

# Yuri Fiedelgolts

**Yuri Fiedelgolts**

**Moscow**

**Russia**

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**Interviewer: Ella Levitskaya**

*When I called Yuri Fiedelgolts and asked for an interview, he refused first, saying that he did not feel very well. Then, he agreed for a short meeting.*

*I understood that it was hard for a man with poor health to recall dreadful events even to break the subject about them, so I was ready for a short life story of Yuri and his family. Yuri and his wife met me very amiably.*

*Yuri is a lean man of medium height. He has thick grey hair and bright young-looking eyes. Victoria, his wife, is a delicate, petite woman. She is calm and poised.*

*Those traits of hers must have been very helpful in the family life as Yuri is even now rather hot-tempered. They live in a 2-room apartment in an old house, located on the small quiet street in the center of Moscow.*

*The promised short interview turned out to be long and detailed. Yuri was carried away by his story line and his philosophy of life. Yuri was taken to Gulag when he was in the first year of the histrionic department of theater institute.*

*Of course, there was chance for him to resume studies after he was released from Gulag. During the interview I could not help thinking that the Soviet Regime had bereft us of a wonderful actor.*

*When Yuri was telling about a certain person, he did not merely depict him, but assumed his role-as if it was him in real life, talking to me.*

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- **My family background**

My father's family lived in Gomel [Belarus, 320 km to the west from Minsk]. Before 1917 it was the territory of Poland, being the part of Russian Empire. [Partition of Poland] [1](#) Now Gomel is a district center of Belarus, being the chief town of the district. Gomel was a part of the Pale of Settlement [2](#), so there were a lot of Jews. There were several synagogues in Gomel and a large Jewish



community. Jews were not merely craftsmen; there were also representatives of town intelligentsia. My grandfather Gersh Fiedelgolts was one of them. I do not know where my parental grandparents were born. They lived in other Belarusian cities when they were single. I know the family story how my parents were wed. They met when my grandmother was married and had two children. I forgot the name of the elder son, the younger one was named Shloime. The last name of grandmother's first husband was Slavin, I do not remember his first name. My grandfather was a smart and handsome man. Besides, he was a good company. One day he met grandmother. I do not know the details, all I know that they fell in love with each other. Their love was crowned with bereavement of granny. She left her rich husband and two children and eloped with grandfather.

It was an improbable story for those times. They settled in Gomel. Grandmother's first husband must have divorced her, so that they had a chance to get married. So they settled down in Gomel. I do not know what education my grandparents got, but they were educated people. Grandfather was a medical attendant, at that time the latter were much more educated and qualified than nowadays. Grandfather treated patients, even made uncomplicated operations. His patients were not always in Gomel. Quite often he was called to other towns. Grandmother was not a housewife after getting married, which was not customary for the married Jewish women back in that time. They lived in the center of the town, by the market square. Grandmother opened pharmacy right in her house. She was both the owner and a pharmacist. I do not remember my grandparents, as they died when I was a small boy. What I know about them is from my father's tales.

There were 4 children in the family. Maria was the eldest. She was followed by the second daughter Asya (Jewish name Asna). Then two more sons were born- the elder Mikhail and the youngest in the family- my father Levi. My father was born in 1899. Later on, he was called Russian [common] name [3](#) Lev.

Grandparents were religious in spite of being educated. Jewish traditions were observed at home. Sabbath and Jewish holidays were marked. They went to the synagogue. Father enjoyed telling me about Jewish traditions, holidays, dainty things grandmother was cooking for the holidays. I remember father's story how grandmother used to bake a lot of poppy pies of a triangle shape, hamantashen, and take them to her relatives and acquaintances. My father told me when grandfather carried out the first Paschal seder, father asked grandfather the traditional four questions as he was the youngest. My father did not tell me those things in detail to get me acquainted with the Jewish traditions - it was a mere idyllic recollection of the childhood. Any human being finds certain recollections from childhood wonderful and my father is like that. Moreover, father had a happy childhood.

Both father's elder brother Mikhail and my father went to cheder at the age of 5. Father got proper Jewish education, but grandparents were aware that secular education would be important for the career. Boys went to the lyceum named after A.E. Ratner, which was open in 1907. The doctor Arkadiy Efimovich Rartner was the founded of the school. In 1911 private Jewish lyceum accounted for 400 children, whose parents were mostly lower middle class and merchants]. It was the only private Jewish lyceum in Belarus. Of course, Jewish children were admitted there without 5%-quota [4](#), existing in Tsarist Russia. The studies at the lyceum were not free of charge. The Jewish children throughout Belarus came to study there. The lyceum students had the uniform and the cap with the lyceums blazon. Wonderful teachers taught at the lyceum.

Father was keen on mathematics. He said his mathematics teacher Krein, should be taken credit for that. Krein's teaching method made all students take an interest in the subject. Besides, Krein was wooing father's elder sister Maria, so they had even friendly relations, closer than teacher-student relations. My father succeeded in studies. Parents facilitated in that a lot. Not only grandfather, but also grandmother was very educated. Apart from being well up in pharmaceuticals and Latin, she also was fluent in several European languages: French, German, English and Italian. My father was also fluent in those languages. At a mature age he looked up only for a special terms in the dictionary, terminology was the only stumbling stone. Grandfather had a great library containing the books in Hebrew and Yiddish as well as secular books in Russian and foreign languages. Grandfather had a large collection of classic music records. All those things were available to the children.

There were Jewish pogroms in Gomel both before revolution as of 1917 [5](#), and during civil war [6](#). Father had to experience one of them in 1905. Pogromers were mostly the chandlers and sellers from the market. A huge crowd was moving towards the main thoroughfare of Gomel, crashing things on their way. They broke in Jewish homes, cutting the pillows and feather beds making the down flying around, breaking windows, dishes and furniture. There were even cases of beating and murder. My father's family did not suffer from that. One of my father's patients, Russian noble man, the officer, sheltered them in his house and did not let the pogromers to enter the house.

Having finished lyceum in 1916 father at the age of 17 went to study in Petersburg. There was a cult of medicine in the family and father was firm to become a doctor. It was very hard to enter the higher educational institution as there was a 5% admission quota for the Jews. Father was lucky and he was admitted in the university. There was the physiology chair on the faculty of the natural science, headed by the renowned and decent doctor-physiologist Leon Orbeli [Orbeli Leon Abagarovich Abgarovich (1882-1958) Russian physiologist, one of the founders of evolutionary physiology, academician of the Academy of Science of USSR, Academy of Science of Armenia, the Hero of Social Labor, general-colonel of medical service]. He ignored the admission quota for the Jews, and accepted as many Jews he considered appropriate judging by the results of the examinations and interlocution.

My father was admitted by Orbeli. Father was an excellent student and did well in studies. When the entire family moved to Moscow, father was transferred to Medicine Department of Moscow University. Father was in the fourth year. Later on in 1926, when the medicine faculty was transferred into 1st Moscow Medical Institute, father went to Moscow. Orbeli played an important role in the life, he gave the recommendation to the rector of 1st Moscow Medical Institute. Orbeli wrote in his letter that a very gifted student would come over to his university and he asked to assist. Father was not specialized in neurology, so he was sent to study to be taught by the famous neurologists. After graduation father was offered a job to teach at 1st Medical University. He became a post-graduate student, defended his thesis, he was an assistant professor, when he was teaching. He also was involved in practical work. He published over 40 works. Unfortunately, the Great Patriotic war [7](#) halted his intention to defend the doctoral dissertation [Soviet/Russian doctorate degrees] [8](#), which was almost complete.

Father was a stickler of communistic ideas in the youth. He welcomed the revolution as of 1917. When the civil war was unleashed, father discontinued his studies and joined the Soviet army [9](#) as a volunteer. He also joined the Bolshevik [10](#) party. Father worked in the political department of

the party, but he had to take part in the reconnaissance and in battles. He sincerely adhered to ideas of world revolution [11](#). Being an adolescent when he was in Gomel, he listened to the speech of Trotsky [12](#), which made a deep impression on him. Father told me how eloquent and convincing his speech was. Trotsky was a great orator. When the civil war was over, father came to the university and regained studies.

Father's elder sister Maria got married in Gomel before the revolution. Her marriage caused a tiff between her and grandparents. Maria fell in love with a Russian man Voronov and he fell in love with her. Jews were not the only ones who did not approve of the mixed marriages.

Orthodox [Christians], whom the Voronov family belonged to, disapproved such marriages too. Jews were especially intolerant as they thought they had enough from Russian pogroms, so they were against marriages with Russians. Neither Maria nor her husband received the blessing from parents, but still they decided to get married. There were certain complications in betrothal. Maria did not want to profess the Orthodox religion, but she had to become Lutheran for them to get married.

Grandparents were at loggerheads with Maria and her husband and did not keep in touch with them for a long time. They buried the hatchet only after Maria came to the parental house with the first born. First, parents did not want to see neither Maria nor the child. Then the baby started crying and grandmother's woman heart went pit-a-pat. She took the baby in her hands, and started comforting and tendering it. Since that time there was peace. After revolution, Maria and her husband moved to Moscow with 2 sons. Her husband was involved in foundation orphanage schools. There were a lot of vagrant children at that time. Maria finished the medical institute and worked as a doctor. In early 1920s grandparents and father's elder brother Mikhail moved to Moscow. Maria helped them with the lodging and took care of parents.

Maria's elder son graduated from the university. He was a zoologist, the professor of Moscow University. The younger, Stanislav, went through the WW2 and entered the military academy with the rank of the officer. He was a career military and retired as a colonel. Maria died before WW2. Her death was absurd. She was afflicted with highmoritis and she died from pain shock resulted in paracentesis of sinus.

Father's second sister Asya was very beautiful. Having finished lyceum Asya went to Strasbourg and graduated from Medicine Department of Strasbourg University. She did not want to return to Gomel. She went to the Polish town of Przemysl and started to work as a dentist. She got married there. Her husband was a wealthy Jew, but much older than her, about 25-30 years. Her husband was also a dentist. They were well-off. They had a large house and servants. Both of them were popular with the inhabitants of Przemysl. They did not have children. In 1935 Asya came to see us and brought a lot of presents. She was confounded that my father was so poor, though he was an excellent doctor. She also was surprised with the friendly relations between «lords» (the way she called directors) and common citizens. She stayed with us for a while and came back to Przemysl. When in 1939 Poland was attacked by Germany, Asya did not want to leave the country, but I do not know why. As soon as Germans occupied Przemysl, her husband was shot like many other Jews and Asya had stayed in ghetto for 2 years and was finally shot.

Father's elder brother Mikhail also graduated from the lyceum named after Ratner. He did not take effort in studies. Mikhail was capable, but he was lazy and negligent. That was the way he lived his

life. Having finished lyceum He did not want to go on with his studies. He was at a loose end. He had odd jobs to get by. He did not have a family. During WW2 he was selling something on the market, and he was nabbed by militia men and arrested. He was charged with spivvery in the court and imprisoned. He died in jail in 1942.

Father's elder step brother (grandmother's son from the first marriage) immigrated to the USA before revolution. I corresponded with him before war. It was dangerous after revolution as the soviet power disapproved of those people who kept in touch with relatives abroad [13](#). People could be blamed in the espionage and imprisoned. Father was very watchful and was not very willing to answer the letters of the American relative. First he was the railroad worker, who installed the ties. Then he went to study and became an officer and finally came into money. He had a large family and he sent the photographs of his prosperous family. All of them looked American, very different from the local town Jews. They were well-groomed and smiley. They were well-off and I remember how I was impressed by that. I was amazed that they had a car.

In USSR it was a rare thing for people to own a car. Uncle always enclosed many beautiful stamps in the envelope for me. When I was arrested in 1948, father was seriously appalled in the period of struggle against cosmopolites [14](#). He had the relatives abroad and his son was «peoples enemy» [15](#). Father abruptly discontinued corresponding with the relatives and even did away with the correspondence and pictures of the relatives so there was no evidence against him. That was the only straw to hang on, so there was no other way to keep in touch with American kin.

The second step brother Shloime lived in Moscow. We rarely met. There is hardly anything I know about him. Of course, he is deceased as he was much older than my father.

Grandmother died in 1928. Grandfather passed away in a year. Both of them were buried in the Jewish Vostriakovskiy cemetery in Moscow.

My mother was born in Moscow suburb, in Bronnitsy [50 km from the center of Moscow]. I have never seen Philip Titov, my maternal grandfather. I know that he was the assistant of the merchant. The merchant was involved in the trade of tea and sent grandfather to China, Japan rather often. It was a very wealthy family. There were 12 children in the family, but I did not know many of them. I only remember three of mother's sisters, who lived in Moscow- Anna, Tatiana and Maria. I heard about the rest from my mother. My mother Capitolina was born in 1899. She was the youngest in the family. Grandfather made sure that all his children were educated in lyceum, mother also finished the full lyceum course. There is a dacha place in the vicinity of Moscow, called Kratovo [40 km from the center of Moscow]. My maternal grandfather built 12 houses over there for each of the children. Of course of that property was sequestrated by soviet regime. My grandpa was reported missing. He must have been shot. Grandmother died during civil war.

Mother's elder brother Dmitriy Titov went to study at the officer's school after having graduated from lyceum. With the outbreak of revolution, Dmitriy joined Bolsheviks. During civil war he fought in guerilla squad. He was captured. The captives were taken away by train, which stopped at every station. Some captives were shot at every station as the edification for the local population. Dmitriy was lucky because the train, he was taking, was attacked by guerilla squad, which rescued the captives from Kolchak [16](#). Of course, Dmitriy joined the Bolshevik party. When civil war was over he became the prosecutor of the Siberia district. He settled in Omsk [over 2000 km from Moscow]. There were times of hunger and typhus fever epidemic in Moscow in that period. Dmitriy called



mother from Moscow and found a job for her as the culture worker in the prison. Mother said that there several members of the Provisional Government [17](#) in that prison. Being a prosecutor Dmitriy was supposed to sign the fusillade lists. Soviet regime exterminated its enemies. It was deemed it would be better to shoot 10 innocent than to miss one guilty. Such a proportion must have been in the aforementioned lists. There were a lot of Dmitriy's friends from officers' school, who did not accept revolution. Of course, it was hard for him and he became demented. During one of his fits he committed suicide.

Mother's second brother Alexander, mining engineer, lived in Petrograd and died from tuberculosis in early 1920s. Mother's sister Serafima committed suicide. Another mother's brother Konstantin Titov also committed suicide. During great patriotic war he was a private in the army and the officer slapped him because he had a bad stature. Konstantin pierced that officer with the bayonet in front of the aligned soldiers. Then he dashed under the train. There was an inherited predisposition to the mental suicidal disease in the family. Fortunately, mother was not affected by that. This is all I know about mother's family.

My parents met, when father was practicing medicine and was in the last year of the institute, internship. He was assigned to hold internship in tuberculosis sanatorium in Moscow suburb. Mother was afflicted with tuberculosis as a result emaciation from hunger during revolution and civil war. The doctors sent her to the sanatorium for a treatment course. My parents met there and fell in love with each other. My mother's feeling was even stronger than love – it was adoration, worshiping. I cannot even put in words. The picture on my table tells a lot about them. Father was looking ahead of him, and mother looked as if she only needed father in her life. It has always been like that between them.

### • Growing up

When parents decided to get married, father's parents were not against it. It was the second mixed marriage in the family. Aunt Maria took the hardest hit. Grandparents were now complaisant to the father's marriage. They came to love mother. But it was not that easy with the mother's relatives. Not everybody approved of mother's intention to marry a Jew. There were anti-Semites among her kin. Mother made an ultimatum in the family – either her family accept father as their own, treat him with well-deserved respect, or she would not keep in touch with them. Mother was firm, at times tough. Her family must have accepted her requirements. Parents got married in 1926. They merely got registered in the state registration authority. They moved to the communal apartment [18](#) in Moscow working district. I was born in 1927. I was named Yuri.

Mother was on maternal leave, while I was an infant. When I was more or less independent, at the age of 5, mother enrolled on the courses of laboratory assistant. She worked in clinics of Moscow Medical Institute as a microbiologist- laboratory assistant. Mother was a good worker, then she was promoted even to the medical position though he did not have higher education. I was raised spending a lot of time outside. I liked all kind of escapades, hooligan pranks. I found my place among the local hooligans and felt rather comfortable among them. I had a lot of friends. There were Jews among them.

Lev Feigin, a Jewish boy from our yard, was my bosom friend in my childhood. He was short and plump. When we were about 6, both of us fell in love in one girl, also a Jew, Lena Tankus. But our

rivalry did not stand in the way of our friendship. I enjoyed reading and collecting stamps. But I liked to fight as well. It seemed romantic for us, boys. We felt ourselves musketeers, pirates. We played all kinds of games in yard. We had so-called wars- when the boys from one house were at war with the boys from another house. Recalling those things I understand that it was in a noble and chivalrous way. Our disputes were settled by the duel- and nobody interfered in the fray. Our boys were referees observing the fight and making sure that none of the boys hides a stone or metal. The fight was face-to-face, only by using buffets and before the first blood. If there was blood, the referee stopped the fight and declared the winner.

Anti-Semitism was concealed in that time. I remember there were times when father was walking along the yard and local youngsters were crying out: «Fiedelgolts is walking by, Fiedelgolts is walking by!», and I understood he was not very pleasant to hear. Sometimes I heard somebody say carelessly «little Yid» [Yid is a pejorative way of calling Jews in Russian]. At that time people watched out what they said, not like it happened later. I was very touchy in childhood and maybe that was the reason why I felt that. At home my parents always convinced me that people were equal in our country in spite of the difference in nationality. and there was no way we could have racism. If somebody hissed so offensive words, he could be judged for that. It was true, before war many people kept silent, having grit their teeth.

When I turned 7, I went to compulsory Russian school, located not far from our house. There were a lot of friends from the yard in my class. I was a good student mostly because of capability rather than sedulousness. I went through all required stages at school: was a pioneer [19](#), Komsomol member [20](#). Both my peers and teachers treated me well.

In 1937 mass repressions commenced [Great Terror] [21](#). I was in the 3rd grade, so I could not understand the political meaning. I had my personal worries. In my childhood I was friends with two boys -Zerkalovs, who lived in our house, and studied in my school. I did not know their father, but their mother was a rigid woman, who also wore a red kerchief on her head. She was a worker at the plant of the rubber articles Caoutchouc. She was an ordinary proletarian woman, a communist and was a leader among common people. Her sons were good boys, and many guys from our yard kept friends with them. In 1937 she was arrested and both of her sons were taken to the orphanage. I have never seen them again. We lived in a poky room in the communal apartment.

Our neighbor's son Latsek stood out from our boys from the yard. Latsek wore a checkered suit and we teased him by calling him 'bourgeois'. I often called on Latsek. His mother, an elegant blond, often took us to the cinema. We watched all children movies, which were released. I envied Latsek, when his father's car was driven in the yard. Latsek's son often went for a ride. Once I asked to take me for a ride as well. Then in 1938 Latsek's father was arrested. I remember how Latsek's mother gloomed, her features sharpened and her dresses did not seem so elegant and unique. Latsek stopped playing with us in the yard, and was hiding. When my parents found out about arrest of Latsek's father, my mother asked me not to play with him, otherwise all of us would suffer. I felt some tension at home. I think it was a fear for arrest. My father never broached political subjects, he even avoided that among his friends. At that time our family was not touched.

During my childhood soviet holidays were always celebrated at home. My parents were very buoyant. They invited a lot of people for celebrations. We had fun. Our kin and friends came over to have a good time dancing, singing, staging home performances. Mother was friends with father's

elder sister Maria. Father's brother Mikhail. Mother's sister Tatiana also came over very often. The relative from both sides admired our family. Love between my parents was worth fascination. My father was worshiped as he did well in science. Father was a developed man- he was well-up in literature, music, mathematics. Of course, he focused on medicine, and neurology. Aunt Tanya always used to ask mother why Lev was always with the books.

I admired my father. Sometimes I was scared of him. He might punish me by slapping my cheek or I could get a box in the ear. His punishment was fair and unavoidable. He was just, so I never bore grudge against him. I would even forgive injustice only because of father's talks with me. Father came home, had dinner and invited me for a walk. We were strolling in the street and could talk on any subject. Sometimes father's friend from lyceum, mathematician Shneerman, also joined us for a walk. He became academician at the age of 24. Both of them talked to me as if I was equal and I imbibed their words.

My father knew very many different people. Of course, many of his acquaintances were doctors. He met with Lina Stern [22](#). They spent hours on talking about medicine. She came in Moscow from Switzerland in the middle 1920s and stayed in the USSR. She was captivated by the communistic ideas and was eager to help soviet regime. She taught at Moscow 2nd Medicine Institute, and was the head of the chair. She was an interesting person, the zealot of medicine. She did not marry and devoted herself to the science. She spoke only French. During war she was the member of the Board of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee [23](#), and was arrested during Doctors Plot [24](#). Fortunately, she was exonerated after Stalin's death [25](#). Father also knew the sister of the great poet Mayakovskiy [26](#). He also knew actors and musicians.

Father had a peculiar Jewish feature- he liked to banter at his interlocutor or the subject of the conversation. He liked the humor. I remember his talks with mother at night. Sometimes I could hear what they were talking about as we lived in one room. There were times when father touched the subject of Stalin's personality. Father was skeptical to Stalin. Coming of intelligentsia father took Stalin as a nouveau riche and barely educated man. Father was skeptical to Stalin's views.

### • During and after the War

On 22nd June 1941 we found out about the outbreak of war from Molotovs' speech. He said that Germany violated peace treaty [Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact] [27](#) and attacked USSR. Of course, we were confounded, but I was sure that the war would not last long. Soviet propaganda was constantly making us convinced that our army was the strongest in the world, and any war would be finished on the territory of the adversary within days. We had stayed in Moscow by October, 1941.

In middle October 1941 state of the siege was declared in Moscow. We with colleges and students of the medical university we were evacuated in Central Asia. First we came to Tashkent[over 3000 km from Moscow], wherefrom we went to Namangan. We did not stay there for a long time and finally stayed in Fergan. Mother noticed hostility coming from Uzbeks when we came to Tashkent. The life of local people became harder with the surge of so many evacuees. Food cards [Card system] [28](#) were introduced, prices for food escalated. People were starving, getting sick and the evacuees were blamed for that. Besides, Uzbeks were drafted now though they had never been drafted before neither in Tsarist army nor in Soviet. I remember the wail of women when they were



seeing off the draftees at the platform of the train station.

Then Uzbeks on purpose caught venereal diseases in order to avoid the draft. Father was assigned the member of the medical board of the military enlistment office. He told me how young guys came over for commission and proudly declared that they were syphilitic. First the afflicted were sent home, but when it turned out to be in masses, they forced the boys to go through medical treatment and then they were sent to the front anyway. Local inhabitants were also blaming Jews for that. They said that their children perish because Jews are not at war. There were local Bukhara Jews [29](#), but the Uzbeks treated them well. Though Bukhara Jews were looking very much like Uzbeks, having the same manners and clothes.

They were also considered local, but they were antagonistic towards the evacuated Jews. Apart from working in the medical board by the military enlistment office, father also worked in the military hospital. Anti-Semitism was thriving there. I could feel it at school as well. Some of the teachers were evacuated Jews from the Western Ukraine and Poland, who came over here to escape Germans. Of course, they were very different as they were assimilated. They were Jews only by blood, but they did not know their language [Yiddish] or customs. Local students ignored such teachers and made anti-Semitic remarks in the middle of the class. I was hot-tempered and was always ready to fight after being insulted. Mother had to come to school rather often and hear complaints against me. She had never reproached me though.

Only father worked in evacuation. Mother had to take up the hardest job- to feed us and to get foods by the cards. She had to spend almost the whole day in the lines. Sometimes we starved, because all we had she gave to father. It was the most important for her that father was OK. Mother did not only forget about herself in her cherished love for father. She also forgot about me. I felt hurt, and I envied those children whose mothers took care only of them in the first place. At times I even thought of leaving home. To a certain extent, mother was right neither I nor she worked, and our father was the only bread-winner. But still, I do not think it was the main factor for her. In evacuation father was afflicted with typhus fever and survived only owing to mother's care.

I was missing Moscow so much during evacuation! When in summer 1943 evacuated were on the point of return to Moscow, I was also eager to home. Father could not leave his job, and mother could not leave father. I talked my parents into letting me go by myself. It was decided that I would stay with mother's sister Tatiana before parents' return. She lived in Kratovo. Father made arrangements with the trainmaster of the military and sanitary train and was sent to Moscow. On my way to the aunt I saw many devastated houses. Many people still had not returned. On the fence of the house I saw a sign in bold font written by chalk: «Fight Yids and save Russia!». I was shocked by that line as well as by the fact that nobody had erased that.

I came back to school. Anti-Semitism was in the full swing. I did not feel it towards me as I was among my friends from childhood. I had to receive passport at the age of 16. There was the section in the passport called 'nationality' [30](#). Before getting my passport it was the first time when I heard from my mother that it would be better for me to be Russian. I said that I would have written Jewish in my passport and mother had never touched the subject again. It was my well-thought intention. My last name was pure Jewish Fiedelgolts, how could I say that I am Russian...

When I was transferred to the 10th grade, I entered preparatory department of the Steel Institute. I met Jew Boris Leviatov and Russian Valentin Sokolov. We were the boys from intelligentsia families.

We used to discuss all kinds of subjects starting from the sense of life and up to the political disputes, Stalin's dictatorship and NKVD [31](#), subordinated to Stalin or Nietzsche [32](#) and all kinds of things. Each of the interlocutors was trying to show off his erudition depicting the revolutionary hero or the movie character. Nobody could ever perceive what would be the outcome of such games of ours. It was a mere adolescent romance and the desire to stand out. After preparatory course we did not keep in touch. Leviatov and Sokolov were drafted in the army and I did not enter the steel institute. Parents were insisting for me to carry on the family tradition and to become a doctor.

Mother was the most persistent as she was in love with the father and she wanted me to follow in his footsteps, thinking that only father was doing the right thing. I was convinced that I would have a bright future; father's name would help me in the first phase and then I would become a good doctor myself. I entered the Medical Institute and in my first year I understood that it was not my cup of tea. I did not stand learning things by rote- having to memorize 200 different names of canaliculate for one temporal. When we had to work on anatomy, I finally understood that I did not want to be a doctor! I still remember how I was sent to the basement to take formalinized corpses for the anatomy class, then I was forced to make a ripping cut cranium with the help of the saw. I still remember those splashes on my face. I could not stand it and decided to leave the institute. In 1947 I entered Theatre Institute, the Department of actor's skill. It appealed to me. The teachers were happy with me and they said I would have a bright future. I was an avid reader. I was took an interest in the history of the theatre, biographies of great actors. I thought I liked what I was doing. I was happy. I was not interested in politics at that time.

At the end of the first year in 1948 I was arrested. I was taken straight from the classes and sent to the department of the reconnaissance SMERSH [33](#), located at Kropotkinskaya street. It is still there. They needed at least a formal confession of guilt for my case to file to court. I was pushed hard in the house of detention. I was blamed in foundation of the anti-Soviet circle and participation in its activity. Then I found out that Valentin Sokolov was the stooge. At that time I thought that he did it because he was a coward, being afraid of the beating and torture. In the 1990s I had a chance to look at my case and I saw the reference to be submitted to the martial court stating that Sokolov was the agent of the KGB Secret Service [34](#) and had the nickname 'Rodionov'. I did not pay that much attention to that. Maybe that reference was one of KGB schemes. Who knows, may Sokolov was the agent. At any rate, the case was filed against the three of us. Sokolov was the witness at the line-up, both with me and Boris. When the search was made in our house, they found my diaries. They played an important role on the trial and were used as material evidence. I described all kinds of events in my life in the diary and admitted rebellious thoughts. It was the time when the struggle was actively taken against rootless cosmopolites and the three of us perfectly fit the article.

I would have run amuck if I had been interrogated longer. The sleuths were putting both moral and physical pressure. There were two interrogators- 'kind' and 'evil'. The kind one, captain Demurin, looking very polite and proper, was as if protecting me. He said that I was kept in the house detention because my comrades on the freeside would have killed if they had found out that I was anti-Soviet with counterrevolutionary ideas. They, interrogators, are here to protect me from the public perturbation and wrath. They would make a man from me. I would go in the camp, do some physical work and come back home being strong and healthy and say: Hello, mama! I should not

think of suicide, just to confess in mistakes and sign where it is required, and keep on living with a clear conscience. Such were the words ...

The second one was hitting hard on the table and yelling: «You scum, Yid mug!». His family name sounded Russian, Maximov, but his appearance looked purely Jewish. It was the time when the employees of the 'punitive agencies' had the alien names... Maximov was constantly deterring me, making threats. He also resorted to beating. He was taking the interrogation minutes, where fibs were written in a beautiful handwriting and orthographic mistakes. Once he gave me such protocol to sign that I hurled it in his face. First he shook my stool with his leg, and when I fell on the floor, he hit me hard in the abdomen, and then in on the head. I lost consciousness and I was hauled in the corridor. When I came around, I was taken back in Maximov's office where there was another colonel, a good-looking one. I did not know who he was. Maximov and I had squabble. When Maximov saw me, he ordered the guard to give me a double mattress. I was happy. I did not have a mattress in my cell and I hoped that I would sleep off! It turned out that 'double mattress' was a wet cell, located in the basement on the level with metro, where he could here the clatter of trains. Water was dripping from the walls and from the ceiling, the wooden bunk was drenched.

There was no place to sit, nothing to say of lying down. I was constantly feeling sleepy. It must have been a protective mechanism of my organism to relieve constant strain. I was about to swoon and was ready to fall asleep even standing. The turnkeys did not let me sleep. I do not know how long I had stayed in that cell in a semiconscious state. When I was being to the interrogation and had to walk along the 'warm' corridor as compared to the cell, I felt chilled. Now I was interrogated by a kind sleuth. He asked me with a tender and ingratiating voice why I was flagellating myself and was looking like the rack of bones. Then he told the guard to bring me a sandwich with the cottage cheese and a cup of coffee with milk. He also told me to eat and ponder over whether it was time for me to confess. Again there were interrogations ... Then they were sick and tired of me and sent me to the prison for 'additional effect'. Those people framed a mythical anti-Soviet organization from our circle, consisting of three people, and enjoyed awards and promotion. My father was also affected with my arrest. He was interrogated for couple of times. It was very rough and humiliating. They even used expletive words and threats. Of course, it was very unpleasant for him. By the way, during interrogation they kept on saying that father and I were Jews.

When our case was in the court, my parents hired renowned attorneys. My father hired attorney Otsep, the professor of jurisdiction, a great lawyer. Father's colleagues told him that he was making me a high-class funeral by hiring Otsep. They were right- his services cost a lot of money, but the result was predetermined. The trial took place in the premise of martial court, located in Arbat [the main promanade of Moscow]. I remember that during the trial Otsep could not bring forth any defense arguments. He was putting an emphasis that I should go through the medical examination at the institute of the court psychiatry; because he was sure that I was demented. That was all he could come up with. All he said looked so cowardly, and everybody noticed that. He was trembling and feeling afraid.

Then the prosecutor, lieutenant colonel Vinogradov, took the floor. His face was in high color. He looked muzzy. Looking straight in Otsep's eyes he said that it was strange for a famous lawyer to talk like a pro-American cosmopolite and he said he could not comprehend whether Otsep was a soviet person or not? I saw the famous Otsep cower. He was despondent and kept silent by the end of the trial. In accordance with the article 58 [It was provided by this article that any action

directed against upheaval, shattering and weakening of the power of the working and peasant class should be punished] we were charged with anti-soviet activity, they also added item 11, group actions. We were sentenced to 10 years in the maximum security camp [Gulag] [35](#) (we were lucky to be sentenced to 10 years, we might have got 25), and we were bereft of rights for five years, i.e. exiled. I was also sentenced to hard physical labor as the most malicious criminal. The three of us were separated. I was sent to the maximum security camp Gulag, located 4000 km away from home. I was sent to work on the automobile repair plant. I had not stayed there for a long time.

My wretched parents managed to get the permit to visit me in the camp. I did not know how they had done that – usually political prisoners were not allowed to have dates, besides I did not stay in the camp that long. My parents came and saw me for couple of minutes in the presence of the guard. Shortly after seeing my parents I found out that I was included in the squad to be sent to Kolyma [36](#). I think my date with parents also affected my fate– certain type of the prisoners was not to have any contacts with the free people. Those who violated that condition, were punished. Our squad was put in the crammed car for cattle and taken to the port of Vanino, where Kolyma camp was being formed. There I met a young Moscow doctor, a Jew, Joseph Malskiy. He was sentenced to 5 years in camp as a socially jeopardous person. His parents, old Bolsheviks were repressed and he was arrested for being their son. His wife and a little daughter stayed in Moscow. Joseph knew my father. We decided to stick together and help each other.

Our squad came to Vanino Sea Port [port town in the Russian Far East, 4500 km to the North-East from Moscow]. Let me dwell upon things I noticed in the replacement depot. Now there is nothing of the kind. Only from tales of those who were there, one can imagine that horrible picture. A spacious territory bounded by the sea, and circled by high blind fence and watchtowers, was divided into rectangular zones and cordoned with the rows of barbed wire. There were low clapboard barracks, located parallel to each other. There were 4 zones. One of them was taken by criminals, the other ones by ‘suka’ [Bitch, a curse in Russian. In this case it refers to rapists and murderers, rascals and traitors, people, who came down – the most dangerous and despised category of prisoners.], the ones who were at fault with their criminal accomplices, i.e. a robber, who gave testimony against his accomplice and others who violated the laws of the criminal world. The next zone was called– «mayhem»: deserters, card-sharpers, sadists, rapists and other riff-raff. And finally we, sentenced as per article 58 ‘fascists’ as we were called. It was not allowed to mix those categories neither in the zones nor in squads: they did away with ‘aliens’ ruthlessly, and a quick death would be a mercy.

Each zone had its own laws and orders. The privileged caste was criminals, whom the authorities called ‘social close’, whereas we were called ‘socially alien’. Criminal authorities were calling shots at Vanino replacement depot and in the camp. Of course, they had certain benefits from the guards. Their food was cooked separately and was much different from the scraggy potage the ‘fascists’ were having. Like we say in modern times, it was a well organized mafia, which had contacts with the camp authorities. There was a collective guarantee: «You concede, and I concede». The head of the zone made some concessions to the criminals under condition that they established order. The criminal leaders assigned the strongest and the cruelest criminals to be the foremen for them to make ‘fascist’ work. The criminals were not involved in hard physical labor, political prisoners were supposed to do their daily work as well as the daily work of the criminals.

Some of those criminal leaders looked rather imposing, like scientific workers for instance. When looking at them it was hard to picture that each of them was tried for several times and was involved in deaths of many people. By the way, I also noticed that there were quite a few Jews in the criminal world. These were so-called 'intellectuals', who were using rather grey cells than hands. I did not see robbers-murderers among Jews-criminal leaders. They were genius thieves – con artists, the so-called generators of the ideas and steps for larceny.

There were the following zones at Vanino replacement depot: administration, decontamination zone, sanitary zone, hospital, where really feeble people were taken. Our squad was taken to the sanitary zone, because our train was from the camp, wherein was the outbreak of some kind of epidemic. The most appalling was to be sent to Kolyma. We had to exert our every effort to stay here as long as possible to postpone the trip to the place, wherefrom would be no escape. Malskiy and I decided to probe the option with the sanitary unit as it was possible to stay here with the steady job. The head of sanitary unit, a young lady, lieutenant dressed in the uniform with the white robe over it, suggested that Malskiy should look into the next zone. In her words recently doctor and medical assistant were killed with the knife, and there was no one to supply for them. We had to agree, as we had no way out. Joseph did not want to go there by himself, so he introduced me as medical assistant.

We went to the sanitary unit. Nobody convoyed us; we were shown to the inpatient-department for 20-30 people. There were double plank beds instead of the bunks. The regime was totally different from our political zone. Even the turnkeys were kind of home-looking people. The convicts, dressed in coats and suits were walking around the zone. We were not allowed to wear civilian garment. If we did, we would be sent to the lock-up cell. We wore striped wrappers. Hardly had we come in, fierce looking criminals, tattooed all over rushed the room and offered us a deal: we were supposed to give the criminals places in the in-patient clinic for them to escape the squad to Kolyma and the most important thing was to provide that pack with the drugs, it was morphine, on regular basis. Many of them used the drugs and for that they offered their patronage.

Many of those 'mayhem criminals' turned out to be interesting people, gifted, preserving certain human qualities. Levka Bush was one of the criminal leaders I met at Vanino replacement depot. First there were rumors in the zone that Bush himself would be coming to Vanino with the next squad. I was curious what kind of person he was to be so revered by the gangsters. Soon, I had to meet him. Joseph and I lived in small room by the barrack of the sanitary unit. All of a sudden, the door was open and some people were taking the suitcases in front of us. Then a huge guy, a body guard with two knives in his belt, stood in the doorway. We were sitting still, and a rather high-brow young man, truly Jewish, dressed in fashionable coat and tie came in. His face was immaculately handsome: thin classic profile, a goatee and beautiful almond eyes. He came up to us and said very politely. I still remember his words and the pitch of his voice: «Doctors, let me introduce myself, Lev Bush. I am a big collector, I am drug addict, and my syringe went bad on my way. Could you borrow me one from your arsenal? You would not regret doing a favor to me».

Of course, there was no way we could refuse him. moreover he made a pleasant impression on us. Joseph suggested that he should stay in our sanitary unit as a patient, and Bush was happy to agree. He settled in our sanitary unit. Bush behaved like a lord. His servants, criminals, made bed for him, took off his boots and cleaned them. Our sanitary unit looked much better now: there were mirrors on the walls, snow white linen. Cakes and wine were brought from the free side. The



management overlooked all that, because such criminal leaders were calling the shots in the zone, and established a relative order. If they were taken away, there would be constant scuffle and massacre. Bush enjoyed talking to us. He considered us his 'equal' and was eager to tell us about him. Bush's father was the KGB colonel.

When Lev was about 14, he was seduced by a housekeeper, who was connected with the criminal world as it turned out. She was his first woman and totally putting him under her thumb. She forced him work for her by selling the stolen things on the market. Of course, he was nabbed, was tried and sent to the camp. He left the camp and got the criminal education. His 'job' was complicated, requiring intelligence and – Bush robbed banks by using forfeited documents, produced by him. He was a professional con artist – collector. The guy was also the artist among the forgers (counterfeiters) being able to forge any stamp, he knew the handwritings and signatures of many dignitaries in militia. It goes without saying, he might become a good famous artist under different circumstances, alas! Though, Bush was a criminal he sincerely despised his 'colleagues' specialized in marauder and murder. He had such qualities as kindness, tenderness, compassion to the suffering of common people. That young, brave and handsome man took a keen interest in philosophy, art and books. We often conversed about different subjects, discussed books and performances. Lev strove to understand whether there was justice in the world and how to exterminate the chains of slavery.

He could not stand being imprisoned and escaped many prisons and camps. The last escape to Vanino was unsuccessful in spite of office's uniform and forfeited ID certificate. Unfortunately, I do not know what happened to Bush, though I would like to know. There were other Jews. There was one Jewish pickpocket Yashka, good humored and nimble guy from Odessa. He was called diamond fingers for his fine work. Mechanism of red tape legal proceedings swept the weeds like orach and wheatgrass together with the grains. "Re-upbringing' in the camp did no good, and incurred recurrent crime and contagious deceases. Very many fates were crippled. What to say about our article 58. In the replacement depot we found out that ossification and sluggishness of our criminal investigation department and legal department as a whole, were incompetent as compared to the criminal world, rapidly changing its strategy and applied with new facilities. Hard-core offenders knew the Penal code and laws better than militiamen and lawyers.

We treated dysentery in the zone during the outbreak of epidemic. At times, we had to give criminals some drugs and put them in an in-patient clinic. We could not hospitalize all of them, and some were discontent. However, as compared to the previous camp doctors we managed to cure patients, soon we respected. Then the replacement commenced. More and more squads of the criminals were taken onboard of the ship. They stopped sending us the drugs. Once, at night, a pack of the criminals broke in our room, pushed us to the wall and started ransacking the room. Then Joseph was told to follow them in the barrack. They did not ask me to, but I joined Joseph for him not to be by himself. The criminals blamed Joseph for hiding the drugs and not saving anyone from the trip to Kolyma. We leaned against wall and were waiting for our fate to be decided. There were 2 of us against 200. They could kill us any minute, but luckily there were some of them with common sense. One of the criminal leaders, Uzbek with the nickname Ugolok [Nook] stood up for us. Joseph saved him when he had the overdose of drugs. Squabbles and discord started and we were taken back tacking advantage of the hassle. In several days both of us were assigned in the support staff of the ship for prisoners 'Ermak". The holds with the 3-tiered bunks, were crammed

with prisoners. We were placed separately in a small section under the ladder. We were given two backpacks- one with the medicine, another with canned fish and bread. We had to service all holds.

Beside Malskiy and me there were some more medic workers-prisoners. We were allowed to walk around the deck. The guard soldiers took off the heavy lids of the holds and took us down. Suffering prisoners, craving for medical assistance were waiting for us in dim light. Rocking, puking, stench, excrements, turoid water in rusty kegs, rime on the lags. Water splashes from waves reached the deck. The rigging was covered with ice. It snowed for couple of times. So Ermak entered Nagaisk bay, breaking through the icy waters. At nights we were getting settled. Being the medics we first were put in a very clean and tidy barrack of the sanitary unit, pertained to the central replacement depot. Then we were sent to the 'mayhem' zone. We had to run away from there. We found out from pickpocket Yashka that we would be in trouble as there were some angry people plotting a murder. Our roaming on the replacement depot seemed to be over when we settled on the zone of robbers, but it did not last long. I was taken from there and sent to Berlag [37](#) accompanied by severe convoy. Our trips with Malskiy diverged.

Again, I became a mediocre worker, no different than the rest. Again I was given the toggerty: sailor's jacket, quilted pants and jacket. There was a painted number on our toggery, and it could be seen from distance. There was the same deaf and humble mass of heterogeneous people: Latvians, Estonians [Deportations from the Baltics ] [38](#), Ukrainians, politzei and former militaries, as well as such people as I 'peoples' enemies'.

I was double pressed in the camp. I was 'peoples' enemy', who could be beat and robbed by any 'socially close', besides I was a Jew. There were people who served for German police, the fascist agents, flagrant anti-Semitists- Lithuanian, Estonian, Ukrainian and even Georgian nationalists, who served in German fascist groups. They were elbow deep in Jewish blood. The administration and the guards were also as anti-Semitic as them. I do not know I was managed to survive. It was a miracle. I took all anti-Semitic escapades very acutely. I was involved in fights and did not spare myself. I was not that physically strong, but I was rather decisive and could stand up for myself. I would never let anybody push me under the bunk. Such a person was reckoned finished, and anyone could tease him without being punished for that.

I was ready to face death rather than face disgrace. I fought tooth and nail. I turned hot-blooded during the fight and felt neither pain nor fear. I was not afraid to be killed, nor I was scared to kill. They were scared off from me like from a rabid dog, and watched out. There were all kinds of things before I gained such a status. In my first camp in Berlag I was attacked by a very physically strong man- anti-Semitist. He was saying something like 'beat the Jews' and trying to hit me with a heavy wooden swab. I understood that he could break my spine, cranium. One time when he brandished with the swab, I managed to dodge, but I understood that I would be over with if took a hit. I did not have anything to use as a weapon. I jumped on him and clenched my teeth on his neck. He fell down.

All kinds of people attacked me with the sticks, clubs and fists trying to unclasp my mouth. I could feel the taste of his blood, and some abdominal feeling was aroused in me. I did not want to let go of him. They managed to unclamp my teeth and turn me out from the workshop. I could not break his throat, but he was so scared, besides he was left with the scar. Of course, authorities found out about that and I was put in the lock-up for five days without bread and water. When I left the lock-

up being feeble and emaciated, I came up to that man the first thing and whispered in his ear 'I would finally kill you, viper' and swore like a bargee. I gave him such creeps that when he saw me he was bowing to me from the distance. He was really funky. It was the law of the jungle, but it was better to be governed by the law of jungle than by the law of meanness. It is my opinion. But the story still went on. I was called in the administration of the camp. There were several people. The officer asked me why I had attacked the criminal. I said that when a man who was elbow deep in Jewish blood, called me 'Yid' and began beating, I had no choice but to protect myself and sell my life at a higher cost.: «You even cannot kill, this is your weakness». he meant 'Jews by 'you. I did not say anything. Of course, if I killed the guy, I would be added 10-15 years to my sentence.

There was another case in the workshop. There was a Ukrainian nationalist in the workshop, who had been saying insulting things against Jews all day long. I still was feeble because of the lock-up and kept silent. Then he put a rotten rat in the spindle of my tool. When I turned it on, the rat came out and was about to hit my face. I came up to him and asked: «Was it you. He smirked and said yes. I took the hammer from the bench and hit him on the forehead hard. He fell. His buddies were chasing me along the workshop thrusting sledge-hammers and crow bars at me. Of course, they might have killed me. The guards transferred me to the barrack of the fortified security. Then I had to stay in the lock-up for 20 days until it would be known whether the guy would survive or not. I was lucky that the guy survived and they did not expand my sentence. In short, I had to protect myself in any cost. I was not crouching. I despised and hated people who succumbed to the rough force, and fawned up the nihilities. I still hate them.

Still, I was lucky to meet good people there, who supported and assisted me. There was even one Ukrainian nationalist, who liked me. He just adored me. He said: «Yurko. You are Ukrainian, you are no Yid!». I waved off and he still used to say that. I met a lot of intelligent and interesting people in the camp. There was the period when I worked in the crew of Lanskoj, the offspring of general Lanskoj [Lanskoj, Peter Petrovich (1799-1879): Russian adjutant General (1849) and General of the cavalry (1866)], of the second husband of Natalia Goncharova, Pushkin's wife [39](#). He was an intelligent man with a good stamina, the officer of the old school. He had a good attitude towards me, he was not anti-Semite. There were immigrants from Kharbin, Mukden, Manchuria, who also treated me right. [Russians who left Russia during the revolutions and the Civil War.] I cannot say that only extremists and monsters were in the camp.

I was closer to the Jews in the camp. Beside the Jews sentenced in accordance with article 58, there were Jews who escaped from Hitler during war and came to USSR. They were from Poland, Romania and Hungary. They tried to escape the Hitler's camp in the country with the equality, where no anti-Semitism and oppression were observed. Of course, they learnt all those things from Soviet propaganda. They ran away from Hitler and came to Stalin and were hospitably settled in Gulag. They took the hardest hit. The convicts were allowed to receive several parcels annually. I cannot say how many exactly. Parents send me the parcels and shared the products, sent by my parents, with the Jews-fugitives. They had nobody to send them the parcels. I remember a Hungarian Jew, the doctor Grosberg, a very pleasant and smart man. There was a Romanian humpty-dumpty old man. He was disabled, so he worked in the support staff of the zone and had a miserable life. I also fed him. Before alignment and getting off to work we grouped in five. Then we were recounted and taken to camp work behind the gate. Suddenly I saw that the convicts swung the roly-poly and threw him at me crying: Yura, hold your roly-poly Yid!». I caught him and told him not to be afraid

of anybody.

In 1951 I was transferred to the camp, to the north from Berlag. It was a huge working zone, where the foundation, walls and constructions of some secretive site were made. It must have been some plant. There was no warm season for the people living in moderate climate of Russia, in Kolyma, but the winters there are even hard on the local people. In the previous camp I was mostly working in the workshop, where it was not so cold, but in frosty winter as of 1951-52 I was to work in the open. I did not work on the construction site for long, as I turned weak. Such guys as I were called hatracks- the candidates to the cadavers. I was transferred to the auxiliary squad consisting of such hatracks as I. The foreman of the crew was Nikolay Bibrikov, the offspring of general Bibikov [Bibikov, Alexander Illich (1729 - 1774): Russian state man and military general, Associate of Catherine the Second]. He was my peer.

He was raised in the family of the immigrated former White Guard [40](#) in Kharbin. He was most likely sentenced because he belonged to the old noble generation line. He was a proud and well-mannered man. We made friends. Our crew was supposed to clean the territory of the camp, but we could not cope even with that work. Bibrikov could barely move because of being so weak. Nobody made him work, he sat with the rest by the fire and remembered the old stories and sang old Russian Romance songs in sotto. Later the crew was dissolved and Bibrikov and I were sent to the barrack of the fortified regime. When it was 50 Celsius degrees below zero, we were sent to chisel the icy bottom of foundation pit. We were supposed to go down 5 meters deep. From the top we were given the tub to load the dug earth. The tub was taken up, emptied and taken down again. We had to watch out not to be hit. We had an almost incessant labor for 10-12 hours per day. We could get warm only in movement. Once, the group of the camp administration came over to the verge of the pit. One of them decided to crack a joke: «Hey you, Bibrikov! How inconvenient it is here! But your relatives were used to luxury». Bibrikov raised his head and glazed at the soles of the people standing on the verge of the pit and said out loud : «I loathe you!». Such a bravery could end in his death, but the administration slowly withdrew.

There were a lot of criminals in the fortified regime barrack, the food there was better than in any other place in the camp. Sometimes we had even had extra helpings. When we were off that barrack and were allotted to the working crew, we were starving again. Our nutrition was very poor: oat gruel, rotten herring, underbaked bread. All that food was in skimpy portions. Sometimes were given stinky boiled fish instead of the herring. In order to prevent scurvy there was a keg with pine infusion.

In early spring 1952 I was sent to another place along with 300 convicts. We got on platform trucks and took the herringbone position- one person sat and moved legs apart so the other one could sit as close as possible. It was made for the security purposes of the convoy for the prisoners not to escape. The trip in the trucks was emaciating though we did some halts. We had been joggling hitting the road pockets all days long. Then we took the ferry boat across a rapid river Indigirka beyond Ust-Nera. At last we reached the final destination. It was the extreme point of Kolyma -Alyaskitovy. That God-forsaken place was about 900 kilometers away from Magadan, far from the high way. There was ore mill in Alyaskitovy: the upper camp with tungsten ore mine with waste banks and mine, and the lower camp with beneficiation factory, sand banks and hydraulic rocks.

There were 2 zones: there were about 1500 convicts, who serviced the ore mine, and the other zone consisting of 500 convicts worked on the beneficiation factory. Tungsten was a metal used in the defense, so the mill was secretive being positioned in such a far-away place. There was a small settlement of the civilians and even the cemetery for them on the slope of the bald rock. The cemetery for the convicts was 15 kilometers ahead, half way between the factory and the ore mine. It was fenced with barbed wire and empty watchtowers in each corner. Convicts were buried there without a trace- there was just a sign with the number. The notch was surrounded with bold mountain with setts.

First I was sent to the upper camp, to the ore mine, but I was hold up there as I had a myopia. I was transferred to the lower camp to work at the beneficiation factory. 500 convicts worked in the lower camp. The toggery we were given was used by two or three people before with large variegated patches. All of us looked like clowns. The barracks were crammed with bunks from wall to wall. Then our clothes had one color- being covered with dirt. There was a canteen and a culture barrack. There was a tidy road between the barracks, covered with sand. There were big boards with annual and quarterly performance ratios and cheerful slogans calling upon honest and bona-fide labor, assisting in reforming. The new-comers were allotted in the crews. I was sent to the factory crew, servicing assembly lines looking like metallic boxes the vibrating metallic nets inside. The factory was down the slope. There was a horizontal water sink in the last corps. Toxic water was trickling down there, taking away the processed gob- white sand. On the photo it looks like it is a river or lake, but is a large puddle, contaminated by waste waters. The dump is to the right. Ore was crushed in the 1st or 2nd corps. It was delivered by hoist cranes in tubs. The crushed mass was poured in screener and griddled out. Larger fractions were additionally ground in the 3rd corps. Ore was flushed with water, then taken in the funnels and finally to the re-griddling in our assembly lines, whereby the convicts worked with the spades.

The mechanism was turned off every half hour. There was a moment of silence and the rattle was off. Our crew consisting of 10 people, was in a hurry to 'take off' the rocks to get to the tungsten concentrate, pouring out the upper layer to wooden tub. Then the master switch was on and machines were on. The crew sat around the tub and assorted wet rocks, putting aside those where tungsten could be seen. The rest was taken to the belt of the transporter, which took the selected rock with the penultimate workshop. The rocks were griddled on the huge vibrating 'tables', then it was processed with alkali and acid. There was a worker by each 'table', fixing the layer of the output and picking the useful threading. The slag was made only of sand. There were drying chambers on the sides of the last corps. The beneficiation factory was heated in the winter time.

Elderly men and disabled were forced to work. They managed somehow. The work was exhausting. There was a cloud of dust. No respirator helped, the convicts were afflicted with silicosis [chronic lung disease caused by inhaled dust for a long time. It is characterized by the developed pulmonary fibrosis], and died in the camp hospital. My working place was damp. The clothes did not dry out after work. Good thing that during severe frost when metallic parts of tractor levers were cracked, we worked in a warm premise. Those who worked by the 'tables' were intoxicated with alkali and acid. Drying chambers were considered to be pandemonium. People were choking with toxic evaporations there. The frosts reached - 60°C. When the water in the flume throat was frozen, we were sent down the mountain to break the obstructions in the exit throat of the flume. We hammered the ice coat and expanded the exit to get rid of the ice so the sand could move



through the flume. Wet sand was coming from the top freezing off immediately to the felt boots and the clothes. Those who were performing works under the flume were in the frozen sand almost knee length.

The second shift was breaking the ice with the pinch bars to get them out of the sand. Only in the drying chamber they were released from the heavy 'cuirass' when the frozen mass melted and strewn off. It was the way people were breaking through with the performance exceeding the standards by 20% -50% percent. There were certain complications. The convicts were made to dig the exploring shafts 4-5 meters deep. Then the convicts were taken down the exploring shaft with the bucket to take the samples from the rock. Of course, no fastening or other safety precautions were observed. Very often the primitive method ended in a tragedy: the worker was covered with the loose sand in the exploring shaft. The most optimistic scenario if he was unburied before he had suffocated. Otherwise if he was suffocated nobody was responsible for him. The person was just crossed out from the list and none would be the wiser.

A Georgian, Nikolay Dzhadzaniya was our foreman. He was brave and decisive. He was sentenced to 25 years, and the term was prolonged because he murdered the camp worker. Of course, having such a term he had nothing to fear and nothing to lose. He established an apple-pie order and discipline not only at work, but in the pastime. Of course, he had succeeded in that by manipulating the feeling of fear. However, Dzhadzaniya was just and honest and did not hurt anyone for no reason. He never extorted the parcels sent to the others. Our crew was multinational. There were two more Georgians beside Nikolay: an amiable bumpkin Aliko Meladze and an old man Dzhashi. Meladze studied at Tbilisi university. His father was the secretary of the state committee of the party of Georgia. After his father was shot Aliko was sentenced to 25 years in camps. He loved his motherland, Georgia, so much. He recited me the verses of the Georgian poets in his native language. Dzhashi served in the German punitive squad. He had the same term as Meladze. Dzhadzaniya was the deputy foreman. He was a calm young Armenian, Stepanyan.

The team of workers consisted of Russians, Ukrainians, Uzbeks, Turkmen, Polish Jews and guys from Baltic countries. The jailbirds used to call it jokingly 'complete zoo'. I remembered the last names of Polish Jews: Kotlyar and Delfer. I was friends with Kotlyar. He was a brave and physically strong and calm man. He was in the camp, located closer to the South and after was sent to Aliaskitovo after having committed a murder. Former polizei, a fascist was the foreman in Kotlyar's previous camp. He started teasing Kotlyar having found that he was a Jew. Kotlyar had no other way, but to kill the polizei. His 25-year sentence was doubled. In the course of time the members of our crew became bonded. I made friends with my peer, Western Ukrainians and Lithuanians. Those, whose sentence was short- 2-5 years, were getting ready for the free side. They were reading books in mathematics and physics. Others were doing arty-crafty jobs in leisure time- making beautiful knick-knackeries with straw incrustation and sold them to the civilians. At time we watched movies. We also had amateur performances.

The mill fulfilled the plan and exceeded the target quarterly and annual plans yielding high profit. But was it reflected on us? We, the convicts, only were given the credit, when we exceeded the target. We were told that those who regularly exceeded the target, would be paroled. But nobody left the camp on parole. Every day we got up in the wee hours and hastily were brought to the roll call, then to the collection point. I remember the daily precept of the convoy: «Attention, convicts! Do not step from row to row, move without dispersing, no lacking behind and smoking. Step to the

left or step to the right would be considered the attempt to escape and the guard will be shooting without a warning. Infuriated dogs were barking behind us and breech mechanisms clattered. Each convict was counting the days and could hardly believe that he would be pardoned. How could we live to be free if we could not see people two steps ahead of us because of the toxic dust.

Primitive respirators bothered us even more, it was difficult to breathe with them. 90% of people ended up in silicosis. Rheumatism and tuberculosis were incurred when working in dampness. But still we thought it was better to fall from physical fatigue than having an easy job to run amuck from desperate thoughts. We had one day off per week, but we spent it by cleaning the territory beyond the zone. Cleaning scavenge heaps in the settlement, working with the pinch bars and picks. We also had to rebury cadavers, hastily buried in winter time during severe frosts. There were little joys as well. Apart from the convicts there some civilians and exiled worked on the beneficiation factory. There were even girls. They got here as per mandatory job assignment [Mandatory job assignment in the USSR] [41](#) after graduation from the mining college. They worked as foremen supervising production processes. Of course, they were informed that the convicts here were villains and beasts, fascist scum, guilty of death of the best people. Of course, after such information girls were keeping away from us. They inspired us: we could enjoy looking at free girls and it was like God's send to us.

Approximately in the middle of February 1953 we learnt from the civilian workers at the factory that Stalin was unwell. We knew that there were constant round-ups on the radio regarding his health and we were aware that he was on the brink of death. Of course, each of us was waiting for that hour to come, but our expectations were different. On the 5th of March 1953 we found out about Stalin's death. Through the fence we could see the mourning flag flaunting over exile area. We were locked in barracks. I cannot say we were rejoicing. All of us were in stupor. Some people were gladdened, but still frightened. All of us had one thought- what would happen with us. Nobody hoped for the better. We were afraid that even a tougher dictator would wield the scepter and exterminate all of us. We also feared that the guard would be lynching. Anything might have happened in such backwoods. But I felt neither great joy nor sorrow. Then we had timid assumptions about amnesty, but nobody could take it serious. We were discussing the candidates and the prospective successors. We had been locked for 2 days. Then the regime on the zone became less rigid, we were even paid some money for the work. A small grocery store was open. Soon Beriya [42](#) issued a decree on amnesty, but it was not referred to us the political. Only criminals were under amnesty. Our hope became forlorn.

In early 1954 I got ill. First, I had ailment feeling giddy from the languor and hyperhidrosis. Then I was getting a fever in the evening. When I had to go to work in the morning, my temperature was OK. There was no doctor in the camp. The position of the chief camp physician was taken by the wife of the prison principal. She had nothing to do with the medicine. Before work I came to the sanitary unit. She thought that her job was to exposes the malingerers, who wanted to escape work. Therefore, she made me take off my shirt and kept watching while I was taking temperature for me not to do any tricks with the thermometer. Then she sent me to work. When I said that I did not feel well, her response was that my mother alternative was a lock-up, if I was not willing to work. Pulmonary hemorrhage started in the workshop and I was taken to the hospital in the stretches. I had stayed there until next morning and was pushed to work.

Only when the hemorrhage did not stop until the morning, the chief doctor understood that she had overplayed. I was sent to the barrack for disabled crammed with dying people. I got more and more feeble every day. I was a bliss for me. I did not have to go to work. Nobody pushed me to get up, there was no convoy... It was serene and quiet. The doctors did not bother to come; there was no medicine. We were hardly fed, but I had no feeling of hunger. I was lying in my bed feeling happy and waiting for the death to knock on my door. The only medical assistance I got were injections of calcium chloride. Strange as it may be –they helped and my hemorrhage stopped. I am not sure what kind of outcome I would have if I were not called by the management and read the order on my pardon in the middle May 1954. It was the time when the campaign on the investigation of the cases of the innocent convicts was being held. The lawyer, mother of the Boris Lyadov, filed an appeal in the supreme court, the collegial of the martial court regarding our common case.

When our case was reconsidered, the Supreme Court left the charge in accordance with article 58- anti-Soviet propaganda, but cancelled item 11- the criminal group. Thus instead of 10 years of camp, we were supposed to have only 6, but we were in the going on the 7th year. Thus, we were to be released. We had to obtain the deed on release and process the documents for the exile in Ust-Nera. Several convicts were sent there in the body of the truck. We were accompanied by a lieutenant. The convicts gave me the letter so I could drop them in the mail box so they would not undergo preliminary censorship. In Ust-Nera we stopped in the tea café and I bought stale cookie, which got hard like a stone. It is difficult for me to put my emotions in words. We were sent to undergo a physical. After being X-rayed they told me the terrible diagnosis- silicosis. It was a spread disease among ore mine workers incurred due to permanent dust. That news gloomed my joy of being free. Silicosis is a malady past cure.

The difference was that I was not to die in the barrack section for disabled, but on the free side. I was told to come back to Alyaskitovy. Since the camp administration was to blame for my production malady, they were supposed to take measures at their cost and send me to the home for the disabled wherein I was to stay until death. Nobody was going to take me back to Alyaskitovy, I was supposed to think of that myself. The two of us, I and an elderly Chechen guy, also sick, we plodded to bald peaks. We were in the camp togger and the dwellers of the house on our way were hiding and locking doors, when saw us. We spent the night right on the curb of the road and in the morning we were picked up by the dump truck heading to the upper camp. I met uncle Grisha, the room orderly from our working barrack. He was standing by the administration premise. It turned out that the tacit man was also released. I asked him what he would be doing on the free side. He said that the camp administration offered him to stay and work with the documents, but he did not want to stay in that damn place any minute. Probably surprise was written on my face, and uncle Grisha took the photo from the pocket- a valiant colonel having a lot of awards. It was impossible to recognize Grisha in him.

The principal could not process the documents for us to be settled in the house for disabled. He suggested that we should be fully maintained by the zone as civilians before he could manage to send us there. We were settled very well in the sanitary unit and the convict doctor Levin was to take care of us. Only in August we were sent to the military aerodrome together with the demobilized soldiers- the guards. We took the plane to Magadan and from there to Berlag replacement depot. We were left in the lurch there. Vanino bay was covered with us and navigation was not opened up. There was no way we could move anywhere. Again I was about to

face death. I had to act, so I resorted to the camp administration. They said they could not help me. I was suggested that I should refuse taking a trip for the sake of Berlag and write an application that I would be on my own. I could not die on the bunk, besides my disease was progressing. I signed the application and I was taken to the town military enlistment office. Commandant wrote that I was exiled and sent me to the shipyard. I had worked there for a month, then my disease exacerbated and I was hospitalized. The doctors made me happy- I did not have silicosis, but tuberculosis. I treaded on air from happiness and finally decided to write my first letter to the parents saying that I was slightly ill, having tuberculosis and there was nothing to worry about. Of course, loving parents were alarmed. They pleaded toe the military collegium for my exile not to be so far away and I was sent to Karaganda [Kazakhstan, 2400 km from Moscow]. I got the money from my parents by wire, bought a ticket and went to Karaganda.

I was sent to the automobile repair plant in Karaganda commandant's office. The profession was not new to me. I worked in the vehicle repair workshops during my service in the camp. The plant provided the hostel for the workers and I was given the referral for the hostel. The first person I saw was the warden of the hostel, called aunt Dusya by everybody. She was a huge woman with a crew-cut, tattooed arms, dressed in a striped west and boots of the bog's color having the cigarette butt in her mouth. She asked in a loud voice where I was from and having heard that I was from Kolyma, she looked at me with respect. I looked like a criminal with my cropped hair, squinted eyes and smirch. I was also told that I looked like a grinning wolf before attack. People preferred not to confront me. I was not even aware that I was ready to attack and fight within those years of my stay in the camp.

The warden of the hostel classified me as a criminal, respected in Kolyma or a political felon. At any rate local people considered those who returned from Kolyma to be revenants. Aunt Dusya suggested that I should be settled in another wing, together with the pardoned thieves for me to feel like a fish in the water. I refused saying that I was ill and would prefer a quieter place. I moved to the room, where 15-year old boy lived. He was the student of the evening department of the vocation school, who was working at the plant. He was an amusing boy. Self-cultivation was his goal. He kept diary, wherein he wrote assignments in the morning regarding training stamina and will and in the evening he assessed his results and gave himself points whether he coped with the task or not. Sometimes I was irritated by him when he put the bicycle on the prop in the middle of the room and rode it producing noise. When I shouted it at him telling to leave, he did that obediently. My job was not complicated. I handed out the tools in the instrumental workshop. I was supposed to know the purpose of the tools, the alloys of steel. I learned all that in the camp.

In couple of month mother came to see me. I met her at the train station. There was no platform and the footboard was too high above the land. She jumped off the train straight in my embrace. I was so agog. I gave her a hug and all of a sudden she pushed back with her eyes streaming in tears. I could not get what happened and she said that I was swearing hard. She could not even imagine that I could say anything like that. I had developed a bad camp habit to the foul language and might have put all my joy and emotions in the obscene language. Mother could not recover for a long time. She was to face another shock when she came in the hostel. She was taking out tasty things from the suitcase, and the hostel warden came. She looked at my mother, crossed her hands on her enormous breasts and started singing old 'thief' song in deep bass voice: «The vagrant is approaching Baikal and his loving mother is there to meet him».

Mother was even more stressed with this song than with the swearing at the train station. She was about to faint. When aunt Dusya left, she said that I would not live in that criminal den and started looking for an apartment for me. She rented me a room from a very pleasant Jewish family, the Kouritskiys, the former Kievans. They were exiled to Karaganda before the war was unleashed. They had an only son, who was demented and spent almost all the time in the mental asylum. They gave me the son's room and took good care of me as if I was their son. Father came to see me in the house of Kouritskiys. I did not mind my language cursing and vituperating the soviet regime and communist party, proving my father that the criminals, who bossed around in the zones and camps and Stalin with his gang all over the country were sharing each other's experience and were socially close. Father was smiling, trying to mollify things by turning them into joke. I was really angry and did not take any jokes.

I was taken from the first course of the institute. I decided not to waste my time in the exile and enter the institute. There were 3 institutes in Karaganda: medical, polytechnic and teachers' training. I went to submit my documents to the teachers' training. It was futile! I was told in the special department that my documents would not be accepted: what things might the exiled teach soviet children?! I went to the polytechnic and then to medical. The result was the same. The only institution I could enter was mining college. So, I went there. I was afflicted with tuberculosis so I could be admitted only to the faculty of the civilian and industrial construction. I could not work in the mines because of my health. It was hard for me to enter the college. I had to get ready for the entrance exams, and I had forgotten almost everything I knew. Hard physical labor made me a dumb primitive guy, and at times I thought I had no grey cells remained. When I started cudgeling my brains, I found it difficult, but I had enough perseverance and willingness to study. I told myself that I was a nobody, even on the free side – I had no specialty. Thus, I was spurring myself. I managed to get ready for the entrance exams and passed them. I studied in the evening, and worked during the daytime. I spent half of my time in the hospital. Tuberculosis is not cured swiftly, but I did well in the college and had an understanding with teachers. I concealed in the college, that I was convicted before exile.

I still lived in Karaganda, when Nikita Khrushchev [43](#) exposed Stalin's crimes on XX party congress [44](#). I took Khrushchev's speech like a sip of spring water making me clean. I read his report, published in the papers, over and over again and almost knew it by heart. Some of the teachers suggested that I should make the report to the students using the materials of the congress, and I willingly undertook the task. No matter how hard they blame Khrushchev for the coming events during his reign, I think that he could be forgiven merely because of the Twentieth Party Congress. It was a great step.

I corresponded with my parents. They came over for a visit. Mother's elder sister Tatiana used to write me rather often. She worked in the support staff of the members of the government and party activists. Of course, she knew what was going on from her bosses. In her letters she called upon tolerance and asked me to look through the papers and wait for the announcement. In 1956, after the Twentieth Party Congress rehabilitations commenced and I was also exonerated after 2-year exile. I was released and given a passport instead of the certificate on the exile. I was entitled to return to Moscow, get the residence permit [45](#) and live like a free person. I obtained the certificate on rehabilitation only in 1962, when I was operated on lung caverns in the hospital. I was on the brink of death, and was lucky to survive.



## • Later life

I was 30 when I came back to Moscow being sick and down in the mouth. There were hard times for me. All my former friends were through with the studies, became the experts. Many of them were married and had children having a fully-fledged life; I was just beginning making up for the things I lost when I was 20. It was hard for me to get it over. I did not want to see anybody and to meet people. I stayed in most of the time, buried in pillows bawling like a wounded animal. The hardest test for me was to meet my former friends. When you meet a person, you have known since childhood, it is natural that you would like to feel affectionate because of the common recollections, but person is different: he has a family, work, his own interests. There is nothing to hang on with the former friend as you have been thrown on the curb of life. Besides, I was afflicted with tuberculosis. I thought that people were afraid to stay close to me not to catch the disease. It took too long to get over that state. My parents were worried about me and did not let me to be in despair. They were very caring, heedful, understanding and tender. Women almost played an important role in my recuperation. When I was in adolescent, I often fell in love. For quite a long period of life I was isolated from women and it was another reason for my depression. When I understood that women took an interest in me and paid attention, it made me feel that still there was the reason to live and hope for the better. I came across good women.

I am grateful to them for their help and support. Support from men is important, but it is even more important when a woman is there for you. My soul was reanimated. Then I got new friends. My former friends remained in the background, and their place was taken by the new ones. Some of them were the same former convicts as I, and their example helped me to regain my footing. I have been composing verses since yearly teens, but back in the period of recuperation I felt the most need in them. I found ways to the ex ego and gradually I was settling down. I still did not feel very well. Father did not want to accept that I worked only for the sake of the salary, he thought the first thing to be done was for me to heal up. Of course the level of medicine in Moscow and Magadan were vastly different. The doctors had to work a lot. My lungs were bad after my return to Moscow. First they undertook oxygen enrichment, then I was to resort to operation- the caverns in my lungs were not calcifying.

After operation I found a job in construction design institute Mosproject. I was exonerated already. I had not got a diploma yet, there was still one year left before graduation, but I could not stay in Karaganda any longer. I was hired as a technician and entered evening department of Moscow Engineering and Construction University, Civilian and Industrial Construction. Of course, there was not the way I could work on the construction site after having graduated because of my health, but I could cope with the work at the design institute. I have been studying with recessions, was on a sick leave. In short, it was not easy. It took me 7 years instead of 5. I cannot say that the university studies gave me a lot from the standpoint of professional skills, but I acquired the latter in practice, working at the institute. I was well up in calculations and models. At any rate I obtained a diploma and had worked for the design institute Mosproject 1961, and retired in 1989.

I wanted to marry only a Jew. Yes, I saw the way my parents had lived in mutual love and respect, and there were other examples as well. I also witnessed how people concealed that they were Jews and, being shy to admit that. My close friend told me that he liked one girl who did not like Jews very much and he did not reveal what nationality he was. Even now I know people who conceal

that they are Jews, but I see no reason for that. I had been hurt by anti-Semites for quite a lot, even by my family. I wanted to feel at ease, but it is possible only when there is no issue on nationality segregation. I knew the families where the spouses were of different nationalities, but when having a tiff, the issue on nationality came up all of a sudden.

I met my wife-to be in Mosproject. Victoria Novik worked as an architect in the department of a very good-looking Jew, architect Chechulin. Victoria was a Jew, and it made us closer. She was an only child in the family. Her family was assimilated, and Victoria's mother tongue was Russian. When Victoria was a little girl, her father, a famous economist Mark Novik was invited in Moscow for work. His family moved in Moscow with him. Having left school, Victoria entered Moscow Engineering and Construction faculty. She got a mandatory job assignment to Mosproject and had worked there until she retired.

We had an ordinary wedding. We got registered in the state marriage registration office and had a wedding party for our close people. We lived with the parents. By that time our neighbor, colonel, in communal apartment, got a lodging and the unoccupied room was given to my parents by Ispolkom [46](#). It turned out that we had a separate two-room apartment. In 1962 our only son Mikhail was born.

My mother was a well-bred Russian woman, raised in the best tradition. That is why she did not accept the soviet regime. Communistic ideas made her smile ironically. Of course, such an upbringing did not nurture anti-Semitism in any way nothing to mention that mother was head over heels in love with my father. She had been a Jew in her soul since getting married. She adored father, and admired Jews on the whole. She considered those people to be special, higher than the rest. The father was an ideological stickler of the communistic ideals, and here their opinions diverged in spite of the fact that mother had unconditionally followed father. When my son was a baby, mother was concerned why we did not made circumcision to the baby. I was aware that father might have disapproved that and I dodged from answering.

My son has always been aloof and tried not to tell about his child's concerns. Later on I found out that my son, even when being a child, had to come across anti-Semitism. When my son told me that he was beaten up by a caboodle in the yard, who cried out 'Yid', I remembered chivalrous plays from my childhood. Mikhail was attacked by the group, being beat by the sticks and metal objects. Once he was almost murdered. In summer he was sent to the pioneer camp. The boys did not merely dare to beat Yid, they also tied up a plummet to the wire and hit my son in the face. His teeth were crashed, jaw was broken. He was hospitalized. It was a big stress for my son. Only after that he told me that it was not the first time, when he was beaten just for being a Jew, just because he had the last name of Fiedelgolts. When Mikhail was an adult, he told me when he was transferred to another school, the new classmates gave him a cold shoulder just because he was a Jew. He was beaten during the break to be put down. The son did not leak a word about it at home.

Having finished school Mikhail could not enter the institute. He was drafted in the army. He was lucky he was in the tank troops in Germany. He was a telephone operator. To a certain extent it kept him away from anti-Semitism, which might mostly likely have happened if was on the territory of the USSR. Having been demobilized from the army, he entered Moscow Institute of Telephone Communication. It was in Brezhnev's times [47](#) in 1982, when anti-Semitism was spread all over the

country. At that time demobilized from the army had some benefits and it must have worked. When son graduated, he was employed by the telephone communication company.

Son married his colleague, Olga Krylatskikh. Olga is Russian. My son did not consider such criterion as nationality when he was getting married and I did not interfere. He had the right for his own choice. They have a happy living. I have two granddaughters. The elder one Anna was born in 1989, and younger Anastasia was born in 1991.

When my son was adult, I told him about my stay at Gulag. My wife and I decided not to tell him about that during his childhood and adolescence. Neither want I my granddaughters to know the details of my past. What for? They have their own life and I do not want to make it gloomier. There was nothing special to tell. I am not a hero, who founded underground organization. I did not fight soviet regime. There were some people like that in Gulag, but there is nothing I can brag about. I am not ashamed of my past, but I not going to make it ostentatious either.

In the 1970s there was the outbreak of mass immigration of Soviet Jews to Israel. The latter was the country-symbol to me, the state founded by Jews. Of course, I dreamt of it, but at the same time I understood that there was no need for me to leave. In my opinion only people who might do something for the country and protect it with the weapon in their hands. I was not fit for any of that. I had stayed in the USSR due to my sickness. There were no other reasons than that. I had all grounds to flee from the country, but I did not want to become a burden for the country, because it needed strong people, not disabled.

I had to come across anti-Semitism rather often. The most horrible for me was the fact that anti-Semitism was not only spread among young people, but such ideas were shared by front-line soldiers, mature people, who did not spare their lives to save the world from fascism. I had to undergo treatment in cardiologic sanatoriums. Being exonerated I was sent to the best sanatoriums of the country, where the veterans of war also took the treatment. There were cases when the veterans of war with the awards said to me that they did not want to sit close by because I was a Jew. I also heard their talks between themselves regarding my getting the voucher for their sanatorium because I was a Yid. They said that all Yids were conniving and knew how to settle well.

I have always been intolerant to anti-Semitism, and I would not change. My father has also been like that. He hated both fascism and anti-Semitism. I remember that in my presence he spat in the face of one anti-Semite and was not ashamed to do that. By the way, that man was big and much stronger than my father. Father spat in his face and sat: «Here you go, fascist! ». But father did not recognize anti-Semitism on the state level, organized by the party. Father has remained ideological communist in spite of the things I and my parents had to go through. I think, international ideas of communism might have affected my father. My father found them the most attractive. He had to live in the times of pogroms, admission quotas for the Jews. Practically the same things, only inveigled had existed during Soviet regime, but father was oblivious to that. He so far away from politics. He believed in his ideals. In spite of everything he took communistic doctrine, which appealed to him to be right. He cannot be blamed for that. Father did not live to see the breakup of USSR [1991]. I think he would take it hard. He died in 1983. Mother passed away earlier, in 1976. She died from extensive myocardial infarction in the hospital. Even in an agonal delirium she was reiterating: «Levochka, I am going to cook soup ...», and the last word she said was her

husband's name. My parents are buried in the city cemetery in Moscow. There are a lot of Jewish tombs, probably every second.

Unfortunately, my health is rather poor now. I had a complicated operation on my lung. I do not have 5 ribs. Recently I was operated in Moscow cardio center, it was an extremely complicated operation: my aorta was replaced with the artificial one because I had aortic aneurysm. I am not scared to die. I had seen a lot of interesting things in my life both good and bad. Each of us has to get over a lot of hardship. It is even not bad to have an experience like that. It makes you richer somehow.

I was imbued with optimism when Gorbachev [48](#) started a new course of the party, perestroika [49](#). There were a lot of demonstrations in Moscow. Everybody could speak his mind from the tribune without feeling timid! I was crying from happiness that things were getting recovered. Now I feel that all was built on sand and did not meet expectations. It hurts and I am thinking "was my imprisonment and suffering futile? Are those things I am doing and writing now, futile?".

I have been writing since childhood, first verses, then prose, but I did not find it important. I started doing it professionally (if I can say that) after I retired in 1989. There was a literary institution Magistral in Moscow [literary institution Magistral was founded in Moscow in the 1960s and united officially unrecognized poets and writers, whose works were unpublished by state publishers], Poet Grigoriy Levin was at the lead. He was an erudite. I was involved in work for this institution. I met many poets and writers. Then I took to writing more seriously. I write about the past and the present. My works were published in different collection of stories and magazines. I wrote reminiscences of my camp life the collection of stories «Still a Burden», published in 2004 in Moscow with assistance of the compiler. I still keep on writing and I would like to get as much publications as possible. Literature appeals to me. I do not find it interesting just to enjoy my life of the pensioner. I would like to do something. As for the Jewry, I have always identified myself as Jew and will remain a Jew till the end of my days, especially is there are anti-Semites. When I am invited to hold a speech, I always recite my verses dedicated to the Jewish theme. Jewish people are heroic. Each member of the tribe takes a credit that the peoples have survived under such hard conditions. A person becomes Jew at birth and remains a Jew for good. Jews did not just manage to ascertain, they also became the pride of the nation, which hosted and despised them.

In 1989 another organization was founded Memorial [50](#). It united the victims of repressions, both Stalin's and fascists. I have taken an active part in Memoria since its foundation, since its first Memorial conference. I was a coordinator of Memorial of our district. There are some interesting personalities among the former repressed. I meet with them. So I have a wide circle of acquaintances and a wide range of interests.

I still consider unbreak of USSR to be a big mistake because the economy of the country was based on centralization during all regimes, starting with the tsarist one. All was bound in one node: cotton was sent to the plants in Moscow bound from Turkistan and Uzbekistan, tractors were assembled from the parts manufactured in Ukraine and Russia and so on. All those ties have been broken. Each ethnicity has the right for self-determination, but the country could gain independence without violating this economic interaction. Here all political tasks were resolved and economic nodes were exterminated.

Many people exalt Russia: «Great, powerful...». It is great and powerful and constantly stagnant. How can it possible be? There is such a territory, richness, mineral resources- gold, oil, gas, all Mendeleyev table. Any us potentially might become a millionaire, even a billionaire, but we are still indigent, wasting all opportunities. It is difficult for us to make an extra step to become rich. It is something that strikes me. I do not find my words shameful. I am not expressing anti-Russian ideas, just bitterness. I would like Russia to be different. The worst thing is that I do not see any prospects.

I always was actively against anti-Semitism, both in Memorial and during discussion with Russian human rights activist Sergey Kovalev. He is dealing with the violation of human rights in Chechnya [Chechen War] [51](#). There is no doubt that it is very important, but he does not notice anti-Semitism around him, so close that he can physically feel it. Before taking care of distant Chechnya he should have seen what is going on in this country. A person can be insulted in the street, even hit just because he is a Jew. Not only hooligans are prone to anti-Semitism. The most horrible is that even members of intelligentsia are in the anti-Semitist movement. Of course they do buffet, they merely justify anti-Semitism from philosophic point of view, referring to some sources and theories. Of course, those things have not just started. Many Russian writers sinned in that e.g. Googol [52](#) so miserably depicts Jews in his novel Tares Bulbar. He gladly describes how Jews were drowned, describing how puny, cowardly, obnoxious and treacherous those Jews, Yids were. And if we take Dostoyevsky [53](#) it is a total obscurantism! He is Nazi! He is really a magnificent writer, a great one, an extraordinary psychologist. There are so many in the spiritual world in his novels, what great characters he has in his novels! But at the same time when he speaks of Poles and Jews in the derogative tone «Polyachishki», «Evreychiki», «Zhidki» [Russian derogatory terms, the first one refers to Poles and the last two to Jews.] – it is so miserable! It is everywhere. Even such a refined representative of intelligentsia as Chekhov [54](#) is mocking the Jewish family and the inn kept by it in his novel ‘Steppe’ ...So the roots of Russian anti-Semitists are very deep....

I often remember pre-war Moscow and its citizens. Now you can rarely meet the true Moscovite with original patois, sociability and hospitality, amicability, certain peculiar features, inherent only to them- kind-heartedness and pride and easefulness. Maybe the reason for is that Moscow is a capital, attracting many bright people as well as riff-raff, who come over and spoil everything. By the way, anti-Semitism was brought to Moscow by the new-comers, who name themselves Moscovites, because those people who cannot study well and get a useful and lucrative job and find their place in life, are inclined to blame ‘aliens’ (Jews in this case) in their unsuccessfulness. In any hamlet or a hick town they might tell you for instance: «We have a librarian Abramovich, a Jew, but a very good person ». Please pay attention to the conjunction ‘but’, which means that the rest of Jews are bad, but that one, was an exception. From many anti-Semitists you might here that many Yids are puds, scums, but he has a friend, Jew, and he would not replace him with 3-4 Russians. It is anti-Semitism. During my lifetime I will keep on fighting it they way I possibly can.

I do not work for Jewish organizations. I think that Jewry is personal, it is mine and I do not want to make out of it the source of welfare. I go to synagogue, not as often as I would like to because of my poor health. I am happy to go there whenever I can. I do not go there only on holidays, even when my soul is looking for it. I like to take part in that sacrament. Each visit to the synagogue is joyful for me.



I have determined main principles during my long life. I think that a human being should have a moral, conscience no matter what filth he had to dip in. He should come out of it with honor. I do not know how well I did, all I know that thanks God I did not do mean things to anybody, did not betray and slander. As for my belief in God, I think that there is one God, there is a supreme benignity, supreme kind, which we cannot cognize ourselves and find out about its intentions. It can cast us hither or thither. I know it very well. Everybody will be rewarded in accordance with his deeds.

## **Glossary:**

### **1 Partitions of Poland (1772-1795)**

Three divisions of the Polish lands, in 1772, 1793 and 1795 by the neighboring powers: Russia, Austria and Prussia. Under the first partition Russia occupied the lands east of the Dzwina, Drua and Dnieper, a total of 92,000 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 1.3 million. Austria took the southern part of the Cracow and Sandomierz provinces, the Oswiecim and Zator principalities, the Ruthenian province (except for the Chelm lands) and part of the Belz province, a total of 83,000 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 2.6 million. Prussia annexed Warmia, the Pomerania, Malbork and Chelmno provinces (except for Gdansk and Torun) and the lands along the Notec river and Goplo lake, altogether 36,000 km<sup>2</sup> and 580,000 souls. The second partition was carried out by Prussia and Russia. Prussia occupied the Poznan, Kalisz, Gniezno, Sieradz, Leczyca, Inowroclaw, Brzesc Kujawski and Plock provinces, the Dobrzyn lands, parts of the Rawa and Masovia provinces, and Torun and Gdansk, a total of 58,000 km<sup>2</sup> and over a million inhabitants. Russia took the Ukrainian and Belarus lands east of the Druja-Pinsk-Zbrucz line, altogether 280,000 km<sup>2</sup> and 3 million inhabitants. Under the third partition Russia obtained the rest of the Lithuanian, Belarus and Ukrainian lands east of the Bug and the Nemirov-Grodno line, a total area of 120,000 km<sup>2</sup> and 1.2 million inhabitants. The Prussians took the remainder of Podlasie and Mazovia, Warsaw, and parts of Samogitia and Malopolska, 55,000 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 1 million. Austria annexed Cracow and the part of Malopolska between the Pilica, Vistula and Bug, and part of Podlasie and Masovia, a total surface area of 47,000 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 1.2 million.

### **2 Jewish Pale of Settlement**

Certain provinces in the Russian Empire were designated for permanent Jewish residence and the Jewish population was only allowed to live in these areas. The Pale was first established by a decree by Catherine II in 1791. The regulation was in force until the Russian Revolution of 1917, although the limits of the Pale were modified several times. The Pale stretched from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, and 94% of the total Jewish population of Russia, almost 5 million people, lived there. The overwhelming majority of the Jews lived in the towns and shtetls of the Pale. Certain privileged groups of Jews, such as certain merchants, university graduates and craftsmen working in certain branches, were granted to live outside the borders of the Pale of Settlement permanently.

### **3 Common name**

Russified or Russian first names used by Jews in everyday life and adopted in official documents.

The Russification of first names was one of the manifestations of the assimilation of Russian Jews at the turn of the 19th and 20th century. In some cases only the spelling and pronunciation of Jewish names was russified (e.g. Isaac instead of Yitskhak; Boris instead of Borukh), while in other cases traditional Jewish names were replaced by similarly sounding Russian names (e.g. Eugenia instead of Ghita; Yury instead of Yuda). When state anti-Semitism intensified in the USSR at the end of the 1940s, most Jewish parents stopped giving their children traditional Jewish names to avoid discrimination.

#### **4 Five percent quota**

In tsarist Russia the number of Jews in higher educational institutions could not exceed 5% of the total number of students.

#### **5 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.

#### **6 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% and agriculture to 50% as compared to 1913.

#### **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 Soviet/Russian doctorate degrees**

Graduate school in the Soviet Union (aspirantura, or ordinatura for medical students), which usually

took about 3 years and resulted in a dissertation. Students who passed were awarded a 'kandidat nauk' (lit. candidate of sciences) degree. If a person wanted to proceed with his or her research, the next step would be to apply for a doctorate degree (doktorantura). To be awarded a doctorate degree, the person had to be involved in the academia, publish consistently, and write an original dissertation. In the end he/she would be awarded a 'doctor nauk' (lit. doctor of sciences) degree.

## **9 Soviet Army**

The armed forces of the Soviet Union, originally called Red Army and renamed Soviet Army in February 1946. After the Bolsheviks came to power, in November 1917, they commenced to organize the squads of worker's army, called Red Guards, where workers and peasants were recruited on voluntary bases. The commanders were either selected from among the former tsarist officers and soldiers or appointed directly by the Military and Revolutionary Committee of the Communist Party.

In early 1918 the Bolshevik government issued a decree on the establishment of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army and mandatory drafting was introduced for men between 18 and 40. In 1918 the total number of draftees was 100 thousand officers and 1.2 million soldiers. Military schools and academies training the officers were restored. In 1925 the law on compulsory military service was adopted and annual drafting was established. The term of service was established as follows: for the Red Guards- 2 years, for junior officers of aviation and fleet- 3 years, for medium and senior officers- 25 years. People of exploiter classes (former noblemen, merchants, officers of the tsarist army, priest, factory owner, etc. and their children) as well as kulaks (rich peasants) and cossacks were not drafted in the army. The law as of 1939 cancelled restriction on drafting of men belonging to certain classes, students weren't drafted but went through military training in their educational institutions.

On the 22nd June 1941 Great Patriotic War was unleashed and the drafting in the army became exclusively compulsory. First, in June-July 1941 general and complete mobilization of men was carried out as well as partial mobilization of women. Then annual drafting of men, who turned 18, was commenced. When WWII was over, the Red Army amounted to over 11 million people and the demobilization process commenced. By the beginning of 1948 the Soviet Army had been downsized to 2 million 874 thousand people. The youth of drafting age were sent to the restoration works in mines, heavy industrial enterprises, and construction sites. In 1949 a new law on general military duty was adopted, according to which service term in ground troops and aviation was 3 years and in navy- 4 years. Young people with secondary education, both civilian and military, with the age range of 17-23 were admitted in military schools for officers. In 1968 the term of the army service was contracted to 2 years in ground troops and in the navy to 3 years. That system of army recruitment has remained without considerable changes until the breakup of the Soviet Army (1991-93).

## **10 Bolsheviks**

Members of the movement led by Lenin. The name 'Bolshevik' was coined in 1903 and denoted the group that emerged in elections to the key bodies in the Social Democratic Party (SDPRR) considering itself in the majority (Rus. bolshynstvo) within the party. It dubbed its opponents the minority (Rus. menshynstvo, the Mensheviks). Until 1906 the two groups formed

one party. The Bolsheviks first gained popularity and support in society during the 1905-07 Revolution. During the February Revolution in 1917 the Bolsheviks were initially in the opposition to the Menshevik and SR ('Sotsialrevolyutsionery', Socialist Revolutionaries) delegates who controlled the Soviets (councils). When Lenin returned from emigration (16 April) they proclaimed his program of action (the April theses) and under the slogan 'All power to the Soviets' began to Bolshevikize the Soviets and prepare for a proletarian revolution. Agitation proceeded on a vast scale, especially in the army. The Bolsheviks set about creating their own armed forces, the Red Guard. Having overthrown the Provisional Government, they created a government with the support of the II Congress of Soviets (the October Revolution), to which they admitted some left-wing SRs in order to gain the support of the peasantry. In 1952 the Bolshevik party was renamed the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

## **11 World Revolution**

Marxist concept and an integral part of Soviet state-ideology. The idea of World Revolution was used to explain Soviet imperialist politics in Eastern Europe as well as world-wide. It was after WWI that the world was closest to the idea: the 1917 October Revolution in Russia was followed by the German (1918-19) and the Hungarian Revolutions (1919), that were eventually both put down as a result of counter-revolutionary efforts and Soviet Russia remained the only communist state. The Communist International (Comintern) in the interwar period (1919-1943) acted as a Soviet-sponsored agency responsible for coordinating the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism worldwide. Aiding the local and previously (during the capitalist regimes) persecuted revolutionary forces was also a pretext of the military occupation of the Central and Eastern European countries during World War II ('Liberation') and keeping them within the Soviet Block until 1989. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World\\_revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_revolution))

## **12 Trotsky, Lev Davidovich (born Bronshtein) (1879-1940)**

Russian revolutionary, one of the leaders of the October Revolution of 1917, an outstanding figure of the communist movement and a theorist of Marxism. Trotsky participated in the social-democratic movement from 1894 and supported the idea of the unification of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks from 1906. In 1905 he developed the idea of the 'permanent revolution'. He was one of the leaders of the October Revolution and a founder of the Red Army. He widely applied repressive measures to support the discipline and 'bring everything into revolutionary order' at the front and the home front. The intense struggle with Stalin for the leadership ended with Trotsky's defeat. In 1924 his views were declared petty-bourgeois deviation. In 1927 he was expelled from the Communist Party, and exiled to Kazakhstan, and in 1929 abroad. He lived in Turkey, Norway and then Mexico. He excoriated Stalin's regime as a bureaucratic degeneration of the proletarian power. He was murdered in Mexico by an agent of Soviet special services on Stalin's order.

## **13 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.

## **14 Campaign against 'cosmopolitans'**

The campaign against 'cosmopolitans', i.e. Jews, was initiated in articles in the central organs of the Communist Party in 1949. The campaign was directed primarily at the Jewish intelligentsia and it was the first public attack on Soviet Jews as Jews. 'Cosmopolitans' writers were accused of hating the Russian people, of supporting Zionism, etc. Many Yiddish writers as well as the leaders of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee were arrested in November 1948 on charges that they maintained ties with Zionism and with American 'imperialism'. They were executed secretly in 1952. The anti-Semitic Doctors' Plot was launched in January 1953. A wave of anti-Semitism spread through the USSR. Jews were removed from their positions, and rumors of an imminent mass deportation of Jews to the eastern part of the USSR began to spread. Stalin's death in March 1953 put an end to the campaign against 'cosmopolitans'.

## **15 Enemy of the people**

Soviet official term; euphemism used for real or assumed political opposition.

## **16 Kolchak, Aleksandr Vasilyevich (1874-1920)**

Russian admiral and White commander in Western Siberia during the Civil War (1918-22). He was the commander of the Black Sea Fleet during WWI, after the October Revolution (1917) he was one of the organizers of the White Guards and became Minister of War in an anti-Bolshevik government, set up in Omsk, Siberia. In November 1918 he carried out a coup and assumed dictatorship. He was successful at fighting the Bolsheviks in Siberia and was recognized by both, the Provisional Government in Russia as well as the Allies. In early 1919 he managed to capture the Ural and had an army of 400 thousand people. After a retreat to Irkutsk he was betrayed to the Bolsheviks who executed him and took possession of Siberia.  
(<http://www.encyclopedia.com/html/k/kolchak.asp>)

## **17 Provisional Government**

Russian government formed after the February Revolution of 1917. The majority of its members were originally liberal deputies of the State Duma. The Provisional Government also had some socialist members, and after a series of political crises the number of socialist ministers increased. The goal of the Provisional Government was to turn Russia into a parliamentary democracy, with broad political liberties, general and equal elections, a multi-party system and equal rights for all citizens. The Provisional Government, however, was unable to solve the country's key problems, namely the withdrawal from World War I, agricultural and food problems and national issues. It was overthrown by the Bolsheviks in November 1917.

## **18 Communal apartment**

The Soviet power wanted to improve housing conditions by requisitioning 'excess' living space of wealthy families after the Revolution of 1917. Apartments were shared by several families with each family occupying one room and sharing the kitchen, toilet and bathroom with other tenants. Because of the chronic shortage of dwelling space in towns communal or shared apartments continued to exist for decades. Despite state programs for the construction of more houses and the liquidation of communal apartments, which began in the 1960s, shared apartments still exist today.



## **19 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.

## **20 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.

## **21 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.

## **22 Shtern, Lina Solomonovna (1878 - 1968)**

Soviet physiologist, the first female academician in the world. She graduated from the medical faculty of Geneva University in 1903 and became the first woman professor there. In 1924 she received an official invitation from the Soviet Union to head the chair of physiology at Moscow State University. In 1938 she was elected member of the Academy of Sciences. In 1943 she was awarded the Stalin Prize. In the same year she criticized the strengthening Antisemitism in the Soviet Union as presidium member of the Jewish Antifascist Committee. In 1952 she was tried and consequently expelled to Dzhambul, Kazakhstan. ([http://www.jewukr.org/observer/eo2003/page\\_show\\_en.php?id=329](http://www.jewukr.org/observer/eo2003/page_show_en.php?id=329))

## **20 Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (JAC)**

formed in Kuibyshev in April 1942, the organization was meant to serve the interests of Soviet foreign policy and the Soviet military through media propaganda, as well as through personal contacts with Jews abroad, especially in Britain and the United States. The chairman of the JAC was

Solomon Mikhoels, a famous actor and director of the Moscow Yiddish State Theater. A year after its establishment, the JAC was moved to Moscow and became one of the most important centers of Jewish culture and Yiddish literature until the German occupation. The JAC broadcast pro-Soviet propaganda to foreign audiences several times a week, telling them of the absence of anti-Semitism and of the great anti-Nazi efforts being made by the Soviet military. In 1948, Mikhoels was assassinated by Stalin's secret agents, and, as part of a newly-launched official anti-Semitic campaign, the JAC was disbanded in November and most of its members arrested.

## **24 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.

## **25 Rehabilitation in the Soviet Union**

Many people who had been arrested, disappeared or killed during the Stalinist era were rehabilitated after the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956, where Khrushchev publicly debunked the cult of Stalin and lifted the veil of secrecy from what had happened in the USSR during Stalin's leadership. It was only after the official rehabilitation that people learnt for the first time what had happened to their relatives as information on arrested people had not been disclosed before.

## **26 Mayakovsky, Vladimir Vladimirovich (1893-1930)**

Russian poet and dramatist. Mayakovsky joined the Social Democratic Party in 1908 and spent much time in prison for his political activities for the next two years. Mayakovsky triumphantly greeted the Revolution of 1917 and later he composed propaganda verse and read it before crowds of workers throughout the country. He became gradually disillusioned with Soviet life after the Revolution and grew more critical of it. Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (1924) ranks among Mayakovsky's best-known longer poems. However, his struggle with literary opponents and unhappy romantic experiences resulted in him committing suicide in 1930.

## **27 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact**

Non-aggression pact between Germany and the Soviet Union, which became known under the name of Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Engaged in a border war with Japan in the Far East and fearing the German advance in the west, the Soviet government began secret negotiations for a non-aggression pact with Germany in 1939. In August 1939 it suddenly announced the conclusion of a Soviet-German agreement of friendship and non-aggression. The Pact contained a secret clause providing for the partition of Poland and for Soviet and German spheres of influence in Eastern Europe.

## **28 Card system**

The food card system regulating the distribution of food and industrial products was introduced in the USSR in 1929 due to extreme deficit of consumer goods and food. The system was cancelled in 1931. In 1941, food cards were reintroduced to keep records, distribute and regulate food supplies to the population. The card system covered main food products such as bread, meat, oil, sugar, salt, cereals, etc. The rations varied depending on which social group one belonged to, and what kind of work one did. Workers in the heavy industry and defense enterprises received a daily ration of 800 g (miners - 1 kg) of bread per person; workers in other industries 600 g. Non-manual workers received 400 or 500 g based on the significance of their enterprise, and children 400 g. However, the card system only covered industrial workers and residents of towns while villagers never had any provisions of this kind. The card system was cancelled in 1947.

## **29 Bukhara Jews**

Bukhara Jews are an ethnic group of Jews residing in Central Asia. They are descendants of Mesopotamian Jews and speak Bukharan, which is basically Judeo-Tadzhik. Their religious rite is Sephardic. Most of them have been repatriated to Israel.

## **30 Item 5**

This was the nationality factor, which was included on all job application forms, Jews, who were considered a separate nationality in the Soviet Union, were not favored in this respect from the end of World War II until the late 1980s.

## **31 NKVD**

People's Committee of Internal Affairs; it took over from the GPU, the state security agency, in 1934.

## **32 Nietzsche, Friedrich (1844-1900)**

German philosopher and poet. Long misunderstood and even reviled as a result of misuses of his work, most notably by the Nazis, Nietzsche has become one of the most influential philosophers of the late 20th century. Nietzsche is famous, among others, for the theory of the Übermensch, which he developed in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. In 1889 he suffered a mental breakdown from which he never recovered.

## **33 Smersh**

Russian abbreviation for 'Smert Shpionam' meaning Death to Spies. It was a counterintelligence department in the Soviet Union formed during World War II, to secure the rear of the active Red Army, on the front to arrest 'traitors, deserters, spies, and criminal elements'. The full name of the entity was USSR People's Commissariat of Defense Chief Counterintelligence Directorate 'SMERSH'. This name for the counterintelligence division of the Red Army was introduced on 19th April 1943, and worked as a separate entity until 1946. It was headed by Viktor Abakumov. At the same time a SMERSH directorate within the People's Commissariat of the Soviet Navy and a SMERSH

department of the NKVD were created. The main opponent of SMERSH in its counterintelligence activity was Abwehr, the German military foreign information and counterintelligence department. SMERSH activities also included 'filtering' the soldiers recovered from captivity and the population of the gained territories. It was also used to punish within the NKVD itself; allowed to investigate, arrest and torture, force to sign fake confessions, put on a show trial, and either send to the camps or shoot people. SMERSH would also often be sent out to find and kill defectors, double agents, etc.; also used to maintain military discipline in the Red Army by means of barrier forces, that were supposed to shoot down the Soviet troops in the cases of retreat. SMERSH was also used to hunt down 'enemies of the people' outside Soviet territory.

### **34 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.

### **35 Gulag**

The Soviet system of forced labor camps in the remote regions of Siberia and the Far North, which was first established in 1919. However, it was not until the early 1930s that there was a significant number of inmates in the camps. By 1934 the Gulag, or the Main Directorate for Corrective Labor Camps, then under the Cheka's successor organization the NKVD, had several million inmates. The prisoners included murderers, thieves, and other common criminals, along with political and religious dissenters. The Gulag camps made significant contributions to the Soviet economy during the rule of Stalin. Conditions in the camps were extremely harsh. After Stalin died in 1953, the population of the camps was reduced significantly, and conditions for the inmates improved somewhat.

### **36 Kolyma**

River in north-east Siberia, the Kolyma basin is best known for its Gulag camps and gold mining. Between 1922 and 1956 there were hundreds of camps along the banks of the river, where both criminals and political prisoners were transferred. They were mainly working in the gold mines, but there were other industrial plants built there too. Over 3 million people were taken to the Kolyma camps.

### **37 Berlag**

Russian abbreviation for 'coastal camp'. Located in Magadan, in the Russian Far-East on the Sea of Okhotsk, the camp existed between 1948 and 1956. As a part of the Gulag between 15 and 31 thousand prisoners were stationed in the Berlag constantly. They worked mainly at mining enterprises, construction sites and timber works. This was one of the most horrible of the Gulag camps: lethal rate was about 50% annually, unless taken to some other camp few prisoners managed to stay alive in the Berlag for over three years.

### **38 Deportations from the Baltics (1940-1953)**

After the Soviet Union occupied the three Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) in June 1940

as a part of establishing the Soviet system, mass deportation of the local population began. The victims of these were mainly but not exclusively those unwanted by the regime: the local bourgeoisie and the previously politically active strata. Deportations to remote parts of the Soviet Union continued up until the death of Stalin. The first major wave of deportation took place between 11th and 14th June 1941, when 36,000, mostly politically active people were deported. Deportations were reintroduced after the Soviet Army recaptured the three countries from Nazi Germany in 1944. Partisan fights against the Soviet occupiers were going on all up to 1956, when the last squad was eliminated. Between June 1948 and January 1950, in accordance with a Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR under the pretext of 'grossly dodged from labor activity in the agricultural field and led anti-social and parasitic mode of life' from Latvia 52,541, from Lithuania 118,599 and from Estonai 32,450 people were deported. The total number of deportees from the three republics amounted to 203,590. Among them were entire Lithuanian families of different social strata (peasants, workers, intelligentsia), everybody who was able to reject or deemed capable to reject the regime. Most of the exiled died in the foreign land. Besides, about 100,000 people were killed in action and in fusillade for being members of partisan squads and some other 100,000 were sentenced to 25 years in camps.

### **39 Pushkin, Alexandr (1799-1837)**

Russian poet and prose writer, among the foremost figures in Russian literature. Pushkin established the modern poetic language of Russia, using Russian history for the basis of many of his works. His masterpiece is Eugene Onegin, a novel in verse about mutually rejected love. The work also contains witty and perceptive descriptions of Russian society of the period. Pushkin died in a duel.

### **40 White Guards**

A counter-revolutionary gang led by General Denikin, famous for their brigandry and anti-Semitic acts all over Russia; legends were told of their cruelty. Few survived their pogroms.

### **41 Mandatory job assignment in the USSR**

Graduates of higher educational institutions had to complete a mandatory 2-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.

### **42 Beriya, L**

P. (1899-1953): Communist politician, one of the main organizers of the mass arrests and political persecution between the 1930s and the early 1950s. Minister of Internal Affairs, 1938-1953. In 1953 he was expelled from the Communist Party and sentenced to death by the Supreme Court of the USSR.

### **43 Khrushchev, Nikita (1894-1971)**

Soviet communist leader. After Stalin's death in 1953, he became first secretary of the Central Committee, in effect the head of the Communist Party of the USSR. In 1956, during the 20th Party



Congress, Khrushchev took an unprecedented step and denounced Stalin and his methods. He was deposed as premier and party head in October 1964. In 1966 he was dropped from the Party's Central Committee.

#### **44 Twentieth Party Congress**

At the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956 Khrushchev publicly debunked the cult of Stalin and lifted the veil of secrecy from what had happened in the USSR during Stalin's leadership.

#### **45 Residence permit**

The Soviet authorities restricted freedom of travel within the USSR through the residence permit and kept everybody's whereabouts under control. Every individual in the USSR needed residential registration; this was a stamp in the passport giving the permanent address of the individual. It was impossible to find a job, or even to travel within the country, without such a stamp. In order to register at somebody else's apartment one had to be a close relative and if each resident of the apartment had at least 8 square meters to themselves.

#### **46 Ispolkom**

After the tsar's abdication (March, 1917), power passed to a Provisional Government appointed by a temporary committee of the Duma, which proposed to share power to some extent with councils of workers and soldiers known as 'soviets'. Following a brief and chaotic period of fairly democratic procedures, a mixed body of socialist intellectuals known as the Ispolkom secured the right to 'represent' the soviets. The democratic credentials of the soviets were highly imperfect to begin with: peasants - the overwhelming majority of the Russian population - had virtually no say, and soldiers were grossly over-represented. The Ispolkom's assumption of power turned this highly imperfect democracy into an intellectuals' oligarchy.

#### **47 Brezhnev, Leonid, Ilyich (1906-82) Soviet leader**

He joined the Communist Party in 1931 and rose steadily in its hierarchy, becoming a secretary of the party's central committee in 1952. In 1957, as protégé of Khrushchev, he became a member of the presidium (later politburo) of the central committee. He was chairman of the presidium of the Supreme Soviet, or titular head of state. Following Khrushchev's fall from power in 1964, which Brezhnev helped to engineer, he was named first secretary of the Communist Party. Although sharing power with Kosygin, Brezhnev emerged as the chief figure in Soviet politics. In 1968, in support of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, he enunciated the 'Brezhnev doctrine,' asserting that the USSR could intervene in the domestic affairs of any Soviet bloc nation if communist rule was threatened. While maintaining a tight rein in Eastern Europe, he favored closer relations with the Western powers, and he helped bring about a détente with the United States. In 1977 he assumed the presidency of the USSR. Under Gorbachev, Brezhnev's regime was criticized for its corruption and failed economic policies.

#### **48 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.

#### **49 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.

#### **50 Memorial**

An international historic, educational, human rights, charity organization, founded in Moscow in 1989. It is a movement initially aiming at keeping the record of political repressions in the former USSR. Now it is an umbrella of a dozen of organizations in Russia, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Georgia and Ukraine, maintaining research, human rights and educational activity.

#### **51 Chechen War**

After the communist Soviet Union disintegrated in 1991 Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia declared their independence. The autonomous territories immediately north of these new nations remained part of the new Russian State, though their populations largely were not Russian. Several of these ethnic groups began agitating for more autonomy from Moscow or for outright independence. The conflict in Russia's South Caucasus region (Chechnya, Dagestan, Ossetia, Ingushetia) began quickly. After the first Chechen War (1994-96) Chechens claimed victory and independence, and the Russian government claimed victory and the retention of Chechnya as a part of Russia. Clashes along the border continued as several Chechen rebel leaders and groups continued to harass the Russians in nearby areas. One such area is Dagestan, another, largely Muslim, region of southern Russia. During the Dagestan Campaign, Russia suffered several terrorist attacks in cities throughout the nation. Using this as an excuse to continue the Dagestan Campaign into Chechnya proved quite popular with Russian voters. After Yeltsin's retirement, Acting President Vladimir Putin won the March 2000 election largely on the strength of his continuing war against the Chechens and Islamic 'terrorists.'

#### **52 Googol, Nikolai (1809-1852)**

Russian novelist, dramatist, satirist, founder of the so-called critical realism in Russian literature, best known for his novel the Dead Souls (1842).

### **53 Dostoevsky, Fyodor (1821-1881)**

Russian novelist, journalist and short-story writer whose psychological penetration into the human soul had a profound influence on the 20th century novel. His novels anticipated many of the ideas of Nietzsche and Freud. Dostoevsky's novels contain many autobiographical elements, but ultimately they deal with moral and philosophical issues. He presented interacting characters with contrasting views or ideas about freedom of choice, socialism, atheisms, good and evil, happiness and so forth.

### **54 Chekhov, Anton Pavlovich (1860-1904)**

Russian short-story writer and dramatist. Chekhov's hundreds of stories concern human folly, the tragedy of triviality, and the oppression of banality. His characters are drawn with compassion and humor in a clear, simple style noted for its realistic detail. His focus on internal drama was an innovation that had enormous influence on both Russian and foreign literature. His success as a dramatist was assured when the Moscow Art Theater took his works and staged great productions of his masterpieces, such as Uncle Vanya or The Three Sisters. and also had some religious instruction.