

Theodore Magder

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Kishinev

Moldova

Interviewer: Zhanna Litinskaya

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I heard about Theodore Magder in the Jewish library of Kishinev. He was said to be an interesting conversationalist, but a rather difficult and very busy man. The people at the library assured me that he would never agree to an interview. I was thus surprised that it didn't take me long to make an appointment with Mr. Magder, though he mentioned that he was available for 30 minutes maximum at the Jewish community center that he heads. Theodore Magder is an old, thin, hunched man. He met me in his office. He wore a snow-white shirt and a suit despite the heat. Our meeting happened to be longer than expected. Mr. Magder agreed to give me an interview and we met two more times. Being a really intelligent man, well-raised and well-educated, Theodore Magder knows how to conceal his inner world hardly ever showing any emotions. Only when he talked about his son and his visit to the Promised Land his voice trembled. However, behind his seeming dryness I managed to discover the fine vulnerable heart of a man who had lived a long life and loved it. After our last meeting we went for a walk in the center of beautiful Kishinev. We went to the park and Theodore Magder told me about his youth. During this walk Theodore rescued a homeless kitten, which had fallen into a construction pit. He pulled it out and stroked its fur with tenderness. He said he loved dogs and cats, but after his wife's death he couldn't afford to keep a pet at home.



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My family background

I don't know much about my maternal or paternal ancestors. We lived in different towns. My parents were rather shy and reserved and they hardly ever told me about their parents or childhood. My paternal grandfather, Yakov Magder, whom I never met, came from the Romanian town of Vaslui [c. 80 km from Kishinev]. I think he was born in the 1850s because in 1877-78, during the Russian-Turkish War [1](#), he was involved in the struggle for independence of Romania. When I was in my teens, I read a poem by a Romanian classic - I don't remember his name - who wrote about ten volunteers from Vaslui who distinguished themselves in the war, and one of them,

who had a 'tempered heart', was my grandfather Yakov Magder. After the war a decree of granting political rights to the Jews who had distinguished themselves on the battlefield was issued in Romania, while Jews had had no citizenship in Romanian before. So my grandfather became a national of Romania. He and my grandmother, whose name I can't remember, lived in Vaslui all their life, and I never met them.

I don't know what my grandfather did for a living. He provided well for his family and gave his children excellent education, so I believe he was a wealthy and progressive man. I don't know any details of my grandparents' religiosity, but I can say they observed traditions, celebrated Sabbath and Jewish holidays. From what I know my father and his brothers didn't go to cheder. My grandfather wanted to raise his children to be progressive people and he managed it well. Grandfather Yakov died in 1926. My grandmother had died a few years before. They had four children.

My father's older brother, Adolf Magder, born in the early 1880s, suffered from a chronic disease since childhood. He was single for this reason. Adolf got a higher pedagogical education at Bucharest University. He was a teacher and a progressive activist in Bucharest. During the Great Patriotic War [2](#) he had an acute condition caused by his disease and was taken to the Jewish hospital in Bucharest where he had to stay a few years. He set up a nice library in the hospital. Adolf died in this hospital during the Great Patriotic War.

I was surprised to hear that the Jewish hospital was operating during the fascist regime in Bucharest, and I spent some time studying this issue. It turned out that Antonescu [see Antonescian period] [3](#), then Romanian leader, was tolerant to Jewish residents of Bucharest, but he mercifully exterminated residents of outside areas, primarily Transnistria [4](#). There were a number of anti-Semitic laws issued [5](#), restricting the rights and lives of Jews, but basically they presented no direct threat to their life. There was a Jewish Theater in Bucharest during the Great Patriotic War. Its director told me many years later that the German officers heading to the Eastern front also used to visit it.

My father's younger brother, Benjamin Magder, born in 1889, was also in Bucharest during the Great Patriotic War. Benjamin had distinguished himself when he served in the Romanian army during World War I. There's a mention of him in the book 'Jewish veterans of WWI', published in Bucharest. ['Evrei din Rumania in Rzhboiyl de reirntregire a shrii 1916- 1919', issued in 1996 by HASEFER - Publishing House of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania, Dumitru Hunke.] Benjamin was a well- to-do attorney and owned a house in Bucharest. His wife's name was Anna and his daughter's name was Beatrica. Being a veteran of the war, he was allowed to stay in his house with his family. Benjamin lived a long life, but for quite obvious reasons - living in the USSR - I had no contacts with him. [The interviewee is referring to the fact that it was dangerous to keep in touch with relatives abroad] [6](#) He died in the late 1980s in his own bed. His daughter Beatrica, whom I met when I visited Romania after 1990, still lives in her parents' house. She has six grandchildren. My father also had a sister, whose name I can't remember. She lived in Bucharest and died young. That's all I know about her.

My father, Solomon Magder, was born in 1887. I know that after finishing a Romanian state-funded gymnasium, he entered the Law Faculty of the University of Iasi. Like many students at that time my father gave private classes to earn his living. That way he met Israel Feinzilber, a grain dealer,

who hired him to teach his younger daughter. My father met my mother, Sima Feinzilber, the older daughter, and they fell in love with each other. They got married around 1912.

My mother's father, Israel Feinzilber, was born in Iasi in 1860. I don't remember my maternal grandmother's name, perhaps, because I just addressed her as 'granny'. My grandfather provided well for his family, though his earnings were based on many factors like crops, market demand, etc. There were six children in the family, so supporting all of them wasn't an easy task for my grandfather. I visited my grandfather in my childhood, and I remember his house well. My grandfather rented an apartment from Bokin, a wealthy Jewish landlord, who had a house on Captain Palui Street in a row of similar stone houses. There were four spacious rooms and a kitchen in the apartment. There was polished furniture in the rooms. My grandparents had a piano for their children to study music. There were velvet curtains on the windows.

My grandfather had Romanian and Jewish acquaintances and had good relations with them. I remember the nearby synagogue. There was a significant Jewish population in Iasi and there were several synagogues for the guilds of craftsmen, traders, etc. My grandfather Israel and my grandmother were rather religious and observed all Jewish traditions. My grandfather wore a wide-brimmed black hat to go to the synagogue on Friday and Saturday. I liked going with him when I was there. My grandmother wore a wig like all Jewish matrons. She took care of the household, did the shopping and cleaning.

I cannot remember how all the holidays were celebrated in my grandfather's home, but Pesach was my favorite. We usually joined my grandparents on this holiday - this was a family tradition. I remember how my father dressed up and reclined on cushions at the head of the table. There was plenty of food that my grandmother cooked on the table besides the Haggadah dishes. According to the rules, my grandfather put away a piece of afikoman. I watched him and found it instantly, and one time I asked my grandfather to buy me a bicycle that I had dreamt of for some time. My grandfather bought it for me, of course.

My grandfather and grandmother spoke Yiddish to one another. Though I didn't study the language, I could understand them all right. In 1930 my grandmother and grandfather moved to Bucharest. They rented a small apartment there, I remember. My grandfather Israel died in 1939. He was buried according to all Jewish rules. My mother, father and I went to his funeral. I saw many religious people and the rabbi reciting a prayer. My grandmother died a few months after my grandfather, but I didn't go to the funeral. She was also buried according to the rules.

My mother's older brother, Mathey Feinzilber, lived in Paris and was a doctor and a writer, when I met him in the 1930s. He wrote a number of novels that I read many years later. I saw him several times when I was 14-15. We corresponded in French. I didn't know Mathey's wife. Mathey had two sons: Jamin Feinzilber, the older one, had kidney tuberculosis. He died before the Great Patriotic War. The other one, Samson Feinzilber, was a cinema and theater critic. He was an actor as well; he performed in French theaters. During World War II he was wounded in his back - probably during an air raid. That's all I know about him. Most likely, he died in a concentration camp. I saw Mathey in 1939, when he came to my grandfather Israel's funeral.

My mother's older sister, Tonia Rozenstein, nee Feinzilber, also lived in Bucharest. Her husband was a wealthy man. When the fascist regime of Antonescu came to power in Romania, he moved to Palestine with his family. He died there in the middle of the 1940s. His wife died a few years later.

Tonia's son, Emil Rozenstein, perished in France during World War II.

My mother's younger sister, Sonia Feinzilber, married a Mr. Nadler, a Romanian Jew. They moved to Egypt. They lived in Alexandria where her husband owned a confectionery. I visited Sonia at the age of 12. I was struck by the eternal beauty of Egypt. There was a rather big Jewish community, a synagogue and Jewish community activities in Alexandria. During and after the Great Patriotic War Sonia and her husband lived in Switzerland. They died in the early 1950s. Sonia had no children.

My mother's younger brother, Simon Feinzilber, also finished the Medical Faculty in Iasi and lived and worked in France like his older brother. Simon was single. That's all I know about him.

Emil, the youngest brother, became a businessman. He owned a textile factory. He lived in Iasi and then in Bucharest. In the late 1930s he moved to Palestine with his wife, whose name I don't remember, and their son, Edwin. Emil and his wife died after the war. I have no information about my cousin brother Edwin.

My mother, Sima Magder, nee Feinzilber, was born in Iasi in 1889. Mama had a private teacher at home and then finished a Jewish or Romanian gymnasium. My parents spoke Romanian to each other for the most part, but they knew Yiddish as well. My mother learned to play the piano and did so quite well. She also studied foreign languages. She was quite well-educated for her time. Neither my father nor my mother knew Hebrew. My parents got married in Iasi in 1912. My grandfather Israel insisted that they got married under a chuppah and had a traditional Jewish wedding.

After the wedding my parents rented an apartment. In 1913 my father and his brother were drafted to the army. When my father's term of service was over, World War I began. He finished an officer school and went to war. One of those years my mother gave birth to her first baby named Emmanuel. Unfortunately, the boy died of scarlet fever at the age of five. I don't know when exactly my father was demobilized, but he moved to Kishinev immediately. He may have been offered a job there. My mother followed him.

Growing up

Before I was due my mother went to her parents in Iasi, and I was born there on 30th October 1921. My name, as well as my relatives' names, seems to be of Romanian, French or even Spanish rather than Jewish origin. I was a long-expected child, particularly since my parents had lost their first baby. Though my father wasn't religious, he obeyed his relatives and I had my brit [milah] ritual on the eighth day. At home I was affectionately addressed as Theo, and this became the name that my family used for me. My first childhood memory is of my mother sitting on the sofa, calling my name and stretching her hands out toward me - she probably taught me to walk thereby.

Another one of my memories is our house, or apartment, I'd rather say, which my parents rented on 16 Pushkinskaya Street. We had four rooms: a living room and a piano in it, my parents' bedroom, a children's room and my father's study. Mama spent all her time with me. She read me fairy tales and poems by Romanian authors, and she took me for walks in the beautiful town garden [in Kishinev] that is still there. There was a visiting housemaid, who did the shopping, cleaning and cooking at home, but my mother tried to do as much housework as she managed herself: at that time the progressive intelligentsia, which I think my parents belonged to, inspired

by democratic ideas, tried to avoid using hired labor. My father worked a lot. Lawyers usually had their offices at home. My father was working and I liked watching him as he was sitting on the sofa. There were armchairs, high bookcases with thick volumes in them, and a desk in the center of his room. When my father had visitors, I had to leave his study. He was basically rather strict, but not my mother who was spoiling me.

My parents didn't observe Jewish traditions. My grandfather Israel usually told me about Jewish traditions and holidays, when I visited him in Iasi. My father didn't go to the synagogue and was an atheist, but he had ties with the progressive Jewish circles and defended Jews in court. Leaders of Jewish Zionist organizations often visited him at home and they had discussions in his room; even a rabbi visited my father once to consult him. My father wrote articles mainly on the eternal Jewish issue. I heard the word 'anti-Semitism' in my childhood, though I didn't know the meaning. My father was involved in civil, criminal and political cases. However, my father never discussed his work with me. I don't even know what kind of organizations they were; my father didn't tell me about them. Only much later did I learn about his support of Jewish organizations from his comrades and the media. I found out that my father was one of the founders of the Maccabi [7](#) local organization for young people in Kishinev. He also spent time with members of this organization. My father was a progressive attorney, supporting and defending those who struggled with the regime for a bright future. He didn't belong to any political party, but his views were close to the socialist ideology. My father also wrote articles about the Jewish history. I learned this, when I studied the history of my family in the 1990s.

I wouldn't say that my father spent little time with me. He read to me, taught me about arithmetic and nature. At the age of five I actually completed the syllabus of the 1st grade of elementary school. I was to take an exam in front of a big commission and this was the first exam in my life. My father was sitting in the conference room where I was standing before the commission. There was the 'intuition' subject in the first grade, something close to natural sciences [Editor's note: the subject certainly had a different name than 'intuitsiya' (Russian), but its content could have been similar to science classes for children of this age.] So the commission asked me to name home pets. I named a dog, a cat, a cow, a duck, etc. When they asked me which of them was my favorite, I said 'duck' and explained that it walked in a funny manner. I even demonstrated how it walked and the commission and my father burst into laughter. The commission gave me the highest mark and explained to my father that I was a smart boy and had an original way of thinking. So I became a pupil of the 1st grade. My grandfather and grandmother already lived in Bucharest, and we didn't join them on Jewish holidays. When I turned 13, my grandfather got angry with my father: my father refused to arrange a bar mitzvah for me. My grandfather didn't talk to my father for almost a year.

I went to the Romanian gymnasium [Lyceum]. There were 40 pupils in my class, seven or eight of who were Jews. Other classes had about the same ratio. By the middle of the 1930s the Jewish population of the town was about 80,000 people. [Editor's note: In 1930 the 41,405 Jews living in Kishinev constituted over 36 percent of the total population numbering 114,896.] There were 65 synagogues and prayer houses and a developed network of Jewish organizations in the town. There were Jewish schools, gymnasiums, and vocational schools preparing young people for repatriation to Palestine. There was a network of Jewish charity organizations, orphanages and a Jewish hospital. There was a Jewish newspaper called 'Neue Zeit' ['New Time' in German/Yiddish]

published in Kishinev.

I didn't take part in any Jewish activities and, like my father, identified myself as a Romanian to a bigger extent. It should be noted that before Romania became fascist, Jews had no problems in their relations with other nations. There was no segregation in the gymnasium: when Christian children had their religious classes, Jewish children studied the history of Judaism and Jewish history. This was an elective course and my father didn't force me to attend it, but I did as I found it interesting. Later it was closed.

I began to take interest in politics, when I was rather young. By the age of twelve I clearly defined my own political interests. I had Romanian, Jewish and Russian friends. Anti-fascism was our common view. Fascism was spreading in Romania through such organizations as the Cuzists [8](#) and the Legionary Movement [9](#), but there were also anti-fascist organizations. Constantinescu, a professor of Kishinev University, was at the head of this movement. He was also the head of the Society of Friendship with the USSR [a local society]. In 1935 he was brought to trial and my father spoke as his attorney. This movement also involved gymnasium students. Two of my classmates were arrested for their participation in the underground Komsomol [10](#) organization. My father couldn't defend them in court to avoid being accused of bias considering that they were my friends. The guys were sentenced to six months in prison, though they were just 15 years olds, and they were expelled from the gymnasium. When they were released, I continued meeting them and shared their views, but I never joined the underground Komsomol organization.

I took a great deal of interest in the Soviet Union like all young anti-fascists; we tried to learn as much as we could about this country. Of course, we had no information about the mass persecutions or arrests, occurring in the USSR at the time [during the so-called Great Terror] [11](#), though the Romanian press occasionally mentioned large political trials - against Kamenev [12](#), Zinoviev [13](#), etc. Later I read records of these trials in a book published in the Soviet Union in many languages. I received one copy of the book in French translation, 'The book you know not about', and when I read the trial records and the words of confessions of espionage and all deadly sins that Lenin's comrades had committed, I couldn't believe this had happened and asked my father to explain. Papa told me strictly that I had no grounds to doubt that what was published in newspapers and books was true: as long as Lenin's former comrades confessed, this meant they were enemies.

Besides politics I was also fond of literature. I read Romanian, French and German books in the original language. I studied these languages with private teachers. I also read the following Russian classics translated into Romanian: Tolstoy [14](#), Pushkin [15](#), Chekhov [16](#), Dostoevsky [17](#). I didn't know Russian. At that time it was even forbidden in Romania. There were announcements that Russian wasn't allowed in public places. I wasn't fond of Jewish literature. I only read Sholem Aleichem [18](#) in Romanian. I also wrote essays and they were published in our gymnasium newspaper. After visiting my aunt in Egypt I wrote a few travel notes. I wrote critical articles and journalistic essays. My fondness of literature helped to pass my exam for the 'Bachelor's degree' very successfully. [Editor's note: In Eastern Europe the term 'Bachelor's degree' refers to the graduation after taking the final exam at high school.] This was a very important exam: about 140 incumbents from all gymnasia of the town had to come to a big hall. The commission included teachers and professors from Bucharest, whom we didn't know. We were to name a writer and be ready to answer any question regarding his life or work. I chose Caragiale [19](#) a complex and

contradictory author. However, I answered all questions and was awarded my Bachelor's degree.

I finished the gymnasium in 1939 and had to think about the future. I decided to go to a medical college - firstly, I was fond of medicine, and secondly, doctors belonged to the wealthy level of society. I went to Bucharest where I stayed with my mama's sister Tonia. Uncle Emil was in Bucharest at that time. He spent a lot of his time with me. I submitted my documents to the Medical Faculty of Bucharest University. Applicants had to sit in alphabetic order at the exam. My companions were Makariy and Manchur, non-Jews, of course. I finished my test and did theirs. We passed the written exam and were allowed to take the oral exam. Makariy and Manchur demonstrated their friendly feelings toward me. Between exams we walked around Bucharest together. One of the guys, a landlord's son, invited me to his mansion, and the other one promised to introduce me to his sister and arrange for me to marry her. During the oral exam I answered very well, but I didn't find my name in the list of students. This was the first time I faced anti-Semitism on the state-level. My 'friends' turned away from me immediately. I had a real depression - I was extremely upset about my first experience associated with the realization of my national identity.

I didn't know where to go or what to do. Wandering about the streets in Bucharest, I saw an announcement of admission to the Faculty of Literature and Philosophy. Since my medical career was over before it started I took my documents there. There was a rather big competition for this faculty. Besides, I was to take exams in subjects that I wasn't particularly ready to take. However, I managed well and became a student of Bucharest University. Throughout this year I attended lectures by the best professors in Romania and acquired invaluable knowledge. One of the best professors was Nicolae Iorga [20](#), a prominent Romanian historian. He spoke 42 languages fluently and was an honored member of many European and American Academies of Sciences.

This was the period of the boom of fascist parties in Romania - Cuzists and others. They had similar programs propagating racial hatred, anti-Semitism and fascism. Today it seems strange that many young people were fond of racial theories and were members of these parties. After the Great Patriotic War they changed their opinions, understood their mistakes and became a part of world literature and philosophy. One of them was Emile Cioran [21](#), whose works I admire. It should be noted that there were no direct anti-Semitic demonstrations at university. I even remember a case when one of the lecturers, a member of the Legionary Movement, who didn't conceal his views, speaking depreciatingly about Jews, gave me the highest mark at an exam, despite my Jewish identity.

During the War

After passing my exams for the first year, I went on vacation to Kishinev in June 1940. My father was recruited to the Romanian army in 1940 and was away from home. The Soviet Army arrived in Bessarabia [22](#) on 28th June [see Annexation of Bessarabia to the Soviet Union] [23](#). I stayed in Kishinev, and my studies at university were over - Soviet citizens weren't allowed to travel abroad. This was a hard period. I was alone with my mother, with no earnings, without my father, and besides, I knew no Russian. About a month after Bessarabia was annexed to the USSR, a man from Romania found me to tell me the tragic story of my father. He was released from the army like all other Jews. My father was in Romania, had no contact with us, and facing the crash of his views - democracy and respect of people - and understanding that he couldn't stand to live under a fascist

regime, he committed suicide. This was a hard period for me. I decided to keep it a secret from Mama and she kept hoping to see him again and didn't give up this hope and love for my father till the end of her life.

I knew I was the only man and breadwinner in our small family. I knew I had to get an education and to do this I had to learn Russian. The best place to learn Russian was the Faculty of Russian Literature and Language. I gathered my courage and went to see the rector of the Pedagogical College that had opened in Kishinev shortly before. Makar Radu, the rector, was quite a young man. He was surprised and even angry about my impudence - I wanted to enter this faculty without knowing Russian and become a teacher three or four years later! The rector turned me down at first, but I managed to convince him to admit me on condition that I would quit, if I failed my mid-year exams. The rector approved my application for admission.

The subject of my first lecture was antic literature. I didn't understand a word of it. I sat beside a pretty girl and continued to sit beside her at classes from then on and started learning the Russian language. It didn't take me long to pick it up, though I kept writing in Latin letters. I passed my midyear exams with excellent marks and became a student of the college. The girl and I became friends and then fell in love with one another. Her name was Asia Shnirelman. She was born into the Jewish family of a doctor in Kishinev in 1922. We would spend the rest of our lives together.

On Saturday, 21st June 1941, I was spending time with my co-students. We had passed our summer exams and enjoyed ourselves dancing, singing, and drinking wine. I returned home at 1 o'clock in the morning. At five we woke up from the roar of bombing: the Great Patriotic War began. I knew Jews had to evacuate. I made Mama promise that she would evacuate with my fiancée Asia's family. We knew we would become husband and wife to spend our life together.

On 6th July I was recruited to the army. I took my college record book and a student's identity card - these were my most valuable belongings. I served in the rear units following the front-line forces. We were to install temporary ridges and crossings. I covered this doleful road of retreat with the Red Army. In each town our unit passed I found a pedagogical college, asking its lecturers to be my examiners. They were looking at me as if I was crazy, but they couldn't turn down a soldier who might actually die any moment. I found libraries or archives, which at times had been turned into scrap heaps, and was looking for the textbooks I needed. I studied at intervals between marches and battles - my goal was studying.

In late 1941 all Bessarabians, including me, were demobilized - the Soviet people didn't trust its new citizens. This distrust hurt me, but now I understand how fortunate I was - it helped me to survive. I was in Krasnodar [Russia], 1,500 kilometers from home. I asked the people in the evacuation inquiry office to give me information about my mother's whereabouts. My mother, Asia and her family were in a village in Kuban region, near Krasnodar, not far from where I was staying. I went to join them there. On the way patrols halted me a few times since I was wearing my military uniform. I showed them my demobilization certificate and they let me go. When I found my mother and my fiancée, we were boundlessly happy to see each other again. We stayed in Kuban for a few months and then moved farther to the east, when the front line approached.

We stopped in Dagestan for some time waiting for a boat. I was captured in a raid, one of many to be checked for 'men fit to serve in the army'. They checked my documents and let me go. From there we took a boat to cross the Caspian Sea with thousands of other people who had left their

homes like us. Then we took a train to Uzbekistan. It was a freight train; it was a long trip. When the train stopped, we exchanged clothes for food. We arrived at Tashkent where my fiancée's father got a job offer to work in a hospital in Bukhara. So, we found ourselves in Bukhara, 3,500 kilometers from Kishinev. When Asia and I decided to register our marriage, I was recruited to the Labor army [mobilized to do physical work for the army]. I had to go to a mine in Sverdlovsk region. I was trained to work as a rigger in a mine. This was hard work, but I was young and didn't fear hard work. I lived in a hostel with other young workers. We received bread cards [see card system] [24](#) and got sufficient food for them. In 1942, the hardest period for our country and army, I joined the Komsomol and it was a sincere step on my part. I didn't work long in the mine. I fell ill with typhus. After I recovered, I was released from hospital and from work. I returned to my family in Bukhara.

This was in fall 1942. I went to the Russian Faculty of the Uzbek Pedagogical College. I also went to work as a German teacher at school. We all lived in one room. We had to stand in line to get bread at night. However, this was quite common at the time. The Uzbek people had never heard about Bessarabia before we came to their town. We were like from a different planet for them. I was struck by the low educational and cultural level of the population that seemed to have been stuck in the middle ages. They thought that Germans would never be able to cross the 'wide water', as they called the Caspian Sea. They respected me and the rest of us for having managed to cross this 'water obstacle'. I liked Uzbek children and enjoyed teaching them. It didn't take me long to pick up the Uzbek language.

In late 1943 my mother fell ill and died. I never told her what had happened to my father, and she never lost hope to see him again. We buried Mama in the local cemetery without observing Jewish traditions since she wasn't religious. Shortly after my mother's death, Asia and I registered our marriage in a registry office. We became husband and wife and she became my only and dearest person.

Post-war

When Bessarabia was liberated in early 1944, my father-in-law started making arrangements for us to obtain a permit to return to our hometown. In Kishinev many buildings that I had liked so much were destroyed. There were only few buildings left in the center, and the monument dedicated to the great Pushkin was there as well. A new stage of my life began. I went to work in the Moldovan department of the TASU [Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union], and also studied in my last year at college. I usually worked at night, receiving news by telegraph and preparing it for the morning broadcast. I attended lectures in college and then passed my state exams successfully. I was also involved in editing and journalistic work, and, in time, I became chief of the foreign department.

For some time there were no demonstrations of anti-Semitism; even in the early 1950s, during the burst of anti-Semitism on a state level, we only knew about the Doctors' Plot [25](#) from newspapers. I never concealed my nationality. When I received my first postwar Soviet passport I thought about my nationality. The officer at the passport department was struck when he heard my question regarding the procedure in choosing the nationality. He said it wasn't based on religiosity, since we were atheists, or racial, since we were not racists, but it might be that the mother tongue determined the nationality. And I said, 'Then write 'Jew', please', knowing that my mother tongue was Romanian, though.

I joined the Communist Party in 1949, and I did so knowingly. I had been raised in the family of an anti-fascist man and communist ideas had been close to me since my boyhood. I felt real grief when Stalin died in 1953, and the denunciation of his cult by Khrushchev [26](#) was a sort of crash of ideals for me. I was involved in the coverage of the Twentieth Party Congress [27](#) in Moscow and was horrified to hear about the crimes of the leader. My trust in the Communist Party was broken.

In 1950 our son was born. We named him Victor in honor of the victory of the USSR in the war. Victor studied well at school. He finished it with a medal. Victor entered the popular faculty of the prestigious Electrotechnical College in Leningrad [today St. Petersburg, Russia]. I rented an apartment for my son. Some time later my son's friends informed me about strange things happening to my son: he fainted occasionally without any obvious reasons. Victor never mentioned it to me. I went to Leningrad and took my son to different doctors. They couldn't find the reason for what was happening. I made an appointment with a prominent neuropathologist, general of the medical service. He examined my son and told me that the ecology and climate of Leningrad were disastrous for my son and he had to move away from there. Victor wanted to stay, but I picked his documents and we returned to Kishinev.

Victor entered the university in Kishinev and studied well until he became a 5th-year student. He married Rita Vaksman, his co-student. Their daughter, Ada, was born in 1973. All of a sudden my son was expelled from university for immoral conduct. I wanted to know the truth: my son was a nice young man and he was devoted to his family. I heard rumors that Victor was expelled after someone reported having seen a map of Israel in his room in Leningrad where Victor had marked relocations of the Israeli army during the Six-Day-War [28](#). This was nonsense, but I failed to prove anything.

When he was expelled from the last course at university, my son decided to move to Israel. At first, my wife and I were against his decision, but then we understood we couldn't force him to stay and signed a permission for him to depart. As soon as I had signed this permission, the party committee summoned me, and then there was a meeting. The issue on the agenda was my expulsion from the Party, but they decided that a strict reprimand for failure in the upbringing of my son was sufficient. I understood that, according to the rules and morals of the time, all relatives of those who had moved to Israel were subject to ostracism. By the way, the authorities were loyal to me: they didn't fire me, but just asked where I wanted to work. Therefore, having worked for the TASU for 29 years I quit my job there. My wife, who was head of the editor's office of a magazine, was also fired from this position due to our son's departure. She was transferred to an editor's position.

I went to work at the publishing house of the Academy of Sciences, where I worked a few years before I went to work at the 'Tribune', a small and unpopular magazine. Then, the chief engineer of the Moldavhydromash industrial association, which was engaged in the industrial machine building and included three big plants and scientific research institutions, approached me. He offered me to write a book about the association on the occasion of its 100th anniversary. I thought it over and agreed. I visited this enterprise, familiarized myself with documents, and I understood that I couldn't write a proper book from the outside. I quit my work with the magazine and went to work as a laborer at this enterprise. I wrote the book in cooperation with the employees of the plant newspaper. Later the management offered me to establish and become the director of the museum of this enterprise. The museum I established got the status of people's museum and

became very popular in Kishinev. We received many national and foreign delegations.

I worked in the museum until 1990. Then something happened that had an impact on all of us in one way or another: perestroika [29](#), the breakup of the Soviet Union. The premier [Snegur, Mircea, president of Moldova from 1991-96] of the first government of independent Moldova [30](#) offered me to take part in the establishment of the department of national issues. I was so dedicated to my job as director of the museum of the plant that I accepted this offer on condition that I could keep my position at the plant. I worked in the department for national relations for ten years. I had very good relations with the premier. He also involved me in diplomatic work. I did a lot for the Jews of Pridnestroiye, when the war began there [see Transnistrian Republic] [31](#). [Editor's note: In a nearly-forgotten corner of the former Soviet Union, a region of Moldova sandwiched between the Dniester river and Ukraine is celebrating twelve years of unrecognized independence. Despite economic hardship and diplomatic rejection, the self-proclaimed Dniester Moldovan Republic - recognized by the world as the Trans- Dniester region of Moldova - appears determined to preserve the traditions of its recent past. The Trans-Dniester region, with a population of less than a million mostly Russian and Ukrainian speakers, unilaterally declared independence from the then-Soviet Republic of Moldova on 2nd September 1990 as people became increasingly alarmed at the prospect of closer ties with Romania. Fighting broke out in the turmoil following the collapse of the Soviet Union, with hundreds dying before the introduction of Russian peacekeepers in mid- 1992.] 1,400 people, who had lost their home and relatives, were to be transported to Israel. We arranged for the buses for these Jews to pick them up at the border of Moldova. They were accommodated in a hotel in Kishinev and given free meals. Those who had documents were sent to Israel promptly. As for those, whose documents had disappeared, burnt in the blasted houses in Bendery and Tiraspol, I prepared a solicitation to the government of Moldova for its approval of simplified procedures for these victims. Two months later they took a train to Bucharest and from there traveled on to Israel.

There were no flights to Israel, and I need to say that I contributed to the resolution of this issue. At my work I had meetings with an American diplomat of Jewish origin. He asked me whether the president of Moldova, Snegur, would come visit if he received an invitation to Israel. I promised him that I would find out what Snegur thought about it. When the President gave his consent for a visit, I verbally passed this message on to the American diplomat. The President's advisors confirmed his decision. I convinced the President to expand the circle of issues to be resolved - the problem of diplomatic relations, airlines, economic issues - and, in the long run, I headed a delegation of ten people to Israel. Our delegation spent ten fruitful days in Israel and resolved a number of issues.

I also met with my son whom I hadn't seen for 18 years, since 1973. My darling wife Asia never saw our son again. She died on 8th August 1989. My son told me his touching story: He had arrived in the country with his wife Rita and their one-year-old daughter, Ada. At that time departure to Israel was only possible if one had an invitation from some people of straw, who declared they were relatives, and with the support of some international Zionist organizations. I don't have the slightest idea how they did it, but somehow these invitations reached the destinations. When my son was asked at the airport in Israel whether he had relatives, he mentioned this man who had signed his invitation. Of course, he had never seen him and the name was the only information he had about this man, or Israel for that matter. My son was given a car with driver, who took them to a specified address in a town. It was night, it was raining, and Victor, Rita and Ada were standing by the door of a stranger in a strange country. The owner of the house was at home. He

remembered that he had signed an invitation one day, invited my son's family inside, accommodated them in his house and supported my son and his family for some time at the beginning. I thank this man from the bottom of my heart. My son is doing very well. He works for a big company. Ada got married and has two children, a son named Odet and a daughter named Sarrah - my great-grandchildren. In 1982 my son's daughter Ilana was born. She recently returned from her service in the army. So, in the long run my son took the right decision to move to Israel.

As for me, I've always associated my life with my homeland - Moldova - and my favorite town, Kishinev. In 2001 the government changed and I quit my post. In the past I was executive director of the Association of Jewish Organizations and Communities, had ties with Joint [32](#) representatives and accepted the offer to become full-time director of the Jewish community center. I'm not a religious person: I've never observed Jewish traditions or gone to the synagogue. However, I dedicate myself to the revival of Jewish culture, traditions and the upbringing of young Jews, and I'm content with the place I have in life. I don't feel like quitting my job or my life, I understand I need to train a good and decent successor, who can take over my place in the Jewish life of Kishinev.

Glossary

1 Russian-Turkish War (1877-78)

After the loss of the Crimean War (1856) the Russian Empire made a second attempt in 1877 to secure its outlet from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean by conquering the strategic straits (Bosporus and Dardanelles) and strengthening its position in the Balkans. The pretext of the war declaration was pan-Slavism: protecting the fellow Christian Orthodox and Slavic speaking population of the Ottoman controlled South Eastern Europe. From the Russian controlled Bessarabia the Russian army entered Romania and attacked the Ottomans south of the Danube. With enthusiastic Bulgarian support the Russians won the decisive battles at Plevna (Pleven) and the Shipka straight in the Balkan Mountains. They took Adrianople (Edirne) in 1878 and reached San Stefano (Yesilkoy), an Istanbul suburb, where they signed a treaty with the Porte. This provided for an autonomous Bulgarian state, under Russian protection, bordering the Black and the Aegean seas, including also most of historic Thrace and Macedonia. Britain (safeguarding status quo on the European continent) and Austria-Hungary (having strategic interests in the region) initiated a joint Great Power decision to limit Russian dominance in the Balkans. Their diplomatic efforts were successful and resulted in the Treaty of Berlin in 1878. According to this Bulgaria was made much smaller and large populations of Bulgarians remained outside the new frontiers. Eastern Rumelia as an autonomous Ottoman province was created. In Berlin the Romanian, the Serbian and the Montenegrin states were internationally recognized and Austria-Hungary was given the right to occupy Bosnia and Herzegovina to restore order.

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 Antonescian period (September 1940- August 1944)

The Romanian King Carol II appointed Ion Antonescu (chief of the general staff of the Romanian Army, Minister of War between 1937 and 1938) prime minister with full power under the pressure of the Germans after the Second Vienna Dictate. At first Antonescu formed a coalition with the Legionary leaders, but after their attempted coup (in January 1941) he introduced a military dictatorship. He joined the Triple Alliance, and helped Germany in its fight against the Soviet Union. In order to gain new territories (Transylvania, Bessarabia), he increased to the utmost the Romanian war-efforts and retook Bessarabia through a lot of sacrifices in 1941-1942. At the same time the notorious Romanian anti- Semitic pogroms are linked to his name and so are the deportations - this topic has been a taboo in Romanian historiography up to now. Antonescu was arrested on the orders of the king on 23rd August 1944 (when Romania capitulated) and sent to prison in the USSR where he remained until 1946. He was sentenced to death for his crimes as a war criminal and was shot in the same year.

4 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.

5 Anti-Jewish laws in Romania

The first anti-Jewish laws were introduced in 1938 by the Goga-Cuza government. Further anti-Jewish laws followed in 1940 and 1941, and the situation was getting gradually worse between 1941-1944 under the Antonescu regime. According to these laws all Jews aged 18-40 living in villages were to be evacuated and concentrated in the capital town of each county. Jews from the region between the Siret and Prut Rivers were transported by wagons to the camps of Targu Jiu, Slobozia, Craiova etc. where they lived and died in misery. More than 40,000 Jews were moved. All rural Jewish property, as well as houses owned by Jews in the city, were confiscated by the state, as part of the 'Romanisation campaign'. Marriages between Jews and Romanians were forbidden from August 1940, Jews were not allowed to have Romanian names, own rural properties, be public

employees, lawyers, editors or janitors in public institutions, have a career in the army, own liquor stores, etc. Jewish employees of commercial and industrial enterprises were fired, Jewish doctors could no longer practice and Jews were not allowed to own chemist shops. Jewish students were forbidden to study in Romanian schools.

6 Keep in touch with relatives abroad

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

7 Maccabi World Union

International Jewish sports organization whose origins go back to the end of the 19th century. A growing number of young Eastern European Jews involved in Zionism felt that one essential prerequisite of the establishment of a national home in Palestine was the improvement of the physical condition and training of ghetto youth. In order to achieve this, gymnastics clubs were founded in many Eastern and Central European countries, which later came to be called Maccabi. The movement soon spread to more countries in Europe and to Palestine. The World Maccabi Union was formed in 1921. In less than two decades its membership was estimated at 200,000 with branches located in most countries of Europe and in Palestine, Australia, South America, South Africa, etc.

8 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. Cuza founded the National Christian Defense League, the LANC (Liga Apararii National Crestine), in 1923. The paramilitary troops of the league, called lancierii, wore blue uniforms. The organization published a newspaper entitled Apararea Nationala. In 1935 the LANC merged with the National Agrarian Party, and turned into the National Christian Party, which had a pronounced anti-Semitic program.

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

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

10 Komsomol

Communist youth political organization created in 1918. The task of the Komsomol was to spread of the ideas of communism and involve the worker and peasant youth in building the Soviet Union. The Komsomol also aimed at giving a communist upbringing by involving the worker youth in the political struggle, supplemented by theoretical education. The Komsomol was more popular than the Communist Party because with its aim of education people could accept uninitiated young proletarians, whereas party members had to have at least a minimal political qualification.

11 Great Terror (1934-1938)

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

12 Kamenev, Lev Borisovich (1883-1936)

Soviet communist leader, member of the first Politburo of the Communist Party after the Revolution of 1917. After Lenin's death in 1924, Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Stalin formed a ruling triumvirate and excluded Trotsky from the Party. In 1925 Stalin, in an effort to consolidate his own power, turned against Zinoviev and Kamenev, who then joined Trotsky's opposition. Kamenev was expelled from the Party in 1927, but he recanted, was readmitted, and held minor offices. He was arrested in 1934 accused of complicity in the murder of Kirov and was imprisoned. In 1936 he, Zinoviev, and 13 old Bolsheviks were tried for treason in the first big public purge trial. They confessed and were executed.

13 Zinoviev, Grigory Evseyevich (1883-1936)

Soviet communist leader, head of the Comintern (1919-26) and member of the Communist Party Politburo (1921-26). After Lenin's death in 1924, Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Stalin formed a ruling triumvirate and excluded Trotsky from the Party. In 1925 Stalin, in an effort to consolidate his own power, turned against Zinoviev and Kamenev, who then joined Trotsky's opposition. Zinoviev was removed from his party posts in 1926 and expelled from the Party in 1927. He recanted and was readmitted in 1928 but wielded little influence. In 1936, he, Kamenev, and 13 old Bolsheviks were tried for treason in the first big public purge trial. They confessed and were executed.

14 Tolstoy, Lev Nikolayevich (1828-1910)

Russian novelist and moral philosopher, who holds an important place in his country's cultural history as an ethical philosopher and religious reformer. Tolstoy, alongside Dostoyevsky, made the realistic novel a literary genre, ranking in importance with classical Greek tragedy and Elizabethan

drama. He is best known for his novels, including *War and Peace*, *Anna Karenina* and *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, but also wrote short stories and essays and plays. Tolstoy took part in the Crimean War and his stories based on the defense of Sevastopol, known as *Sevastopol Sketches*, made him famous and opened St. Petersburg's literary circles to him. His main interest lay in working out his religious and philosophical ideas. He condemned capitalism and private property and was a fearless critic, which finally resulted in his excommunication from the Russian Orthodox Church in 1901. His views regarding the evil of private property gradually estranged him from his wife, Yasnaya Polyana, and children, except for his daughter Alexandra, and he finally left them in 1910. He died on his way to a monastery at the railway junction of Astapovo.

15 Pushkin, Alexandr (1799-1837)

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

16 Chekhov, Anton Pavlovich (1860-1904)

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

17 Dostoevsky, Fyodor (1821-1881)

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

18 Sholem Aleichem (pen name of Shalom Rabinovich (1859-1916))

Yiddish author and humorist, a prolific writer of novels, stories, feuilletons, critical reviews, and poem in Yiddish, Hebrew and Russian. He also contributed regularly to Yiddish dailies and weeklies. In his writings he described the life of Jews in Russia, creating a gallery of bright characters. His creative work is an alloy of humor and lyricism, accurate psychological and details of everyday life. He founded a literary Yiddish annual called *Di Yidishe Folksbibliotek* (The Popular Jewish Library), with which he wanted to raise the despised Yiddish literature from its mean status and at the same time to fight authors of trash literature, who dragged Yiddish literature to the lowest popular level. The first volume was a turning point in the history of modern Yiddish literature. Sholem Aleichem

died in New York in 1916. His popularity increased beyond the Yiddish-speaking public after his death. Some of his writings have been translated into most European languages and his plays and dramatic versions of his stories have been performed in many countries. The dramatic version of *Tevey the Dairyman* became an international hit as a musical (*Fiddler on the Roof*) in the 1960s.

19 Caragiale, Ion Luca (1852-1912)

Very important Romanian playwright, prose writer and journalist, representative of the classical trend. He was a contributor for the most renowned humor gazettes of liberal orientation, and for liberal and conservative newspapers. Refusing to comply with the aesthetical and social taboos of his time, he made a deep analysis of the Romanian society in all his works, from plays and literary prose to humorous sketches, politically- biased columns and epistolary literature. In 1905, he settled in Berlin together with his family. He was the father of the prose writer and poet Mateiu I. Caragiale and of the poet Luca I. Caragiale.

20 Iorga, Nicolae (1871-1940)

historian, university professor, literary critic, memorialist, playwright, poet, and Romanian politician. Iorga attended Iasi University, from which he graduated *Magna Cum Laude* after completing his undergraduate studies in a single year. He went on to study in Paris, Berlin and Leipzig, obtaining his doctorate in 1893. A prolific author, he is estimated to have written 1,250 published volumes and 25,000 articles. He traveled extensively throughout Europe, and his written works in many languages bear out the claim that he could read, write, and speak virtually all of the major modern European languages. He served as a member of parliament, as president of the post-WWI National Assembly, as minister, and (1931-32) as prime minister. He was co-founder (in 1910, with A. C. Cuza) of the Democratic Nationalist Party. Iorga was ultimately assassinated by Iron Guard commandos in 1940, who considered him responsible (in his capacity as a minister) for the 1938 death of their charismatic leader, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu.

21 Cioran, Emil (1911-1995)

Major Romanian essayist and philosopher who asserted himself in the European culture through a philosophical-moralizing discourse. In 1938, he was granted a scholarship by the French Republic and settled in Paris, where he continued his work in French. He wrote several volumes of essays and paraliterary commentaries on existential concepts and issues. He evolved towards a stoical philosophical position, concerned with the issues of suffering and evil.

22 Bessarabia

Historical area between the Prut and Dnestr 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 Moldavia.

23 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.

24 Card system

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

25 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.

26 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.

27 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.

28 Six-Day-War

The first strikes of the Six-Day-War happened on 5th June 1967 by the Israeli Air Force. The entire war only lasted 132 hours and 30 minutes. The fighting on the Egyptian side only lasted four days, while fighting on the Jordanian side lasted three. Despite the short length of the war, this was one of the most dramatic and devastating wars ever fought between Israel and all of the Arab nations. This war resulted in a depression that lasted for many years after it ended. The Six-Day-War increased tension between the Arab nations and the Western World because of the change in mentalities and political orientations of the Arab nations.

29 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.

30 Moldova

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

31 Transnistrian Republic

The easternmost part of the Moldovan Republic, located between the present Moldovan-Ukrainian border and the Dnestr river (Nistru in Romanian). Transnistria means 'The territory over the Nistru'; it is also referred to as 'Stanga Nistrului' in Romanian and 'Pridnestrove' in Russian. Being part of the Kingdom of Romania during the interwar period Bessarabia (Moldova) was annexed to the Soviet Union in August 1940 according to a secret closure of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Parts of Bessarabia were incorporated into the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic ('Gagauzia', the very south of the province along with the Black Sea coast and the Danube delta) and the previously Soviet Transnistria was attached to the newly created 'Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic'.

Transnistria has a Russian (and Ukrainian) speaking majority and a large Moldovan minority (43%). In 1989 Moldovan (a Romanian dialect) was declared the official language of Moldova and a unification with Romania was being considered. As a response the Russians and Ukrainians declared the independent Transnistrian Republic with Tiraspol as its capital on 2nd September 1990. Approximately 50,000 armed Moldovan nationalist volunteers went to Transnistria, where widespread violence was temporarily averted by the intervention of the Russian 14th Army. Negotiations in Moscow between the Transnistrians and the Moldovan government failed and it could not regain control over the seceding territory. Although an agreement was signed in 1994 to withdraw all the Russian troops from Transnistria, it was never ratified by the Russian Duma (Parliament). In 2004 the Moldovan government decided to create a blockade that would isolate the rebelling territory from the rest of the country. Transnistria retaliated by a series of actions meant to destabilize the economic situation in Moldova: since, during the Soviet times, most of the power plants in Moldova were built in Transnistria, this crisis generated power outages in parts of Moldova. Currently the OSCE are holding negotiations to resolve the situation.

32 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.