

# Zlata Tkach

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Kishinev

Moldova

Interviewer: Natalia Fomina

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Zlata Tkach is a well-known composer in Moldova. Before visiting her I looked into the Musical Encyclopedia published in Moscow in 1991 where I read that she is the author of a few operas, a ballet, cantatas, concerts, sonatas, etc. Zlata met me wearing an original sweater that she had made herself and a long multi-colored skirt. She is short and quick in her movements, a fatty woman with fluffy reddish hair. Zlata has an independent way of thinking, she has a bright, artistic and charming character. There are a few details of her everyday life in her story. Her story is full of emotional recollections. She remembers her reaction to events rather than the content. After her husband died, Zlata has lived alone in a bright four- bedroom apartment designed to make an impression of being spacious. Zlata's pet, the playful cat Asia, thinks of herself as the mistress of the apartment. There is a piano in the study where Zlata works and gives classes to her few students. We talked in the living room where there is a big carpet on the floor, a set of bookcases full of books, armchairs and a sofa. There are graphical and artistic portraits of the master and mistress of the house on the wall over the sofa: they are works of the friends of the family who are artists of Kishinev. After the interview, Zlata invited me to have gefilte fish and homemade liqueur; everything was delightfully delicious.

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## **My family background**

My maternal grandfather, Mendel Kofman, was born in the 1870s in Kishinev and lived there all his life. When I was small, we lived in my grandfather's big four-bedroom apartment on Lankasterskaya Street, in the lower part of Kishinev. This street no longer exists. My grandfather was a businessman. Like any other businessman he had his ups and downs. He was deeply religious. He prayed twice a day: in the morning and in the evening, with his tallit and tefillin on. My grandfather secluded himself to pray in a room, but I was inquisitive and used to follow him there secretly. I was very interested in the process. I don't know whether he went to the synagogue every day, but he certainly went there on holiday. He always had a small yarmulka on at home. He dressed smartly and accurately, and my grandmother took care of his clothes. My grandfather's photographs have been lost, and I don't remember whether he had a beard.

My grandmother, Riva Kofman, was a few years younger than my grandfather. I didn't know her maiden name. She was an impeccable housewife. I remember how ideally clean she kept the house, it was just perfect. My grandparents spoke Yiddish and I understand the language thanks to them. They both died before the war [see Great Patriotic War] [1](#), in the mid-1930s. My grandfather died first and then my grandmother followed him less than a year later. I have no doubts that they were buried in accordance with the Jewish rites, but I was about seven years old and I hardly remember anything. Besides, my parents protected me from negative emotions, and during the funeral I think I stayed with some acquaintances. My grandparents had two daughters. My mother's older sister Esther was married to Mordekhai Lerner. Aunt Esther also lived in Kishinev. Her son Aron was about eight years older than me. Before the war, Aron studied in the violin department at the Conservatory.

My mother, Fania Kofman, was born in Kishinev in 1905. She graduated from grammar school where she was a good and industrious pupil. She was musical and sang well. My mother was of average height, had brown hair, a round face and black eyes. Her most prominent feature was meekness. My mother was a beautiful woman, but she grew plump when she was young, for some unexplained reason. She didn't have to go to work. She married my father when she was young, and was a housewife.

My paternal grandparents also lived in Kishinev, but I don't know where they were born. I didn't know my paternal grandfather, Bentsion Berehman. He died young in the 1910s. My grandfather dealt in selling prunes that he produced in the village of Lozovo near Kishinev. My grandfather purchased 'vengerka' plums that were dried in loznitsa boxes [special box for drying plums]. My grandfather owned a whole prune production facility. This was a profitable business. Prunes were in great demand and were even shipped abroad. My grandmother, Kenia Berehman, took over the business after he died. She was an imperious businesswoman. She owned a house on Lankasterskaya Street, two to three houses away from where my mother's parents lived. There were seven rooms and a big corridor in the house. There was a big yard with a cellar in it, there was a gate to the garden, and in the garden there was a raspberry yard, my favorite playground. My grandmother rented out one half of her house for additional income. I can't remember whether my grandmother had housemaids. I believe she managed everything herself, so full of energy she was. She raised two sons.

My father's older brother, Isaac, studied abroad like many other young men in Bessarabia [2](#). He graduated from the Law Faculty of the University of Rome and worked as a lawyer in Kishinev. Uncle Isaac was married. His wife's name was Zhanna. He died in 1973. Zhanna died some time before. Their son Boris lives in Kishinev.

My father, Moisey Berehman, was born in Kishinev in 1902. He got his strong will and extraordinary energy from my grandmother Kenia. He was gifted in music and finished the violin class at the Conservatory. He also learned to play brass instruments at the Conservatory. He played the trombone, tuba and the horn. After graduating from the Conservatory my father taught the violin at the Conservatory and gave private classes. He founded a small orchestra consisting of his students. My father was a very handsome man, and naturally, women were attracted to him. Like many artistic characters my father was amorous, and later my mother lived through many hard times in this regard.

## Growing up

I don't know how my parents met, but I know for sure that they had a love marriage. This happened in 1927. My mother told me that they had a traditional Jewish wedding with a chuppah. I was born on 16th May 1928 in Lozovo in Nisporensk district, where my grandmother Kenia had her business, and my parents probably lived there for some time. When I turned three, we moved in with my mother's parents Mendel and Riva Kofman in Kishinev. They had an apartment on the second floor. There was a big hallway, a kitchen, some storerooms and a toilet in the apartment. My grandparents and my parents had their own bedrooms. There was also a big dining room and a salon with a big piano where my father gave his classes. I also slept in this salon: I had a desk and a small sofa in the corner. My father's students had their classes when I was at school. There was a woman in the house who must have cleaned the house and brought food products from the market. My mother didn't go to the market.

My family led a traditional Jewish way of life and I liked everything associated with Jewish traditions. It was like I lived in a fairy-tale wrapped in love. It's wonderful when two to three generations live together. The six of us sat at a big rectangular table. There was my grandmother and grandfather, my father and mother, I, and my grandmother's sister I think. The table was covered with a snow-white tablecloth and there was silverware. I still have a silver spoon reminding me of the time when we sat at the table and the adults ate slowly, which is different from how they nibble on food quickly nowadays.

I remember how on holidays my grandfather Mendel recited a prayer standing at the head of the table. This was very solemn, and holy, and I believed it all so much. On Pesach we ate from special crockery kept in a locked cupboard during the year. By the way, I always had my own crockery for Pesach and hullin [Hebrew, in Ashkenazi tradition: everyday kitchen utensils]. I remember how my grandparents taught me the fir kashes - the four traditional questions to be asked on Pesach: 'Mah nishtanah halaylah hazeh mikol halaylot' in Hebrew. Though I don't know Hebrew, I still remember some extracts of fir kashes. It's amazing how memory keeps some things, though I remember no other details. Later, the war erased so much from my memory.

My parents went to the synagogue on all holidays. Sometimes they took me with them and I sat on the balcony with my mother and the other women. The men sat downstairs, I remember this well. However, I don't remember what the synagogue was like. I remember the celebration of New Year - Rosh Hashanah. There were special dishes on the table: apples, honey and round challah. Chanukkah was the merriest holiday. We usually had many guests. I remember color toys and garlands that my grandmother decorated the rooms with. We danced and had lots of fun. There were gifts, but I don't remember been given money - I didn't care about money.

Purim was also a wonderful holiday. I liked it very much. There were delicious hamantashen and fluden: walnuts boiled in honey, hard and sweet, and I liked them more than hamantashen. There were guests and masquerades and I had a Pinocchio costume.

My father was a musician and my mother was very musical and there was always a lot of music in the house. When I turned three, my father began to teach me the violin. I had a little quaver violin: a very rare instrument. Pupils usually start with a quarter, then a half, three quarters and then an integer violin, but I was little and had a little quaver violin. When I grew older, I began to learn the piano. My teacher was Mademoiselle Kaplun. Every Sunday morning we had morning parties in our

salon where my father's orchestra also took part. I played the piano and my mother sang sometimes. This was so festive! These were family music festivals, a tradition that has now been lost regretfully. My talent in music showed up early. At the age of four I already performed on stage. However, I can't remember where it was. I remember going onto a stage to play the little violin.

I didn't have a nanny. My mother educated me and walked with me. She was a wonderful mother: devoted, tender and wise. My father was sporty. He was fond of sports. He swam and walked long distances. I remember how he sometimes walked from Lozovo to Kishinev. He wanted to make me sporty. When I turned six, he began to teach me swimming. We went to a swimming pool near the railway station. I sailed on my father's back. Once, I slid down and began to drown. He pulled me up, but I had swallowed a lot of water, and I've been afraid of swimming since then.

My parents spoke both Yiddish and Russian to me at home, but I first learned to write in Russian. I started learning Romanian when I went to a Romanian elementary school for girls on Harlampievskaya Street. I remember my first day at school well. We lined up in the school yard. Our director, Bugaeva, came from a noble Russian family. She made a nice speech to us. She approached each one of us, stroked our hair saying that we were taking up some responsibilities which we had to take seriously to become decent people. Everything was so solemn like at an inauguration of a president. We wore dark uniform robes and white aprons and wore our hair in gauze hair pieces. I picked up Romanian fast and studied well. Bugaeva taught us crafts. In the course of four years I learned to knit, embroider and cook a little. She also taught us taste in dressing and good manners. She was a friendly, tactful and charming lady. She loved me for some reason.

After finishing elementary school I went to the grammar school 'Regina Maria', on Podolskaya Street. I had a good conduct of Romanian by that time and was a good and industrious pupil. I had almost all excellent marks. I didn't do so well in humanities, but I was good at certain subjects. I always had the highest marks in mathematics. Our mathematics teacher was a rough woman. When somebody gave a wrong answer she would say, 'You have a straw head and a hole in it.' However, our teachers were well-educated for the most part. There were a few Jewish girls in the grammar school but I didn't face any prejudiced attitudes. Perhaps the high level of education of our teachers explains this. The children also came from educated families: 'Regina Maria' was considered to be a prestigious grammar school. There was strict discipline in the grammar school. There was also a Romanian grammar school, 'Principessa Dadiani,' in town, where French was also taught. Unfortunately, I didn't study it for long and have poor knowledge of French.

Besides school I also attended my violin and piano classes and hardly had any leisure time left. In the rare moments of leisure my parents didn't allow me to play with other children in the yard who probably had a different mentality. Instead, they took me to the confectionery shop on Alexandrovskaya Street, the main street of Kishinev, where we had ice cream. Alexandrovskaya Street was paved with gravel like the majority of the streets in Kishinev, and there was a tram running there. There were one- storied houses, some of them were nice. There were many shops owned by Jews on Alexandrovskaya Street. There were a few markets and many gardens and parks in Kishinev. One of the oldest parks was the park with the monument of Stephan the Great [the ruler of the Moldova principality from 1457-1504, who conducted the policy of centralization]. I remember there was a terrible earthquake in Kishinev in 1940. It happened at night. I was sleeping

in my corner by the outer wall. My father grabbed me and rushed outside, when the wall collapsed right on my bed. My father saved my life.

I remember that the late 1930s, when the Cuzists [3](#) came to power, were troublesome years. My parents were very concerned as the elements of anti-Semitism began to emerge. Young people marched in the streets and there were collisions. Perhaps for this reason our family was happy when Bessarabia was annexed to the USSR [see Annexation of Bessarabia to the Soviet Union] [4](#). Besides, we had no idea what the USSR was like. We were told that everybody was equal there, but this sounded so naive. I, a twelve-year-old girl, was just curious. I remember watching the Red army troops marching along the streets, when they came into town. There was new administration. There were jokes told about the wives of the military who bought olives to make jam. Of course, the Soviet military and their wives weren't highly cultural. It seemed to me that the life of our family didn't change. My father was a teacher and we lived in our apartment. However, my grandmother Kenia let a part of her house to her tenants without charging them. She said, 'Let them live here, I don't need their fees.' I went to the sixth grade of a Russian school.

### During the war

On 22nd June 1941 the war began. Our family had different views regarding evacuation: some were for it and some were against it. My uncle Mordekhai was adamantly against evacuation. He said, 'I'm not leaving here.' They stayed and perished in a ghetto in Transnistria [5](#). Their son Aron was mobilized to the Soviet army on the first days of the war and this saved his life. He was at the front during the war, survived and met the Victory Day in Hungary. After the war Aron returned to Kishinev and worked in the State Symphonic Orchestra of Moldova. He got married and had a daughter. Aron died of cancer at the age of 53 in the early 1970s. His wife Zhanna lives in Kishinev, and their daughter Lisa moved to Israel.

My father demonstrated strength and activity. He arranged for my mother and I and my grandmother Kenia, to leave Kishinev by railroad. There was an air raid near Kishinev and the refugees grabbed their bales and jumped off the train. Somebody said that it was best to hide under the railcars, but my father dragged us to the field and this saved our lives. A bomb hit our railcar. Then, I remember this well, we headed to the Northern Caucasus in open platforms. On our way we ate whatever we could get trading our belongings for food. We got off in Ordzhonikidze. My father was mobilized to the army and sent to a distribution point in the town of Prohladnoye near Ordzhonikidze. My mother went there to see him. The front line was approaching Ordzhonikidze and we had to move on.

The three of us took a freight train heading to Makhachkala [1700 km from Kishinev], a port on the Caspian Sea. Near Makhachkala we were told to get off the train. They said, 'This is the end of the track. You can get a lift on trucks or whatever.' A few families got together and hired a truck trading some things for the ride. The drivers were Chechen or somebody else speaking a language we didn't understand. Somehow the men who were with us didn't like their attitude. They probably wanted to rob us and leave us in the middle of nowhere, but fortunately there was a column of trucks moving in the opposite direction on our way. The men jumped off the truck and spoke to some military men telling them about our situation. The military offered us a truck to take us to Makhachkala: there are wonderful people at all times! There was something awful in Makhachkala. There were crowds of people waiting for a ship to go to Central Asia across the sea.

We stayed in the open air for a few days. I remember one episode. It was getting dark and it was rather cool and uncomfortable. I was lying on our packs of luggage. Right before where I was the lights went on the first floor. I looked in there and couldn't take my eyes away. There was a table set in a bright cozy room with two girls sitting at a table: a nice homely scene. I looked there and tears poured down my face. Boarding on the ship was announced. I followed the others, when I was horrified to discover that there was no mother or grandmother beside me. I got lost. I began to scream, 'Mama! Mama!' Somebody said, 'Your mama is on board already.' I was 13 and should have guessed that my mother would never board a ship without me, but I believed this and went up. My mother and grandmother stayed ashore. A Tatar woman, who had two children, shared her miserable food with me on this ship.

I got off in Krasnovodsk [today Turkmenbashi - 575 km from Makhachkala]. From there we were taken to an aul village. I stayed with this family but I don't remember their names. It was thought that they would send me to a children's home later. There were low saxaul trees in this aul. Their branches served for stoking in this area. There was flat bread made on the fire. There was little food, even mill cake [milled and pressed sunflower oil production wastes] were hard to get. I decided to leave this family and go to Namangan [1625 km from Krasnovodsk], which was about 30 kilometers from this village to find a children's home there. When I got to Namangan I fortunately bumped into a Jewish woman. She happened to be the director of a children's home in Drogobych [Lvov region]. Her name was Rosa Abramovna, but I've forgotten her surname. She was arrested in 1945 or 1946, I don't know for what charges. She had a rare kind heart. She took me with her.

So I began to live in the children's home and go to school. We had sufficient food, four to five of us slept in one room. At this age it was no problem for me. It's nowadays that I don't like to share my room with anyone in a recreation home. I told Rosa Abramovna that I could play the piano and violin, and she engaged me right away. I formed a small band of the children from this children's home, found some patriotic poems and composed the song 'Red army troopers'. We learned this song, and I even staged dances. My father's energy emerged in me. Later, our band went to the Olympiad of Children's Amateur Arts in Tashkent. We were a great success and took the second place. Rosa Abramovna was very happy and provided additional rations of food for the 'artists.' It was amazing but I don't remember any of these children.

Life in the children's home was totally different from my life in Kishinev, but it wasn't that bad for me. I was 14 years old, I was full of energy, had my music and joined the Komsomol [6](#). Imperceptibly I became an atheist like all Soviet children. Rosa Abramovna helped me to search for my mother and grandmother. She wrote to Buguruslan in Orenburg region [today Russia], where they opened an evacuation inquiry office, and my mother finally responded in 1943. As it happened, my mother and grandmother were in Kokand [about 100 km away] near Namangan. My mother had been looking for me all that time. She and my grandmother were exhausted and miserable. They moved to Namangan. Rosa Abramovna employed my mother as a tutor in the children's home. My mother had meals in the children's home and took food for my grandmother. They rented a room and I lived with them.

My father served in an orchestra platoon. However, he had venous congestion and wasn't fit for military service and they demobilized him in 1943. He went to Tashkent where he was hoping to find us, but it wasn't that easy. When my father was sitting at the railway station one of our

acquaintances from Kishinev called his name, 'Moisey! Do you know that your family is in Namangan?' Just imagine! One chance in a thousand! In Namangan my father went to work in the School of Military Musicians evacuated from Moscow [today Russia]. He taught the tuba, French horn and horn: he was much valued for knowing to play brass instruments. We reunited. Our relatives began to move to Namangan: my father's brother Isaac, and my grandmother Kenia's distant relatives. Life was very hard and we had miserable food. There was a terrible disease called 'shpru' raging in this area. It may have been dystrophy. The hunger resulted in durable diarrhea and death. My grandmother Kenia tried to support us. She said she had had enough food and gave her food to her sons. She fell ill with 'shpru' and died. My grandmother was buried in the town cemetery in Namangan.

When re-evacuation began, Zlobin, the director of the School of Military Musicians, tried to convince my father to move to Moscow. He also offered my father an apartment but my father only wanted to go back to Kishinev, 'I want to go to my homeland, to Kishinev.' In August 1944 the Soviet army liberated Kishinev and we returned home, but there was no home left. Kishinev was ruined. There was a pile of stones left from my grandmother Kenia's house. In the house across the street, a Moldovan woman kept chicken in a room with a window in the ceiling. She let us live in this room. We cleaned it, whitewashed the walls and moved in there. Later, we had another small room built. It looked like a corridor, but there was a window in it. Our prewar tradition to set the table covered with a snow-white tablecloth faded away and Jewish traditions were forgotten: we were just surviving. My father went to teach in a music school, he had no private classes, and our life was hard.

I finished the ninth grade while in evacuation. When we returned I bumped into my former mathematics teacher, Lidia Samoilovna. She remembered me well and taught at elite school # 2 [7](#). She said, 'Let's take this girl to our school.' So I went to the tenth grade in this school, and also, began to work in kindergartens as a music tutor. They didn't pay well but they provided meals and I could even take some food home with me. I composed music for children. I remember the song 'Little leaves': 'Swing with me, my little golden leaf. Little leaves, green, maple leaves' - 'Listiki', 'Pokachaysa nado mnoy, moy listocek solotoy. Listiki, listiki selonie klenovie.' The children liked it. The war was over. Victory Day [8](#) is a big, a very big holiday. There was a meeting at school. However, for me Victory Day is associated with the song 'The Day of Victory' by Tukhmanov [David Tukhmanov, a Jew, a popular Soviet composer of popular songs]. I think it's just a brilliant song.

## Post-war

My father was happy that I worked with music and had a positive attitude to my composition experiences. He was happy that we had survived, but we were so bothered looking for food. We starved. I'm not ashamed of this word. We all starved. I needed good food: butter and milk. There was no food like this and I fell ill with bronchoadenitis, but thank God, there was a pulmonary doctor, Fishov. He brought me to recovery free of charge. However, I developed chronic bronchitis that has bothered me ever since. I finished school. At my graduate exam in mathematic I solved mathematic problems for the whole class. I finished school with a golden medal and decided that my vocation was to be the Faculty of Physics and Mathematics. I had no problems with entering Kishinev University, which had just been founded [1945]. However, it was a disappointment. Probably, the lecturers there weren't so good.

At that time Leonid Simonovich Gurov, a renowned pedagogue and composer, came to work in the Kishinev Conservatory from Odessa. My second cousin sister Dora Fridman was a musician and advised me to show my compositions to him and I did so. Leonid Simonovich listened to my songs. They were probably naive but they came from my heart and had nice tunes. He liked them and told me to enter the Preparatory Faculty of the Conservatory. I tried to study at both the University and Conservatory, but it was too hard and I quit the University.

After finishing the Preparatory Faculty I entered two Faculties at the Conservatory: the violin class of Iosif Lvovich Dailis, and the Music History Faculty. Unfortunately, I couldn't get in Gurov's class of composition: his class was full. I was hoping that later there might be a chance, but there wasn't. There were two anti-Semitic campaigns: the struggle [campaign] against cosmopolitans [9](#) and the Doctors' Plot [10](#), when I studied in the Conservatory. We understood that these were fabricated campaigns and we followed the events, but we were more bothered about our hard life. There was a card system in the country and we were hungry. I remember sitting in class, and there was a bakery store under the windows of the Conservatory building, and we couldn't focus on the subject of studies as we looked through the window trying to guess whether the bread had been delivered to the store. Our teacher reassured us, 'They haven't delivered the bread yet. Sit still.' When the card system was cancelled and it became possible to buy bread and sugar, there was so much happiness. I remember my fellow student, Yefim Bogdanoskiy, sitting at the table to have a cup of tea, 'How many spoons of sugar do I put? One, two, three... Hey, I'm all confused, let me start again.'

The Jews we knew were happy about Stalin's death [1953]. There were talks in Kishinev that there were trains waiting to deport all Jews to Birobidzhan [11](#). However, on the outside this was mourning. There were fanatics who thought that nothing could happen without Stalin. I still believe that we can't cross out this figure. Besides all cruel features he did a lot of good. Well, perhaps if he hadn't done them, the others would, but there were things about the Soviet regime that are gone for good: free medicine and free education. One can't forget such things. As for what Beriya [12](#) was doing, I don't think it was a secret to Stalin. I think he knew. This was Soviet fascism. Speaking about this subject I can say that when at the Twentieth Party Congress [13](#) Khrushchev [14](#) denounced Stalin, it wasn't staggering news for my husband or me. We knew it at the back of our minds.

I met my husband, when I was a third year student, in 1949. In summer every week in the Alexandrovskiy garden [Town Park in the center of Kishinev] the conductor of the Kishinev Philharmonic, Boris Milutin, and the Philharmonic orchestra, gave symphonic concerts. They were very popular in the town, and we, students never missed one of their concerts. I paid attention to one guy during a concert. He was different and had such a spiritual face, when the orchestra played Mozart. I liked him and he also paid attention to me. His name was Yefim Tkach and he studied in the flute class at the Conservatory.

Yefim was born into a wealthy Jewish family in Beltsy in 1926. His father, Mark Tkach, was a fur specialist, and his mother, Nehama, helped him. Yefim studied in a grammar school. His younger brother Yevgeniy graduated from elementary school. When the war began, they left Beltsy on foot. The German troops caught up with them in Kryzhopol in Vinnitsa region and they were taken to the ghetto in Kryzhopol. They survived since they knew Romanian and there were Romanian guards in the ghetto. Yefim's mother was a cook for a Romanian officer and his father also worked for



somebody. When in 1944 Soviet troops approached Kryzhopol, the Romanians escaped. Yefim's family returned to Beltsy. Yefim finished school and studied at the Pedagogical College in Beltsy. He didn't like it and went to Kishinev where he entered the flute class at the Conservatory. His parents moved to Lvov. They died in the 1970s. Yevgeniy graduated from the Faculty of Physics and Mathematics at the Pedagogical College in Beltsy, and was a mathematics teacher. Now he is a pensioner and lives in St. Petersburg with his wife. They have no children.

Yefim and I got married two years after we met, on 4th December 1949. We just registered our marriage and our closest relatives got together at home. I didn't have a veil or a white gown. We had a modest dinner. We resided in the annex with a window. In 1952, I finished the Conservatory and got a mandatory job assignment [15](#) to teach in a music school. I worked there for a few years. I inherited my father's pedagogical talent. I still like teaching. In 1953, our son Lyova [Lev] was born. It was hard to have no comforts at home, but my mother helped me a lot. However, I was so full of energy that at night we would build the walls to make a two-room apartment where our shed was. Yefim was very handy and did the water piping, made a toilet, and even steam heating. We also fenced a small yard and lived there till 1970.

My parents lived in two rooms nearby, which we had refurbished a little. My mother helped me to do the housework and cooking. I worked at the music school and was very busy, but I continued to compose music and felt that I lacked special education. In 1957 I entered the Faculty of Composers to Gurov's class and I only studied my specialty. In 1962 I graduated from this faculty and went to work at the Conservatory. I lectured on solfeggio, harmony, analysis of music works and reading of symphonic scores. Later, I gave up teaching solfeggio since I had to sing a lot with students and developed a catarrh. Now I teach composition, orchestra, instruments for symphonic orchestras, and choir arrangement which I like so much.

Lyova was a cheerful and sociable boy. I remember his morning parties in the kindergarten. Our neighbor, the father of one of the children, and I dressed up in fairy-tale costumes and made performances for the children. We were young and enjoyed it as much as the children. Lyova went to a music school where he also studied general subjects. My father worked at this school. My parents loved my son and he returned their feelings. He adored his grandfather calling him 'dyedushk' [Lyova pronounced the word 'dyedushka' wrong]. He had many friends and I liked it when they came to our house. Later, they moved away, but Lyova still keeps in touch with some of them. Two of them live in the USA. They correspond and call each other.

My father loved teaching. He particularly liked working with little children. He formed a violin ensemble with his pupils at school and they often played at children's concerts. His pupils loved him, and his work was very effective. One of his postwar pupils, Lidia Mordkovich, was a laureate of numerous music contests. She lived in Israel and now she lives in England. Another one is Galina Buynovskaya, director of a music lyceum in Kishinev, and violinist Mila Volnianskaya who lives in Israel now. Once I looked through his archives and found a number of photos of his students with inscriptions, 'To dear beloved Moisey Bentsionovich...'

In 1967 I wrote my first opera for children: 'A nanny goat and three kids'. It was staged in our Opera Theater. I joined the Association of Composers of Moldova [a professional creative association of composers]. The chairman of our union was Vasiliy Georgievich Zagorskiy, a student of Lev Gurov. He was Russian, born in Bessarabia and he knew Romanian well. He was a nice

person. It was to his credit that there was no anti-Semitism in the Association of Composers. He created a very good creative atmosphere. There were many Jewish composers: Shapiro, Aranov, Fedov, Mooler. There were hardly any Moldovan composers. Since we lived in a very small apartment, I enjoyed trips to the House of Creativity of Composers [specialized recreation homes to create conditions for creative work], where I could forget about everyday routines and dedicate myself to work. We communicated with composers all over the Soviet Union at congresses of composers. I traveled a lot to hear the works by Georgian, Armenian, Moscow and Kiev composers. Soviet composers and performers arrived in Kishinev. I was fortunate to meet Dmitriy Shostakovich [Shostakovich, Dmitriy Dmitrievich, (1906-1975): one of the foremost 20th-century Soviet composers] at a meeting in the 1960s. He wasn't only a genius, but also, a wonderful, humble, and intelligent person.

One can say that I've accomplished a lot, but I took a huge effort to reach it, it was very hard. Firstly, because there were many jealous people, which happens in the creative environment, secondly, because I'm a woman, and there aren't many women composers, and thirdly, because I'm a Jew. This became a problem for me when numbers of Jews began to move to Israel, but I must say that Yefim and I never considered departure. It's hard to say why, perhaps, it's just an inner conviction that a person must live where he was born and where his ancestors were buried. Perhaps, one lives with this never questioning it. The establishment of Israel in 1948 instigated the feeling of happiness and inner pride that Jews got their own country, finally. Since then I've considered Israel to be my country.

We often had friends at home celebrating the first nights [of performances], birthdays and just having gatherings. I've always enjoyed having guests. Nobody taught me to cook at home, I was protected and spoiled, but when I went to recreation homes I liked going to the kitchen to talk with the cooks. I just adored them, common wise people. They taught me to cook, 'Here, Zlatochka [affectionate for Zlata], this is how it must be.' I learned a lot, but the thing I can't do is baking. I mean I bake, but it's nothing special. However, I must say that I have a taste for the Jewish cuisine. I make gefilte fish tasting exactly as the fish I had in my grandmother Riva's home. Once in the recreation home in Sortavala [a town in Karelia, a climatic resort] I made it for Soviet composers. That year Sviridov [Sviridov, Georgiy (1915-1998): Soviet composer, pianist, public activist] worked and rested there. He was a fond fisherman. He and his young wife caught 21 pikes.

Somebody mentioned to him that I could make good Jewish fish and he asked me to cook the pikes. At first other dames wanted to assist me, but they dispersed seeing that it was hard work. Only one of them stayed, my assistant, a composer from Baku, and we finally did it. It was delicious and there was a lot of it, but we smelled of onions and went to take a shower. In the bathroom I felt dizzy from fatigue. I fell on the cement floor, hit my head and fainted. She dried me with a towel, helped me into my clothes, and called the others who took me to my room: there were cottages where we stayed. I was fortunate that her father was a doctor, staying with her. He examined me - there was a bruise on my head. He told me to stay in bed a whole week, and they had the delicious gefilte fish. They liked it, and I gained the title of an excellent cook.

In 1970, we received a four-bedroom apartment with all comforts for me, my husband, my son, and my parents. My mother saw it and we bought chandeliers for all the rooms, but my mother didn't enjoy living in this apartment. She died that same year. We buried her in the Jewish cemetery without following the Jewish ritual. After my mother died, I composed a concert for violin and

orchestra and dedicated it to her memory. Lyova finished school in 1972 and entered the music history department of the Conservatory in Kishinev. After finishing his first year he decided to go to Moscow Conservatory. It was hard, but he managed. At that time I had to have training in Moscow for six months. We both stayed in the hostel of the Conservatory on Malaya Gruzinskaya Street. I had a room for myself, of course, and Lyova shared his room with two guys from Central Asia. They are all excellent cooks, and the guys taught Lyova to cook. He makes such delicious plov dishes! [Editor's note: Plov is originally an Uzbek dish, rice mixed with boiled, or fried meat, onions and carrots (and sometimes other ingredients such as raisins).]

After he graduated from the Conservatory Lyova was taken to the army. He served in the music band of the Moscow regiment. He sang in the choir. After the army he married his former co-student Mila Gordiychuk, a Ukrainian girl. Mila and her mother lived in a one-bedroom apartment in Moscow. Her father had left them a long time ago. There was a wedding in Moscow, in Mila grandmother's apartment. I bought many pink roses that I kept in the bathroom of the hotel room where my husband and I were staying. After the wedding, Lyova and Mila moved to Kishinev. Lyova went to teach in a music school. We rented an apartment for them. In 1979 my granddaughter, Yulia was born. Then Lyova was offered an administrative position in Moscow in the All-Union Bureau of Propaganda of Soviet Music. Mila's mother moved in with Mila's grandmother, and Lyova and his family got her a one-bedroom apartment. I missed them a lot and traveled to Moscow whenever I had the chance.

In the early 1980s, a Moldovan writer Bukov [Bukov, Yemilian (1909-1984): Bessarabian poet, wrote prose after the war], offered me to compose music for the ballet after his fairy-tale 'Andriyash.' Somebody told him that I was the best composer to write it and he was very insistent. Frankly speaking I wasn't quite sure that I could handle this genre, but I have a decisive character. Oleg Melnik, chief ballet master of the Kishinev Opera and Ballet Theater, was going to stage this ballet, but when the score was ready, he happened to be chief ballet master in Samarkand [today Uzbekistan], he somehow had problems with the administration of the Kishinev Theater. I was confused, but he called me, 'Mail me your score. I'll stage the ballet in Samarkand.' I did so. Some time later Melnik sent me an invitation to the first night. I went there two days before the performance. Since there was no direct flight to Samarkand, I had to take the flight Kishinev-Tashkent with stopovers in Tbilisi [today Georgia] and Ashgabat [today Turkmenistan].

In Tashkent I was to take another plane to Samarkand. There was fog in Tbilisi and there was a delay, then there was another delay in Ashgabat due to poor weather conditions, and I was afraid that I wasn't going to make it to Samarkand on time, when all of a sudden I heard, 'The crew of the plane apologizes, but we need to force-land in Samarkand.' One wouldn't believe it. From the airport I rushed to the theater. I went to the dress rehearsal. Then I went to wash and change in the hotel and rushed back to the theater. The first night was successful. I took a tape of the performance and brochures and went back to Kishinev. I showed these to the director of our Opera theater and he got very interested. He started preparations for the performance. To cut a long story short, 'Andriyash' was staged in Kishinev and I was awarded a State Award of Moldova in 1982. [State awards of the Union Republics were awarded in the Soviet Union since 1966 by special committees for outstanding accomplishments in science, technical fields, literature and art.]

We were used to the Soviet way of life. I didn't care about politics and I didn't join the Party. As for our spiritual life, Yefim or I never felt any suppression. My husband collected classical literature. I'm

very fond of foreign classics. My creative activities were closely connected with Moldovan literature and we often discussed works by Moldovan writers: Aureliu Busyok [Moldovan Soviet writer, based on his novel 'My Parisian Uncle', Zlata Tkach wrote an opera in 1988], Dumitriu Matkovskiy, a Moldovan writer and poet, and Grigore Vieru - a Moldovan poet, who was a friend of our family for many years. We went to all the performances in the Opera Theater, and symphonic concerts. Many popular musicians came on tours to Kishinev, I remember Yevgeniy, Mravinskiy, a conductor from Leningrad, Oleg Krysa, a violinist, Soviet composers: Khachaturian [Khachaturian, Aram (1903-1978): Soviet-Armenian composer], and Khrennikov [Khrennikov, Tikhon Nikolaevich (1913): Soviet-Russian composer, public activist]. We didn't often go to drama theaters in Kishinev as Yefim wasn't fond of them. We only went there when producers whom we knew invited us to the first nights.

My husband and I lived for 52 years together, longer than a golden jubilee. I think I'm a happy woman who had a happy family life. I married for love, we lived in harmony and we were united by profession. Yefim was a smart and wise man, talented in his field, and he cared about my success. Yefim taught in the music school for many years and later worked in the Philharmonic. He lectured on the history of Moldovan music in the Kishinev College of Arts. He specialized in Moldovan music, wrote many articles for the press, presented regular radio programs in Moldovan that he knew well. He had a strong will and had a goal to polish the Moldovan language to perfection. He understood that this was the only way for him to describe the cultural life of Moldova in every detail.

My husband and I never cared about everyday comforts: we were more interested in spiritual life. We only bought a 'Ganka' set of furniture [Soviet-Moldovan furniture brand] for the housewarming party in 1970. It was rather difficult at that time. The owner of the furniture store, whose son, a pianist, entered the Moscow Conservatory with our son Lyova, helped us to get it. He made arrangements for me to buy this set of furniture without having to wait in line. I bought another carpet for my living room before the New Year [2004], just because the old one got very shabby. I received a bonus of one thousand rubles from the Conservatory. And I decided: now or never. My student's mother helped me to take it home in her car.

When Gorbachev [16](#) came to power and perestroika [17](#) began, for me it was a possibility to give freedom to my thoughts and turn 180 degrees to Jewish life. I've composed music my whole life. I was born in a Moldovan village, lived in Moldova and had an ear for Moldovan music, while I've never had an expressed need to write Jewish music. Life was difficult: the war, evacuation, and the Soviet reality kept me within certain frames. As soon as I felt free for expressing myself, I felt like writing music for my own people. Music is always in the genes. My husband helped me with it. He found a rare book by Berezovskiy for me: 'Jewish folklore.' I began to use arrangements of Jewish pop songs in my works.

Unfortunately, the beginning of perestroika was marked by a tragic event in my life. My father died in a car accident in 1985. He outlived my mother by 15 years. We buried my father in the Jewish sector of the 'Doina' international cemetery. I made arrangements for my mother's reburial near my father's grave. It was hard, but I managed. Now they are together under a black marble gravestone where their names are inscribed, a candle and a violin are engraved. My parents' death had a huge effect on me, and my thoughts turned to God again. After my father's death, I decided to compose a concert of two flutes and dedicate it to him. This was the first work where I used Jewish motives and tunes. There was Irina Mishura, a wonderful vocalist. She is non-Jewish, but her

husband is a Jew of Kishinev. She wonderfully performed the works by Bitkin, a Jewish composer. When I heard her, I felt like writing something for the vocals. I had a collection of poems by Ovsey Dreez [Dreez, Ovsey (1908-1971): Soviet Jewish poet, author of a collection of lyrical poems, and fairy-tales and poems for children] in Yiddish, which my former student gave me. I wrote a vocal cycle based on his poems. Therefore, I began to write Jewish music in vocal cycles, instrumental music, music for a quartet and an orchestra. I have a number of pieces of Jewish music that I composed.

My son worked in the Bureau of Propaganda of Soviet Music till the breakup of the USSR in 1991. The Bureau was closed and Lyova was jobless for almost three years. By that time it was my turn in the line to buy a car. [In the USSR people who wanted to buy a car had to wait in line for years before their turn came.] I bought it, and Lyova took it to Moscow and earned money by working as a cabdriver in a cooperative. Later, he worked as a director of the collection fund of musical instruments, and now he works in the Glinka [18](#) State Central Museum of Musical Culture in Moscow. His wife Mila works for a real estate company. She is the breadwinner of the family. My granddaughter, Yulia is 25, she didn't want to study music. She took a two-year course of language studies and now she is a tour guide.

For me perestroika was a good thing, but there were also negative features. When the USSR broke up, all creative relations between the former republics fell apart. As for me, this made my creative life poor, though I continued to work at the Conservatory. The leading musicians and orchestras don't come to Kishinev on tours. Regretfully, our television adds to the negative side of it showing vulgar unprofessional clips. There is no serious symphonic music on the screens since nobody pays for it. There is only the 'Mezzo' channel, a French channel, but it also has a tendency to worsen. I used to listen to the 'Symphony of Psalms' by Stravinskiy. But now they broadcast some jazz fragments. Being a musician, it's hard for me to have no music replenishment. My husband left a big collection of classical music. My son gave me a nice music system, and I listen to music. I listen to what I like. This is all I have.

In 1992, I traveled to Israel with a delegation of Moldovan musicians at the invitation of the Kishinev composer Kopytman, who was one of the first to move there. He had an important position in the Rubin Musical Academy in Jerusalem, and Maria Bieshu [Moldovan singer (lyrical-dramatic soprano) soloist of the Kishinev Theater of Opera and Ballet, laureate of international contests]. We spent a week there and stayed in a hotel. This was a busy week: concerts, meetings and many tours across Israel. We visited the Wailing Wall, and I left a note there, of course. This was like a fairy-tale! Israel is a wonderful and beautiful country. I sensed its amazing aura and I felt like traveling many decades back, I felt an inner connection with the history of my people. I was very impressed by this tour. I visited Israel again in 2001 at the invitation of Izolda, the daughter of Kishinev conductor Boris Milyutin. She lives in Bat Yam near Tel Aviv. Life in Israel is progressing.

My husband and I witnessed the rebirth of the Jewish life in Kishinev seven years ago [1997]. Yefim began to collect material about the Holocaust and anti-Semitism. He had cancer and hurried with his work. Two other activists of the Association of Jewish Organizations and Communities of Moldova, Aurel Guzhel and Yefim Levit, worked with him. They prepared and published with the help of Joint [19](#) four collections of documents and articles on this subject under the title 'We won't forget,' in Romanian and Russian. My husband was chief editor of this collection. Yefim died in April 2003. On the day of his funeral I saw how much he was loved in Kishinev: by Jews and Moldovans

alike. Many people came to pay their respects to him. We buried him near my parents' graves. Employees of Hesed [20](#) Yehuda, our charity center, helped me to make all necessary arrangements. I invited a rabbi and he recited the Kiddush. I installed a red granite gravestone on his grave to match my parents' gravestone.

I'm alone but my son often visits me and I teach at the Conservatory. I have a few students. At the invitation of Joint I teach talented Jewish children composition. One of the officials in Israel said, 'the accomplishments of the Jews of the Diaspora are the achievements of Israel.' Hesed Yehuda provides assistance to me: a volunteer comes to clean my apartment once a week and I also receive food packages.

## Glossary

### **1 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.

### **2 Bessarabia**

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

### **3 Cuzist**

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

### **4 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.

## **5 Transnistria**

Area situated between the Bug and Dniester rivers and the Black Sea. The term is derived from the Romanian name for the Dniester (Nistru) and was coined after the occupation of the area by German and Romanian troops in World War II. After its occupation Transnistria became a place for deported Romanian Jews. Systematic deportations began in September 1941. In the course of the next two months, all surviving Jews of Bessarabia and Bukovina and a small part of the Jewish population of Old Romania were dispatched across the Dniester. This first wave of deportations reached almost 120,000 by mid-November 1941 when it was halted by Ion Antonescu, the Romanian dictator, upon intervention of the Council of Romanian Jewish Communities. Deportations resumed at the beginning of the summer of 1942, affecting close to 5,000 Jews. A third series of deportations from Old Romania took place in July 1942, affecting Jews who had evaded forced labor decrees, as well as their families, communist sympathizers and Bessarabian Jews who had been in Old Romania and Transylvania during the Soviet occupation. The most feared Transnistrian camps were Vapniarka, Ribnita, Berezovka, Tulcin and Iampol. Most of the Jews deported to camps in Transnistria died between 1941-1943 because of horrible living conditions, diseases and lack of food.

## **6 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.

## **7 School #**

Schools had numbers and not names. It was part of the policy of the state. They were all state schools and were all supposed to be identical.

## **8 Victory Day in Russia (9th May)**

National holiday to commemorate the defeat of Nazi Germany, and the end of World War II and honor the Soviets who died in the war.

## **9 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'.

## **10 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.

## **11 Birobidzhan**

Formed in 1928 to give Soviet Jews a home territory and to increase settlement along the vulnerable borders of the Soviet Far East, the area was raised to the status of an autonomous region in 1934. Influenced by an effective propaganda campaign, and starvation in the east, 41,000 Soviet Jews relocated to the area between the late 1920s and early 1930s. But, by 1938 28,000 of them had fled the regions harsh conditions, There were Jewish schools and synagogues up until the 1940s, when there was a resurgence of religious repression after World War II. The Soviet government wanted the forced deportation of all Jews to Birobidzhan to be completed by the middle of the 1950s. But in 1953 Stalin died and the deportation was cancelled. Despite some remaining Yiddish influences - including a Yiddish newspaper - Jewish cultural activity in the region has declined enormously since Stalin's anti-cosmopolitanism campaigns and since the liberalization of Jewish emigration in the 1970s. Jews now make up less than 2% of the region's population.

## **12 Beriya, L**

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

## **13 Twentieth Party Congress**

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

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

Soviet communist leader. After Stalin's death in 1953, he became first secretary of the Central Committee, in effect the head of the Communist Party of the USSR. In 1956, during the 20th Party Congress, Khrushchev took an unprecedented step and denounced Stalin and his methods. He was



deposed as premier and party head in October 1964. In 1966 he was dropped from the Party's Central Committee.

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

Graduates of higher educational institutions had to complete a mandatory 2-year job assignment issued by the institution from which they graduated. After finishing this assignment young people were allowed to get employment at their discretion in any town or organization.

### **16 Gorbachev, Mikhail (1931- )**

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

### **17 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.

### **18 Glinka, Mikhail Ivanovich (1804-1857)**

The first important Russian composer. He wrote the first Russian national opera, A Life for the Tsar, as well as overtures, symphonies and orchestral suites.

### **19 Joint (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee)**

The Joint was formed in 1914 with the fusion of three American Jewish committees of assistance, which were alarmed by the suffering of Jews during World War I. In late 1944, the Joint entered Europe's liberated areas and organized a massive relief operation. It provided food for Jewish survivors all over Europe, it supplied clothing, books and school supplies for children. It supported cultural amenities and brought religious supplies for the Jewish communities. The Joint also operated DP camps, in which it organized retraining programs to help people learn trades that would enable them to earn a living, while its cultural and religious activities helped re-establish Jewish life. The Joint was also closely involved in helping Jews to emigrate from Europe and from

Muslim countries. The Joint was expelled from East Central Europe for decades during the Cold War and it has only come back to many of these countries after the fall of communism. Today the Joint provides social welfare programs for elderly Holocaust survivors and encourages Jewish renewal and communal development.

## **20 Hesed**

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