Bella Chanina

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Kishinev
Moldova
Interviewer: Nathalia Fomina
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Bella Semyonovna Chanina is a short plump woman with a sweet round face, thick silver-gray hair that she wears in a knot. Bella Semyonovna wears trousers and loose shirts, which make her look young. She has a pleasant deep voice that becomes commanding at times. She is very fond of the public work she does. Bella Semyonovna is the mistress of 'the Warm House.' One can tell that she was a lively and vigorous character in her youth. Bella Semyonovna buried her husband a few months ago. She hasn't recovered from the loss yet, and when she tells me about her life, tears often fill her eyes. Bella Semyonovna lives in a cozy two-bedroom apartment. It is furnished with 1970s furniture: a living room set, a low table and chairs. She serves me tea and a cake that she has made herself.

My family background

My maternal grandfather, Yoil Rosenthal, was born in the 1860s and lived in Telenesti [According to the census of 1897 this shtetl had 4379 residents, 3876 were Jews], in Bessarabia 1. My grandfather had two brothers: Lazar who lived his life in Odessa [today Ukraine] and we didn't know him, and Srul, a handsome old man with a big white beard. I knew Srul Rosenthal, he was the father of my mother's cousin brother Zalman, my mother's big friend. Srul had two sons: Mordko and Yakov. Mordko and his family were killed in Kalarash during the war [Great Patriotic War] 2, and Yakov disappeared at the front. Srul died in evacuation. I didn't know grandfather Yoil; he died in 1891. We had a big photographic portrait of my grandfather on the wall: in a white shirt, a small narrow tie in the fashion of the time. He looked like an intelligent man. I don't remember a beard, but if he had one, it was small. I can't tell what he did for a living. When we evacuated, we left the portrait on the wall and this was his only photograph.

My grandmother Ester Rosenthal was born and grew up in Telenesti. I don't know her maiden name, but I know that my great-grandmother's name was Beila since I was named Bella after her. At the age of 28, Grandmother Ester became a widow with four children, the oldest of whom, Gedaliye, was eight years old and the youngest, Iosif, was just a year and a half. I remember my grandmother well. She was short, round-faced, always wearing modest dark clothes and a kerchief.

She lived with us before the war and sometimes went to stay with her younger son in Soroki. My grandmother wasn't fanatically religious, but observed all the Jewish traditions. She lit candles on Sabbath and when she was with us, before Pesach she had all our utensils and crockery koshered. And I also remember – they don't do it now – that my grandmother placed all tableware – knives and forks, into the ground in flower pots. She probably koshered them in this manner.

My grandmother Ester believed that the sons had to study, while the daughter had to help her about the house. My mother's older brother Gedaliye graduated from the university in Odessa. He was a mathematician before the war and worked as a director of the Jewish school in Tarutino in Bessarabia. Uncle Gedaliye was a dandy, he liked nice clothes. When he visited Kishinev, he had suits made for him here. My mother always went to fitting sessions with him; I remember he didn't leave her alone till she gave up what she was doing to go to a tailor with him. Uncle Gedaliye and his wife Sophia had an only son, Yuliy, born in 1926.

During the war they lived in Aktyubinsk in Kazakhstan, where Yuliy studied in a railroad school. In the last months of the war Yuliy volunteered to the front without saying a word to his parents. He was at the front till the end of the war and then served until the end of the term of his service. After demobilization Yuliy finished a law school and entered the Law Faculty of Lvov University. Uncle Gedaliye died in Lvov approximately in the 1960s. His wife Sophia died at the age of 92-93, many years later. I often visited Yuliy, who lives with his family in Lvov, and we went to my uncle's grave at the Jewish cemetery.

The next child in the family after my mother was Mordko, who lived in Moscow. I always knew him as Max, maybe he changed his name because the previous one was too Jewish. He had a higher technical education, but I don't know where he studied. During the Russian Revolution of 1917 [3] Uncle Max lived in Tbilisi and then moved to Moscow. My mother corresponded with her brother, but he rarely wrote to her. Max worked in the Ministry of Heavy Industry, where he was chief of the planning department. During the war the Ministry stayed in Moscow and so did Uncle Max and his family. His son's name was also Yuliy – it was a tradition in my mother's family to call older sons by the name of Yuliy after grandfather Yoil. Uncle Max died in 1969. Yuliy died in the 1980s, and his wife Nyusia lives with the family of their daughter Bella in Jerusalem. I'm not in contact with them.

My mother's younger brother Iosif lived in Soroki [Soroca in Moldovan] before the war and after the war he moved to Kishinev [Chisinau in Moldovan]. Uncle Iosif didn't have a higher education. He had different jobs and in his last years he was an insurance agent. His older son Yuliy studied in the Agricultural College. In his childhood he fell seriously ill and had heart problems. Yuliy died at the age of 20, before graduation from the college. Uncle Iosif died in the 1970s, he was buried at the Jewish cemetery in Kishinev. Two younger children of Iosif, Max and Ida, and their families, moved to the USA in the early 1990s. They live in Boston.

My mother Sarah Rosenthal was born in 1887. When she was four, my grandfather died. My grandmother Ester raised her to be a future Jewish wife. My mother learned to cook and sew and knew Jewish traditions well. However, my mother was eager to study. She had a strong character and ran away from Telenesti at the age of 16. She went to study in the Jewish grammar school. After finishing it she got a certificate of a teacher. My mother moved to Tiflis, that's what Tbilisi was called at the time, to her brothers Max and Gedaliye. I don't remember under what circumstances

they had left there. She worked as a teacher.

When she was in Tbilisi this was the period of genocide against the Armenian population in Turkey in 1915-1916. [In 1915 the Turkish government issued an order for the forced deportation of Armenians from Eastern Anatolia. About 3 mln people were subject to deportation. Only one third of them survived]. My mother told me that in Tbilisi a committee was organized to provide assistance to Armenians and she worked in this committee. She said when Armenians came to talk to her, they complained, 'You are a Georgian and you provide more help to Georgians,' and vice versa, when Georgians talked to her, they said, 'You help Armenians more than Georgians.' They never guessed that she was neither Georgian nor Armenian, but a Jew. My mother helped Georgians and Armenians equally.

In 1917 my grandmother fell ill in Telenesti. My brothers decided that one of them had to go there and of course, it was to be my mother. She went to her mother and stayed in Bessarabia. This was at the time when Bessarabia was annexed to Romania in 1918 4 and the border was closed. My mother moved to Kishinev and was a teacher of Hebrew in a lyceum for boys.

My father's father, Moisey Fichgendler, lived in Yampol Vinnitsa region [today Ukraine]. [Yampol was a district town of the Podolsk province. According to the census in 1897 there were 6,600 residents including 2,800 Jews.] I can't tell what he was doing there, but some time in the 1900s the family moved to Soroki in Bessarabia, since my grandfather couldn't find a job in his town. I remember my grandfather Moisey. When I was born, he and Grandmother lived in Kishinev. My grandfather was a very modest quiet man with a gray beard. He always wore a yarmulka [kippah]. My grandmother was short, busy and sweet. She always wore dark clothes and covered her head. They lived in the lower town, the poorest part of Kishinev. I remember dimly their small apartment, very modest, two small rooms, and the front door led directly to one of the rooms.

My grandmother and grandfather were religious, but I don't remember them going to the Choral synagogue [the largest synagogue in Kishinev, where besides the cantor there was also a choir], where my parents went. They probably went to a smaller synagogue. My grandfather died in Kishinev in 1930. He was buried according to Jewish traditions, wrapped in a takhrikhim, and there were candles on the floor. I was seven years old, and remember his funeral well. After my grandfather died, my grandmother Rosa moved to her younger son Boris in Soroki. During the war Grandmother Rosa and Boris' wife were taken to a ghetto somewhere in Ukraine. They were killed there in 1941 or 1942.

My father had three brothers. I don't know the names of two of them. One of them moved to America in 1910 and the second one drowned in the Dniestr at the age of about 20. My mother told me about it. I only knew my father's younger brother Boris. After the war he lived in Beltsy. Boris was a worker at a plant. He remarried after his wife's death in the ghetto. I met his second wife, with whom he lived after the war. They had no children. They visited us occasionally. They've both passed away.

My father Semyon Fichgendler was born in Yampol in 1888. When he was ten or twelve, his family moved to Soroki. I don't know where my father studied, but he knew Russian and Yiddish well. He probably finished an agricultural school. He was an agronomist, a vine grower. I don't know exactly, when he moved to Kishinev, but in the 1910s he was working in a Jewish children's home in Bayukany, a district in Kishinev. Boys were kept in the children's home till they reached the age

of 14. My father was an agronomist, teaching the boys gardening. He lived in a small room in this home. After my father died, one of his pupils wrote to me, telling me how my father accommodated him in his room in 1912, when the boy had to leave the children's home. He shared food with him and took him to work in surrounding villages and helped him to stand on his own feet in life.

My father was known for his qualifications beyond Bessarabia. Landowners offered him to work for them. My father told me that he got to know by chance what one of them wrote in a letter of recommendation for my father: 'You know how much I dislike Jews, but I do recommend you to employ Fichgendler, he is a wonderful specialist.' I know that my father was having problems with obtaining the Romanian citizenship since he wasn't born in Bessarabia. We had a document that I gave to the museum, a special verdict of the court about granting the Romanian citizenship to my father.

My parents met in Kishinev, but I don't know any details. We never discussed this subject. When my mother was his fiancée, my father bought her a French enamel brooch. It has been miraculously preserved till now. I don't know, maybe my mother had it on her clothing, when they evacuated. Now this brooch is a rarity, but I don't dare to sell it, though I need money very much. My parents got married in 1922.

Growing up

I was born in the Jewish hospital in Kishinev in 1923, and was registered in the rabbinate book. When after the war I needed to obtain a birth certificate since the original was lost, they found the roster of 1923 at the synagogue and found an entry about my birth there. Following the family tradition, my mother wanted to name me Yulia after her father, but the others talked her out of it: 'What if you have a boy one day.'

When I was small we often changed apartments. Probably, my parents were looking for a cheaper one. I know the addresses, but the last apartment before the war was on 8, Teatralnaya Street, two blocks from the central street. We lived in a two-bedroom apartment on the second floor: one bigger room – a dining room, and a smaller room – my parents' bedroom. I slept on a couch in the dining room behind a screen. There was a bookcase with books in the dining room. We didn't have fiction, but my father had a big collection of books on vine growing, mainly in Russian. During the war this collection was gone. Later I often found his books – they had his facsimiles – in the house of agronomists in Kishinev, but I don't know who brought them there. There was also a big desk in the dining room, but I did my homework in my parents' bedroom, where they had a small table. There was also a small hallway and a kitchen in the apartment. My mother cooked on a primus stove.

Our family was rather poor. I remember that my mother had one fancy dress of black silk, very plainly cut. I don't remember my parents going to the theater, but they were often invited to charity parties arranged by the Jewish community. My mother wore her only fancy dress and pinned her brooch on it. If she lost weight she draped the dress on her side and pinned it with this same brooch. My mother was beautiful, had expressive black eyes and always looked nice in her outfit. Men couldn't help liking my mother, but my mother was not soft. She was strict and imperious. My mother knew Russian literature well and read a lot in Russian. When guests came she liked to recite poems by Lermontov 5: 'Tell me, the branch of Palestine, where you have grown. Where have you bloomed? What hills, what valley have you adorned?'

My father was soft and kind. He traveled to surrounding villages on business a lot. I remember that when he came home, he always had rakhat-lukum [Turkish delight] for me. I adored it. At times it was very hard from being stored for a long time, but my father just had to give me my favorite sweets and I have bright memories about it.

My father had an acquaintance who was an agronomist. His name was Fyodor Fyodorovich Pozhoga, he was Russian. He lived in the upper town in a cottage with a big yard where he grew flowers. On my birthday at dawn my father brought me bunches of flowers from there. When I got up in the morning I didn't know to what corner to look first. There were flowers in vases on the floor and in vessels all over the room. I was born in June, when there are always many flowers.

I invited my friends from school to my birthday and my mother arranged a party for us. The hit of the parties was ice-cream. My mother borrowed an ice-cream maker. I remember a metal cylinder with another one inside and there was ice to be placed between them. Then it was necessary to turn the handle of the inner cylinder for a long time to make ice-cream. My mother made it in advance and put it on ice in the cellar in the yard. Once my dear Papa, who also had a sweet tooth like me, took a spoon going somewhere in the yard. Mama asked him where he was going and he said, 'I'm going to taste the ice-cream.'

My mother cooked dishes of the Jewish cuisine: chicken broth with kneydlakh, sweet and sour meat and gefilte fish on holidays. My mother made noodles, cut and dried them. She was good at making pastries, but I haven't any of her recipes left. My mother bought food at the market where she took me with her. The market in Kishinev was very picturesque. I particularly remember the rows with fish. The counters were plated with tin sheets. The vendors often wiped them and they shone in the sun and were very clean. We always bought lots of vegetables: tomatoes, red paprika and eggplants. My mother preserved tomatoes for winter. She had her own method to make preserves in bottles. My mother baked egg plants, put them under a press, tore them in pieces and placed them in a bottle. When the bottle was full she corked it, put the bottles in a big washing pan to sterilize them. She also made tomato preserves in bottles, adding aspirin to them. She also made gogoshari [a popular sort of sweet red paprika in Moldova]: she baked them, removed the thin transparent peel, placed them in a clay pot and added sunflower oil. She kept it in the cellar during the winter and the oil turned red and spicy and my mother used it in her cooking. We also ate lots of water melons. We usually bought a few dozens of them. The vendors delivered them to or home. My mother bought chickens and took them to a shochet to slaughter. My mother bought dairy products from certain vendors. Of course, we followed the kashrut at home.

My parents always celebrated Jewish holidays. I remember well that on holidays my father put on his black suit and went to the Choral synagogue, the biggest synagogue in Kishinev, with my mother. My father had a small tallit that he put on on holidays. Sometimes they took me with them. I sat on the balcony with my mother. The synagogue was very beautiful and there were many people in it. The rabbi of the Choral synagogue, Izhak Zirelson, was a public activist. He was a deputy to the Romanian Parliament. I saw him, but I don't remember what he looked like. Zirelson perished in the first days of the war. They said, a bomb hit his apartment. I also remember that there was a very good cantor at the Choral synagogue.

On Pesach we visited Grandfather Moisey and Grandmother Rosa, my father's parents. There was only our family there, no other visitors. My mother was the best connoisseur of Jewish traditions in

the family. She conducted the seder. We reclined on cushions at the table. There were traditional dishes and wine on the table. Everybody had a wine glass and there was one for Elijah ha-nevi, the Prophet. My mother opened the door for him to come in. I am not sure, but I think it was I who asked di fir kashes [the four questions], there were no boys. My mother put away the afikoman, a piece of matzah, and I had to steal it unnoticed.

On Rosh Hashanah my parents also went to the synagogue, and then we had a celebration. I remember apples and honey. On Yom Kippur we fasted and spent a whole day at the synagogue.

On Chanukkah I had a dreidl, beautiful, painted all over and big. I used to play with it for hours, sitting on the floor. My mother made doughnuts, sufganim. However, I don't remember being given any money. I also remember how my mother lit another candle every day on Chanukkah. On Purim my mother made hamantashen, triangle little pies with delicious filling.

We didn't have guests often. My parents were friends with the director of the children's home, Kholonay. He was a doctor and his wife was a housewife. We often visited them. They had old dark wood furniture and very beautiful crockery at home. There were no children at their home. Perhaps, their children were away – Kholonay was much older than my father. We also kept in touch with our numerous relatives in Kishinev. The parents of Sophia, Uncle Gedaliye's wife, lived on Kharlampievskaya Street. My mother often visited these old people. The parents of my uncle Iosif's wife from Soroki also lived in Kishinev. But my mother's closest relative was her cousin Zalman Rosenthal, the son of Srul Rosenthal, my grandfather Yoil's brother.

Zalman was born in Telenesti in 1889. He was educated at home, gave private classes of Hebrew, worked in a pharmacy. Then he finished a grammar school in Odessa, as an external student. In 1923 he started to work as an editor with the daily Yiddish Zionist newspaper 'Undzere Tsayt' [Yiddish for 'Our Time'] in Kishinev. Uncle Zalman was a Zionist. My mother and he often talked about politics and I often heard the name of Jabotinsky 6, it didn't mean anything to me at the time. Zalman went to Palestine and bought a plot of land there. He wanted to move there, but his wife was against it. In March 1938 the Romanian government closed 'Undzere Tsayt.' In 1939 he went to work in the Zionist organization Keren Kayemet 7 in Kishinev as an instructor for collecting funds. When in 1940 Bessarabia was annexed to the USSR 8, he was arrested on the charges of Zionism and exiled farther than Arkhangelsk [today Russia] in the North.

I remember well the Kishinev of my childhood - lying out like a chess board: you could see the end of a street lined with trees, when you were standing at its beginning. The central Alexandrovskaya Street sort of divided the town into two parts: the wealthier upper part and the lower poorer town, closer to the Byk River. There were wealthy houses and apartments in the upper town: the rich Jews Kogan, Shor, Klinger lived there. There were many shops on Alexandrovkaya Street owned by Jews. I don't remember whether they were open on Sabbath. I remember the jewelry and watch shop of the Jew Nemirovskiy. His two sons, young handsome men, worked in the store. When I turned 13, my parents said they didn't have money to organize a party for me, but that we would buy me a watch. They bought me a wristwatch at the Nemirovskiy shop that served me many years. After the war Nemirovskiy's older son worked as a watch repair-man in the Kishinev service center. He was excellently good and I took my watch to him for repair. He remembered me since I was a girl.

I went to a Romanian school at the age of six and then went to study in the lyceum for girls. When my grandmother lived with us, we spoke Yiddish at home and when my grandmother was not with us, we spoke Russian. Since my mother was a Hebrew teacher in the 1920s, she tried several times to teach me Hebrew, but I didn't move farther than 'Alef, beth' [Hebrew Alphabet]. My mother was very strict about my studies at school. She even asked the teacher to be strict with me. I remember that I wasn't happy about it. My mother taught me to recite poems and I performed at school concerts, but on the condition that she left the hall, or I got confused, feeling her strict look on me. We all wore black uniform robes of the same length. We lined up and the teacher measured the length with a ruler – they had to be 30 cm sharp from the floor. There were white collars and aprons, black nets to hold hair and a black velvet ribbon on the neck. There were Jewish, Moldovan and Russian girls in the lyceum. There was no anti-Semitism.

My closest friend Bertha Geiman was a Jew. I remember our class tutor reprimanding Bertha: 'You and Fichgendler are friends. Why don't you study as well as she does?' A tragedy happened in Bertha's family. Her older brother, a grammar school student, fell on the skating rink and hit his head. He must have had a concussion, but he didn't pay attention to it. That same evening he went to a party where he felt ill and died. Bertha's mother was grieving a lot after her 15-year-old son. She went to the cemetery almost every day. When the war began and there was the issue of evacuation, she said, 'I shall not leave my son's grave, I shall stay here.' When I returned from the evacuation in 1944 I ran to Bertha's house in the upper town. Their neighbors told me that Bertha and her mother were shot in 1941, at the beginning of occupation, during the mass action.

I was good at all subjects at school, but my favorite teacher was the teacher of Geography, whose surname was Mita. Mita is a 'cat' in Moldovan. She was a beautiful tall brunette. Somehow I remember the class where we studied the USSR. I was always interested in the USSR, since my mother's brother Max lived in Moscow. She told us, 'Imagine moving into a new apartment. Of course, your apartment is a mess, but gradually everything gets in order: furniture pieces, things and carpets. Of course, there was no order in the USSR after the revolution, but gradually things will be getting in order and it will be all right.' She talked about it almost sympathetically.

There was a tradition in Kishinev grammar schools. 100 days before finishing school a class from the girls school made arrangements to celebrate this with a class from a grammar school for boys at somebody's apartment. We called it a '100-day party'. In 1940 our class celebrated this '100-day party' with students of the commercial school for boys on Mogilyovskaya Street. We danced, sang and got photographed. I don't have a photograph of this party. After the war I met some people who attended this party in the streets of Kishinev. After finishing the lyceum I wanted to continue my education. Jews usually went to get higher education abroad: in France, Germany, Italy. There was only the Religious Faculty of Iasi University and Agricultural College in Kishinev, but my parents didn't have money to send me abroad. What were we to do? There was no answer to this question.

At that time Bessarabia was annexed to the USSR. I remember well this summer day [June 28th 1940]. We lived almost in the center. I plated red ribbons in my hair and went to Alexandrovskaya Street in the afternoon. The town was empty. I returned home. Later that afternoon I went out again. Somebody was making a speech from the balcony of the town hall, but I don't remember what he said. There were few people and it was quiet. Later there came rumors that wealthier people were deported. Once, somebody knocked on our door at dawn. I opened the door and saw a

young man wearing a summer shirt. He said the name of our neighbors. I showed him the door and ran to the window in the kitchen. It was high and I stood on the table to see what was going on in the yard. There was a truck and our neighbors were loading their things on it. They had everything well packed. Then they boarded the truck with NKVD 9 officers. They returned a few years after the war.

This summer I entered the Faculty of vine growing and wine making of the Agricultural College in Kishinev. My father wanted me to become a doctor, but there was no Medical College in Kishinev, and to send me, their only and beloved daughter to Uncle Max in Moscow was too much for them. There were Russian and Romanian groups in college. I went to the Romanian group. I became a Komsomol 10 member in the college. I knew a lot about my future profession from my father and I liked studying. I finished the first year.

During the war

In summer 1941 Germany attacked the USSR. We knew that Germans were killing Jews and many Jews were leaving Kishinev. Only those who had illusions regarding Germans and Romanians were staying. The sovkhoz 11 where my father was working provided horse-drawn wagons to Jews. My father was told we were expected in a sovkhoz in Kakhovka district, Kherson region [today Ukraine]. My mother, my father, Grandmother Ester and I left in the direction of Dubossary. We left the key to our apartment on the shelf by the door, as usual. We didn't think we would be gone for long. We reached the town of Kriulyany on the Dniestr. The bridge across the river was destroyed and the army troops were making a bridge of boats before nighttime. There were many people and equipment on the bank. The army troops were the first to pass. At dawn the bridge was removed for the day. Our turn was on the third night. We reached the eastern bank in complete darkness. We didn't know where to go and turned left. All of a sudden a silhouette of a soldier emerged before us. I can still see it: a short thin soldier with a rifle, its bayonet sticking over his head: 'Where are you going, there are Germans there!' He made us turn around. Wouldn't one believe in miracles after this? If he hadn't turned us around, we would have gone directly to the Germans.

We moved to the East for two weeks. We stopped to take a rest in the town of Voznesensk. My parents had a discussion and decided that my father would go to the sovkhoz in Kherson region, and my mother, grandmother and I would go to Uncle Max in Moscow. My father left on the sovkhoz wagon. My mother wasn't feeling well and needed some medications. The owners of the house, where we were staying, told me the way to the pharmacy in the main street. Round the corner there was a steep descent to a bridge across the Bug River. I looked at the bridge, bought the medication and went back. On the next day the front advanced so much that we had to take a prompt leave. The owners of the house were evacuating with their office and couldn't take us with them. My mother ran about the town the whole day, trying to obtain a permit to board the ship with a hospital on it. She finally got one, but the chief of the hospital said, 'I can take you and your daughter and you will work for us, but I cannot take the old lady – we shall need this place for a patient.' My mother refused to go – we couldn't really leave my grandmother.

An evening and then night fell. Demolition bombs began to be dropped on Voznesensk. We left the house and were walking along the central street without knowing where to. There was a truck with some soldiers moving in the opposite direction to where we were going. The driver asked us from the cabin: 'Where is a bridge?' How fortunate that I knew where the bridge was! 'Take us with you

and I will show you the way!' They pulled Grandmother in by her hands and my mother and I got in. Near the pharmacy I pointed to the right. We crossed the bridge and drove up the steep bank, when we heard an explosion. We turned back and saw the bridge burning. At dawn we had to get off – they couldn't allow us to stay in the truck – they had ammunition in it. I remember that the soldiers offered us bread and something else, but we refused and didn't take anything. We were too shocked by everything. We got to Novaya Odessa [Nikolaev Region] walking on the dusty road in the unbearable heat. I was exhausted and remember lying down by a clay fence. Military trucks were driving by, we were trying to stop one, but they didn't stop until finally somebody picked us up. They drove us to Melitopol, where we met a middle-aged Jewish man. When he heard we were from Kishinev he took us to his house. He turned out to be the director of the town bookstore. He had a comfortable apartment and his wife treated us to a meal.

We decided to go to Rostov [today Russia], where our good acquaintance Fyodor Nikitich Tifanyuk, director of the Champagne factory, had evacuated with his enterprise. We got to Donetsk in a train with other refugees and from there we went to Rostov. Fyodor Nikitich helped us to get a job in the Reconstructor vine growing sovkhoz in Aksaysk district near Rostov. They gave us a little clean room, my mother and I went to gather crops of grapes and my grandmother stayed at home. It was the beginning of September. One day, when my mother and I came to lunch, we were told that somebody from the factory in Rostov called us and told us to go there immediately. We went to Rostov with Grandmother. How happy we were, when Fyodor Nikitich gave us a card from my father! My father wrote to him that he was in the village of Grigoropolisskaya in Alexandrovsk district, Stavropol region, and that he had lost his family. Fyodor Nikitich gave us money for the road and we went to Papa.

Papa had lost hope to see us and was so depressed when he came to the village that he didn't tell them that he was an agronomist and was handling sacks on the threshing floor. Later he got a job as an agronomist and earned more money, so we managed to save a little. We needed winter clothes. Winter was coming and we had lost all our clothes that we took from Kishinev. One morning my mother left for Armavir, located on the other end of Kuban. My mother went to the market there and in the evening she returned with her purchases. She bought a dark blue coat with a rabbit collar, a big size soldier's gray overcoat and some other clothing. We made the overcoat shorter and I wore it for many years after we returned to Kishinev from evacuation. From the remaining cloth I made a sleeveless vest and knitted sleeves to it.

When they heard in the village that I had studied at the Agricultural College for a year, they offered me a job as an agronomist in a neighboring village. I agreed. The chairman of the kolkhoz drove me to the field. He explained, 'These are winter crops, this is a stubble field.' I had no idea what this was all about. To cut a long story short: I returned to my parents and stayed there quietly. In Grigoropolisskaya I took three months' training for combine operators at the Mechanic School, and after finishing it I began to work in the equipment yard. It was a cold winter. Huge sheds with tractors and combines. There were hardly any tools, but grips and files sticking to hands from the cold. I wrote a letter to the Ministry of Higher Education asking them where our college was evacuated. It was just incidental that the director of our college, Nikolay Vasilievich Nechaev, was chief of the department of agricultural college at the ministry at that time. I received their prompt response that my college had evacuated to Frunze [today Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan] and that if I wanted to continue my studies there, they would send me money for the ticket. They sent us

money for the whole family. This was July 1942. The front line was approaching our village and German troops were on our tails when we reached Mineralnyye Vody and then Baku [today Azerbaijan]. From Baku we went to Krasnovodsk [today Turkmenbashi in Turkmenistan] across the Caspian Sea and from there we took a train to Frunze.

In Frunze we rented a corner in a room from one family. My father worked as an agronomist in the trade department. I was in my second year of college and my mother didn't work. Uncle Max came by to take Grandmother to Moscow with him. In Frunze we received bread per bread cards 12. My mother had a card of a dependent and I had a student's card. My father supported us: he went on business trips to sovkhozes that had bakeries. My father used to bring us bread. I remember it – flat gray loves of bread. Once my mother bumped into Uncle Zalman Rosenthal's father-in-law, sitting on a bench in a park. It turned out that Zalman's wife Betia, their daughters Tsyta and Musia were also in Frunze. Betia told my mother that Zalman was still in the camp. The girls studied music and often came to where we lived on their way from music classes. My mother always gave them at least a piece of bread. Of course, we didn't observe Jewish traditions when in Frunze. We were starving and following the kashrut was out of the question.

On vacations students were sent to the construction of the Chuiskiy channel [one of the irrigational channels in Kyrgyzstan]. There was a lack of drinking water and we licked the water dripping between the slabs of the walls of the channel. As a result, many students fell ill with enteric fever. I also contracted it. I was taken to Frunze, where my mother brought me to recovery. I was young and wanted something nice to wear. I made a dress from bandage strips sewing one to another. Then I colored it with ink. I also made summer shoes. We bought rubber pieces at the market and I made soles and sewed some canvas on them. However, I couldn't do anything of this kind now – I wouldn't remember how. In fall there was a celebration of the 25th anniversary of the college. 'What do I wear?' I thought. My mother removed a silk lining from her coat that she had from Kishinev and made me a dress. She decorated it with lace from a night slip and a lace collar. I felt like a queen in this dress!

Soviet troops liberated Kishinev on 24th August 1944. I returned to my hometown with my college before my parents came there. We were accommodated in a hostel and first thing in the morning I ran to our yard. Our apartment was half-ruined, there was no furniture left. I climbed the ruins, imagined the dining room and the bedroom. Where there was a cupboard I found broken pieces of our dinner set, with purple flowers. I found my baby bathtub with a missing bottom and an old kettle. My mother and father returned a few months later, receiving a letter of invitation from Fyodor Nikitich Tikhanyuk. Papa went to work at his Champagne factory. We stayed in the ruins of our house, gradually fixing the roof and building up the walls. The town authorities reimbursed our expenses for the restoration of our house in part. For a long time there were no comforts [toilet and bathroom] in this apartment. Only many years later water piping was installed to supply water.

After the war

In the late 1940s Grandmother returned to Kishinev from Moscow. She was missing Moldova. She died in 1950. We buried my grandmother at the Jewish cemetery, and, as required, she was wrapped in a takhrikhim. My mother didn't allow me to go to the cemetery: those whose parents are living should not go to the cemetery. I remember my mother grieving: 'How far away we buried Granny. Oyfn barg' ['To grief' in Yiddish]. There was a flat area and then a slope in the cemetery.

Nowadays my Granny's grave is by the entrance to the cemetery, since the former area of the cemetery was given to a park in the 1960s.

Our classes in college began in the winter of 1944. In spring we went to have training in the college yard in Bykovets station of Kalarash district. On 9th May we, girls, worked in the vineyard and the guys were in the field, when border guards came by riding their horses: 'Girls, the war is over!' Of course, we dropped what we were doing and went to the hostel in the village. On our way there, we picked bunches of field flowers that we took to our room! When the guys returned to the hostel after work and saw this beauty they couldn't understand for a long time what happened, till we told them that the war was over. I remember an employee of this yard brought us a bucket of wine to celebrate the victory.

After finishing the college I received a diploma of a vine grower and wine maker. The dean of our faculty, a renowned wine maker in Moldova, Ivan Isidorovich Cherep, offered me to be a lab assistant at the department. It didn't seem interesting to me and I still regret it. I went to work in the Winemaking Industry Department. In 1950 there were incredible crops of grapes. It was really disastrous, there were not enough boxes, fuel for transportation, barrels and big containers for wine. All department employees were sent to sovkhozes to help them resolve problems. I was in Kamenka. Once I went to the chief of our department in Kishinev and said to him that I wouldn't leave till he gives a direction for me to get fuel. All of a sudden, a tall swarthy man with an aquiline nose stepped into the office from the balcony. He was wearing a tight-neck jacket and high boots, imitating Stalin's style like many bosses did at the time. He must have heard our discussion. 'Give her as much as she needs' – he directed.

It turned out later that this was the chief of the Department of Wine Industry from Moscow, Azarashvili, a Georgian man. During that visit of his he made tours to all wineries, including my father's. He liked what my father was doing and they became friends and Azarashvili visited us at home. He suggested that I should go to postgraduate studies in the Agricultural Academy in Moscow. I found this idea attractive and submitted my documents to the institution, but they refused without any explanation, but in those years it was clear that the reason was my nationality. This was when the campaign against cosmopolitans 13 began. I remember the much ado about the 'Doctors' Plot' 14. It didn't touch upon me directly, but I remember meetings at work with ridiculous accusations against Jewish doctors. Everything ended with Stalin's death [1953]. So many people around were crying, but I kept silent. I didn't go hysterical. In my heart I was hoping for changes.

After Stalin died uncle Zalman returned from a labor camp 15 in 1954. He had been kept there for 14 years and returned a broken ill man. He wasn't released, but sent to reside in Kishinev, which meant that he had to make his appearance in the KGB office 16 in Kishinev every week. His wife and daughters finally saw him. Zalman went to work at the Aurika garment factory in the suburb of Kishinev. The former editor began to stamp tags for garment products. At one o'clock on Sunday he came for lunch with us. I remember that he sat beside Mama. One Sunday he didn't come. This was unusual to us. What happened? We went to see him. He was staying in bed. He had had a stroke. Two days later he died. This happened in 1959. Zalman Rosenthal has never been rehabilitated 17. His older daughter Tsyta lives in Germany now, in Aachen, his younger daughter Musia lives in Jerusalem, Israel.

I met my future husband Grigoriy Chanin at work. Shortly afterwards he invited me to the cinema. I took a colleague of mine there. We began to meet. He courted me for over a year. I introduced him to my parents. His parents had died before that. His mother, Sophia Chanina, died in 1946 from diabetes at the age of 56; his father, Wolf Chanin, who was a commercial man before the war, and a pensioner after the war, died in 1957. His sister, Nora Borenstein, was the first of his family whom he introduced me to. Nora and her family, her husband Izia and their son Slavik treated me like their own. Our friendship lasted for many years till they moved to New York, USA, in the early 1990s, where Nora died in the late 1990s. Izia danced wonderfully, and I loved dancing with him on our family gatherings. Grigoriy's sister Rosa was an accountant. She died in the 1980s. Her daughter Rina and her family live in Israel. There were two brothers living in Kishinev: Rivik, who died in 1966, and Alexandr who moved to USA with his son's family in the 1990s. He died there in 2003.

In 1958 Grigoriy and I got married. There were no big wedding parties in those years. Everything was quiet. We had a small wedding dinner with our relatives: his and mine. Grigoriy was five years older than me. He was born in Kishinev in 1918. When the war began, his parents, sisters and he evacuated. On the way he was mobilized to the Soviet Army. He took his first baptism of fire during the defense of Zaporozhiye. There was a power plant, the dam was blasted and the Dnieper flooded the town. Grigoriy couldn't swim and many others couldn't either. The water was neck deep and they were grabbing tree branches to survive. Grigoriy was wounded in battles for Zaporozhiye and sent to a hospital in Armavir. After recovery he participated in the Stalingrad battle, then he finished a school of intelligence studies and received the rank of lieutenant. Along with other Soviet officers who knew Romanian, Grigoriy was sent to the Romanian units formed in the USSR at the end of the war to fight against Fascist Germany. They were instructors to Romanian officers. He fought till the end of the war. When victory came, he was in Hungary. After the war he served in the registry office in Vadul lui-Voda district and demobilized from there. Grigoriy started work and entered the evening department of Kishinev Polytechnic College, the Faculty of Economics. When we got married, Grigoriy was finishing the college. I was helping him, went to exams to write notes for him. I also helped him to write his diploma thesis. Our room was full of sheets of paper all around, that were sections of his diploma thesis. He even placed them on the floor and to walk in the room I had to maneuver between them.

We lived with my parents. After my father retired, he received a plot of land out of town: one and a half rows of vines. He was growing grapes, tomatoes, cucumbers, anything one could imagine. My husband and I went to help him. Grigoriy made a kolyba [Moldovan] hut for Papa from some planks to serve as a sun shelter. There was another pensioner working on the adjoining plot of land, from the Caucasus, either a Chechen or an Ingush, a very strong old man. They became friends. The neighbor watched my father working and followed his example in everything. He admired him: 'he is a magician.' My father always had good crops of grapes, and he sold some. One year he bought me a golden watch for the money that he made selling grapes; I still wear it in the memory of my father. My father always liked spoiling me.

After the first heart attack in 1966, my father grew weak and suffered from this very much. Once I came home from work: he was lying down crying. 'I can't work and if I don't work, I will rot.' But he always had an amazing memory. My mother helped me about the house. She also did the cooking. She died in June 1971. My father asked me to have her grave not too far in the cemetery so that he

could go there. Actually, he didn't have much time left. He died in 1973. They were buried near one another at the Jewish cemetery, but not according to Jewish traditions. I didn't observe the traditional Jewish mourning, when they sit on the floor for seven days. I just wore black clothes.

From the mid-1950s I began to work in the Republican Statistical Department. In 1963 I was appointed chief of the Department of Agricultural Statistics. Jews weren't given such positions usually. Chief of Department Ivan Matveyevich Vershinin had to obtain the approval of the Central Department of Statistics in Moscow, and of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Moldova. The Central Committee wouldn't have approved a Jew for this position, and this was their policy. Ivan Matveyevich played a trick: he obtained approval from Moscow and they issued an order of my appointment for this position and then he notified the Central Committee of the Communist Party in Moldova of the fact. There were about 150 employees in the department, but one could count the Jews on the fingers of one hand. This was the result of state anti-Semitism. I worked in this position for 16 years till I retired. I had good records. We were a team in my department. We only had one man, Semyon Naumovich Litviak, a Jew, he worked with us till he retired. He was a very good employee. After him we didn't employ men to our department. I thought they were not as good employees as women. The department of which I was chief was called a factory of chiefs of departments. Many of my former colleagues became chiefs of departments later. I let them quit willingly, but with a big regret.

I worked hard and often had to go on business to district towns. My husband and I tried to rest well on vacations. We went to health centers. We've been in Kislovodsk 18 a few times. Once, during our trip to Kislovodsk we traveled to Armavir, my husband wanted to find the hospital where he stayed during the war, but unfortunately, we failed to find the former employees of the hospital in Armavir. Like a drunkard loving to have a drink, I loved Kislovodsk. I liked walking the mountainous paths. There are specially developed routes in the mountains – a terrain course. Once, Artyom Markovich Lazarev, the former pro-rector of Kishinev University, my husband's comrade, offered us a trip to a students' camp on the Black Sea. We stayed in a tent at the seashore, bathed and lay in the sun, and my husband was fond of fishing. I made fish soup, but I made my best fish soup ever on the bank of the Dniestr.

Our department of statistics had a rest center on the bank of the Dniestr. Our employees and their families used to spend their weekends there. By the end of Friday our bus took all those who wanted to go there to this center. On Sunday evening this same bus brought us back. There were double rooms in the building there. In every room there were two beds, a table, chairs, a fridge and kitchen utensils – everything one might need for a good stay. There was a big kitchen with gas stoves. This was free for our employees and their families. One day in July, on the Fisherman's Day [one of the professional holidays in the USSR], we decided to celebrate this holiday. Our men liked fishing and thought they were related to this profession. They went to a neighboring sovkhoz and brought a lot of fish from there. We decided to make fish soup for the celebration. There was a big metal container with boiled water in the kitchen. We poured this water into smaller pots. There was a little tap in the container that we removed and corked the hole. I was the chef. Our employee Masha Tatok made the rounds of the room collecting everything we needed for fish soup: greeneries, spices, laurel. A whole team of assistants scaled the fish. We took all tables to the yard to make one long table. We had fish soup for the first course and served boiled fish in garlic sauce – mujdeiin in Moldovan – for the second course. Children and adults stood in a long line waiting for

their turn and I poured the fish soup into their bowls, but the funniest thing is that I didn't even taste it. On Monday they discussed this fish soup in the corridors and in all offices for the whole day.

In 1975 my husband and I moved into a two-bedroom apartment in Ryshkanovka, a new district in Kishinev. It's beautiful here: it's very green and there is a big park near the house. We had many friends: my husband's comrades and my colleagues. We often got together. We had friends of many nationalities. My husband's comrade Petia Katan was Russian, his wife Anya was a Jew. Their daughter Luda lives in Canada now and their son lives here, in Kishinev. My friend Lilia Glushkova was Russian, we worked together since 1953. My mother used to say: 'I like Lilia, she eats well.' Lilia adored my mother's little pies with cherries. Our friend Yasha Weinstein was a Jew, and his wife Mila was Russian. Mila was a doctor at the tuberculosis institute. We celebrated New Year with them. They moved to Germany in the 1990s. When Jews began to emigrate, my husband was thinking about it. It was my fault that we stayed, or I don't know whether it was a fault at all. I was against moving away. I like this land. When my husband and I had discussions of this kind, I used to walk the streets of Kishinev gazing at each tree: can it be that I will never see it again? How can I leave the graves of my parents? I was born here and I have grown up here, and every little thing here is dear to me.

In 1979, when I turned 55, I began to receive a personal pension of the Republican significance. Considering my Item 5 19 line this was a great accomplishment. It wasn't a lot more money, but it meant many benefits. For example, I paid 20 percent of the cost of medications for any medications and any quantity. I also paid 50 percent of communal utility fees for the apartment, power and telephone. Once a year I was allowed a free trip to any health center in the Soviet Union. Once I also received an allowance equal to my one and a half pension. Besides, I could have medical treatment in the republican polyclinic for governmental officials. As a pensioner I continued working in an ordinary job for a few years. My husband was very independent and proud and often changed jobs for this reason, though he was a very good economist, so he got a smaller pension than I had.

The life of pensioners became much worse after perestroika 20. Personal pensions were cancelled, and I lost all the benefits. We spent a bigger part of our pensions on our apartment fees and medications, as we were growing older and sickly. However, freedom was granted that didn't exist before and we can talk about the rebirth of the Jewish life in Kishinev. At first we started a Jewish library and now it is our community center. There was a club of pensioners opened in the library and I became one of its first members in 1993. I also began to work as a volunteer in Yehuda, a charity organization in the Hesed. In 1997 I became mistress of the warm house. I am fond of this work. We celebrate all the Jewish holidays and I try to do everything in accordance with Jewish traditions. For example, on Pesach I put on the plate of each attendant four pieces of matzah, with a napkin between them, an egg, horseradish and potatoes, everything that traditions require. Young people from the Hillel, an organization for young people, visit us. Considering my age, it's getting harder to manage my duties of the mistress of the warm house, but this activity supports me a lot. A few years ago I went to the synagogue on Sunday afternoon. There was a club conducted by Rabbi Zalman-Leib Abelskiy. The club is still there, but I can't attend it due to my health condition. Hesed delivers a food package to me every month. A few months ago my husband died. It was his will to be buried at the Jewish part in the cemetery 'Doina,' but not

according to the Jewish ritual - and so I did it.

Glossary:

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

2 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.

3 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.

4 Annexation of Bessarabia to Romania
During the chaotic days of the Soviet Revolution the national assembly of Moldovans convoked to Kishinev decided on 4th December 1917 the proclamation of an independent Moldovan state. In order to impede autonomous aspirations, Russia occupied the Moldovan capital in January 1918. Upon Moldova's desperate request, the army of neighboring Romania entered Kishinev in the same month recapturing the city from the Bolsheviks. This was the decisive step toward the union with Romania: the Moldovans accepted the annexation without any preliminary condition.

5 Lermontov, Mikhail, (1814-1841)
Russian poet and novelist. His poetic reputation, second in Russia only to Pushkin's, rests upon the lyric and narrative works of his last five years. Lermontov, who had sought a position in fashionable society, became enormously critical of it. His novel, A Hero of Our Time (1840), is partly autobiographical. It consists of five tales about Pechorin, a disenchanted and bored nobleman. The

novel is considered a classic of Russian psychological realism.

6 Jabotinsky, Vladimir (1880-1940)
Founder and leader of the Revisionist Zionist movement; soldier, orator and a prolific author writing in Hebrew, Russian, and English. During World War I he established and served as an officer in the Jewish Legion, which fought in the British army for the liberation of the Land of Israel from Turkish rule. He was a member of the Board of Directors of the Keren Hayesod, the financial arm of the World Zionist Organization, founded in London in 1920, and was later elected to the Zionist Executive. He resigned in 1923 in protest over Chaim Weizmann's pro-British policy and founded the Revisionist Zionist movement and the Betar youth movement two years later. Jabotinsky also founded the ETZEL (National Military Organization) during the 1936-39 Arab rebellion in Palestine.

7 Keren Kayemet Leisrael (K
K.L.): Jewish National Fund (JNF) founded in 1901 at the Fifth Zionist Congress in Basel. From its inception, the JNF was charged with the task of fundraising in Jewish communities for the purpose of purchasing land in the Land of Israel to create a homeland for the Jewish people. After 1948 the fund was used to improve and afforest the territories gained. Every Jewish family that wished to help the cause had a JNF money box, called the 'blue box'. They threw in at least one lei each day, while on Sabbath and high holidays they threw in as many lei as candles they lit for that holiday. This is how they partly used to collect the necessary funds. Now these boxes are known worldwide as a symbol of Zionism.

8 Annexation of Bessarabia to the Soviet Union

At the end of June 1940 the Soviet Union demanded Romania to withdraw its troops from Bessarabia and to abandon the territory. Romania withdrew its troops and administration in the same month and between 28th June and 3rd July, the Soviets occupied the region. At the same time Romania was obliged to give up Northern Transylvania to Hungary and Southern-Dobrudja to Bulgaria. These territorial losses influenced Romanian politics during World War II to a great extent]
7 NKVD: People's Committee of Internal Affairs; it took over from the GPU, the state security agency, in 1934.

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

10 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.

11 Kolkhoz

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

12 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 abolished in 1947.

13 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’.

14 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.

15 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.

16 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.

17 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.

18 Kislovodsk

Town in Stavropol region, Balneal resort. Located at the foothills of the Caucasus at the height of 720-1060 meters.

19 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.

20 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.