look Jewish. My mother wrote to Father from the ghetto saying that the Germans are sending all people from the ghetto to settle down in another place. The Germans deceived them, of course. But a mother or a father will never leave their children. My father came to the ghetto and also got into that massacre. My parents were somewhat naïve.

My father was hid in the village by our neighbor. This man told the Germans that Mordukh was not in the village. The neighbor was Russian. He was a poor man, had many children, but he lived in a 'rich' street. And the rich ones mocked him, and he used to steal from them in revenge. But he didn't steal anything from us. Mother would leave somewhere and tell him, 'Sergey, let everything be in order, all right?' And when she came back, all our stuff was safe. Sergey hid my father from the Germans. I wrote to him after the war, and he wrote me back telling me how he had been hiding father and how terribly sorry he was that he still perished.

Father's sister Sonya was killed too. She lived at her son's in Belarus, and her husband was in Baku. He survived, and Aunt Sonya perished. Uncle Isroel lost his wife Frada. Uncle Isroel also perished later, around 1941 or 1942.

Only those who were the children of communists were saved. They were scared. And my parents were not party members, so they thought that they wouldn't be hurt. And all our communist relatives survived. For example, the wife and children of Matvey, my father's nephew. As soon as they heard about Hitler approaching, they left Belarus.

Of our close relatives, only my sister Rosa and I survived World War II. And of the families of my parents' brothers and sisters, about 12 persons survived. This is a half of all our relatives. When the war ended, my sister Rosa and I were going to leave from Chisto-perevoloka. People didn't want to let Rosa go. They were afraid that as soon as she would leave they would be deprived of their rations. But Rosa comforted them. She said, 'The war is over, your husbands will come back and life will get easier, you won't get lost.'

Returning to Leningrad

After the war, I came back to Leningrad with Rosa and Margarita. I received a ‘call-up’ 17 from my husband. [‘Call-up’: during World War II and shortly after it, people could move to other places only if they had special permits issued on the basis of official invitations.] My husband was already demobilized. But while I was on my way there, my husband went to visit this one woman; they had been at the front together. My husband was contused on the front, but he didn’t want to go to hospital and leave his fellow soldiers. And then that woman, a civilian from Leningrad, took care of him at her home. Owing to her, he was able to recover without staying at a hospital. After he was demobilized, he decided to call on her. And she fell ill with hepatitis at that time. My husband couldn’t leave her alone and stayed to take care of her.
When I came to Leningrad, I learned that my husband lived with that woman. He wanted to come back to me, but I didn’t forgive him. Though I should have done so. I did not let him come back to me. However, 20 years later, when my second husband died, we got married again and lived together for nine years. We would have lived our whole life together, had he not died of cancer.
It seems to me that after the war, anti-Semitism intensified in the Soviet Union. I was a witness to a few incidents myself. One of our friends helped Rosa and me. Her name was Veronica Leonidovna, she was Russian; she had been with us in evacuation. Her husband served in Air Defense Forces during World War II. When she asked to issue a ‘call-up’ for us, the director told her, ‘Why do you take the trouble – they are Jews!’ When Rosa wanted to get a job in the Textile Institute, the head of the staff department did not accept her because of her nationality, though she had vacancies. So Rosa found a job at the ‘Electronica’ plant where her husband was working.

Once I heard some man shout in the street that Jews didn’t fight during the war, they only hid and sat on the fence. I went up to him and asked his address. He got scared and ran away.
There was another incident at the beginning of the 1970s. I went shopping. There was a long line in the shop, and I had my small granddaughter Nadezhda in my arms and also heavy bags with food products. I asked people standing in line to let me in front of them. But suddenly one man shouted, ‘You are a Jew! To let you go first, and with a Jewish child? Never!’ But the line moved, pushed the man aside and let me forward.
After the war, anti-Semitism started showing more in Leningrad. I think it was connected with rumors spreading, that Jews didn’t fight at war. And I heard Stepashin, former prime minister of Russia, saying in a TV-program that there are more Jews among the Heroes of the Soviet Union 14 than representatives of any other nation.
After the war, I came back to the Baltic plant to work as an economist.

Then in 1947 I married for the second time; my second husband was Mikhail Ivanovich Zlatkin. He was a Jew, and he had been married to my elder sister Berta before the war. In 1941, both his family and mine perished in Belarus. After the war, he worked in the field of restaurant service.

My second marriage and raising my children

In 1949 our son Alexander was born. He grew up a very tender and obedient boy. He always tried to help me about the house. He studied well at school. My daughter Margarita helped him to do his homework. At the age of eighteen, Alexander went to serve in the Soviet Army, in the navy. They

served in the navy for three years then. After the army, in 1970, Alexander wanted to enter the historical department of Leningrad State University. But he was not admitted. My son studied at a technical school, and then found a job at a plant producing telephones. He married a Russian woman; her name is Natalya. They have two daughters – Natalya and Maria. They are a very nice and harmonious family.

It was already dangerous to bring up Margarita and Alexander according to Jewish traditions, and Margarita even didn't like talking about Jews. We didn't celebrate Jewish holidays; we just ate matzah. Once, when Rosa was still alive, I went to the synagogue and ordered a Kaddish to remember my dear relatives. Rosa praised me a lot for this.

Stalin's death provoked my tears of joy. I knew he was a monster; I just didn't talk to anybody about it. I was afraid to let little Alexander go to a kindergarden – he could have said something incautiously. I knew one Jewish woman with a little child; we would go for walks together. One day somebody heard her saying something about Jews and Russians. She was arrested. She barely got out of this scrape. I knew that Stalin hated Jews. Everybody was crying when Stalin died; you had to cry. It's just that people had different reasons for it. It's good that he died. Otherwise he would have killed all Jews with some poison.

Anti-Semitism in the 1950s

I remember the 'Doctors' Plot' 15. Many of us, Jews, knew it was a set-up. But we saw famous, talented people change their Jewish surnames for Russian ones – for example, Mikhail Svetlov [(1903-1964), a famous Soviet poet and dramatist. His poems about the Civil War were well known; some of them were set to the music of the famous composer Isaac Dunaevski and became popular songs]. People cannot hide their Jewish origin, no matter how hard they try. But they did it for the sake of their career.

When I was young, I didn't face any obstacles in getting education or a job because of my nationality. I did not have any special talents; I have a different talent – to settle in this life. Margarita also wasn't hindered by anybody in her career or studies. She is registered as Russian, and she doesn't look Jewish. But Alexander has suffered from this. He passed the entrance exams to the Historical Department of St. Petersburg State University, got the necessary mark, but didn't find himself in the list of the admitted. He went to the dean. The dean asked him about his marks and went to clear up the situation. He found out that Alexander is Jewish and couldn't do anything. Elderly communists and aspirants with bad marks did enter the university. And Alexander did not.

We do not have any connection with our relatives in America, with Uncle Shender. In Soviet times, from 1917 till 1985, it was dangerous to have relatives abroad. When relatives of my son's wife Natalya came to visit her from Germany, I was against meeting them. I was anxious for Alexander and for all of us.

When Israel and the Soviet Union had bad relationships, I worried so much about Jews both here and in Israel. I am for Jews and Russians communicating with each other. There are good and bad people among Jews, as in any other nation. But bad ones do not count. Jews are very kind people;

they bring up their children very well. Russians could learn it from Jews, too. I couldn't emigrate to Israel, and actually I didn't really want it. I was a loner already, so where could I have gone alone. Besides, the climate is too hot there. And after all, it has become dangerous to live in Israel now. This is why I worry about Jews.

Life after perestroika

When Mikhail Gorbachev came to power and perestroika 16 started, I was very happy. Both Margarita and I hurried to turn on the TV-set every evening to listen to Gorbachev's 17 speech. First we liked him very much. But then he started speaking in such a way that we couldn't understand anything. But still he is a nice man. He released Andrey Dmitrievich Sakharov 18, our academician and lawyer, from under arrest.
My first husband, Serafim Ivanovich, died in 1975; my second husband, Mikhail Ivanovich, died in 1965. Now that both my husbands are dead and my children are not so young and healthy as before, the St. Petersburg Jewish Community helps me very much. Hesed 19 has helped me a lot. They send me meals for the whole week. This is a great help for me, because I cannot cook for myself. Before, a nurse also visited me. But now she doesn't visit me anymore, and I need it so much. When I broke my leg, Hesed gave me a wheel chair, a special mattress preventing bedsores and crutches. I had a course of massage as well. I am very grateful to Hesed and the people who work there.

Unfortunately, almost all my relatives from my generation have already died. My friends of Jewish origin must also have died already. I broke my leg three years ago, in 2000, and I have not gone out since that, so I know nothing about my friends.

Glossary:

1 Russian Revolution of 1917
Revolution in which the tsarist regime was overthrown in the Russian Empire and, under Lenin, was replaced by the Bolshevik rule. The two phases of the Revolution were: February Revolution, which came about due to food and fuel shortages during World War I, and during which the tsar abdicated and a provisional government took over. The second phase took place in the form of a coup led by Lenin in October/November (October Revolution) and saw the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks.

2 Guild I
In tsarist Russia merchants belonged to Guild I, II or III. Merchants of Guild I were allowed to trade with foreign merchants, while the others were allowed to trade only within Russia.

3 Banya
A kind of Russian sauna, a special place (usually a separate building) where people sweat and wash themselves. Presently still both private banyas of owners of the private houses exist and public banyas, where people can go to wash themselves for a fee.

4 Kolkhoz
In the Soviet Union the policy of gradual and voluntary collectivization of agriculture was adopted in 1927 to encourage food production while freeing labor and capital for industrial development. In 1929, with only 4% of farms in kolkhozes, Stalin ordered the confiscation of peasants' land, tools, and animals; the kolkhoz replaced the family farm.

5 Gangs
During the Russian Civil War there were all kinds of gangs in the Ukraine. Their members came from all the classes of former Russia, but most of them were peasants. Their leaders used political slogans to dress their criminal acts. These gangs were anti-Soviet and anti-Semitic. They killed Jews and burnt their houses, they robbed their houses, raped women and killed children.

6 Lenin (1870-1924)
Pseudonym of Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, the Russian Communist leader. A profound student of Marxism, and a revolutionary in the 1890s. He became the leader of the Bolshevik faction of the Social Democratic Party, whom he led to power in the coup d'état of 25th October 1917. Lenin became head of the Soviet state and retained this post until his death.

7 Komsomol
Communist youth political organization created in 1918. The task of the Komsomol was to spread the ideas of communism and involve the worker and peasant youth in building the Soviet Union. The Komsomol also aimed at giving a communist upbringing by involving the worker youth in the political struggle, supplemented by theoretical education. The Komsomol was more popular than the Communist Party because with its aim of education people could accept uninitiated young proletarians, whereas party members had to have at least a minimal political qualification.

8 NKVD
(Russ.: Narodnyi Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del), People's Committee of Internal Affairs, the supreme security authority in the USSR - the secret police. Founded by Lenin in 1917, it nevertheless played an insignificant role until 1934, when it took over the GPU (the State Political Administration), the political police. The NKVD had its own police and military formations, and also possessed the powers to pass sentence on political matters, and as such in practice had total control over society. Under Stalin's rule the NKVD was the key instrument used to terrorize the civilian population. The NKVD ran a network of labor camps for millions of prisoners, the Gulag. The heads of the NKVD were as follows: Genrikh Yagoda (to 1936), Nikolai Yezhov (to 1938) and Lavrenti Beria. During the war against Germany the political police, the KGB, was spun off from the NKVD. After the war it also operated on USSR-occupied territories, including in Poland, where it assisted the nascent communist authorities in suppressing opposition. In 1946 the NKVD was renamed the Ministry of the Interior.

9 NEP

The so-called New Economic Policy of the Soviet authorities was launched by Lenin in 1921. It meant that private business was allowed on a small scale in order to save the country ruined by the Revolution of 1917 and the Russian Civil War. They allowed priority development of private capital and entrepreneurship. The NEP was gradually abandoned in the 1920s with the introduction of the planned economy.

10 Partkom

Committee of the Communist Party, it was established in all Soviet institutions and educational foundations.
11 KGB: The KGB or Committee for State Security was the main Soviet external security and intelligence agency, as well as the main secret police agency from 1954 to 1991.

12 Great Patriotic War

On 22nd June 1941 at 5 o'clock in the morning Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union without declaring war. This was the beginning of the so-called Great Patriotic War. The German blitzkrieg, known as Operation Barbarossa, nearly succeeded in breaking the Soviet Union in the months that followed. Caught unprepared, the Soviet forces lost whole armies and vast quantities of equipment to the German onslaught in the first weeks of the war. By November 1941 the German army had seized the Ukrainian Republic, besieged Leningrad, the Soviet Union's second largest city, and threatened Moscow itself. The war ended for the Soviet Union on 9th May 1945.
13 ChK (full name VuChK): All-Russian Emergency Commission of struggle against counter revolution and sabotage; the first security authority in the Soviet Union established per order of the council of people's commissars dated 7 December 1917. Its chief was Felix Dzerzhynskiy. In 1920, after the Civil War, Lenin ordered to disband it and it became a part of the NKVD.
14 Hero of the Soviet Union: Honorary title established on 16th April 1934 with the Gold Star medal instituted on 1st August 1939, by Decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet. Awarded to both military and civilian personnel for personal or collective deeds of heroism rendered to the USSR or socialist society.

15 Doctors' Plot
The Doctors' Plot was an alleged conspiracy of a group of Moscow doctors to murder leading government and party officials. In January 1953, the Soviet press reported that nine doctors, six of whom were Jewish, had been arrested and confessed their guilt. As Stalin died in March 1953, the trial never took place. The official paper of the Party, the Pravda, later announced that the charges against the doctors were false and their confessions obtained by torture. This case was one of the worst anti-Semitic incidents during Stalin's reign. In his secret speech at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956 Khrushchev stated that Stalin wanted to use the Plot to purge the top Soviet leadership.

16 Perestroika (Russian for restructuring)
Soviet economic and social policy of the late 1980s, associated with the name of Soviet politician Mikhail Gorbachev. The term designated the attempts to transform the stagnant, inefficient command economy of the Soviet Union into a decentralized, market-oriented economy. Industrial

managers and local government and party officials were granted greater autonomy, and open elections were introduced in an attempt to democratize the Communist Party organization. By 1991, perestroika was declining and was soon eclipsed by the dissolution of the USSR.

17 Gorbachev, Mikhail (1931-)

Soviet political leader. Gorbachev joined the Communist Party in 1952 and gradually moved up in the party hierarchy. In 1970 he was elected to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, where he remained until 1990. In 1980 he joined the politburo, and in 1985 he was appointed general secretary of the party. In 1986 he embarked on a comprehensive program of political, economic, and social liberalization under the slogans of glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring). The government released political prisoners, allowed increased emigration, attacked corruption, and encouraged the critical reexamination of Soviet history. The Congress of People's Deputies, founded in 1989, voted to end the Communist Party's control over the government and elected Gorbachev executive president. Gorbachev dissolved the Communist Party and granted the Baltic states independence. Following the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States in 1991, he resigned as president. Since 1992, Gorbachev has headed international organizations.

18 Sakharov, Andrey Dmitrievich (1921-1989)

Soviet nuclear physicist, academician and human rights advocate; the first Soviet citizen to receive the Nobel Peace Prize (1975). He was part of the team constructing the Soviet hydrogene bomb and received the prize 'Hero of the Socialist Labor' three times. In the 1960s and 70s he grew to be the leader of human rights fights in the Soviet Union. In 1980 he was expelled and sent to Gorkiy from where he was allowed to return to Moscow in 1986, after Gorbachev's rise to power. He remained a leading spokesman for human rights and political and economic reform until his death in 1989.

19 Hesed

Meaning care and mercy in Hebrew, Hesed stands for the charity organization founded by Amos Avgar in the early 20th century. Supported by Claims Conference and Joint Hesed helps for Jews in need to have a decent life despite hard economic conditions and encourages development of their self-identity. Hesed provides a number of services aimed at supporting the needs of all, and particularly elderly members of the society. The major social services include: work in the center facilities (information, advertisement of the center activities, foreign ties and free lease of medical equipment); services at homes (care and help at home, food products delivery, delivery of hot meals, minor repairs); work in the community (clubs, meals together, day-time polyclinic, medical and legal consultations); service for volunteers (training programs). The Hesed centers have inspired a real revolution in the Jewish life in the FSU countries. People have seen and sensed the rebirth of the Jewish traditions of humanism. Currently over eighty Hesed centers exist in the FSU countries. Their activities cover the Jewish population of over eight hundred settlements.