

# Mark Kabakov

MARK KABAKOV

Russia

Moscow

Date of interview: May 2005

Interviewer: Svetlana Bogdanova

*Mark Kabakov is of short height. He is very hospitable. Mark lives in the downtown Moscow in the brick house constructed in late 1950s.*

*His apartment consists of three rooms. He lives with his younger son's family.*

*The pieces painted by a talented artist, father-in-law Isai Seitman, are hung all over the apartment.*

*There is Mark Kabakov's Study in the apartment. The walls are adorned with marine symbolism, sea landscapes of Arctic and the Black Sea, where the owner of the Study had served.*

*There are a lot of books - collected works of Russian poetry and classic literature.*

*Mark is seldom in.*

*He takes frequent trips in the country and abroad.*

*He is very agile and brisk.*

- [My family background](#)
- [Growing up](#)
- [During the war](#)
- [After the war](#)
- [Glossary](#)

## • My family background

There were different versions on the origin of a surname Kabakov. There were a lot of people carrying that name. There were two lines of Kabakovs - Ukrainian and Byelorussian. I belong to Byelorussian one. In my opinion the most plausible version is the one that says that there is a small town by Minsk called Kabaki, where the Kabakovs probably came from. There is another, more romantic version found by my distant relative Rabinovich, who lived in Minsk and who was the representative of a multimillion 'clan' Kabakovs. His mother's maiden name was Kabakova. He was so carried away by the history of his maternal relatives, that he made the lineage of Kabakovs, which goes back to the 16th century. Jews appeared in Russian after division of Polish territory, i.e. after the 16th century. Jews came as independent settlers during the reign of Catherine [1](#). My



relative Kabakov managed to discover that the origin of Kabakov's name stems from the phrase 'kanai ben kanai' which means in Ivrit 'zealot is the son of zealot. This phrase is mentioned in Talmud. When Moshe lead the Jews in the desert that Kanai was an ardent stickler of the ideas expressed by Moshe and his son Ben Kanai was even a more ardent follower. He became the progenitor of the Kabakovs, being the abbreviate K-B-K. This is Rabinovich's version. It is hard to judge how authentic it was, but it has the right to exist as a version.

I did not live to see my paternal grandparents. I do not know exactly where they were born, but I know for sure that they came from Byelorussia. When they reached mature age, they lived in Minsk. Grandfather Morduch did not have a house, but a spacious comfortable apartment in the downtown area. Grandmother Sofia Kabakova died at the age of 25-26 while having parturition of her younger daughter in 1900. Grandpa remained with 3 little kids. My father was only four, the eldest Gersh was 6 and Sofia was a new-born. My grandfather's second wife was Feiga. She was called Feigale or Fanya at home. They did not have common children. Fanya raised my father and his siblings. My father, his brother and sister loved her very much, like their mother, but they called her auntie.

Grandfather Morduch Kabakov worked as an accountant for his rich relatives Kabakovs. There were two lines of Kabakovs in Minsk- one wealthy and another one, where my grandpa belonged to, was not very rich. The business of the Kabakovs my grandpa worked for was very prosperous. They even had their own synagogue. There were only 50-60 telephone subscribers, 20-30 out of which pertained to public institutions and one of them belonged to the rich family of Kabakovs. At that time it spoke for welfare. Though, my grandfather, the accountant, was not a poor man either. All his children finished lyceum and obtained higher education in Warsaw and Saint Petersburg, which was rather problematic for the Jews of that time. My grandpa Morduch Kabakov died of heart stroke in 1916. Grandparents Kabakovs were buried in Jewish cemetery of Minsk. Their tombs were not preserved after Great Patriotic War [2](#).

Father's elder brother Gersh Kabakov was born in 1892. He finished Realschule [3](#) in Minsk. He studied in Poland in Warsaw University. Then he became timber engineer. He lived in Moscow and died in 1966. He was buried in Vostryakovskoye cemetery in Moscow. His son Matvey Kabakov is currently living in Moscow. He is an engineer like his father. Now he is a great expert in machine-building. Father had a sister Sofia Kabakova. She was born in 1900. She remained single. I do not know what she did for a living. I did not know her. She died of consumption in Moscow in 1938. It is not known to me where she was buried. I assume there was a sad story behind it. She was probably buried in Dragomilovskoye cemetery. Half of that cemetery was Jewish [4](#). On the eve of Great Patriotic War in 1941 Moscow authorities decided to build a new avenue, the construction of which was completed after war. Now that avenue is called Kutuzovskiy. Part of the avenue went through Dragomilovskoye cemetery. I remember there was tittle-tattle that the tombs would be taken to another place, but they did not manage to do that and the cemetery was razed to the ground by the tractors.

Grandpa Morduch Kabakov was very religious. He strictly observed all Jewish traditions. The solemn holiday of Yom-Kippur was the most revered by grandpa. On that day all Jews, including women went to the synagogue. They had stayed there all day long and fasted until the first evening star. If some of the children broke the fast, grandpa was infuriated and in father's words the violator got in

the neck.

My father Volf Kabakov was born in 1896. Having finished lyceum father left for Saint Petersburg, where he studied at Juridical Department of the University. He managed to finish only two courses. He could not go on with his education as the civil war was unleashed [5](#), there was no scholarship, no heating in the hostel, no prospects for future and in a word it was not the time to study. Father went to his relatives in Minsk. He married my mother Anna Pelix in 1919. I do not know what kind of wedding they had- secular or religious. Unfortunately, I know hardly anything about my parents for two reasons: first the upbringing of our generation, the motto of that time was: «We would raze the world of violation...!», and we were taught that after October 1917 [Russian Revolution of 1917] [6](#) we would start a new life and we should not care for the past and forget it.

I belonged to that generation Secondly, it was even more aggravated by my service in fleet since the age of 16. I was rarely at home and was hardly involved in the life of my kin. The only thing I know that parents' wedlock was considered to be a misalliance. At that time the gradation of the past was still there, and Soviet regime had not affected the minds and mentality of Jews. The marriage between Haim Pelix daughter, who had his own business, and the son of Gersh Kabakov, who owned no business, was reckoned as misalliance. Nonetheless, they got married. Daughter Sofia was born in 1920. She died soon. Then they moved to Leningrad. Father was an officer, i.e. performing office functions. Such profession was called clerk in the west. Clerk was supposed to work in different branches, one day in one, tomorrow in another etc. My father was such type of a clerk. Though he was called the economist or statistics expert, all the same it changed nothing. He had never been involved in legal work.

My parents came of traditional Jewish families, but they were rather liberal in mind. They belonged to such type of Jews, who wanted to escape from Jewry and patriarchal principles of the past. It was not rare at that time. Though, as the experience showed, they were not able to do as they wished. They remained Jews subconsciously. Having denied religion and Jewry in the years of adolescence, my parents at a mature age came back to Jewry and started thinking of God. Father being over the hill, at the age of 70 started to go to the synagogue and fast on Yom-Kippur. Mother also took an interest in religion. I remember her cry when she was listening to Hatikvah [7](#).

Father was hot-tempered He had a hard life which made his temperamental character even more acerbated. He was declared peoples' enemy [8](#) and imprisoned in 1929 being charged with bourgeois views. He was exiled to Solovetskiye Islands [about 1000 km. to the north from Moscow]. He got off with that pretty easily and was released in 1932. His incarceration in GULAG [6](#) left an imprint on his further life. Father was broken down. That year 1932 he left mother and married another woman. He was still thinking of mom and he loved me very much. It is hard to say who had a bigger influence on me. Both of my parents equally took part in my raising. After divorce, father was very tender and affectionate to me. Moreover, I spent most of my childhood with father. The reason for it was that my mother's apartment was in the basement- father had much better living conditions. The most important for parents was to care of me, but not thinking of their offences.

Mother Anna Kabakova came from Pelix family. She was born in Minsk in 1897. My mother's history is also unique. All people having the last name Pelix are close relatives. The last name of my maternal great grandfather was Levin. He was to be drafted in the army. My great grandpa was strongly against it. He was an educated man, knew how to read in Russian which was very rare

among the Jews from hick towns. He read some book about Polish life and he liked the character Felix. My ancestor came up to the clerk of the synagogue and offered money to change his son's name to Felix. The clerk was not very knowledgeable in Russian and put down Pelix instead of Felix. That was the way such a unique last name appeared.

My maternal grandfather's name was Haim Pelix. He was involved in timbering. He owned plots in the forest. Byelorussia was rich in forests. It started exporting timber to the Western Europe a long time ago. Haim Pelix was not rich, when he was young. His wife, whose name I do not remember, came of the family Kogelman. That family was not rich, but it had some inconsiderable profit. The money grandpa was to receive after wedding as a dowry was enough to start his own business. First, he had nothing, but grandpa Haim managed his business so well, that he finally got rich. He was able to get all his children educated. Mother had 2 brothers Jacob Pelix, Solomon Pelix and sister Esfir' Pelix.

Mother Anna Pelix studied at conservatoire in Saint Petersburg. She had a good voice. Her siblings studied in Lausanne, Switzerland. For a Jew to study in conservatoire at that time, it was necessary to have a wonderful voice as well as wealthy parents who would be able to pay tuition. Mother's family was one of the richest in Minsk. There was a house in Minsk with servants and maids and there was a house out of town, where his office was located. After revolution Bolsheviks demanded money from rich people and arrested their children, threatening that they would be killed if money was not brought. Mother was among those arrested children. It proves that grandpa was one of the wealthiest people in the city. The money was collected and children were released. There are terrible recollections of the time being cooped up in ChK [10](#). Later on grandpa Haim was murdered in 1918 during civil war. He took the wages to the forest and on his way he was attacked by a pack of gangsters, who robbed and killed him. Grandpa was buried in Jewish cemetery in Minsk. His grave was not preserved.

Mother's elder brother Jacob Pelix studied at Lausanne University. He did not come back to Russia. He stayed in Switzerland. He had lived a long life and died in Bern in early 1970s, when he was over 80. He was buried in Swiss cemetery. He was baptized. His wife Matilda was a Swiss German. They had two children. They are still alive. Edward Pelix is rather odd, though not insane, is still studying in the Swiss University in spite of a mature age. He and his mother are living on a dole. My wife and I stayed with Edward in Matilda for two weeks in 1993. Unfortunately uncle Jacob was not alive, when I came there. German speaking Swiss speak the language approximated to Yiddish. At an old age all kinds of things are coming back to the memory, so I started remembering the forgotten language. I was able to communicate with them. It was a very lucky time. The only thing I know about another Jacob's son Robert is that he is married, has a daughter and lives in Bern. I've seen him only once during my stay in Bern.

Another mother's brother Solomon Pelix lived in France. He was married to a French lady who was thirty years younger than he. She gave birth to two children. Son Daniel Pelix lives in Nice. He is an artist. Another son Gerard Pelix is a famous engineer. He lives in Paris. They have a comfortable living. In 2001 my wife and I visited our relatives in Paris. Uncle Solomon was deceased by then. We communicated with the help of interpreters, whoever was close by. It was really hard, though my cousins were anxious to have a chat.

Mother's sister Esfir' Pelix was born in 1894. Aunt Fira also studied in Switzerland, but she came back to Russia for some reason. He had worked as a journalist all her life. She worked for many publishers, including the major one, where most soviet news-papers and magazines were published. I loved my auntie Firochka. During the time of starvation I had lunches in the canteen of the publisher company. Auntie was single. She loved, pampered and gave me expensive toys. She died in 1973. She was cremated and her ashes were buried in the Jewish sector of Vostryakovskoye cemetery.

Mother did not correspond with her brothers, since her son was the navy officer. At that time it was jeopardous to keep in touch with the relatives, living abroad [11](#). Though, mother managed to correspond with aunt Esfir' Pelix. She did it in some complicated way via poste restante.

Mother was very gifted. She had a wonderful voice and did well in conservatoire. Mother lost her voice and could not continue singing after the death of my little elder sister, who died in 1921 at the age of 1. Later on mother was a director of the kindergarten. She was very impulsive and she lost her temper if someone was getting on her nerves. I think very many people of her generation were like that because there was a lot they had to go through. Nevertheless, she loved life and fun. She was a merry-maker. There were a lot of people around her who were willing to laugh, dance and sing. She was always in the highlight of the company. She knew a lot of jokes and was good at cracking them. She was a bright person. She loved her kin, especially aunt Fira.

Of course, father and all my relatives as well as people surrounding me considered revolution to be a tribulation for them and their families. They wanted to live and tried to adapt the best way they could. None them was a politician. I do not think any of my relatives was a communist. Within a family people openly expressed their negative attitude towards the regime authorities and leaders. Though I cannot say what children at the age up to 16 are more prone to perceive - the talks in the family or the school with the rigidly organized system of studies and propaganda, nurturing children with certain trends. Besides, there were so-called extra-curriculum activities held in Oktobrist [12](#), pioneer [13](#) and comsomol [14](#) organizations. I went through all of that. School had a strong influence on me. I welcomed communism ideas , but on the other being a child I could not ignore things told by parents and aunt.

### • Growing up

I was born in Leningrad in 1924. I was not named Mark right away. There is a whole story behind it, mould from the epoch. In accordance with the Jewish traditions I was to be named after deceased maternal grandfather. He was called Haim, which means life. It was decided to name me in accordance with the Jewish traditions after grandfather, so that the name would not be Jewish, but meaning life. They chose the name of Vitaliy, since vita meant life. Thus, I was named Vitaliy, when I was born. When I turned 3, I was taken to Minsk, where my grandmother Feigala Kabakova, the second wife of Morduch Kabakov, my paternal grandfather. She said: «Vitaliy, no way! There will be Morduch». It was the name of my deceased grandpa, her husband. Thus, there was not Vitaliy no longer, and Morduch appeared. Morduch did not sound euphonic at that time and parents did not want to give me traditional Jewish name, so I became Mark. The name Mark Kabakov was put in all my documents. I was to be Morduch Volfovich and I became Mark Vladimirovich.

In 1927 my parents moved to Moscow and grandmother, the second wife of my grandpa Feigala Kabakova took me to Minsk. I had stayed with her for a year. Feigala was rather religious. I do not think she was a bigot, but all traditions were observed in her house. I had never seen her fast or go to the synagogue. I meant national Jewish food, Jewish language-Yiddish. There I learnt how to speak Yiddish and learnt the language only thanks to my aunt as my parents spoke only Russian. I do not remember it vividly, but I think that on Jewish holidays such as Pesach, Rosh Hashanah etc. there was a white tablecloth and challah on the table. Candles were lit and bracha was read- the way it was supposed to. I do not remember those things, but I am convinced that it was all observed. Feiga died in Moscow in 1940. Father and his brother moved her to Moscow shortly before her death. She lived in Moscow with father and at times she stayed in the place of father's elder brother Gersh Kabakov. She was buried in Moscow in Donskoye cemetery.

In 1928 I reached the kindergarten age and mother took me to Moscow. I went to the kindergarten in Moscow, where my mother was working. Mother started her career in a kindergarten as a nanny at night shifts. Then she became a minder and finally she was in charge of the kindergarten. I remember that every summer I spent out of town, where the kindergarten went during summertime. All children of the kindergarten staff went there.

I went to school a little later than my coevals, at the age of 8. I had a hard form of appendicitis, so I was one year lacking behind. I went to a common Russian school, not far from the house, we lived in. School premises were in three-storied building. I was impressed by first years of my studies. I had two buddies, whom I had been friends with all my life, Lyonya Volodarskiy and Misha Kouznetsov. I made friends with Misha Kouznetsov in the first grade and kept friends with him till the end of his days. I am still friends with Lyonya Volodarskiy. I started composing verses at school. This doggerel was so useless that I even do not want to recall them. A lot of boys and girls of my age twiddled with that. There was a library on my way home. I was a regular customer there. I received my first and the last literary prize. I remember as if it was yesterday that it was the set of chess. It was written on hardboard how talented I was and about the prize I got. I was not a social activist, but I did well in studies. I read a lot at my leisure, went to the cinema, played football.

The fact that father was declared the peoples' enemy and incarcerated was taken by me as a tragic mistake of the authorities, bringing sorrow in our family. The tribulation, opened door to trouble for me and my family as before father's imprisonment I had mother and father and after that the family severed. As a result my childhood became joyless. I think that my childhood ended with my father's arrest and woe was upon our family. Sometimes at night I used to dream what would have happened if father had not been behind the bars: we would have gone for a walk, he would have bought me a ball and a bicycle... The dreams looked cheerful, but the reality was sad.

When I was in the 8th grade, I found out that the first specialized marine school was to open in Moscow. Two years ago specialized artillery schools were open in Moscow. Then aviation school was open. There were seven specialized marine schools in the country, located in Leningrad, Baku, Odessa [about 1175 km. to the south from Moscow], Kiev, Moscow, Vladivostok [about 6400 km. to the east from Moscow], Gorky [about 450 km. to the east from Moscow]. I went to specialized marine school # 1. It was the only marine institution in Moscow. Nobody spurred me on, it was my idea to enter. There was a tough competition for admission. There were 5000 applications were submitted and only 500 could be admitted. 8th, 9th and 10th grades were admitted. I passed my entrance exams and went through physical test. If somebody had some sort of ailment or a slight

deviation from the norm, he was not admitted.

Squads were formed from the freshers. 10 grade - 1st squad, 9 - 2nd squad, 8 - 3rd squad. I entered the 2nd squad of the Moscow Specialized Marine School. My admission was not affected by my father's past. I turned a new leaf. We did not live in the dormitory, but at home. We were like ordinary Moscow schoolchildren, but in the uniform. Apart from the school curriculum we were taught the fundamentals of marine service. We were taught how to tie the knots, do simple work on the deck, all kinds of marine disciplines, boating and sailing. We were loaded with work. We even had dancing classes. Being the students of the school we were not conferred any military ranks. I was merely a student of the specialized school. My being Jewish did not influence my admission. There were several Jews among students. I had school friends. Many of them are dead now. Our school was founded in 1940 and it was disbanded in 1946.

Those who finished that school were sent to naval academy. Depending on the performance the students were sent to certain schools. The top-rank students had a choice of either to marine engineering academy named after Dzerzhinskiy [13](#), where navy engineers and mechanics were trained ( I chose this one) or naval academy named after Frunze [14](#), training navigators. Both academies were in Leningrad. Over 90% of all marine schools were in that city.

- **During the war**

In summer 1941 the 8th and 9th grades went to summer camps located at Valaam Island on Ladoga lake [about 550 km. to the north-west from Moscow]. Navy was based on that island. Torpedo boats were located there. It was the so called navy base. I remember fantastic cliffs of Valaam, bays and cloister cells. We were ignoramuses. It was raining during our stay, so we lived in the tents. We broke the walls of the adjacent cloister and took the boards to cover our tents without even assuming that the cloister was built earlier than in the 16th century. It was even worse than barbarism. We, the boys, did it under supervision of our 'fathers'-commanders, who were adults and looked educated. We arrived in Valaam on the 10th of June 1941, and the war was unleashed on the 22nd of June. On the 24th of June we were swiftly evacuated from there. Shortly after the war was declared, aviation of the adversary started bombing. The whole specialized school had few training rifles, which were not good for shooting. Besides, military commander had a pistol. Apart from us there were Leningrad and Gorky specialized schools at Valaam. We were bombed by Finns, who were allies of Germany as Finland was in the closest vicinity to Valaam. Several bombs were released close to us, but we were able to dig couple of trenches and hide.

Then we traveled by a ship Kremlin. There we found stored chocolate sweets and devoured them. There were the moments when our childhood and civil life were dying. We were heading to Leningrad. The ship was being bombed on our way. Then we found out that the steam-boat behind us sunk during bombing, but we got off safely. In Leningrad we stayed in academy named after for less than a day. Then we had to go to Moscow. First we did not have classes and we were prancing Moscow with the feeling that we were the first to find out about the war. Moscow had not been bombed yet. Then we went to the village not far from Moscow caked Seltsi, which stood on Oka river. There were summer camps of Moscow military circuit and specialized artillery schools traditionally held their annual camp gatherings. Students of Moscow marine schools were also taken there. Boats were brought there so that we could have water training. We were to have boating and sailing practice as well as physical training. We lived in the camps and had classes.

There was village Konstantinovo on the opposite bank of the river. It was the motherland of the renowned Russian poet Sergey Esenin [15](#). His mother and sister were still living there at that time. The group of students, including me was sent there to help the farmers with mowing hay. We were given rye bread and milk and that was it. None of us even came to the house, where Esenin lived, to have a talk with his kin. We were not interested in that. We were good comsomol leaders. We thought that there was only one true soviet proletarian poet - Vladimir Mayakovskiy [16](#). Esenin, as we were taught at that time was a decadent kulak poet, the poet of profligacy and we believed what we were told without even reading his poems. Only during the war, when people came to know what was true and what was false, they really appreciated the beauty and magnanimity of that poet. It is a pity that we could not perceive what soviet regime was really like.

Then we came back in Moscow. We had studies, dug fortifications in the vicinity of Moscow, had duty on the roofs of the city during bombing, took with grampus firebombs, released by Germans, and put them in the barrels with water. We helped in the defense of the city the best way we could and consequently the entire school was awarded with the medals for the defense of Moscow. Then we left Moscow, when everybody was escaping. It happened on the 16th of October 1941, when Germans stood by the border of the city. The whole city was imbued with the smell of ashes as the documents were being burnt in all institutions, including regional party committee. It was the only day when the metro was closed down. All specialized schools -artillery, aviation and our marine left Moscow. We were evacuated in the East. The schools got off the transport gradually upon arrival. We were traveling in the locomotives. The first stop was in Achinsk, [about 2900 km. to the east from Moscow] , wherefrom we had to take a walk to the village Bolshoy Chul, Novosibirsk oblast.

The frost was severe -20°C, -30°C, at least, but we had to walk in our military jackets and spring boots. I remember that the stevedore who took our bags, spoke German. These were those Germans, who were exiled [19](#) at the beginning of war. The village, where we were taken, was absolutely unsuitable for marine trainings. There was nothing there- no premises for training or lodging, no devices. We slept on the straw in the barn. We gradually became lice-ridden. We were fed only with the fish, caught in river Chulym. We had no classes there. When they were dawned that we came in the wrong place, we were sent to Achinsk in two weeks. No classes were held in Achinsk either. We had lived in the premises of some vocational school for about 10 days. We slept on double-tiered bunks. Taking advantage of the absence of studies, I went to the library. I have always been a bookworm. At that time nobody knew what to do with us. We were just given food, which was poor to boot. Soon we took a train again and headed for Astrakhan [about 1300 km. to the south-east from Moscow]. It took us a long time to get there- about three weeks.

By that time mother had been evacuated in some small town in Siberia. Unfortunately, I do not remember its name. She managed to find me in some incredulous way. Father was drafted in the army in August. He was in the lines. Before war he worked in procurement ministry. He was drafted and given military uniform. In the front he dealt with procurement of forage. He had worked there for a year, but since he was rather old for military he was sent back to Moscow, to his previous job. After war father kept working for the ministry as a clerk. I saw him couple of times, since I rarely came to Moscow. Father died of infarction in 1968 and was buried in Moscow in Vostryakovskoye cemetery.

At that time naval academy named after Frunze was in Astrakhan. Naval academy from Leningrad was also evacuated there. Training course was founded by the academy, aiming at providing



secondary education. We expeditiously finished that course and were sent to Baku [about 2000km. to the south from Moscow]. The academy named after Frunze had been relocated there by that time. It was the year of 1942, one year before Stalingrad battle [20](#). Again we had to take the vessel to go to Baku from Astrakhan by the sea. Baku as well as entire Caucasus was in the state of siege. We were distributed to marine schools. I wanted to enter naval academy named after Dzerzhinsky, Mechanical Engineering Department as I was one of the best students and had the choice where to go. I had studied there for two years- 1942, 1943.

When the war was unleashed, they started thinking what to do with the cadets of naval academy. After war the training for tankmen were trained for three months, pilots for half a year, platoon commanders were 'baked' for one month. They started making likewise experiments with the future officers of Russian navy , but then they thought that the navigator could be trained for no less than 3,5 years under condition of removing all minor subjects, and training duration for mechanics was to last 4 years. It turned out that some people were to fight, and others to study. Then the minister of the navy issued an order regarding cadet's practice. In accordance with the order, cadets were assigned to battle navy ships in summer time and studied in winter. First, in summer I was having battles on anti-aircraft ship, which was in Kaspiy.

I was assigned to the ship, but I do not remember how my position was called. Our anti-aircraft ship practically remained uninvolved in military actions. It was the year of 1943 and the front shifted to the west. There was no fire or bombing in the vicinity of Kaspiy. Though when we were in Astrakhan , the aircrafts of the enemy were bombing and we were firing at them. In 1944 I continued studying in winter and in summer my fellows and I were sent the North Navy. There we took part in convoy operations for three months. We escorted the conveys of battle vessels, which came from the east via Vladivostok and from the west via Murmansk [about 1400 km. to the north from Moscow] from England and America with the lend-lease freight [lend-lease is the system of transfer (loan or lease) of weaponry, ammunition, strategic raw materials, provision etc.; supplies in terms of lend-lease were made by USA to the ally-countries on anti-Hitler coalition in the period of the second world war. The law on lend-lease was adopted by USA Congress in 1941] for our country.

Preliminary the law on lend lease was introduced in the USA and at the beginning of the World War Two and it was meant only for England, attacked by German aviation. Soon that law was also enforced on the territory of USSR. In accordance with lend-lease USSR was supposed to get ammunition, medicine and provision from the allies. USSR was in need for that. It is hard to put in words what a long and scary voyage those freights were supposed to go for. The convoy of ships to Russia was through Artic waters. There was another route via Vladivostok, but it was next to impossible to travel all that freight to the front through entire Siberia. The first caravan came in august 1941. First Hitler did not pay that much attention to the ships, he was more interested in the land.

Though after defeat in the vicinity of Moscow, Hitler started deploying new attack. In Berlin the attention was focused on polar convoys. They decided to activate the struggle and 'processed' convoys from water and air. The task for German navy in 1942 was to deprive Russian of communication and assistance from the allies up to complete isolation. That navy was deliberately directed to the coast of USSR by German command. Besides, there was Hitler's order on complete

extermination of Murmansk, the port where English and American vessels were unloaded. German aviation massively bombed the city and Murmansk was in shambles.

Our heroic Northern navy stood against German navy. Our navy was of small scale, but amazing people were there. They fought in Barents Sea and many of them perished in icy waters of the Arctic ocean. When my service in the Northern navy began, the situation there was very tough. A 'pack' of submarines was raving Northern waters, aircrafts armada was ransacking Russian polar space. At that time 50 cadets from our naval academy were sent to Northern front, and only 42 came back. It was a true war. I was assigned to the big chaser Shturman. I was an assistant to motor mechanic. Big chaser is the class of a ship. Big chaser and small chaser appeared during Great Patriotic War. These were wonderful battle ships. They were armed with the principle 'plenty is no plague'. Their purpose was to fight with the enemy's submarines. Besides, they were equipped with a large number of artillery weapons and could attack any surface ships and land targets, fire from artillery weapons, mortar guns. They also had devices for landing paratroopers etc. Sometimes convoys were attacked by aviation, sometimes by submarines. The most dangerous were submarines. The above-mentioned eight people perished during attack of the submarines. There were depth bombs, which hydro acoustic device discerned the noise produced by submarines and attacked them. Those bombs were dropped with the help of release gear and blasted at a certain distance from the surface. We had anti-aircraft guns for defense from aviation attack.

The crew of our ship consisted of 40 people. I had no fear. Of course, you are not very pleased, when you know that there is a submarine under you. One of the peculiarities of war in the sea is that you do not see the adversary. You are not like a soldier who meets the enemy from face to face in combat. The Northern seas are very rigid even in summer, not to mention spring and fall. Some of the ships could not stand the ocean waves, which often smashed the boards. Decks gave under with the load of ice. Multi-ton load of ice, solidly frozen on the forecastles could keep the careen and the ship could upturn. As per order of the commander the entire crew was on the deck to cut away the ice. During the storm the deck was full with water. The wind made antennas bend. Any human-being could not go to the deck without a rope. Any person could be easily washed in the sea during the storm. There was not a single person who could be saved after he had been washed off by the. Polar water was a dangerous thing. It 'scalds' you and you are frozen to the marrow of the bone. Even nowadays the medicine might be helpless in rescuing people who happened to be in the polar water.

Our task was to meet convoys of the 72nd parallel, to the north from Polar Port, by the exit from Kola bay and escort them to Murmansk. It was the operational zone of Northern front. Soviet ships and aircrafts escorted ship convoy. We, the big chasers long with patrol and torpedo boats and aviation came first to make a preliminary search for German submarines on the adjacent territories to Kola Bay. Firefighters covered convoys. There were times, when Northern front placed 40 vessels for defense. When we were to meet convoy we took certain place in escort order. The captain said over ship radio: «Attention! It is the time for defense. Be vigilant on the observation point. Do not make any unnecessary movements on the deck.» We escorted those convoys of ships, resisting attacks of the submarines and aviation of the adversaries. Germans took frenzied actions while attacking in the vicinity of Kola Bay, when the distance to Murmansk was inconsiderable.

There were several dozens of ships in the convoy and they were escorted by couple of military ships. It was a spectacular scene. There was not way to disguise things. For instance, we had to take part in escorting convoy JW-59 (33 merchant vessels, one salvage ship, 2 escort aircraft carriers, one cruiser and 18 more battle ships). The above-mentioned were covered by two groups of English navy ships consisting one battleship, 5 aircraft carriers, 3 cruisers, 14 destroyers and several frigates jointly with the group of vessels having been transferred to Soviet Union on account of future division of the fleet of the capitulated fascist Italy (battle ships and 8 destroyers), and 11 chasers fighting against torpedo boats, acquired from the USA in terms of lend-lease. The eighteen soviet vessels met them on the operational territory of the Northern Front. Soviet fire-fighters covered us safely in the air. Germans kept a track of us and we kept track of them. We were at war, trying to outsmart each other. We were lucky. None of the enemy's submarines was able to attack us, we were not torpedoed or blown on the minefield. When our hydro acoustic devices tracked the enemy's submarine, we were chasing it. If reconnaissance aircraft was noticed, our anti-aircraft gunners opened fire and Germans left.

I will tell you the episode about our fight with submarines.

One day during our escort, there was a rather strong storm, when we were approaching Kola Bay. When high waves split up, the sea discovered deck cabin of Hitler's submarine. The reaction of the captain, coxswain, miners, machinists and other people on duty was fulminant and express. The commander ordered to start depth attack. The vessel made a steep turn being hit by a billow of water. The wave crushed windshields. People were knocked down. Any minute the miners could be washed off the ship, but it did not happen. They succeeded. Twenty one mines were dropped on enemy's submarine and it was exterminated together with the crew. The convoy of vessels reached Murmansk port and got unloaded there.

The escort of convoy did not last long, for about two or three days. The ships were unloaded in Murmansk and then went back. We did not escort them on their way back. In the interim between escorts we were ransacking the waters of Barents Sea trying to find German submarines and we generally staying on the patrol.

Staying on the observation point was emaciating and exhausting. We were hectically tensed and we could not ease that strain. Even though it seemed calm at a certain point, anything could happen in a minute. There was no way one could leave the observation point. It was provided by the rules of escort to cut the routes by zigzags, make sharp tacks for the submarines of the enemy not to calculate a proper angle for attack.

We had pretty good living conditions. The nutrition of the navy was excellent. During the period of time, when half of the country was starving, the acting navy was fed very well. We lived on the ship. There are different kinds of ships. E.g. torpedo ships are not meant for living. They are meant only to put to the sea. The crew lived in the barracks. Submarines were not meant for dwelling either. Their crew lived on the coast. Big vessels as ours have the facilities for dwelling even when they are docked. The people on the observation points were dressed in felt boots and sheepskins. The crew got necessary dosage of vodka to get warm. British crew had worse uniforms, as it was not adapted for the Northern latitude. English thought grog to be unsuitable for such rigid conditions.

The crew was given very strong rum. We communicated with the members of English and American crews, we were escorting. They were our allies. The Northern navy was contacting the

allies, unlike other navies. English people were rather reserved, but Americans vice versa, they got along with us as if we were their buddies. They hunkered for our rye bread as they found it very good. We met in Murmansk at dancing clubs. Murmansk was razed. The dancing parties were arranged in the basements. Those people who knew the language, were chatting with the foreigners. We got along. Nobody stood on our way and we could communicate openly. SMERSH [21](#) representatives were on our ship as well as at any other vessel, but they did not mind our communication as it was the wartime and there were other things to be focused on.

For me personally the war was still not over when the act on capitulation was signed by Germany on the 9th of May 1945. I take pride in the fact that I was still involved in military actions when the war was over. In 1947, when I graduated naval academy, I was assigned an officer to the 6th Krasnoznamennyi mine-sweepers division the Northern navy. Up to 1950 I had been dealing with postwar minesweeping. Germans obstructed Northern seaway with mines. Minefields were reaching New Land Island [about 2500 km. to the north-east from Moscow]. The Northern seaway was one of the most vital arteries of Soviet Union and it was practically closed down for navigation. All navigating vessels, including the merchant ones could only go to the areas, having been tested by mine-sweepers or being escorted by them. Our task was to find the mines and exterminate them with the help of mine-sweepers.

As a matter of fact, we knew the location of the mines. There were minefields maps. We were supposed to clear them. I had worked at the mine-sweeper АБ-117 for three years after war. Our division consisted of those kinds of vessels. Mine-sweepers belong to the class of vessels, which are supposed to sweep the mines. They are equipped with the sweep-nets, containing cutting jaws. Sweep-nets are located astern the mine-sweeper. Sweep-nets are steel hawsers, deepened to a certain distance from the water surface, containing cutting jaws, which cut anchor ropes, fastened to the mines. The mines are buoyant and float to the surface. Then they were fired by the guns. There were different kinds of mines. There is even a science, devoted to that. There are contact mines, i.e. containing a fuse, and if the vessels hits the fuse, the mine blows up together with the vessel. There are mines with electromagnetic fuses, which do not react to the vessel. Even when there is no collision with the ship, mine react to electromagnetic field, which any metallic body contains, the contact of fuses are sealed in and the mine blows up. There are also acoustic mines. They contain the fuses, which react to the noise, produced by the vessel. For them to blow up there should no collision either. When the fuse 'hears' the noise of the propeller, the contacts are sealed up and the mine blows up. Electromagnetic and acoustic mines appeared only during the war. These were perfect mines.

The mines, set up by Germans in 1942, 1943 contained those perfect fuses- acoustic and electromagnetic. That is why the mine-sweepers we worked on were acoustic and electromagnetic. Electromagnetic sweep nets were the cables, where electric current was passed. It produce much stronger magnetic field that the one of the mine-sweeper. That it is why a strong magnetic field was not under the mine-sweeper, but astern and the mines blew up astern. We skidded the so-called 'clatter' ( a drum, inside of which a pellet was installed, which produced the noise muffling the noise of propellers). Again the mines did not blow up under the vessel, but behind it. The mine-sweepers are designed in a special way. They sit shallow that is why they were not touched by ground mines. Some mine-sweeper had a powerful system of degaussing band, which was in antiphase with own magnetic field of the vessel, which made the value of the magnetic field of the

vessel very inconsiderable. The worst thing was that the mines, installed by Germans had 'ship counter'. We also had such mines.

The essence of that malicious device was that the ship could pass for couple of times and the mine would not be revealing. Let's say on the fifth time (depending on the number of times) the circuit closed in, and the mine blew up. It was done to make mine-sweeping more complicated. The maximum number of times on the counter was 12. That is why we went back and forth for 12 times. To be on the safe side we made as many trips as it was max number programmed in the counter. We had dealt with that for 3 years. Our navy had stayed in the sea the longest. It was rather far away from the ship base and military ports: Polar in Barents Sea and Archangelsk in White Sea. Thus, one voyage in the Arctic lasted for three months. Then we came back in Archangelsk, where the ship went through maintenance repair and then again headed to the sea for three months. The total time spent in the Arctic was half a year. There was no fun in that. The vessels we had were made in America.

The designers of those vessels had no idea that they would make so many trips to Arctic waters. There were no cold storages, just household refrigerators. That is why for three months of the mine-sweeping we had eaten almost everything, and our meals consisted of dried potatoes and cabbage, dried meat and rusks. Vitamins were very of big help. Nonetheless, when I was to have my teeth pulled in Archangelsk (during navigation my teeth really hurt), the dentist did it so easily that I had such a strong beriberi. We were paid very well and it was the only good thing. I, mechanic of the mine-sweeper had such a salary that it was exceeding my combined income for the entire marine service, which was pretty long- 34 years. During Great Patriotic War I was awarded with Great Patriotic War Order of the First Class [22](#), medal for victory in the Great Patriotic War [23](#) and a number of other medals.

#### • After the war

In 1950 I was assigned to higher courses for the officers in Moscow. Having finished them I served as a military representative at torpedo building plant in Alma-Ata [about 3000 km to the east from Moscow]. After that I had served in the Baltic navy for 6 years, then at Black Sea navy for another 6 years. Then I came to Moscow and worked for four years in scientific research institute as a military representative having the rank of commodore. I resigned in 1974. I was clad in military uniform in 1940 and resigned in 1974.

My mother lived by herself in her apartment, where we used to live before war. During some period of time she worked in the kindergarten as a minder. In the early 1950s she retired and raised my kids. They often stayed with grandmother on the weekend. During the week she met them at school, took them home and helped them with their homework. She died in Moscow in 1974. She had a severe form of cancer. She was buried in Vostryakovskoye cemetery.

Besides, I am actively involved in literary activity. My first publication was made by house magazine in Astrakhan in 1942. My first book was published in 1968. About two dozens of my books were published. Most of them are poetry, but there is also prose and journalistic genre. I was admitted in the council of writers in 1973. I have been its member for about 30 years.

It is hard to say what I enjoyed more-literary activity or military service. There are totally different and discontinuous things. I am thankful for everything I came across with. I am grateful to my commanders. They were decent people and I joyfully recall my service, especially military mine-sweeping. I am not denying anything, though I understand that the very notion of war is atavistic as now the mankind is having such state-of-the-art armament that it would be enough for some insane to push two or three buttons to produce a massive explosion. I hope people will be reasonable enough not to do anything of the kind.

For many years I personally came across anti-Semitism for a number of times like any Jew, living in Russia. In 1951 I finished higher courses for the officers. Those very higher secretive courses held in the period of time when the doctors' plot [24](#) was in the full swing. At that time there were repressions against Jews, both military and civil. In 1951 5 Jews were expelled right shortly after the course commenced. The quota must have been exceeded by admission. Only 2 Jews were left, and both of them were Muscovites. Upon finishing course, neither I nor my comrade were to stay in Moscow, but we were sent in godforsaken places. My further service was in Alma-Ata. There my little sonny was teased and called "Little Zhyd" [editor's note: 'Zhydy' - abusive nickname of Jews in the Soviet Union]. He came home sobbing. I slapped one of the parents of those kids. The regional engineer of state acceptance, my boss, called me on the carpet and started edifying me that our country was multinational and there was no anti-Semitism in it. When I was in the navy, I had never felt anti-Semitism during the entire period of my service. But when I was demobilized in 1974, I was not hire in any civilian enterprise. I understood why- because I was a Jew. Then for 17 years I was not permitted to go abroad since I had an access to secret documents during my service, though those people who performed my job later and had an access to even more sensitive documents were permitted to go abroad earlier than I was. Probably KGB deemed that there was nothing more dangerous as a Jew, who had an access to secret documents.

When a campaign on so-called 'doctors-murderers' was launched I understood that it was fabricated and had not a slightest doubt in that. I perceived that there was anti-Semitism behind it. It was adulterated to exterminate Jews. Zhabotinskiy [25](#) said: "We, Jews deserved the right to have rascals amongst ours". I can only add: "We deserved the right to have blockheads amongst us", as there were blockheaded Jews, who believed things published in papers.

Stalin's death in 1953 was a joyful event for me. I would never forget the lamentation on the plant yard. I lived in Alma-Ata at that time. My wife and I came home, I took a bottle of wine and we gladly drank to the death oft that rascalion.

I met my wife Maya Zeitman in 1949 during my vacation in Moscow. I had corresponded with her for a year and then in 1950 we got married. We had lived in perfect harmony for a long time. She followed me no matter to what village or city I was sent during my military career. She made a cozy and warm home in any place we happened to be. She gave me 2 sons, whom we raised honest and worthy people, the way we wanted. Maya was a very well-bread and intelligent person. In general we were soul mates. In every stage of my life she was there for me, understanding me and giving me a hand. We traveled a lot in the country and abroad, when I finally got a permit for that. We visited my cousins in France and Switzerland, our son in Israel.

Maya was born in Moscow in 1927. Like me she finished secondary school with honors, then Moscow Higher Technical School named after Bauman [Moscow High Technical School named after

renowned revolutionary Nikolay Bauman, today it is called Technical Institute]. She worked as a designer, When we lived in Alma-Ata, she taught technical drawing and resistance of materials in the institute. She died in 2002. She was buried in Donskoye cemetery in Moscow.

My wife came of an interesting family. My father's -in-law name was Isai Seitman. He was a famous artist. Some of his pictures are exhibited in Tretyakov gallery in Moscow [the word renown gallery, one of the main arts museum of Russia, located in Moscow]. Besides, he was a very good optician. He graduated from Moscow University [26](#), Physics Department. Then he taught physics. The first institution he worked for was Jewish commune-school in the vicinity if Moscow in Malakhovka. The interesting thing was the fact that my father-in-law could not teach Yiddish, and the students gladly agreed to have classes in Russian. In that school drawing classes were taught by one of the greatest well-known artists Marc Chagall. [27](#). They did not meet as Marc Chagall had left work one year before my father-in-law came to work. Jewish commune school was founded in 1920 in Malakhovka (Moscow neighborhood) for Jewish orphans. Isai Seitman was raised in common Jewish family in the town Alexandria, located in the South of Ukraine, Kherson province [about 1100 km. to the south from Moscow]. Since childhood his artistic talent had been noticed. When he was a lyceum student, he went to the school founded by lady of the manner. She graduated from Arts Academy in Saint Petersburg and founded arts school in Alexandria. Religion was alien to my parents-in-law. They belonged to those Jews, who did not mind assimilation to the soviet regime. Everything connected with the Jewry went back to their childhood and adolescence. They live with other things, they breathed another air- international and communistic. I father-in-law was interested in Jewry merely because very many great artists were Jews and Jewish theme was reflected in their works. Neither my mother-in-law nor my father-in-law denied that their Jews, when the subjects of art was broached. In this respect they felt proud and worthy. The notion of internationalism was inherent to them. It was in their blood. They were true representatives of intelligentsia. My father-in-law was fluent in French, could read German, my mother-in-law Sofia Seitman graduated from Moscow University, chemistry department. She had taught chemistry in Moscow institutions of higher education. She was of noble-minded person with great heart.

My first son Victor was born in 1951. My second son's name is Leonid. He was born in 1956. Victor has lived in Israel since 1986. Victor graduated from polygraphic institute. He worked as a polygraphist for a while, then he started dealing with books in Israel. Son Leonid lives with me in Moscow. He finished arts school and is currently working as an artist in Moscow art gallery. He definitely followed in the footsteps of his grandfather, my wife's father. Children identify themselves as Jews. My wife and I always told their children that they were Jews. We talked about Jewry and about our Jewish problems. My son, who is living in Israel, the three of his children are true Jews. My Israeli grandsons' names are Innesa, Dmitriy and Sofia. My son's wife lights candles on Sabbath. Their family observes kashrut and that is it. They are not Orthodox Jews. My son drives on Saturday and he does not consider it a sin. My daughter-in-law talks on the phone on Saturday and does not reckon it a sin either. My granddaughter Innesa is a very gifted girl. She studied at Moscow Literary Institute, Translation Department. She finished four courses. Now she is studying at Jerusalem University, Philology Department. She got bachelor's degree some time age. Now she is going for masters. She is fluent in Russian, Ivrit and English. She is not like grandpa, who speaks a little bit German and English (with the help of body language).

My son Leonid has two children – daughter Svetlana and son Yuri. They are expecting the third child. Younger son became Orthodox. He is religious and he strictly observes all the rites. All my grandchildren (his children) are baptized. His family goes to the church. The family of my son Victor, living in Israel, disapproves of the baptism of Leonid's family. Being baptized and Christian Leonid still identifies himself as Jew. The fact that Leonid and his family became Christians was calmly accepted by me. Everybody has the right to profess the religion of his choice.

I identify myself as Jew. If I address to the Creator, I picture him in Jewish apparel, though in the religion of our ancestors he is invisible and immaterial. I am proud to belong to the peoples, who gave 10 commandments to the modern civilization. Only ignoramuses and rascals can deny them.

I found perestroika [28](#) taken place in my country, positive. No matter what, all things incurred by perestroika were for the better as the system which could not survive, collapsed. It is strange that the system based on determent and fraud has existed for such a long time. Perestroika merely goaded the process, which was to happen. Another thing, we were lead by famous Bolshevik refrain "We will raze the world of violation...", we insanely exterminated every we had. The collapsed systems had its accomplishments as well. We had a unique education, healthcare and recreation systems. But we contrived to do make it in accordance with the European norms and completely destroy it. My deceased wife used to say: "Knowing the depravity of the society, its existing ambiguousness, we have not made any steps to prevent embezzlement and plunder, though these who were brewing perestroika' were not the fools As a result, you know what we got. All, having been gained within decades due to horrible exploitation (any remuneration for work was peanuts), we allowed to be so audaciously plundered. Unfortunately it is a true fact. I take it philosophically. There was a large-scale social experiment in Russia. We started building something we did not know from normal economic development. Officially it was called "From Capitalism to Socialism". There were not precedents in the world. Thus the first time in the world Russia is going from socialism to capitalism. As a result, losses are inevitable.

I also would like to say on the state of the modern Russian navy. I think our navy is not in the best position. Though, I am prone to think that every powerful state should have something to be respected for by other countries. One of the things to be respected for is the navy. It should look nice, be spectacular and powerful. Nowadays our navy cannot be compared to the one it used to be. Navy is cost-consuming. Battleship is outrageously expensive. The expenses for building of any aircraft-carrier should be provided in the state budget, and our country does not have such money, and not expected to have in the short run.

I cannot picture how everything can be rebuilt when the foundation of the country – the social base- is exterminated. How can be plans realized without material and cultural values? That social base is made up by tens of thousands of nurses, teachers, librarians and a dozen of other social important professions, which are so vital for bringing up children and for life in general.

- **Glossary:**

### **1 Catherine the Great (1729-1796)**

Empress of Russia. She rose to the throne after the murder of her husband Peter III and reigned for 34 year. Catherine read widely, especially Voltaire and Montesquieu, and informed herself of



Russian conditions. She started to formulate a new enlightened code of law. Catherine reorganized (1775) the provincial administration to increase the central government's control over rural areas. This reform established a system of provinces, subdivided into districts, that endured until 1917. In 1785, Catherine issued a charter that made the gentry of each district and province a legal body with the right to petition the throne, freed nobles from taxation and state service and made their status hereditary, and gave them absolute control over their lands and peasants. Catherine increased Russian control over the Baltic provinces and Ukraine. She secured the largest portion in successive partitions of Poland among Russia, Prussia, and Austria.

## **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 Realschule**

Secondary school for boys. Students studied mathematics, physics, natural history, foreign languages and drawing. After finishing this school they could enter higher industrial and agricultural educational institutions.

## **4 Jewish section of cemetery**

In the USSR city cemeteries were territorially divided into different sectors. They often included common plots, children's plots, titled militaries' plots, Jewish plots, political leaders' plots, etc. In some Soviet cities the separate Jewish cemeteries continued to be maintained and in others they were closed, usually with the excuse that it was due to some technical reason. The family could decide upon the burial of the deceased; Jewish military could for instance be buried either in the military or the Jewish section. Such a division of cemeteries still continues to exist in many parts of the former Soviet Union.

## **5 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.

## **6 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.

## **7 Hatikvah**

Anthem of the Zionist movement, and national anthem of the State of Israel. The word 'ha-tikvah' means 'the hope'. The anthem was written by Naftali Herz Imber (1856-1909), who moved to Palestine from Galicia in 1882. The melody was arranged by Samuel Cohen, an immigrant from Moldavia, from a musical theme of Smetana's Moldau (Vltava), which is based on an Eastern European folk song.

## **8 Enemy of the people**

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

## **9 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.

## **10 ChK (full name VuChK)**

All-Russian Emergency Commission of struggle against counter revolution and sabotage; the first security authority in the Soviet Union established per order of the council of people's commissars dated 7 December 1917. Its chief was Felix Dzerzhynskiy. In 1920, after the Civil War, Lenin ordered to disband it and it became a part of the NKVD.

## **11 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.

## **12 Young Octobrist**

In Russian Oktyabrenok, or 'pre-pioneer', designates Soviet children of seven years or over

preparing for entry into the pioneer organization.

### **13 All-Union pioneer organization**

a communist organization for teenagers between 10 and 15 years old (cf: boy-/ girlscoouts 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.

### **14 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.

### **15 Dzerzhinskiy, Felix (1876-1926)**

Polish communist and head of the Soviet secret police. After the Revolution of 1917 he was appointed by Lenin to organise a force to combat internal political threats, and he set up the Cheka, the Bolshevik secret police. Lenin gave the organization huge powers to combat the opposition during the Russian Civil War. At the end of the Civil War, the Cheka was changed into the GPU (State Political Directorate) a section of the NKVD, but this did not diminish Dzerzhinskiy's power: from 1921-24 he was Minister of Interior, head of the Cheka and later the KGB, Minister for Communications and head of the Russian Council of National Economy.

### **16 Frunze, Mikhail (1885-1925)**

Soviet political and military leader.

### **17 Yesenin, Sergei Aleksandrovich (1895-1925)**

Russian poet, born and raised in a peasant family. In 1916 he published his first collection of verse, Radunitsa, which is distinguished by its imagery of peasant Russia, its religiosity, descriptions of nature, folkloric motifs and language. He believed that the Revolution of 1917 would provide for a peasant revival. However, his belief that events in post-revolutionary Russia were leading to the destruction of the country led him to drink and he committed suicide at the age of 30. Esenin remains one of the most popular Russian poets, celebrated for his descriptions of the Russian countryside and peasant life.

### **18 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.

### **19 The forced deportation of Germans in the Soviet Union was carried out without exception in 1940**

Men between the ages of 16 and 60 were sent to "Trudarmija," a special prison camp, where they were treated as enemies of the state. Their possessions were seized and they were not permitted to return to their communities.

### **20 Stalingrad Battle (17 July 1942- 2 February 1943) The Stalingrad, South-Western and Donskoy Fronts stopped the advance of German armies in the vicinity of Stalingrad**

On 19-20 November 1942 the soviet troops undertook an offensive and encircled 22 German divisions (330 thousand people) in the vicinity of Stalingrad. The Soviet troops eliminated this German grouping. On 31 January 1943 the remains of the 6th German army headed by General Field Marshal Paulus surrendered (91 thousand people). The victory in the Stalingrad battle was of huge political, strategic and international significance.

### **21 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 Victor 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.

### **22 Order of the Great Patriotic War**

1st Class: established 20th May 1942, awarded to officers and enlisted men of the armed forces and security troops and to partisans, irrespective of rank, for skillful command of their units in action. 2nd Class: established 20th May 1942, awarded to officers and enlisted men of the armed forces and security troops and to partisans, irrespective of rank, for lesser personal valor in action.

### **23 Medal 'For Victory in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-45', Established by Decree of the Presidium of Supreme Soviet of the USSR to commemorate the glorious victory, 15 million awards**

### **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 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.

### **26 Lomonosov Moscow State University, founded in 1755, the university was for a long time the only learning institution in Russia open to general public**

In the Soviet time, it was the biggest and perhaps the most prestigious university in the country. At present there are over 40,000 undergraduates and 7,000 graduate students at MSU.

### **27 Chagall, Marc (1889-1985)**

Russian-born French painter. Since Marc Chagall survived two world wars and the Revolution of 1917 he increasingly introduced social and religious elements into his art.

### **27 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.