Riva Belfor

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Moldova
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Riva Belfor lives in a nice two-room apartment in a district, constructed in the late 1970s. Riva is a very beautiful slender woman with huge dark-brown, expressive eyes. It looked like she was nervous and ill at ease. As it turned out she was worried about her daughter's divorce and her immigration to Israel. Riva asked not to take her picture now, as she had changed a lot and grew old because of the latest events. It was a Saturday evening. The candles were burning out in the silver candlestick given to Riva by her relatives. Riva and her husband still observe Jewish traditions. When Riva started her story, her husband Boris, an impulsive, young-looking man, was surprised to find out that our conversation was private. He had to go to the next room. We could hear his exclamations. As per Riva's request, Boris will be talking about his family himself. I could feel that Riva was the heart and soul of the family. She pampered her husband, who is in fact a big child.

My family background

My paternal grandfather, Ihil Soifer, was born in 1860 in the small town Medzhibozh [about 300 km from Kiev], located in South-Western Ukraine [in 1860 part of the Russian empire]. This town is known for being the center of Hasidism 1 [the Jewish community of Medzhibozh is one of the oldest in Ukraine and until 1648 one of the largest in Podolia. The number of Jews grew to 6,040 (74% of the total population) in 1897, then fell to 4,614 (58.2%) in 1926. The community was destroyed after the German occupation in 1941]. My grandfather's name means 'a man, who rewrites the Torah' in translation from Yiddish [Editor's note: soifer or sofer (Heb.) is 'scribe for holy books,' a man especially trained for this holy task]. Men of his lineage were involved in this honorable and complicated matter from the ancient times. My grandfather fixed the Torah, wrote holy scripts, which were put in the tefillin and mezuzah. Apart from this craft, which was similar to the subtle art, Grandfather read the Torah and Talmud – all holy Judaic books and interpreted them. He discussed things that he read with the neighbors and acquaintances. He tried to live and to act in accordance with the Torah. He often told his kin how one was supposed to act in certain cases according to the doctrines of the holy books. In general he was a very religious and literate man. He got married at the age of 18 according to the Jewish rite [The Talmud recommends that a man marry at the age of 18, or somewhere between 16 and 24]. I didn't know Grandmother Riva. All I know is that she gave birth to ten children, five sons one after another – Abram, David, Monya,

Isaac and Jacob, and five daughters – Reizl, Dvoira, Basya, Sima and Lubov. All children got only elementary Jewish education. The girls were taught by melamed and the boys went to cheder.

In the 1910s the large Soifer family moved to Bessarabia 2 – either they were looking for a better living or trying to find shelter for their sons not to be drafted into the army. The peak of the drafting campaign was achieved in 1913, before World War I. All my grandfather's sons were very religious and the army service was a kind of moral ordeal for them. Three sons – David, Monya and Isaac – found a solution: immigration to the USA. All of them were approximately of the same age – as they were born in the mid-1880s. Their first attempt was unsuccessful - they were arrested at the border and forced to return to Medzhibozh. But they didn't change their minds and in 1913 they took another attempt and managed to leave for the USA via Hamburg [Germany], where they had to stay for a couple of months. Grandfather gave a bribe, which cost him a lot of money, to get a new passport for the name of Stiepelman so that the Soifers would vanish into thin air.

So this is how it happened that the whole family acquired a new name: Stiepelman. Thus, my father and his siblings had that surname. The family moved to Kishinev [then Bessarabia, today Moldova, called Chisinau in Moldovan] and settled there in a rather nice house, purchased for the money acquired for the sold house. They got a husbandry – chicken and geese. Ihil kept on religious activity there. After Grandmother Riva passed away in 1929, Ihil got married shortly after her death – according to the Jewish tradition in grandfather's words a man is not supposed to be alone [Gen. 2:18: 'it is not good for man to be alone']. I don't remember his second wife's name as they didn't live together for a long time due to her death caused by some sort of disease. Reizl was grandfather's third wife. She was his last wife. She was a comfort to my grandfather during the last stage of his life and was doomed like he was. In 1941 the Germans came to Bessarabia. Ihil didn't want to get evacuated, so he died with his wife in Kishinev ghetto 3. It was a horrible death. Father told me that Grandfather was harnessed in the cart with a huge barrel with water and made to run until he fell dead, while the guards were mocking him. Reizl was shot shortly afterwards.

My father's elder brother Abram Soifer, born at the beginning of the 1880s, lived in St. Petersburg with his wife Basya and his children. He got married in Medzhibozh and then moved to St. Petersburg, finished some sort of vocational school. He was involved in commerce. I don't know the details. Abram died in 1918 during the Civil War 4. I don't know what happened to him exactly, but his wife Basya always used to cry when this subject was broached. He was killed by some gangsters, which at times came to Kishinev. I remember only Israel, Rahil, and Reizl out of the fourteen children of Abram and Basya. All of them are deceased.

In America, father's brothers David, Monya and Isaac changed their last name to Saper. The eldest brother David got married to a rich American lady, the owner of a large store, shortly after immigration to America. David got acclimatized very swiftly – soon he became proficient in English and was able to merge in his wife's business and make it even much more prosperous. He had a good and worthy life. He never forgot where he came from and he sent money to Grandfather on a regular basis, and Grandfather in turn helped out the rest of the children. In 1939 David managed to come over to Kishinev to visit his kin. I remember how I was rapt by foreign chic – David, dressed in a morning robe, was sipping coffee from a demitasse. It was the last time I saw David. I never saw either his wife or any of his four children. I didn't know that we didn't keep in touch after the Soviet regime was installed in 1940 5. The Soviets, putting it mildly, didn't encourage people who had relatives abroad 6. David passed away in the mid-1950s. He died from cancer.

Monya also became an entrepreneur in America. He started out from a small car repair shop. His business was gradually growing, making him rather well-off. He had a family, but I don't remember the names of either his wife or his children. Monya died at an old age. before his death we were able to order a telephone conversation, so that Father would be able to hear his brother's voice, whom he hadn't heard for many decades.

Isaac had a tragic fate. He had been a greengrocer all his life, selling plants in the street. His wife died in parturition, leaving a wonderful girl. Isaac had the nanny to raise the girl until she reached the age of seven. The lady didn't give the girl back and the American court, where Isaac filed a claim against the lady, let the girl stay with the lady by ruling. Isaac was in courts for years trying to have his daughter back. The girl grew up, got a good education and became a lawyer. She saw her father a few times, but she never recognized him. Isaac died in the 1970s in solitude and indigence. I don't know where David, Monya and Isaac were buried, or whether they were buried in accordance with the Jewish tradition. They were very religious people and it was likely that they were buried at a Jewish cemetery.

Father's elder sisters Reizl and Dvoira had fiancés before leaving for Kishinev from Medzhibozh. They didn't want to walk away from their fiancés and soon got back to Medzhibozh. They got married there. I don't remember the name of Reizl's husband. He was killed by gangsters during the Civil War. Reizl remained with two sons – Solomon and Natan. Reizl, who was a housewife before her husband's death, became a seamstress. During the Great Patriotic War 7 she was in evacuation with her children, somewhere in Central Asia, but she didn't live long after coming back to her native city. Reizl died in the early 1950s, she was buried at the Jewish cemetery in Medzhibozh. In the 1970s her son Solomon immigrated to the USA with his family. He died there ten years ago. Natan, who is over 80 now, is alive and healthy. He has lived in Israel with his family since the late 1970s. Dvoira's life is more or less prosperous. Her husband Veiner – I don't remember his first name – was a successful vendor and lived with Dvoira until getting old. Neither Dvoira nor Reizl had to work. She died in1970 and was buried next to Reizl; the funeral of my father's sister was carried out in accordance with the Jewish rites. I don't know what happened with Dvoira's daughters. They don't keep in touch, and I forgot their names.

Father's younger sisters Sima, Basya and Lubov lived in Kishinev all the time. Sima, born in the late 1890s, was married off successfully. Her husband, Joseph Epelbaum, was a literate, well-educated and religious Jew. He was the secretary and the right hand of the Kishinev Rabbi Zirelson [Zirelson, Yehuda Leib (1860-1941): rabbi, member of the municipal council of Kishinev and its delegate to meetings with government authorities. He yearned for a Jewish state, based on Torah principles. He was killed in a bomb attack on Kishinev]. Joseph made good money and his family – Sima and five children – were well-off. His son – I don't remember his name – died at the age of 18. His daughters – Mara, Shelya, Susanna and Bella – died at an old age.

Joseph and his family managed to get evacuated in 1941, I think they were evacuated to the Ural. It was good that he hadn't listened to Rabbi Zirelson who was talking him into staying in Kishinev. Joseph kept all the Jewish traditions and rites even in the post-war period and after returning to Kishinev. He died in 1961. He was buried at the Jewish sector of the city cemetery of Kishinev. [In the USSR city cemeteries were territorially divided into sectors. Usually all city cemeteries have common land plots, plots for burial of children, sectors for burial of the titled militaries, a Jewish sector, land plots of the political leaders etc. People were usually buried in accordance with the will

of the relatives of the deceased or the testament.] Some elderly people recited the Kaddish over his grave. Sima passed away at the age of either 92 or 93, only Bella is alive and lives in Tel Aviv. Shelya lives in the USA. We don't keep in touch.

Basya, born at the beginning of the 1900s, was married to a Jew, Vertman. I don't remember his name. He worked as a salesman for some owner of a store.He didn't make much money, but it was enough to make a living for his wife Basya and their three daughters – Rahil, Lida and Riva. Basya with her husband and children was in evacuation during the Great Patriotic War and returned to Kishinev when the war was over. She died at the age of 80 and was buried at the Jewish sector of the Kishinev city cemetery, next to Joseph. Lida is the only daughter who is alive now. She is currently residing in Israel.

My father's youngest sister Lubov, born in 1911, was married to a goldsmith, Aron Dorf. Her husband didn't have Romanian citizenship and was exiled somewhere for salt processing. When the Soviet regime was established in Bessarabia he stealthily came back to Kishinev. Lubov lived in Kishinev with her sons, Buma and Haim, during that period of time. Their sons had a tragic fate. The younger son, Haim, died at the age of twelve in the train car on his way to the evacuation area. The elder brother, Buma, entered the Physics and Mathematics department of Kishinev University after the war. He ranked as a top student of his course. Buma drowned when he was passing a test in swimming. After Buma's death, Lubov gave birth to a third son at the age of 41. He was given the name of Ilia, and was as handsome, intelligent and gifted as Buma was. He also entered the university. When his mother got severely ill he devotedly was looking after her. Aron was deceased by that time and Lubov accidentally threw away the jewelry box with precious things, which was stashed away by Aron. She wasn't controlling herself at that time. After that she had an apoplectic stroke and died in hospital in 1967. Ilia couldn't get over his mother's death. In spite of the fact that he got married and had two daughters of approximately the same age, born with just one year difference, he was grieving over his mother's death so much that he committed suicide. His wife and his daughters immigrated to the USA in the 1980s.

My father Jacob Soifer, the youngest of the sons, born in the early 1890s, changed his name to Stiepelman. Father didn't get any education. He even didn't go to cheder. Grandfather Ihil was his teacher, and he gave all his knowledge to his favorite son. The elder brothers sent an invitation from the USA to my father. And when he decided to join his brother, Grandmother Riva said that she would commit suicide, if he left. He loved his mother very much, so he refused to go. He lived with my grandfather at that time and spent time studying and praying before he got married. He was not that young when he got married. It was a prearranged marriage. His wife-to-be was from the Moldavian [Moldova in Moldovan] 8 village Gura Galbeney. Her name was Haya Feurman.

My mother Haya Feurman came from a large family. She had nine siblings. They lived in the Moldovan village Gura Galbeney [which means Yellow Mountain in Romanian], 40 kilometers away from Kishinev. My maternal grandfather, Velvl Feurman, born in the 1860s, was the owner of a grocery store. Besides, he worked as an accountant for the forestry. Velvl was a highly qualified accountant. One of his job functions was to check the parts of the forest that he was responsible for. Grandmother Sosl was a housewife. She raised the children, did a lot of things about the house. My grandparents were rather well-off and respectable people. There weren't very many Jewish families in Gura Galbeney. There were about 100 families in the village, and 10-15 out of them were Jewish families. Mother was a very sociable lady who kept in touch with Moldovans and

Romanians. The Jews, Moldovans and Romanians had a mutual respect for each other and got along very well. There was a small synagogue in that village and the family went there on high holidays. There was also a cheder in the village. My maternal grandparents weren't as religious as the paternal ones. They adhered to traditions, observed the kashrut and celebrated holidays, but they didn't do it as devotedly and properly as my paternal grandparents' family. Grandfather died at the beginning of 1940.

I don't remember the names of all of my mother's brothers and sisters. I know for sure that they lived in small towns of Bessarabia. Almost all of them had their own families and children. I remember mother's brothers Shmerl, Haim and Suher, who were drafted into the lines during the Great Patriotic War and were reported missing. Shmerl was a bachelor. Haim had a son. He lives in Israel now. Suher went through the war and survived. In the post-war period he lived in Kishinev. He got married and immigrated to Israel with his wife in the 1980s. Suher didn't have children. He died in Israel.

My mother's eldest sister Hanna was married twice. She divorced her first husband, and her second one, Vasilkovkskiy, had died before the Great Patriotic War broke out. As soon as the war began, Hanna and her two children – son Milya and daughter Lubov – and Grandmother Sosl were evacuated. They went by train and on their way the echelon was bombed. Hanna, Grandmother Sosl and Milya died during the bombing. Twenty-year-old Lubov survived the bombing. She was found in the shambles of the train. Soviet soldiers took her to the hospital. When Hanna was discharged from the hospital, she attended nurses' courses. Then she went to the front lines as a volunteer. Lubov was in the lines until the victory day. After the war she married a Jew, Shulim Herman, and moved to Western Ukraine, the city of Lvov [500 km from Kiev]. She had a hard life. Her husband was killed in a car crash and Lubov remained with her seven-year-old daughter. They didn't have enough money to get by. Lubov worked in the hospital as a nurse. Her salary was skimpy, besides she was supposed to be on duty very often, but they managed to go through that hard period of their lives. Now they live in the United States.

Mother's sisters Rahil and Leya lived in a village not far from Kishinev. Rahil married a lad, whose mother was a Jew and father a German. They didn't evacuate in 1941. Rahil and her husband hoped that Germans wouldn't touch them, but they were murdered by the occupants. Leya, her husband and three of her children also perished at the hands of the Fascists. I don't know anything about the rest of my mother's siblings.

My mother Haya Feurman, born in 1895, and her other sisters were educated by a melamed. In spite of her being educated at home, she was a rather erudite person. Yiddish was her mother tongue. She was proficient in Russian and could read Jewish books in Ivrit [modern Hebrew]. Before meeting my father, Haya spent most of the time at home, read books and helped Grandmother about the house. It was considered that she was a spinster, as she was twenty-seven and still single. But my father wasn't a boy either. A Jewish shadkhan made an arrangement for my parents to meet each other. Shortly after their acquaintance they got married. I don't know the details of their wedding. All I know is that it took place in Kishinev in full compliance with Jewish rites: chuppah, Jewish music and numerous guests.

My parents rented an apartment in Kishinev after their wedding. Grandfather helped them out for a while until Father had acquired a profession. Then father learned how to become a shochet. Every

week he went to the small town of Khyncheshtch [since 1940 Kotovsk, 30 km from Kishinev], where the butcher who taught him lived. My parents didn't stay in Kishinev for a long time, and moved to Khyncheshtch, looking for a job. The old butcher, my father's teacher, sent all his clients to my father. Father became a very skilled butcher. He could cut poultry, and he also knew how to slaughter cattle. In every house we used to live, there was a shed where my father did his job. There were huge hooks where fowl was placed and there were tubs with straw or boxes with sand underneath for the seeping blood. Father was very hard-working. Not every Jew was able to pay my father for his job, but my father couldn't leave a Jew without a kosher Sabbath chicken. That is why my father worked for free sometimes. Each Friday Father rented a cart to go to the villages, where at least one Jew was residing, to cut chicken for Sabbath. He didn't want any Jewish family to remain without kosher chicken, but there were families, which couldn't afford to buy a chicken, and my father came back home empty-handed.

Father didn't make much money, but it was enough for the family to get by. Mother was a wonderful housewife, coping with a lot of housework: baking fresh bread, cooking an apple pie, keeping a house in order and taking care of the children. In 1923 my sister Bluma was born, and the next year Rahil was born. My elder brother Motle was born in 1927. Then I was born on 10th September 1934, in the town of Khyncheshtch. I was named after my grandmother Riva. She was deceased at that time. [One of the most common practices is to name a child to honor a relative. Sephardic Jews name their children freely after both living and deceased relatives. However, Ashkenazim rarely name children after living relatives.]

Growing up

Shortly after I was born, Father found a job in the town of Resena [about 80 km from Kishinev], not far from Kotovsk, and our family moved there. I remember myself at the age of two, drinking wine. I was a mirthful and sociable girl. Once I saw Moldovans crushing grapes and dancing. I went in the circle. They gave me some wine to drink. I was dancing so hilariously that everybody burst into laughter. There is another recollection from early childhood, which is embossed in my memory. I remember that Mother taught us not to take anything that belongs to other people, no matter how hard our living was. One of our acquaintances, who was very rich, brought me a little white apron. I was so happy to get such a nice present, but Mother told me to give it back and said that we didn't want anything that didn't belong to us.

I also remember my mother was expecting a baby. I was two, but I was fully aware that I wouldn't be taken as much care of and I wouldn't be loved so much when mother would give birth to a baby. It made me sad. The priest's spouse was the midwife in Rezina and she delivered my mother's baby. Mother was in the small bedroom, while Grandfather Ihil was making gefilte fish in the drawing-room. I was close to the Primus stove [a small portable stove with a container for about 1 liter of kerosene that was pumped into burners], inhaling a spicy aroma and expecting a delicious dish. Grandfather kept telling me to stay away from the stove. I didn't understand why Grandfather was cooking fish on the Primus stove, because Mother always used to cook on the Russian stove 9 in our kitchen and used the Primus very rarely. When the cry of a baby was heard from the next room, my father and grandfather rushed there. Then I was shown a small puckered baby. Mother gave birth to a son, who was given the name of Haim. I liked him very much and I forgot all my apprehensions and jealousy. I still love my brother very much. In 1938 Mother gave birth to a girl, but she lived only for a couple of weeks and died.

I vaguely remember the town of Rezina. It was an ordinary Jewish town, where Jews peacefully coexisted with Moldovans and Romanians. I think there were about 500-600 yards in the town, and approximately half of them were Jewish. I remember the synagogue with the separate gallery for women. When Mother went to the synagogue, she took me there as well. She put my breakfast in a parcel: patties, grapes and apples. Usually she left me in the synagogue yard, where I played with other girls. At times we had to wait for a long time until our mothers were through with praying. We also shared food given to us by our mothers in parcels.

My mother's family wasn't as religious as my father's. Father was a very religious man. He even went to bed in a kippah. Mother also became religious, following Father's example. She adhered to all the Jewish traditions. Mother covered her head with a dark kerchief, even in evacuation, where it was hard to get any fabric. Before Sabbath our house was thoroughly cleaned and festive dishes were cooked: chicken, challah, cookies, homemade kosher wine [wine made by a Jew from the grape that he planted himself], gefilte fish, all kinds of tsimes 10, beans cooked with sugar and cracklings. Challah was put on the table. Mother lit the candles, sang and read a prayer. Father recited the Kiddush. The kashrut was strictly observed. If there were two cauldrons in the house – one chipped with a knife, for it to look different and not to be confused with the other one, was used for milk, and the other one was used for meat. Knives, cutting boards, dishes and even rags were marked. If a knife fell on the floor on Pesach, it wasn't used for the entire week. It was put in the earth and was supposed to stay there for a week.

Jewish holidays were celebrated in our house. We got ready for the holidays beforehand. My father was a shochet. Besides he was a chazzan [back in the time, the chazzan was the head of the community prayer in the synagogue, later he was a cantor, a synagogue singer] in the synagogue, he sang prayers during the holidays. He was supposed to blow the shofar at the end of Yom Kippur. He rehearsed blowing the shofar in the summer before the fall holidays. My parents fasted on Yom Kippur. Father spent the whole day in the synagogue. I began fasting at the age of twelve. [Children under the age of nine don't fast, then they start fasting little by little. Boys start to fast as long as adults do by the age of 13, girls from twelve.]

I loved Sukkot very much. Father took some reed and made a sukkah in the yard. The attributes of the holidays – lulav and etrog – were sent from Kishinev. [Editor's note: the Sukkot attributes are the so-called Four Species (arba minim): an etrog (a citrus fruit similar to a lemon native to Israel; in English it is called a citron), a palm branch (in Hebrew, lulav), two willow branches (aravot) and three myrtle branches (hadassim).] I liked to watch my father say a morning prayer in the sukkah, holding a palm branch and the fruit of the citrus plant Lyonus. After the holiday those plants were put in long boxes and kept for a year. We had dinner in the sukkah in the period of eight festive days, even though it got really cold in fall.

We had a good time during holidays. My parents' friends came to us. They were common Jews. We sang songs and danced. I had fun as well, as my parents' friends used to bring their children with them. I enjoyed playing with them. We liked Chanukkah very much, as we were given presents and money. Purim was spectacular. People in the Jewish houses were cooking and baking all day long. At night they took a walk along the central street in Rezina, lit only by one lamppost, to bring shelakhmones from house to house. At home we gave performances, Purimshpil [traditionally at Purim parodies (Purim Shpil, Yiddish for Purim Play) are performed], and made hoaxes.

Pesach was the most important holiday. Mother cleaned the house, scraped walls and whitewashed the stove. [The Passover cleaning, the mitzvah of biur chametz – getting rid of chametz – and other traditions described below belong to Pesach traditions according to halakhah.] New outfits and shoes were prepared for all children. There was a clean starched cloth on the table and snow-white napkins on our modest furniture. On the eve chametz was banished. Mother took bread crumbs, put them in a wooden spoon and buried them. [Editor's note: the described proceeding refers to bedikat chametz, a formal search for chametz in the home, but with slight differences regarding the tradition.]

Matzah was brought from the synagogue in a large hamper covered with a sheet. Pesach dishes were taken from the garret. Those dishes weren't used for the entire year. Every child had his own. I was looking forward to getting my pink glass with the picture of a kitten, which was kept in the chest. My father, clad in white attire with a belt and a white festive kippah, was reclining on the sofa with the white cover, carrying out seder. [According to the Jewish tradition the eldest man in the family, the one who made Seder, was supposed to recline on something soft (usually pillows were used for that), which was the embodiment of relaxation and exemption from slavery.] My brother Motle asked him four questions about the origin of the holiday while I was looking for the afikoman. The festive Pesach dish was in the middle of the table. There were all dishes in accordance with the Haggadah. Besides, the table was abundant in Jewish dishes: gefilte fish, chicken strew, chicken broth and tsimes. The goblet with wine was placed on the table for Elijah ha-nevi. There was a certain paragraph in the Haggadah when people were supposed to open the door. We kept the door open until morning for Elijah ha-nevi to come to our house and drink wine.

During the war

In 1939 our family moved to Kishinev. There was a vacant position for a shochet. We rented an apartment. It was a small three-room apartment in a private house. There was a shed in the yard, where my father did his job. My elder brother Motle helped my father so he could learn from him. Motle had been prepared for religious activity since early childhood. He finished cheder, which was customary for the boys. Father and Grandfather Ihil spent a lot of time teaching him. My brother got ready for the rite of bar mitzvah. The rite was carried out by Rabbi Zirelson in the central synagogue. After that Motle was enrolled in a yeshivah, where very literate, educated and religious Jews taught, such as Zirelson and Uncle Joseph Epelbaum.

My sisters didn't get such a thorough education. The elder one, Bluma, was taught how to read and write by our parents. She thought it was sufficient for a girl like her. She was very good at embroidery since childhood. Later on she started taking orders and earned pretty good money. After finishing school, Rahil went to the technical school of the Tarbut school 11, one of those schools which prepared the youth for repatriation to Palestine. There were very many Zionist organizations in Kishinev, but I couldn't join them because of my age and I don't remember their names.

Pro-Soviet and pro-Communist ideas were also disseminated. I remember how my father was inspired to talk about Russia. He was a real zealot of Soviet power, national equality, propagated by the Communists. Father tried to find out about Russia as much as possible. At that time the USSR was a political enemy to Romania and there was no information about Russia. Father had a friend – a Moldovan, a medical assistant – who also cared for the USSR. He had a radio, which was

a rare thing for people of our circle. Father came to him and they used to listen to the news from Moscow surreptitiously. Of course, neither Father nor his friends knew the truth about the USSR, they knew nothing about arrests and repressions of the innocent people 12.

Back in those times there were Fascist Organizations: followers of Professor Cuza 13, the so-called Cuzists 14, and the Legionary Movement 15. They advocated Fascist ideas of racial and nationalistic hatred and threatened the Jews. Kishinev Jews who survived the Pogrom of 1903 16, dreaded to think that it would recur. Fortunately it didn't come to that, though anti-Semitism was felt in everyday life. One evening, when Father was on his way home from the synagogue, two gangsters, Cuzists, attacked him and hit him a couple of times, threatening to do away with him.

On 28th June 1940 an event took place, awaited by many Jews and our family as well. The Soviet Army was marching along the streets of Kishinev in filthy tunics and dusty boots. It seemed to us that they were envoys from a wonderful country and my siblings and I were delighted to meet the soldiers. Then our life started changing, and it wasn't for the better. First, almost all the products vanished from the stores. Mother complained about it to my father, but he kept silent. The worst things were to come – arrests and exile. The Soviet regime was after wealthy people first, we were safe, because we were not well-off. They were after the activists of the Zionist movement and religious Jews. Father didn't work as a shochet, he was employed at the railroad department. Sometimes Uncle Joseph came to us in the evening and they were whispering about something. Joseph feared to be arrested even more than my father did. Neither he nor Zirelson were touched, maybe for the lack of time.

In spring 1941 our family came back to Rezina. Father thought that it would be safer to live here. In the morning of 22nd June 1941 I was in bed, reading a book about Sergey Kirov 17 – by that time I could read in Yiddish and Russian. I was taught by my mother. We lived on the central square of the town. I heard some noise coming from the street. People clustered by the street loud speaker. They were listening to the broadcast very closely. Soon Father came home and broke the news about the commencement of the war. For ten days we lived as if nothing had happened. Some Jews left Rezina, others were on the point of leaving. There were also people, especially survivors from World War I, who were prone to think that Germans would do no harm to Jews.

At the beginning of July, retreating Soviet troops went along the streets of our town. We were having lunch. My appetite wasn't very good as it was very humid outside. Somebody knocked on the door. A handsome Jewish lad in the officer's uniform entered the room. He asked Father to give him a pill for toothache. He went to the next room where Father was. Father rushed from the room in a second. He was really pallid. Father said that we would be leaving at once as Fascists were on their way. Probably the soldier told my father what had happened to the Jews on the occupied territories. It was on the 7th of July. We took off immediately without changing our clothes: my siblings, parents and I. We were at a loss. Mother didn't even take the documents and the precious things: her and father's wedding rings. Mother only took some money and Father took tallit and tefillin. When we went outside, a Romanian told my father: 'Yanku [short for Jacob], where are you taking your caboodle, you won't make it, let me hide you in my garret.' But my father only shook his head and we left.

We walked for a couple of days in the direction of Kishinev. We could feel the panic: the roads were crowded with people, besides they were moving in both directions – from and to Kishinev. Nobody

understood where to go, and which road to take. Nobody was told what to do. It was humid and dusty. There was no place to bathe. In a day or two we started to itch, and when I took off my dress I was shocked: I was teeming with lice. I had noticed that it was the same with the others. Those insects always appeared when there was a calamity.

When we came to Kishinev, the city was on fire. People were panicking and scurrying in all directions. We came to the train station. It was crammed with people, so it was next to impossible for us to take a train. However, luck smiled at us. One of my father's pals called him. His family was on the open coal carriage. He helped us get there before the train left. We reached Tiraspol and changed the train. The fugitives were put on locomotives, which left for Rostov [today Russia]. Our trip lasted for about two weeks, we went through about 900 kilometers. We tried to get some food and water at the stations. The road was bombed. We were cold and hungry, sitting close to our mother like chickens by the hen. Once, Motle was about to miss the train. We got off the train on one of the stations to fetch water. Father got him on, when the train was starting off.

In August 1941 we got off the train at the station Belaya Kalitva, not far from Rostov, which was about 1000 kilometers from Kishinev. We were met at the station very ceremoniously and warmly. We were given warm bread with honey, tea and milk. Then they took us to a kolkhoz 18. All evacuated people settled in the houses of the kolkhoznikovs [collective farmers]. We lived in the house of an elderly Cossack 19 and his wife. They treated us very well. We, the children, spent all day long outside in the orchard with apple and pear trees. We ate tasty melons and watermelons. Father and the elder children worked in the kolkhoz. Mother went to the canteen everyday, where she was given warm cooked food and bread. Everyday she brought a full can with food. Then, the cold and rainy fall came. Everyday Father and the host listened to the round-ups on the radio. One November day of the year 1941, the old man told my father that he heard in the news that the front lines were approaching and my father needed to move further to the East.

And again we went on foot. It was cold. It was sleeting. The roads were crowded by retreating squads of the army and fugitives. On one of the junctions, a handsome Russian officer came to us. I was a pretty little girl at that time. He said to me, 'My little daughter is wandering on the war roads just the way you are!' The officer stopped the truck and ordered the driver to take us to Stalingrad. There were fugitives from other cities and districts. They were staying in the fields, and in the stadiums. It was December, but fortunately it wasn't cold. We were starving. Father bought some rolls, sometimes he managed to get some warm soup. People got lost, and to find each other, they glued the announcements on the fences and on the walls of the stadium. Father wrote such an announcement as well, hoping that he would find somebody from our kin. Mother's younger brother Suher found us with the help of that announcement. He was mobilized, he was waiting to be dispatched to the front lines. Suher brought a loaf of bread, some canned food and said good-bye to us.

In about a week we crossed the Volga on a barge. It was horrible as the barge was bombed and people were pushing each other, forcing their way to the barge. We were lucky to get on the barge and stay together. On the opposite bank of the Volga we took a freight car and went to the East. And again we had to starve, being able to find food only at the stations. Sometimes at the substations we boiled potatoes, brought by compassionate local inhabitants. Once, the train was to start off, and Dad grabbed a bucket with under-boiled potatoes, so we had to eat raw and hard potato. Father prayed daily, sitting in the corner of the car and swaying from time to time. There

were people of different nationalities in our car, and nobody hurt or offended us in any way.

It took us six weeks to reach Tashkent [today Uzbekistan], and from there we were taken to the town of Namangan in Ferghana valley [about 3700 km from Kishinev]. For a couple of days we lived in a shed, previously used for fertilizers. There was a hearth in the corner, where women cooked food. There was a sulfur heap next to the fire and we were gasping for air from evaporation of sulfur. Suddenly an earthquake started. People rushed from the sheds half naked and barefoot and cried in panic. When the earthquake was over, the evacuated were brought to kolkhozes.

We were taken to the kolkhoz Itiphok, which means Union in Uzbek. Houses weren't heated; there was a hole in the corner of the room where we put cotton waste to warm the premises. My parents and elder sisters gathered cotton, and my brothers and I stayed at home. We were also given some work to do: they brought us unopened cotton bolls for us to work in the shed. Our nutrition wasn't very good. Each family was given daily one glass of semi-rotten wheat or barley. We made porridge out of it. In spring 1942 Father was taken to the labor front 20.

It was a very hard period for us. Mother was hypertonic, and was unwell rather often, she couldn't work. We were famished. One rich Uzbek offered Mother money under the condition that I would marry him. I was only eight years old. Of course, Mother didn't agree to that. She sent my brother and me to Kasansay [today Uzbekistan], where the family of Father's sister Sima lived. Her husband Joseph was working at a tobacco factory as a book-keeper, and her daughters were also working. They lived comfortably, but there wasn't enough food for everybody. My brother and I were sent to an orphanage, but we were even more hungry there than in the kolkhoz. At that time, Mother received a letter and a package from Father, who worked at a military plant in Chelyabinsk [today Russia]. Mother took us back. Our living was better when Father was sending us money and provision. We weren't able to receive the money, as the Jewish postman embezzled it. At the end of 1943 Father came back. He demanded money that belonged to him, and he was given it. In evacuation and at the labor front Father observed Jewish traditions. He didn't work on Saturdays, he worked on Sunday instead. On Friday he lit a candle. On Pesach he sold his bread ration and bought corn flour to make some scones similar to matzah. His comrades respected my father's religious belief.

After the war

At the end of 1944 Father took us to Chelyabinsk. We shared the apartment with one Russian woman. Father worked at the plant and when he had spare time he sawed felt boots. Our life was getting better. Then we were struck by sorrow. Late in the evening our neighbor rushed to us, screaming that our father was lying on the railroad. When he was brought home, it turned out that on his way from work, late at night, he was hit by the train and his leg was cut off. Father was in the hospital and came back with a crutch and an empty trouser leg. Father said that God had rescued him taking only one leg, not his life. He became a cobbler, working near the market. Since childhood he was good at it. Thus he made some money and we came back to Namangan. It was warm there. I went to school in Namangan. It was a Russian school and I became an excellent student within a year. Then Aunt Sima sent us an invitation from Kishinev. In August 1946 we came back to Bessarabia.

The city was devastated. We had to walk for a long time and finally we reached the house of one of Sima's daughters, my cousin Shelya. Mother thought that we would be able to move to some of our

relatives but then we understood that we shouldn't rely on anybody as everybody had their own problems. Father on crutches went to look for lodging in the city. Some Russian lady was very sorry for him when he told her our story. She showed us an empty basement. We moved to the basement. We stayed there until 1956. There were two dark rooms and a corridor, where Mother made a kitchen. We were happy to have a roof over our heads. At that time many families were trying to find a shelter in the basements and sheds. Father remained a cobbler for a short time. There was a shochet in Kishinev, when we returned, but when he left abroad in 1946, Father was offered by the community to take the position of the shochet. Father processed a patent, equipped his working place and became a butcher again. Father worked for many years duly paying all taxes. He regained his footing when he came back to his favorite synagogue and became a chazzan.

I went to school. After the Uzbek school I was admitted in the fourth grade. I stuck to Jewish traditions having been observed in my family since childhood even after I became a pioneer 21 and Komsomol 22 member. I had to conceal my true religious belief. During the first years of hunger we ate only mamaliga [polenta, crushed cornmeal]. Once I was treated to a tasty roll with a nice smell. It was during Pesach, I didn't eat that roll and hid it under the bed. Of course, I had to throw it away as it got moldy. I remember once on Friday night my Ukrainian friend knocked on my door. She was a real Soviet person. Her father was the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. The candles were lit in our apartment and I didn't want to let Larissa in. She was persistent, so I had to open the door. She was surprised to see that our electric lamps were switched off and candles were lit. I said that our fuses had burned out, and when she told me to repair them, I said that only adults could do that. I don't know whether Larissa guessed that we were celebrating Sabbath. She never even made a hint. I was friends with Larissa for many years. Both of us were sobbing when Stalin died [1953]. My parents were laughing at us. I think that at that time they understood that the great leader was responsible for all our tribulations.

I finished school with the golden medal [with highest level of honors] and was supposed to enter the institute without taking exams [pupils that graduated with golden or silver medals had the right to enter the university only by passing entrance interview 23. That was the first time when I came across anti-Semitism. I applied for the Chemistry Department of Kishinev University. The dean said that I was supposed to take exams, because it wasn't known where I was during the war and how I got my certificate. The director of my school, a Russian lady, stood up for me. She came to the dean and made him get me accepted the way it was supposed to be: without the entrance exams. I was a good student at university. I didn't feel any inequality there, the atmosphere was rather pleasant. In those years Father was able to save some money and in 1956 he purchased a two-room apartment. In the end, we moved out of the basement. I got my diploma with distinction, which meant that I might expect the best positions after the mandatory job assignment 24. As a rule Jews didn't get good jobs. I was sent to the city of Chernovtsi [today Ukraine] to teach chemistry. My parents didn't want to let me go and Father found a way out with the help of his pal. He gave a bribe and I got a job at the chemical laboratory of the jewelry plant. It was my first job.

In 1958 I met a Jewish lad, Boris Belfor. We began to date and fell in love with each other. Boris introduced me to his parents and proposed to me. His father, Abram Belfor, born in a town close to Lvov [today Ukraine], moved to Bessarabia before the revolution [Civil War of 1917-18]. He was a hatter 's apprentice. He was married to a Jewish girl, Mintsa. Boris, the fifth baby in the family, was

born Kishinev in 1932. The family of Abram and Mintsa wasn't religious, but their children adhered to Zionist ideas. The eldest, Alexander [Jewish name Ziska], a convinced Zionist, left for Palestine at the age of 18. He lived in a kibbutz, where only Bessarabian Jews were. Alexander became a respectable man, got married. His death was tragic: he drowned in the sea in 1959.

My fiance's sister Broha Belfor joined an underground Zionist group [which wasn't an organization; the Jewish youth just got together to talk about Israel, read Jewish literature, discuss the prospects of life in Israel], after coming back from the evacuation in Central Asia, where she was with her parents and younger brother. Broha, along with fifteen other women was arrested in 1950. She was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment and was released from prison only after Stalin's death, in 1956. Broha got married and left for Israel. Now Broha Basman lives in Israel. Boris's elder brother Nusim perished in Königsberg [today Kaliningrad in Russia]. His second brother Moishe lived in Kishinev. He was a common worker.

By the time of our acquaintance Boris had served the full term in the army, which was two years at that time, and graduated from the Lvov Polygraphist College. He was an extramural student of the Ukrainian Polygraphic Institute. In 1958 we got married. In spite of the fact that we both were Komsomol members, we had a traditional Jewish wedding. A chuppah was placed in the yard of Uncle Joseph Epelbaum. The rite was carried out by him. Then the crystal goblet was broken, Klezmer music was played. All our relatives and friends had fun.

By that time my sisters Rahil and Bluma were already married. They married the Gershengolts brothers. Bluma's husband Motle worked as a salesman in Kotovsk [former Khynchenshtch]. Bluma worked as an outworker knitter. She died in 1988. Her son Vladimir lives in Kishinev, and her second son, Boris, lives in Israel.

Rahil's husband Mehl Gershengolts was also involved in commerce. He built a nice private house in Kishinev where he lived with his wife and daughters – Sonya, and Edit. Rahil died rather young, in 1968. Her husband and children left for Israel. The daughters are currently residing there.

My eldest brother Motle worked as a foreman after finishing vocational school. He also immigrated to Israel with his family –wife Sofia, children Anna and Yuri. Motle died at the beginning of the 1990s. His children are currently residing in Israel. My younger brother Haim was involved in commerce after finishing school. He got married and immigrated to Israel in 1990 with his wife and daughters. He and his daughter Irina are currently living in Israel.

In 1958, after our wedding we moved to Rahil's house. We were given a separate room there. In 1959 I gave birth to a girl. Our daughter was given thename Zinaida, after the recently perished brother of my husband, Zinka. We got an apartment in a couple of years. We still live in this apartment. We had a good life. My husband worked as a chief engineer of the large typography house. Soon I went to work there as a chemistry expert-production engineer. We made pretty good money and we had a lot of friends at work. We celebrated Soviet holidays together, took part in festive demonstrations in spite of the fact that the Jewish traditions ands holidays were a major priority to us.

I cannot say that we had a luxurious life, we didn't have a car or dacha 25, but we had enough money for food and recreation. Almost every year we went to the seaside spas. We also went to the theaters, cinemas. Sometimes, we went to the restaurants with friends. We enjoyed reading.

We had a full-fledged life. I went on business trips to large cities rather often. I went sightseeing there, attended museums and theaters. Our daughter was nurtured in kindness and care. My mother helped me raise a good daughter, a true Jewish lady, who observes traditions.

My parents lived in the same two-room apartment, purchased by my father. In 1975 Mother passed away. Father died in 1983, eight years after mother's death. They were buried in the Jewish part of the cemetery in compliance with the Jewish rites and traditions. Unfortunately, Uncle Joseph, who carried out all the Jewish traditions in the family, didn't conduct the funeral rites, as he died in 1961.

Zinaida finished school, then the Economics Faculty of the Agricultural Institute. She was married to a Jew called Vadim Donets. They lived together for many years. In 1983 my granddaughter Marina was born. My daughter fell in love with an Israeli citizen and divorced her husband, when her daughter came of age so she could understand her. Zinaida left for Israel a year and a half ago. She has a happy marriage. She lives in Haifa. Marina lives in Kishinev with her father. She entered the university. Marina came to Zinaida for a visit.

I am suffering because of the collapse of my daughter's family, though I shouldn't. Everybody is free to choose his own fate. I regret not leaving for Israel, when our relatives and acquaintances were leaving. We were afraid that we wouldn't be able to find a job. Besides, we had a good life in Kishinev. Now we go to Israel on a frequent basis. We are considering immigrating to Israel.

We have always observed Jewish traditions: lighting Sabbath candles and celebrating all holidays. The synagogue was always open in Kishinev and Jewish traditions never ceased. Now after the breakup of the Soviet Union, independent Moldova created conditions for national revival making Jewish life more active. We are community and Hesed members 26. We attend different events, Jewish performances, read Jewish newspapers. Along with other community members we come to the monument of Holocaust victims, built at the place of the shooting of Kishinev Jews. Grandfather Ihil and his wife Reizl died there as well. One of the positive things brought by perestroika 27 is the revival of Jewish life. But it is not enough. I am missing the huge Soviet Union, where I could go to any city with historic sites, where I felt needed by people, where I could meet my friends. Now I am not needed by anybody, but my husband. Maybe I am just getting old.

Glossary:

1 Hasidism (Hasidic)
Jewish mystic movement founded in the 18th century that reacted against Talmudic learning and maintained that God's presence was in all of one's surroundings and that one should serve God in one's every deed and word. The movement provided spiritual hope and uplifted the common people. There were large branches of Hasidic movements and schools throughout Eastern Europe before World War II, each following the teachings of famous scholars and thinkers. Most had their own customs, rituals and life styles. Today there are substantial Hasidic communities in New York, London, Israel and Antwerp.

2 Bessarabia
Historical area between the Prut and Dniestr rivers, in the southern part of Odessa region.

Bessarabia was part of Russia until the Revolution of 1917. In 1918 it declared itself an independent republic, and later it united with Romania. The Treaty of Paris (1920) recognized the union but the Soviet Union never accepted this. In 1940 Romania was forced to cede Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to the USSR. The two provinces had almost 4 million inhabitants, mostly Romanians. Although Romania reoccupied part of the territory during World War II the Romanian peace treaty of 1947 confirmed their belonging to the Soviet Union. Today it is part of Moldova.

3 Kishinev Ghetto

The annihilation of the Jews of Kishinev was carried out in several stages. With the entry of the Romanian and German units, an unknown number of Jews were slaughtered in the streets and in their homes. About 2,000 Jews, mainly of liberal professions (doctors, lawyers, engineers), and local Jewish intellectuals, were systematically executed. After the wave of killings, the 11,000 remaining Jews were concentrated in the ghetto, created on 24th July 1941, on the order of the Romanian district ruler and the German Einsatzkommando leader, Paul Zapp. The Jews of central Romania attempted to assist their brethren in the ghetto, sending large amounts of money by illegal means. A committee was formed to bribe the Romanian authorities so that they would not hand the Jews over to the Germans. In August about 7,500 Jewish people were sent to work in the Ghidighici quarries. That fall, on the Day of Atonement (4th October), the military authorities began deporting the remaining Jews in the ghetto to Transnistria, by order of the Romanian ruler, Ion Antonescu. One of the heads of the ghetto, the attorney Shapira, managed to alert the leaders of the Jewish communities in Bucharest, but attempts to halt the deportations were unsuccessful. The community was not completely liquidated, however, since some Jews had found hiding places in Kishinev and its vicinity or elsewhere in Romania. In May 1942, the last 200 Jews in the locality were deported. Kishinev was liberated in August 1944. At that time no Jews were left in the locality.

4 Civil War (1918-1920)

The Civil War between the Reds (the Bolsheviks) and the Whites (the anti-Bolsheviks), which broke out in early 1918, ravaged Russia until 1920. The Whites represented all shades of anti-communist groups – Russian army units from World War I, led by anti-Bolshevik officers, by anti-Bolshevik volunteers and some Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries. Several of their leaders favored setting up a military dictatorship, but few were outspoken tsarists. Atrocities were committed throughout the Civil War by both sides. The Civil War ended with Bolshevik military victory, thanks to the lack of cooperation among the various White commanders and to the reorganization of the Red forces after Trotsky became commissar for war. It was won, however, only at the price of immense sacrifice; by 1920 Russia was ruined and devastated. In 1920 industrial production was reduced to 14 percent and agriculture to 50 percent as compared to 1913.

5 Annexation of Bessarabia to the Soviet Union

At the end of June 1940 the Soviet Union demanded Romania to withdraw its troops from Bessarabia and to abandon the territory. Romania withdrew its troops and administration in the same month and between 28th June and 3rd July, the Soviets occupied the region. At the same time Romania was obliged to give up Northern Transylvania to Hungary and Southern-Dobrudja to Bulgaria. These territorial losses influenced Romanian politics during World War II to a great extent.

6 Keep in touch with relatives abroad
The authorities could arrest an individual corresponding with his/her relatives abroad and charge him/her with espionage, send them to concentration camp or even sentence them to death.

7 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.

8 Moldova
Historic region between the Eastern Carpathians, the Dniester River and the Black Sea, also a contemporary state, bordering with Romania and Ukraine. Moldova was first mentioned after the end of the Mongol invasion in 14th century scripts as Eastern marquisate of the Hungarian Kingdom. For a long time, the Principality of Moldova was tributary of either Poland or Hungary until the Ottoman Empire took possession of it in 1512. The Sultans ruled Moldova indirectly by appointing the Prince of Moldova to govern the vassal principality. These were Moldovan boyars until the early 18th century and Greek (Phanariot) ones after. In 1812 Tsar Alexander I occupied the eastern part of Moldova (between the Prut and the Dniester river and the Black Sea) and attached it to its Empire under the name of Bessarabia. In 1859 the remaining part of Moldova merged with Wallachia. In 1862 the new country was called Romania, which was finally internationally recognized at the Treaty of Berlin in 1878. Bessarabia united with Romania after World War I, and was recaptured by the Soviet Union in 1940. The Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic gained independence after the break up of the Soviet Union in 1991 and is now called Moldovan Republic (Republica Moldova).

9 Russian stove
Big stone stove stoked with wood. They were usually built in a corner of the kitchen and served to heat the house and cook food. It had a bench that made a comfortable bed for children and adults in wintertime.

10 Tsimes
Stew made usually of carrots, parsnips, or plums with potatoes.

11 Tarbut schools
Elementary, secondary and technical schools maintained by the Hebrew educational and cultural organization called Tarbut. Most Eastern European countries had such schools between the two world wars but there were especially many in Poland. The language of instruction was Hebrew and

the education was Zionist oriented.

12 Great Terror (1934-1938)

During the Great Terror, or Great Purges, which included the notorious show trials of Stalin's former Bolshevik opponents in 1936-1938 and reached its peak in 1937 and 1938, millions of innocent Soviet citizens were sent off to labor camps or killed in prison. The major targets of the Great Terror were communists. Over half of the people who were arrested were members of the party at the time of their arrest. The armed forces, the Communist Party, and the government in general were purged of all allegedly dissident persons; the victims were generally sentenced to death or to long terms of hard labor. Much of the purge was carried out in secret, and only a few cases were tried in public 'show trials'. By the time the terror subsided in 1939, Stalin had managed to bring both the Party and the public to a state of complete submission to his rule. Soviet society was so atomized and the people so fearful of reprisals that mass arrests were no longer necessary. Stalin ruled as absolute dictator of the Soviet Union until his death in March 1953.

13 Cuza, Alexandru Ioan (1820-1870)

The election in 1859 of Alexandru Joan Cuza as prince of both Moldova and Walachia prepared the way for the official union (1861-62) of the two principalities as Romania. Cuza freed in 1864 the peasants from certain servile obligations and distributed some land – confiscated from religious orders – to them. However, he was despotic and corrupt and was deposed by a coup in 1866. Carol I of the house of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen was chosen as his successor.

14 Cuzist

Member of the Romanian Fascist organization named after Alexandru C. Cuza, one of the most fervent Fascist leaders in Romania, who was known for his ruthless chauvinism and anti-Semitism. In 1919 Cuza founded the LANC, which became the National Christian Party in 1935 with an anti-Semitic program.

15 Legion of the Archangel Michael (also known as the Legionary Movement)

Movement founded in 1927 by C. Z. Codreanu. This extremist, nationalist, anti-Semitic and xenophobic movement aimed at excluding those whose views on political and racial matters were different from theirs. The Legion was organized in so-called nests, and it practiced mystical rituals, which were regarded as the way to a national spiritual regeneration by the members of the movement. These rituals were based on Romanian folklore and historical traditions. The Legionaries founded the Iron Guard as a terror organization, which carried out terrorist activities and political murders. The political twin of the Legionary Movement was the Totul pentru Tara (Everything for the Fatherland) that represented the movement in parliamentary elections. The followers of the Legionary Movement were recruited from young intellectuals, students, Orthodox clerics, peasants. The movement was banned by King Carol II in 1938.

16 Kishinev pogrom of 1903

On 6-7th April, during the Christian Orthodox Easter, there was severe pogrom in Kishinev (today

Chisinau, Moldova) and its suburbs, in which about 50 Jews were killed and hundreds injured. Jewish shops were destroyed and many people left homeless. The pogrom became a watershed in the history of the Jews of the Pale of Settlement and the Zionist movement, not only because of its scale, but also due to the reaction of the authorities, who either could not or did not want to stop the pogromists. The pogrom reverbarated in the Jewish world and spurred many future Zionists to join the movement.

17 Kirov, Sergey (born Kostrikov) (1886-1934)
Soviet communist. He joined the Russian Social Democratic Party in 1904. During the Revolution of 1905 he was arrested; after his release he joined the Bolsheviks and was arrested several more times for revolutionary activity. He occupied high positions in the hierarchy of the Communist Party. He was a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, as well as of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee. He was a loyal supporter of Stalin. In 1934 Kirov's popularity had increased and Stalin showed signs of mistrust. In December of that year Kirov was assassinated by a younger party member. It is believed that Stalin ordered the murder, but it has never been proven.

18 Collective farm (in Russian 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 percent of farms in kolkhozes, Stalin ordered the confiscation of peasants' land, tools, and animals; the kolkhoz replaced the family farm.

19 Cossacks
an ethnic group that constituted something of a free estate in the 15th-17th centuries in the Polish Republic and in the 16th-18th centuries in the Muscovite state (and then Russia). The Cossacks in the Polish Republic consisted of peasants, townspeople and nobles settled along the banks of the Lower Dnieper, where they organized armed detachments initially to defend themselves against the Tatar invasions and later themselves making forays against the Tatars and the Turks. As part of the armed forces, the Cossacks played an important role in Russia’s imperial wars in the 17th-20th centuries. From the 19th century onwards, Cossack troops were also used to suppress uprisings and independence movements. During the February and October Revolutions in 1917 and the Russian Civil War, some of the Cossacks (under Kaledin, Dutov and Semyonov) supported the Provisional Government, and as the core of the Volunteer Army bore the brunt of the fighting with the Red Army, while others went over to the Bolshevik side (Budenny). In 1920 the Soviet authorities disbanded all Cossack formations, and from 1925 onwards set about liquidating the Cossack identity. In 1936 Cossacks were permitted to join the Red Army, and some Cossack divisions fought under its banner in World War II. Some Cossacks served in formations collaborating with the Germans and in 1945 were handed over to the authorities of the USSR by the Western Allies.

19 Labor army
it was made up of men of call-up age not trusted to carry firearms by the Soviet authorities. Such

people were those living on the territories annexed by the USSR in 1940 (Eastern Poland, the Baltic States, parts of Karelia, Bessarabia and northern Bukovina) as well as ethnic Germans living in the Soviet Union proper. The labor army was employed for carrying out tough work, in the woods or in mines. During the first winter of the war, 30 percent of those drafted into the labor army died of starvation and hard work. The number of people in the labor army decreased sharply when the larger part of its contingent was transferred to the national Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian Corps, created at the beginning of 1942. The remaining labor detachments were maintained up until the end of the war.

20 All-Union pioneer organization

a communist organization for teenagers between 10 and 15 years old (cf: boy-/ girlscouts in the US). The organization aimed at educating the young generation in accordance with the communist ideals, preparing pioneers to become members of the Komsomol and later the Communist Party. In the Soviet Union, all teenagers were pioneers.

21 Komsomol

Communist youth political organization created in 1918. The task of the Komsomol was to spread of 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.

22 Entrance interview

graduates of secondary schools awarded silver or gold medals (cf: graduates with honors in the U.S.) were released from standard oral or written entrance exams to the university and could be admitted on the basis of a semi-formal interview with the admission committee. This system exists in state universities in Russia and most of the successor states up to this day.

23 Mandatory job assignment in the USSR

Graduates of higher educational institutions had to complete a mandatory two-year job assignment issued by the institution from which they graduated. After finishing this assignment young people were allowed to get employment at their discretion in any town or organization.

24 Dacha

country house, consisting of small huts and little plots of lands. The Soviet authorities came to the decision to allow this activity to the Soviet people to support themselves. The majority of urban citizens grow vegetables and fruit in their small gardens to make preserves for winter.

25 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 Former Soviet Union 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.

26 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.