Alexander Grin

Moscow
Russia
Interviewer: Svetlana Bogdanova
Date of interview: November 2003

Alexandr Grin is a friendly, amiable and hospitable host and an interesting and educated conversationalist. He is an average height, gray-haired, blue-eyed handsome man. Alexandr lives with his wife Galina and their grandson Pyotr Grin in a three-bedroom apartment in a recently built house in Krasnopresnenskiy district, not far from the center of Moscow.

It's a spacious, comfortable and nicely furnished apartment. One of the rooms serves as Alexandr's study. There is old restored furniture that belonged to his parents.

Alexandr has many books: scientific books in geography, manuals and fiction. There are photographs of his relatives and pictures on the walls. Alexandr had a stroke in 1997.

The doctors saved him and his wife brought him to recovery. His left hand and left leg are disabled now. He can hardly walk and needs care. His wife Galina takes care of him.
Alexandr willingly agreed to tell me about his family and his life, particularly after his son talked him into recording his memories. Alexandr fondly talks about his family and speaks with ease.

- **My family background**

My paternal great-grandfather and grandfather's surname was Grinberg. This was also my father's surname, but later he shortened it to Grin. My father was a journalist and Grin first became his writing pseudonym and then his family name. Unfortunately, I was told little about my ancestors. Just a tiny bit. My great-grandfather, Zundel Grinberg, was a cantonist 1 serving in Nikolai's army 2. I don't know how many years he was in the army, but I presume it was for a long time. He retired in the rank of sergeant major and had the right to live within the Jewish Pale of Settlement 3. He settled down in Rostov-on-Don [about 1,000 km from Moscow]. I don't know where and when he was born or his wife's name.

My great-grandparents had seven children: Yakov, Abram, my grandfather Filip, Ilia, Boris, Vera and Sofia. There was an interesting story about his children. My grandfather Filip and his four brothers married four sisters who were their cousin sisters and came from Nevel [about 1,100 km from Moscow]. Unfortunately, I don't know the surname of these sisters. They were a good family and I never heard anything about any conflicts in this family. They said the 'mishpacha' [Hebrew for family] was big and harmonious.

Yakov and his family moved to America in 1910 and contact with him was lost because after the Russian Revolution of 1917 4 it wasn't allowed to keep in touch with relatives abroad 5. I know very little about the other brothers and sisters of my grandfather. I know nothing about his sisters Sofia and Vera or their families. His brothers lived in Rostov. Abram's children moved to Moscow. I know that [Abram's son] Moisey was the director of the philharmonics for some time and his other son, Lev, was the director of a big food store in the center of Moscow.

My father and Mark, the son of my grandfather's brother Boris, were very good friends. Mark was born in 1907. He worked in the editor's office of the newspaper where my father was manager and later he became a well-known photo-artist. Mark lives in Moscow and we talk on the phone occasionally. I don't know when my grandfather Filip was born, but he died in Rostov-on-Don in 1925 and was buried in the Jewish cemetery there. This is an old cemetery and no more burials are allowed, but when I was there about 15 years ago, I visited the cemetery and it was still there.

My grandmother Amalia came from Nevel. Unfortunately, I don't know when she was born. She died in Moscow in 1969.

My grandparents had two sons: Ilia Grinberg and my father, Moisey Grinberg. My grandfather was a clerk in a hardware store. My grandparents were a family with an average income. Their children went to a grammar school. There were grammar schools in Rostov where Jewish children were admitted. My grandfather paid for his children's studies.

My grandfather and grandmother were religious. When I was born, my parents took me to visit my grandfather. When he got access to me he immediately had me circumcised, which horrified my mother and father, who weren't religious. My grandmother was so religious that even in the Soviet Union, when it wasn't appreciated, she celebrated Saturday lighting candles and reciting a prayer over them [see struggle against religion] 6.

My grandmother told me that my grandfather was so strong physically that during the period of Jewish pogroms in Ukraine 7 he stood at the gate of his house and when pogrom-makers saw how big he was they passed by to avoid trouble. I don't think any of my ancestors fell victim to pogrom-makers. My grandmother told me little about their life in Rostov. She left Rostov and lived either with our family or with my Uncle Ilia's family. I rarely saw her and she didn't have a part in raising me. I think my parents kept us away from her so that she wouldn't teach us any 'religious prejudices'. Regretfully, this was their conviction at the time.

My grandmother wasn't old, but she seemed old when she lived in our family and we showed little interest in her. She had no education. My father said that she was praying with her prayer book without understanding a word in it, that she recited prayers and pretended to be turning the pages of her book. She died in 1969 and was buried in the Jewish sector of Vostriakovskoye cemetery in Moscow. She was buried in accordance with Jewish traditions.

My father's older brother Ilia Grinberg followed my father to Moscow. He worked in a design institute developing power equipment designs for various enterprises. His wife Sarah Maltinskaya's father was also very religious. He conducted the ritual. He lived in a small old house near his daughter and gathered his relatives on Jewish holidays. There were many children and there was a lot of fun. On Pesach he observed all Jewish rituals and traditions. He hid matzah under a cushion [the so-called afikoman] and the children were looking for it and then received redemption for it. The youngest of the children posed the traditional questions [the mah nishtanah], but I don't remember any details. There was traditional food and very delicious gefilte fish. Yummy! I learned to cook it from my grandmother. This was a few years before World War II. Unfortunately, I didn't follow any traditions since nobody at home believed in it.

Uncle Ilia Grinberg was also buried in the Jewish sector of Vostriakovskoye cemetery in 1956 in accordance with the Jewish traditions. I remembered it well because numerous mourners hired for money made a terrible impression on me. He was buried in winter and was transported on sledges. There was a crowd of beggars clutching at him and lamenting and relatives could not come close. I remember a cantor at the funeral reciting the Kaddish. The body was washed and wrapped in a shroud. There was no casket. Uncle Ilia had a daughter. Her name was Zina Vaisbord. In 1980 she emigrated to the USA with her family. She still lives there now.

As for my maternal grandmother and grandfather, the Libermans: my grandfather, Aron Liberman, born in 1862, was a musician. He played the clarinet and was the manager of a small orchestra playing in a café. His father, Pyotr, was born in Bakhmut [about 1,000 km from Moscow]. My grandmother, Anna Liberman, nee Tahilevich, was born in 1869 in Azov [about 1,000 kilometers from Moscow]. Her father's name was Zahar. My grandmother was a housewife. Aron and Anna had eight children: Zahar, Pyotr, Matvey, Nathan, Yelizaveta, Yevgenia, my mother Raisa and Sarah.

Their family must have been wealthy. All of the children, even the girls, studied in grammar school. Most of them lived in Rostov. Zahar died in 1903. Pyotr, born in 1889, was the oldest son and after his parents' death he became the head of the Liberman family. Yelizaveta, or Lisa, born in 1894, lived a hard and poor life. Her husband died young and her son Mark perished at the front during the Great Patriotic War 8. My mother's brother Matvey, born in 1902, was arrested in 1937 [during the so-called Great Terror] 9 and executed in 1939. His daughter Nora lives in the USA. Uncle Nathan, born in 1911, and his family moved to Kislovodsk. His children live in Riga, Kislovodsk and Rostov. Sarah and Zhenia lived and died in Moscow. When in Israel, I visited the diaspora museum and discovered that the Libermans were mentioned for the first time in 1310. The surname of Liberman was registered in the birth index of the synagogue in Cologne, Germany.

My father, Moisey Grinberg, was born in Rostov-on-Don in 1899. He finished school and got attracted by revolutionary ideas. During the Civil War 10 he served in the political department of the 2nd Red army cavalry unit. My mother and father met, when Red army troops entered Rostov. My mother and father never told me any details about how they met, though they actually actively communicated with us. My mother also took some part in revolutionary activities, though not as passionately as my father. He was an active member of the Communist Party, though he quit during the period of the NEP 11 because of his disagreement with the policy of the party. He did it quietly and there were no consequences of this for him. This episode was never discussed in the family because if people quit the party for ideological reasons they might have been sent to camps. During perestroika 12 my father told me the story.

My parents didn’t have a religious wedding. They belonged to the generation that made the Revolution and their position was to reject the significance of nationality. They believed that a person should be a revolutionary and internationalist and rejected religion or traditions. No nationality or tradition-related issues were ever discussed in our family and there was no orientation of our Jewish identity.

My father began to get involved in journalism in Rostov, but there were no career opportunities for him and my parents moved to Moscow in 1924. My father began to work as chief editor of a trade union magazine. He was about 30 years old then. At that time my father changed his surname to Grin.

We lived in a big communal apartment 13 on Basmannaya Street in the very center of Moscow at first. Well, it seemed big to me. There were big rooms, but the apartment as such was probably not that big. There were two families sharing it: our family and my parents’ friends who had also moved to Moscow from Rostov. I was born there in December 1924. My parents had two rooms in this apartment: my mother and father shared one room and my nanny and I the other.

My nanny’s name was Nadezhda, but everybody called her ‘nanny’ since she was the oldest sister in her family, lived in a village and raised her younger brothers and sisters. My nanny was like a member of our family. She came to work for us when I was a few months old and raised me, my younger sister and my son. She was a Christian and very religious. She attended church and contributed everything to it she earned. It’s also funny that this nanny, a plain village woman, was my grandmother’s best friend and always stood for my grandmother when the family had arguments with her about her prayers on Saturday. We were surprised at that, but probably religiosity makes people tolerant and respectful about different faiths.

In 1928 my parents bought a cooperative apartment on Krestovozdvizhenskiy Lane. This was the first cooperative in Moscow. It was a fabulous apartment for this period: three rooms and a hallway, all comforts and a bathroom. There was a gas boiler for heating water. Later, after the house was overhauled, this gas water heating was replaced with centralized hot water supply piping. We lived in this apartment till March 2003. I seem to remember, or perhaps I remember it from what my mother told me, how we moved from Basmannaya to Krestovozdvizhenskaya Street. I was four or five. I remember a horse-drawn wagon overloaded with our belongings and we walked behind it across Moscow. I was held by my hand and we were walking across beautiful sunny Moscow. This was my first childhood memory.

There was an actual threat of my father’s arrest in 1937, but thank God, he wasn’t arrested in the end. It happened due to very interesting circumstances. In 1930 he quit his job as chief editor of a trade union magazine and switched to geography. He did it because he wanted to do scientific work. Perhaps, he didn’t even realize that his fate smiled at him at that time. Probably the authorities didn’t find him. There were ten or eleven apartments in our part of the house. Only two men weren’t arrested: my father and a severely ill man.

My father was a talented man. He took part in and won literature contests, liked writing greetings in the form of poems and did it well. He wrote a children’s book entitled ‘Notes of Doctor Dobrov’ where he described his expeditions in which children took part. There were scientific and scientific educational expeditions that he arranged. He also took me along in the 1930-1940s. I was with him in the Crimea and took part in scientific expeditions in the Altay and Caucasus. He spent a lot of

time with my sister and me. I became a geographer under his influence. My father was a joyful man with a great sense of humor and irony. I believe it to be a part of the Jewish nature: this ironic attitude toward one's own self and the surrounding.

My mother, Raisa Grin, nee Liberman, was an intelligent, well-educated person, though she had only one official document about finishing a grammar school. She studied at university, but never graduated from it and didn't have any documents proving her higher education. She sang very well and attended evening classes at the conservatory before the war, but she never reached a professional level. She had no time having to raise two children. She was a statistics economist. She worked in the institute of figurative statistics.

My mother was a wonderful person. She was my most loved and beautiful person. She spent a lot of time with my sister and me. My mother shared my father's views on politics and religion. She had formulated her family role and later taught my wife Galia, 'You must do everything for your home and your husband must sit at his desk earning money'. She didn't like it that I got involved in everything going on at home and helped Galia with the housework. She thought it was wrong. Here is an example:

Once my sister or I asked my father: 'Papa, do you eat all food at home?' 'Yes', he said, 'absolutely everything'. My mother laughed loudly, 'But of course. You like macaroni, but we've never cooked any'. He never interfered with any household issues and had no idea about them. During the war there were problems with food, but he had no idea where or how to get food. He just brought his earnings home and that was it. Of course, he was the head of family, but my mother was its neck and turned the head as she believed right.

We were a close family. My mother and father loved each other and the children. My mother was very close with her brothers and sisters. She was particularly close with Yevgenia Liberman, who was single and worked as a teacher in a kindergarten. I used to visit her in the kindergarten and was a nuisance. I was naughty and she felt uncomfortable about it since everybody knew that I was her nephew. I once drowned a crayfish from the zoo room of the kindergarten in the toilet and was driven out of the kindergarten with a terrible scandal.

My parents kept the door open for friends. In the 1930s people were afraid of meeting or discussing political issues, and no political subjects were discussed in our family. Interesting people visited us. A well-known geographer named Baranskiy, the author of a school geography textbook that existed till about 1960, visited us. He was a big Siberian man. My parents had many Jewish friends visiting us, but there were no discussions of Jewish subjects. Shira Gorshman, wife of the artist Gorshman [Soviet Jewish book illustrator] and a popular Jewish writer who wrote in Yiddish was my mother and father's close friend and often visited us.

- **Growing up**

My mother and father didn't spend vacations together. My mother and we, kids, spent vacations in the Crimea or Ukraine. It was warm and there was sufficient food. My father worked hard and spent his vacations alone. He traveled to Sochi in the Caucasus alone. In 1937 my parents built a dacha [summer cottage]. My mother had a colleague, a Latvian woman whose husband was an engineer at the furniture factory.

This factory obtained a permit to build a hostel for its workers on a site in the woods. They cut the trees and built a huge barracks from the logs. Non-manual personnel of the factory was given permission to build dachas on the spots where the trees had been removed. My mother's friend suggested that my parents join them to build a house for two families. They didn't have money, but they had a plot of land.

My father, thank God, had money, but at that time it was very difficult to receive a plot of land. To cut this long story short: they built a house with two entrances. It was a small, but nice house. There were three rooms for each family and an open verandah. It's still there, but we modified the house. We often spent time there in winter and in summer.

My younger sister, Galina Grin, was born in Moscow in 1932. She finished the Biological Faculty of Moscow University. My sister was a geobotanist studying plants. She was a talented person and took part in various expeditions to Kazakhstan [about 2,000 km from Moscow], where she happened to work on a nuclear testing site. She was exposed to radiation and fell ill with leukemia at the age of 23.

My mother was trying to rescue her from death. There was no treatment available at that time, but it doesn't exist nowadays either, as it happens. There was the issue of marrow transplantation. At that time a big group of Yugoslav scientists was also exposed to radiation and there was a lot of ado about this case. There were discussions about possible treatment, including marrow transplantation.

A professor, the first-rate hematologist of the country, visited Lialia – that' how we called my sister at home. He said we were not going to apply any new methods of treatment and that her goal was to survive as long as she could while waiting for new medication to appear, but it never did. My mother supported her for five years. My sister died at the age of 28. Everything possible was done to prolong her life. She had blood transfusion every now and then. I remember that she was taken to Botkin's hospital, one of the central clinics in Moscow. Once there was a threat of a cholera epidemic in Moscow, when it was time for her blood transfusion. There was quarantine in hospitals and my mother wasn't allowed to visit her. My mother managed to make arrangements for blood transfusion at home, which was a difficult thing to do. Basically, my mother took every effort to rescue her. From time to time my sister was taken to the hospital near our house for another course of treatment. She died in this hospital.

My first childhood memories are associated with our yard. It was an asphalted yard. We played lapta [rounders] in the yard. Gee, it was exciting! We also played 'shtander' throwing a ball up in the air and the one who caught it shouted 'Shtander!' [exclamation used exclusively in this game meaning 'stand'] and then he had to hit motionless players. The boys from my yard were my friends and later I made friends at school too. The children from our yard went to different schools. I went to school #92 14 in our district. I also had friends at the dacha. Our neighbors in Moscow, the Vorontsov family, happened to be our neighbors in the dacha village. There were three brothers: one was one year older than me, one was the same age and one was a year younger. We became friends at the dacha. They lived on 5, Granovskogo Street in Moscow and when we were in Moscow I went to meet with them in their yard.

I joined the Komsomol 15 at school. It couldn't have been otherwise at that time. I was chairman of the pupils' committee. We were responsible for good progress in our studies. Like any other public

organizations we did a lot of rubbish: had meetings and various cultural activities. The situation in our school was complicated. There were many pupils from the so-called ‘5th house of Soviets’. Families of high Soviet officials lived in the house on 5, Granovskogo Street. There were two blockheads, the sons of the Minister of Finance, in our school. They were hooligans who only had bad marks at school, but the school had to be patient with them. Who could dare to reprimand the son of the Minister of Finance? There were also nice children at school. One of my classmates was the daughter of the Minister of Heavy Industry; I don’t remember her name. She was a good pupil and so was I. I did well at school.

I have dim memories about the arrests in 1937. I didn’t have the slightest idea about things then, though I saw a suitcase with all necessary things packed in my father’s room. I didn’t feel alarmed. I was too young and our parents protected us from any subjects of this kind. My mother’s brother Matvey suffered during this period. He perished in a camp. Now we know that he was executed, but at that time nobody knew what was happening. He was arrested and disappeared and that was all. Some of my schoolmates’ parents were arrested and the children were sent to children’s homes, but nobody discussed these subjects ever. We were just children and had easy attitudes to such things.

- **During the war**

In 1941 it started. I had no feeling that it was going to be a world war. We just didn’t understand what was happening. All of a sudden we became friends with the Germans signing the Non-aggression Pact [the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact] 16; this seemed strange. No political questions were discussed at home. I remember the day of 22nd June 1941, when the war began. I listened to Molotov’s 17 speech on the radio on the first day and then Stalin’s speech on 1st July, I think. There was concern in the air and it couldn’t be ignored. We were at the dacha, but we often came back to the city.

On 1st July our Komsomol group went to the construction of defense lines near Moscow. I wasn’t mobilized, but all activities were volunteer mandatory. I was a Komsomol activist and the Komsomol was sending its members without asking their consent. The Komsomol district committee sent our group to the vicinity of Yelnya, about 250 kilometers southwest of Moscow, where we excavated anti-tank trenches. It was hard work for teenage boys.

There was intelligentsia from Moscow there. At that time people didn’t have clothes for all occasions. My parents’ clothes fit in one small wardrobe. My mother had one dress for work, one for special occasions and two pairs of shoes, accordingly. So, women came to do this hard work wearing silk dresses and high-heeled shoes. They just didn’t have anything else to wear.

We had to handle the soil standing on terraces to gradually move soil from the bottom to the top. I spent a month there. There were Spartan living conditions. Our group slept on the ground in the stables. We had more or less sufficient food, as I understand it was a soldiers’ ration. There was a field kitchen where they cooked. We worked and worked and didn’t know about evacuation or where the locals were. All we thought was going back to work.

In late July the Germans began to drop bombs on Moscow. We were still working on the defense lines when our artillery units were already firing over our heads. Germans were advancing to

Yelnya promptly. We heard the roar of cannons. There was the terrible impression of German bombers flying to drop bombs on Moscow. We knew nothing. Nobody informed us on what was happening. There were no newspapers. We listened to the radio, but it was hard to tell the whereabouts of German troops by the names of towns and villages. Nobody said, for example, that they were close to Yelnya.

In the last week of July Germans broke through the front line near Yelnya and we urgently boarded a freight train to Moscow. We walked home from the railway station hoping that our houses were still there. My house was there. So I had to think about what to do. Go to the 10th grade at school? Our school was already closed. Most of our teachers and pupils evacuated. There was another school in our district, but I didn't quite feel like going back to school and my parents didn't insist that I did. My friend and I became apprentices of a turner at the aviation plant. The night shift began at 9 to 10 and approximately at that time German bombers started their attacks that ended at 3am sharp. There was no way to get to work during air raids. The public transport stopped and there was an alarm announcement. In order to get to work I had to catch a tram before this alarm since if they started on their route they had to continue on it regardless the alarm. But if you failed to catch it and missed your shift at work, it might have caused problems.

At times we didn't feel like going to work at all. We went to the subway before the alarm and wandered along the tracks looking for our friends. The subway was used as shelter during air raids. There were wooden decks placed over the tracks to walk on them or sleep at night. I didn't have any fear being a young man with romantic outlooks.

There was one episode when I felt fear in my life. Once, and I don't know what led to it, but during an air raid I stayed at home with a girl. Probably it was just my desire to spend time with the girl. There were many bombs dropped in the center of Moscow. It was scaring. There were flak units shooting and bombs roaring. Germans attached sirens to bombs to produce this sound. It gave the feeling that everything near you was falling into an abyss and that another bomb was going to hit the house.

I worked at the plant till 13th October 1941. It was the day of great panic in Moscow, real panic, whatever they say. The Ministries were burning their papers. Military units of shabby soldiers - as if they had just come out of battles - were crossing Moscow and cattle was also moving along the streets. At night food storages went up in flames. Flour and sugar were burning and people were pulling out bags of them. Our plant was to evacuate, so they announced at work. Only workers who could repair equipment and load it were to stay. They told all boys to go home.

On 13th October my father told us that his institute was evacuating and we could go with them. My mother managed to get my father out of the Territorial army [Fighting Battalion] 17, formed before our departure from Moscow. Only later they issued an order releasing people with scientific degrees or other merits from this service. Of course nobody was going to release anybody from there. My mother found my father in his unit housed in a school building, showed this order to his commandment and demanded that they released my father. He was a doctor of sciences by then. So we evacuated. We only had a few bags packed for the road. This was all we could take with us. My mother, my sister and I and my mother's sister Zhenia Liberman went to the railway station. My nanny refused to go with us. She said she would guard the apartment. My grandmother was living with uncle Ilia's family at that time. They evacuated to Central Asia.

We boarded a passenger train that departed when it got dark. However, in the morning we discovered that the train didn't leave Moscow moving along peripheral railroad tracks. This continued two or three days. There were few trains that had to take turns for departure to the east. We finally left Moscow moving in the direction of Voronezh, about 800 kilometers southeast of Moscow. In Kuibyshev we changed to a freight train heading to Central Asia. This was a train for cattle and prisoner transportation. We arrived in Frunze, about 3,200 kilometers southeast of Moscow. There was another shock waiting for us there. There was a lot of bread, vegetables, onions and fruit at the market as if there was no war. Back in Moscow there were already bread coupons. I also obtained a worker's card at the plant. [Editor's note: the card system was introduced to directly regulate food supplies to the population by food and industrial product rates. During and after the Great Patriotic War there were cards for workers, non-manual employees and dependents in the USSR. The biggest rates were on workers' cards: 400 grams of bread per day.]

This abundance of food products lasted about a month and then it just disappeared as if 'a cow licked it off with its tongue' [Russian idiom], but there were still more food stocks in Frunze than in Moscow. We were accommodated in a room in a private house. Life was hard, but there was still enough food and it was warm. Children could play outside and run to the market. I went to work at the Kyrghyz scale repair plant where I was an apprentice to an equipment mechanic. There were high-skilled workers from Leningrad who trained me in their job. So the winter of 1941/1942 passed.

The local population treated us all right. At least I didn't hear of any problems. Aunt Zhenia stayed at home and my parents went to work. My father became an executive secretary of the newspaper 'Kyrghyzskaya Pravda' since there was no work for a geographer. My mother worked in an office making provisions for artists in evacuation. She worked in the logistics department. When we returned to Moscow she continued her work in this office till she retired. My sister went to school. Life was tolerable, I would say. Aunt Zhenia worked culinary miracles. She made onion jam, for example. We didn't starve, but of course our life in evacuation was far from the prewar level. Though even before the war, when my father was professor and dean and my mother worked as well we led a modest life. I remember my mother saying before the war: 'I can't afford to give you gastronomic breakfast every day'. This meant that we could only have sausage and cheese for breakfast on weekends or holidays and on weekdays we had cereal.

In May 1942, when I was 17 and a half years old [the recruitment age was 18], the military registry office summoned me. They said, 'Sit down and write a volunteer application to the army'. Who would dare to refuse those orders at that time! They sentenced people for desertion and then nobody would ever find justice. I was recruited to the 17th squadron of the Civil Aviation near the railway station in Frunze where they trained navigators/radio operators on aircraft. All cadets had finished the 9th grade at school. Later this squadron was renamed into a radio operator school. We lived in a barrack. There was poor food: sprat soup and boiled cereals. Those who came from Frunze rarely got leave to go home. We were given uniforms: boots, trousers and overcoats. There were two groups of 25 cadets each at school. There was military order. Our commander was first sergeant of the training unit and had been at war. For some reason he became furious with us and made our life as hard as we could imagine. He was to train us in drilling.

We had wonderful teachers in other military disciplines who were navigators and radio operators of the Civil Aviation. This was a privileged group. There weren't many pilots at that time, and they

told us that they knew all of them in the Civil Aviation. We also had flying training on DS-3 [Douglas], American aircraft with which our Civil Aviation was equipped before the war. There were also German Junkers planes furnished from the vicinity of Stalingrad. Near Stalingrad [present-day Volgograd, 800 km from Moscow] many planes left from many airfields. Later the Tashkent aviation plant got a license to manufacture those DS-3 planes, but they became Li-2, of course. They replaced passenger seats with steel benches and installed machine guns on them.

We finished our training in May 1943 and went to the headquarters in Moscow by train. We were accommodated in a military unit, the 1st air transportation division of the civil military aviation, near Vnukovo airport [domestic flights airport about 75 km southwest of Moscow]. I went there a couple of years ago and there were still two-storied barracks there where we lived. The pilots flew former passenger planes modified to become military aircraft. They transported people and loads to partisan units, for example. I can tell you a few anecdotes. When we came there planes were flying to Berlin on low altitudes or they would have been knocked down, lighted the landing spot with a torch and moved our intelligence men from there. They also transported the wounded from partisan units. Lighter planes were based near the front line, but ours were heavy planes and they flew directly from Moscow. There was a division of planes. Our division was a military unit, though it belonged to the Civil Fleet.

I flew to take partisans to the vicinity of Kiev. Kiev was occupied by the Germans. These were mostly girls. They jumped from the plane with parachutes. They had so many weapons and explosives on them that they couldn’t walk themselves inside the plane and we pushed them off board. I was responsible for communications and navigation during flights. I was the navigator/radio operator of the plane. At times Germans knocked down our planes. It’s aviation, and many things happened.

In fall we were sent to a bombers’ unit, that is, to the army. I was sent to the 11th Guards Night Bomber regiment west of Stalingrad in Morozovskaya station, about 900 kilometers south of Moscow. Our regiment was also involved in the liberation of Stalingrad. We bombed German positions and ramparts. We flew to bomb Donetsk basin in Ukraine, 600 kilometers west of Stalingrad where the front line was. We only flew at night since our planes flew at low speed. Our army lost many planes and crews during the Stalingrad battle flying during the daytime.

Other pilots, war veterans, told me that they were fired at as if in a shooting range: German fighter planes came from behind shooting at them. At that time our pilots were flying on Tb-3 planes, heavy bombers that were used for transportation of expeditions to the North Pole after the war. We heard many stories when we came to this regiment. Some military started the war at the borders. Many of them perished, but some survived. They told us stories and shared their experiences.

We were located far from the front line. Later we were called ‘Long-range aviation’ and became a reserve of the chief commandment. We rarely took part in front line operations. We were sent to the locations of another one of Stalin’s blows. [Editor’s note: 10 subsequent decisive blows on German troops during World War II resulting in the expulsion of Germans from the territory of the Soviet Union. The Soviet propaganda referred to the authorship of Stalin in the development of the strategy of those combat actions and they were called Stalin’s blows.] Our commander was Marshall of Aviation Golovanov. We didn’t get closer than 200 to 300 kilometers from the front line. There were airdromes where we were deployed, but they weren’t always properly equipped;

sometimes they were field air fields. The Land Lease provided the so-called ‘net’ to us. [Editor’s note: the system of USA lease or transfer of weapons, ammunition, food and other logistics resources to the countries of anti-Hitler coalition during WWII. The US Congress adopted the Land Lease law in 1941.] It could be placed on the field ground and planes could take off or land on it. We were in the vicinity of Stalingrad till winter.

In winter 1943 we relocated to Ukraine, to the town of Gorlovka in the vicinity of Donetsk liberated from fascists [about 900 km from Moscow]. We flew to drop bombs across Ukraine and Poland. There was one plane in the division equipped with photographic equipment to take photographs of the combat site after the bombardment to control the correctness of fulfillment of combat tasks. There were squadrons or regiments flying on tasks. Besides, each crew wrote a report upon return from tasks, and photographs served as proof of the accuracy of such reports. As far as I understood there were no lies written in reports. Lying might have been punished by the tribunal, penal battalions or execution.

We lived in former hostels or likewise modified into barracks. We had good food. Pilots had very good provisions. We even got chocolate under the Land Lease law, but not those who smoked. They got cigarettes. We got dark chocolate with nuts. It was packed in lumps in boxes and our logistics people broke it into pieces. For every successful flight we received 100 grams vodka, but since there was no vodka available we received 42 grams of pure alcohol. Since our logistic people were reluctant to weigh 42 grams each time they summed up a few flights to release more spirit, but our commandment didn’t appreciate this practice because they wanted to prevent intoxication. There was a poet in our squadron. He wrote: Dva pozharchika, Dva vzryvchika, Dai talonchiki na sto gramm, which means Two little fires, Two little blasts, Give me a card of 100 grams’. We called this ration of 100 grams ‘people’s commissar’s’ hundred, since this permission was issued by the people’s commissar of defense.

As a rule, we flew every night. At least, we were to be ready to fly every night whether or not we received a task that night. There was no fighters’ escort with us. At times German flak cannons attacked us. Our planes were equipped with two machine guns and a 20 mm aviation cannon gun installed in a machine gun ring in the cabin. The ring was covered with plexiglass for observation and wind protection purposes. There were machine guns on the right and left sides in the tail of a plane.

Once, when our unit was deployed near Leningrad we bombed Finland calling this action ‘to drive Finland out of the war’. This operation started after the blockade of Leningrad 19 was broken. We bombed Helsinki and Turku port in the Gulf of Finland. A shell hit our plane there, broke through the engine and fortunately exploded somewhere higher. It was a two-engine plane and there was one left. We managed to fly to the area between the towns of Porokhov and Dno in Pskov region [about 500 km from Moscow]. We landed in a field at night without releasing the landing gear. We survived.

This was the territory of partisans. The front line was somewhere near. The partisans helped us to cross the front line. We returned to our unit leaving the plane behind. Its propellers and engine were damaged. Later we repaired the plane and moved it to our unit. When we returned to our units we had to write to a number of explanatory units about what happened and how. The special department [this department dealt with the work of employees with sensitive documentation

containing state secrets. This department reported to the KGB] was shaking the information out of us, particularly because we had landed behind the front line. They wanted to know whether we had had contacts with the Germans, transferred any secret information to them or intended to surrender. It was stupid and humiliating, but it was their job. They were responsible for security. We described the situation referring to partisans who witnessed the circumstances and the special department believed us.

There was another episode when we were near Leningrad. It was a siege and we were deployed on the other side of the siege. The German front line was between Leningrad and us. Though residents of Leningrad were dying from hunger we had probably the most sufficient food supplies of the war period there. I remember having red caviar for the first time in my life. Of course, they gave it to pilots. From there we flew to bomb Finland and the Baltic Republics.

I remember a funny incident. We were to know the wind direction over the target before we took off on our task, but there was no information except the intelligence data. If there were intelligence people in the vicinity of the target they provided the information about the weather conditions in the area to us, but if there were none of them, they provided the data from the area where they were located - that might be up to 300 kilometers away from the target. We once received a task and the discrepancy of the data about the wind direction we received and the actual situation was 180 degrees. They told us the wind was blowing from the north to the south in the area, while actually it was blowing from the south to the north.

We were flying over the Gulf of Finland to avoid German flaks. There was a lot of confusion and once one of our crews dropped bombs on Sweden, which was out of the war. We were to drop bombs on Finland. They returned and wrote a report: ‘These damned Finns don’t even care about black-out. Here is lighting everywhere and even trams commute. We gave them a sharp blow without seeing the target’.

In summer 1944 we were in the vicinity of Kiev. Kiev was liberated in early November and the front line was actually near our border. We were dropping bombs on Romania. Our major task was to deprive Germans of Romanian gasoline. In 1945 we bombed Berlin. At times we were wrong and dropped bombs in the wrong places, but nobody ever mentioned it in our reports for the fear of the tribunal. There were four 250 kg bombs in the plane, or two 500 kg bombs or one one-ton bomb. There was a bombardment navigator in the crew determining the location for dropping bombs. I identified the direction by radio beacons. They were reliable. Besides at night we could see geographical guiding points, such as rivers, settlements or railroads. We often returned home along railroad tracks. At times, when it was getting light at dawn, we descended at lower heights to read the name of railroad stations.

At that time I knew nothing of the genocide of Germans against Jews, the ghettos and mass shootings. When we were near Kiev, I had no idea of Babi Yar 20. I didn’t know about the Holocaust until some time after the war. My fellow comrades knew that I was a Jew. We got along well. However, as for awards or promotions, they stumbled on the commissar. The commissar and I had good relationships personally, but he probably had instructions from his commandment to not bestow awards on Jews. At least I didn’t face routinely anti-Semitism in the army. I didn’t understand then why I didn’t have awards or promotions. I thought it was a misunderstanding and tried to think of explanations. I only realized it after the war. I used to think: ‘Why did they award

an order to Vanika, but no order to me?' There are orders and medals awarded to him for his combat deeds and labor achievements on his jacket, including the Order of Great Patriotic War, Order of Glory, medal for the defense of Stalingrad, medal for Courage, etc. I thought about it after the war, but nothing of the kind occurred to me during the war.

Anyway, I was awarded an order of the 'Great Patriotic War' and a medal 'For courage' We got awards for successful flights. There were curious Stalin directives: for example, an order was to be awarded for 50 successful flights, a medal for 30 successful flights, and the award of the 'Hero of the Soviet Union' for 250 successful flights. This was for the bombardment aviation. It was different for fighters. They counted the number of planes they lost. Our flights were considered successful when we hit the target.

I joined the Party at the front. I joined it because of conviction; there were no other thoughts at that time. I started my service in the rank of sergeant and when the war was over I was Guards first sergeant. On Victory Day 21, 9th May 1945, we were near Kiev. We heard about the victory at night. All of a sudden, in the middle of the night, there was terrible shooting in the military living quarters near the aerodrome. We didn't understand a damned thing at first. Naturally, we ran outside and heard the shouting: 'Victory! Victory!' We were in the rear. Perhaps, they felt the victory differently at the front. For us it was a huge surprise and a great joy. Then our crew was to be included in the combined regiment to prepare for the Victory Parade and fly over the Red Square, the main square of the country. This was summer 1945. The parade was to take place in May, but it was continuously delayed and when it took place the weather was terrible and we didn't fly on that day. There were no planes taking part in the parade.

In summer 1945 we relocated to the Far East. We were to start the war with Japan 22. Crews of commanding officer, second pilot, navigator and board mechanic flew to the Far East. Our pilots were flying Tu-2 aircraft, designed by Tupolev. They were high-speed high-altitude bombers, better aircraft than we used to fly before. This was a military aircraft manufactured for military purposes. I was a radio operator/gunner at that time already. All radio operators and gunners and support personnel went to the Far East by train. It took us a month to cross Russia. It was a passenger train. When passing their home towns many of our crew members hurried to visit their homes and later caught up with the train. Trains moved slowly due to damages on the roads, taking long stops and it was not a problem to catch up with a train getting a drive to another station.

In August we arrived in Vladivostok about 7,000 kilometers east of Moscow. We installed tents on the bank of the Chornaya River in the suburb of Vladivostok and lived there for quite a while. Then we took a boat to Sakhalin Island about 800 kilometers from Vladivostok. As soon as we left Vladivostok harbor there was a vigorous storm on the sea and to approach Sakhalin Island we were to cross the Laperuz Strait. We had to heave to drift since there was no way to orient the boat. We were sailing for a week instead of one day trip. This was August 1945. We finally reached the destination, but it was a long sail.

There was a lot of spirit that they were to release to us. There was a people's commissar rate in Vladivostok: 100 grams of vodka per day. We received this rate for flights during the war while here they released it every day. Everybody drank a lot on the boat, including the crew and there was a small fight that was stopped with a water cannon. So we were at the destination point in late August. There was Zonalnoye settlement on the border of the Northern and Southern parts of

Sakhalin. The air field was very small. There were few houses that could only accommodate officers. The rest of the staff had to make earth pits. We had to cut wood. There were Land Lease furnished Studebaker vehicles that could climb the hills. There were about 600-meter high hills in this area. So we cut the trees to make cuttings in the woods. Studebecker cars drove uphill to pick 12-13 meter tree trunks and we made earth huts from them. We had to hurry. Winter was approaching and we didn't know what kind of climate to expect in Sakhalin.

There was one episode for which later all new recruits teased us. It was called 'They came to bomb Muroran'. Muroran, I think, was a major town on Hokkaido Island. There was an air field there. It became our target and we were preparing for this operation. There were delays due to weather conditions. There was vigorous fog and we couldn't fly there and the ships of the Pacific Ocean Navy couldn't leave the bay. This ended rather sadly for our commandment. Marshal Novikov, Commander of the Far East Air Force, was dismissed, and so was the Admiral of the Pacific Ocean Navy. Thank God, we didn't invade Hokkaido Island, or things might have been worse, but there was an intention of this kind. The war was over on 11th September. We were to drop bombs on Japan, but we didn't. We didn't know that an atomic bomb was dropped on Japan. We got to know this much later, after the war was over.

- **After the war**

I served in Sakhalin till 1950. They didn't demobilize anybody from our military unit. It was hard to bring replacement for us because we were too far away. We went on training flights and bombing. There were deserted islands along the seashore. They became our training grounds and we bombed them vigorously. I knew nothing about what was happening in the country: about the death of Mikhoels 23, or the campaign against cosmopolitans 24. Our political officers propagated communism to us. There were political hours more often than once a week. I got tired of the army by that time. Here is how I demobilized: When the Korean War began, it turned out that our planes were good for nothing; the ones that seemed so good to us. We needed replacement of equipment and training of staff. Then our commandment decided that there was no sense in spending money for training of old staff and demobilized us in May 1950. We flew to the continent in the same aircraft that I flew during the war. It also served as the main civil aircraft. Our flight to Moscow lasted two days. It turned out that it was much easier to fly when I worked than just being a passenger.

I came home. Everything was fine there. Everybody was healthy. Lialia studied at university. Our dacha had been in a German controlled area during the war and the Germans had burnt it down. When I arrived, my parents had already built a new dacha. There was a big plot of land: 40 hundred parts of a hectare. It was turned into a vegetable garden where my parents grew potatoes and other vegetables for our family and two families of their friends. Their friends with whom they had initially shared this dacha perished in the camps in 1937.

My relatives in Rostov were in the occupation twice. The Germans retreated and then returned. My cousin Mark Yerenevskiy, aunt Lisa Liberman's son, perished there. He served in the infantry. People saw him coming home and then he disappeared and was on the lists as a missing one. I don't know how he perished. My cousin Nora Liberman from Rostov evacuated to Kislovodsk in the Caucasus, but German troops advanced there and she and her parents moved to Central Asia where she met Boris Gofman, a Polish Jew, and married him. Boris served in the Polish army and

Nora followed him to Iran and after the war they moved to the USA. She lives in Los Angeles now. My mother corresponded with her, though it was risky, but my mother was old at that time and had no fear any longer. Nora visited Rostov twice and traveled via Moscow during perestroika.

I had to finish school and enter a college. I went to a young working people's school. I studied at school and worked at the construction trust office as a clerk. Actually, I rather pretended to be working. I needed a certificate to confirm that I was working for school. I studied well. I finished school in winter 1950-1951 with all excellent marks. At that time the persecution of Jews in the country grew stronger. My father lost his job as dean of the Geographical Faculty of the Pedagogical College. He went to work as senior scientific worker in the College of Railroad Transport. There was no fear of arrests, though, like in 1937, and there was no packed suitcase in the house.

In 1951 I submitted my documents to the Geographical Faculty of Moscow State University. In those years they didn't admit Jews to colleges and my parents were very concerned. I was still young and light-minded and didn't quite understand the situation. I passed the entrance interview 25 along with other applicants with all excellent marks in their school certificates. I didn't have to take exams and this was my good luck. The atmosphere during the interview was very calm and I answered all questions. They admitted me. Of course, I was nervous, but my parents were even more nervous having a much better understanding of what was going on. My father probably had some connections at the university and most likely made some arrangements for my admission, but I don't know anything about it.

There were only few Jewish students at the faculty. Student life was wonderful. We went on expeditions in the Geographical Faculty and became very close. I took an active part in public life. There were only five or six party members. Other students were Komsomol members. I was the party leader of my course. I was fond of sports and went in for volleyball. We had excellent lecturers. We respected them a lot. Their lectures were very interesting. We had wonderful parties and meetings. I studied well and received the Lenin's stipend. [Editor's note: the highest stipend in higher educational institutions in the USSR awarded to the best students for special merits. This stipend was only awarded to a maximum of ten students per institution.]

Again, I was young and stupid and the Doctors' Plot 26 went past me, but I didn't believe what the newspapers wrote. I thought it was just anti-Semitism. This was what they said at home. We were a patriarchal family and respected our parents. For example, we had to come home for dinner regardless of where we were or what we were doing. My parents returned home at about 6 and then we had dinner. I smoked when serving in the army, but my parents didn't allow me to smoke inside and I had to go into the corridor to have a cigarette. In the end I quit smoking. My father couldn't stand the smoke and my mother decided that I wasn't allowed to smoke at home. Everything in the family was subject to my father's interests. There were discussions of life matters during dinner and those were interesting discussions. My father was a smart and bright person and it was always interesting to spend time with him.

I remember the day of Stalin's funeral in 1953. It was rather dramatic. When it was announced that Stalin had died, of course everyone gathered and our lecturer in scientific communism - by the way, this was a mandatory subject in all higher educational institutions of he USSR - held a very emotional speech about the Great Stalin. This lecturer was loved by the students for her interesting

lectures and of course, after this speech, there was sobbing. I listened to her quietly, but with alarm. We were raised this way. The world seemed to have come to an end. Nobody could imagine who would become the leader of the state to lead us on this fair way to communism. Fortunately, I didn't go to the funeral, or I might have got into this meat grinder where many people died. I was smart enough to stay away from there.

During our studies we went on expeditions and training tours. I had a very interesting trip called 'On great construction sites of communism'. We went to Kuibyshev, Stalingrad and to other hydro power plants. Later I went on an expedition to Bodaibo, to the gold mines [about 4,400 km from Moscow]. I saw things there. There were prisoners and exiles working in the mines. Dredges were washed on the surface while some deposits were underneath the river beds. A horizontal mine was operating where they mined for gold and it was like a river of gold flowing along the track. We, hydrologists, were to determine how much water they used. We were surprised that the people's faces were dirty though there was so much water around. I asked why that was and they explained to me that when a prisoner found a nugget he put it in his mouth to keep it there till the end of the shift. Since there were metal detectors at the entrance/exit of the mine it made no sense to hide gold. After the shift the prisoner had to spit the piece of gold out of his mouth onto a cart. They couldn't leave with it, but they just couldn't help hiding and trying to smuggle out a piece anyway. People changed into work robes at the check-in point and after work they took off their robes to pass through the metal detector naked.

The Koreans living in this settlement of gold diggers surprised us. They managed to grow terrific crops. The Russians hardly managed to grow potatoes while the Koreans grew plenty of things and sold the vegetables at the market. They were expensive, though. One pickled cucumber could cost as much as a bottle of vodka. I traveled there in 1953. This was a terrible time. There had been an amnesty in the country, but they only released criminals. The situation there was fearful. There was no order whatsoever and the authorities were helpless. All workers in our research expeditions were former criminals sentenced for murder for the most part, but they were excellent workers and we got along well with them.

My chief of expedition, an old topographer, was a terrible drunkard. Once he was bringing our salaries, including the wages of those workers who were former criminals and got so drunk that he fell and didn't remember anything and somebody took away his bag full of money. He said that he had lost his bag and they returned it to him and not one ruble was gone. That's how big an authority he was. I heard many stories about the situation and rules in camps. There was a riot in a camp near Bodaibo and the guards killed everyone. It was disclosed only after the sister of one prisoner started to roll up this case. They notified her that her brother had died of heart failure. She didn't believe them and went to the camp where she took a roster where they registered deaths and discovered that there were 100 people who died on one day from flu or heart failure. After Stalin's death she wrote to the prosecutor's office and finally found out the truth.

I met my future wife, Galina Ghermanson, at university. We studied in the same group. She was also a hydrologist. She was a nice young girl. We got married between the 4th and the 5th year of our studies. We had our wedding on New Year's Eve. We had a civil registry in the registry office and a wedding party at home in the evening. There were many guests.

My wife came from a family of Baltic Germans or Swedes, but she was registered as Russian in her passport. Her grandfather was a Lutheran. He came from Rzhev, but later they moved to Moscow. Her father was an administrative worker in a military hospital. He was an officer and officers' families were accommodated in hostels. I visited them in their room in the hostel. She was the only daughter. Neither my parents nor Galina's expressed any discontent about our wedding. Though my parents were unhappy knowing that it was wrong for a Jew to marry a Russian, they never spoke their mind about it. I also believe that it is a wrong thing for Jews to have non-Jewish spouses. The Revolution destroyed everything Jewish and in mixed marriages things also get dispersed.

We lived with my parents. My wife defended her diploma before our son was born in 1956. I was happy to have a baby. It didn't matter to me whether it was a boy or a girl. It was a human being and I was very happy. We named my son Andrey. My nanny looked after him and my wife or I didn't have to raise him till he turned five. We had to start working and build up our life.

My work experience in the Institute of Geography of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, where I worked all my life, started on the day when Andrey was born. When I was employed they made me feel a Jew. Galina and I received diplomas without any mandatory job assignment 27. This was rare. Job assignments were convenient. It was good to know that there was a job waiting for you upon graduation. I had an appointment with the deputy director of the Institute, the academician Avsyuk. Later he became my scientific supervisor. He said I would get a job and could start the following day, but I had to make arrangements with the human resources department where they told me there was no need to hurry and advised me to come by at a later time to find out about the state of affairs. This took me about a month.

I sort of guessed that the reason was my nationality. This was how it was at the time! So I told them a miserable story saying that my wife was to have a baby and they felt sorry for me and told me to come to work. I took Galia to the maternity hospital and went to work. I began to take an active part in the public activities of the institute. I must have had good organizational skills. I became secretary of the Komsomol unit of the institute. There were about 500 Komsomol members there.

I started to work as a senior lab assistant with the salary of 83 rubles per month, but soon they gave me a raise to 105 rubles. [Editor's note: This is probably a slip of the tongue. At that time his salary was probably 830 rubles. In 1961, upon denomination of money in the USSR his salary was 83 rubles. Before 1961 1 kg of bread in the USSR cost about 1.4 rubles and 1 liter of milk 1.2 rubles and after 1961 about 14 & 12 kopeck, accordingly.] This was the average salary of a young specialist in the country, but it was hard to live on it. The chief accountant, Anatoliy Raskin, an old Jew, was quite an important person in the institute. I think that because of Jewish solidarity he soon increased my salary to 120 rubles, but again, it wasn't that much, particularly as we lived as a family paying our expenses separately from my parents.

It was hard for Galina to live in a different family, even though all of us were smart and educated. My father had a good sense of humor and Galina had a different background. In 1956 she was only 23 years old. She was very young. My sister Lialia, my grandmother and nanny lived in one room, my mother and father shared the second, and Galina, Andrey and I were in the third room. My sister fell ill at about this time. Galina went to work at the Institute of Water Issues of the Academy

of Sciences. Our parents helped us, but life wasn't easy. We weren't hungry or poor, but I remember I had to buy cheap meat wastes from the meat factory at the market.

My son studied well and didn't cause us much concern. However, he was quite an idler since he didn't learn mathematics as he should have. After school he submitted his documents to the university and mathematics was his first entrance exam and he failed. He took his documents and passed exams in French to the Geographical Faculty of Moscow Pedagogical College. My mother spent a lot of time with him. She knew French from grammar school and when Andrey studied French at school she was helping him with his homework till the 5th grade. Andrey studied in a special French school. He had excellent marks in all subjects, but mathematics where he received '4' or '3' out of 5.

In summer we lived at the dacha. Andrey studied well in college; his only mistake was that he got married. This was his first wife. He had four altogether. They were Russian wives. He divorced his first wife promptly. His son Pyotr, from his third wife Olia, was born in 1985. Pyotr is a student of the Faculty of Economics in Moscow State University now. Olga went to visit her friend in the USA during perestroika and stayed there. Later she married an American and they have two lovely daughters. She visited us here with her family and they stayed at the dacha. Pyotr has visited her in the USA several times, but he didn't dare to stay there. Olga lives near San Diego in California. Her surname is Beauty now, I think.

Pyotr lives with us. He is like our son. Galina and I don't think it's good though. A son must live with his father and mother rather than his grandparents. Andrey is married again. We get along well with his wife. Galina is her favorite mother-in-law. She has good relationships even with Andrey's ex-wives. I think his family life failed because he didn't find whom he needed. At first my son was a teacher at school and then he was promoted to deputy director. He was even about to become director of a school, but then he went to work at the Academic 'Systems Analysis Institute'. School teachers have low salaries and this was one of the reasons why he left. At the institute Andrey worked as an economist, studied in the post-graduate class and became a candidate of economic sciences [see Soviet/Russian doctorate degrees] 28. Some time later my son quit this job and went to work at the Moscow committee for architecture where he became deputy chief architect of Moscow for economics. He was responsible for all business related issues, developing estimated cost of building design and construction.

I worked at the institute of Geography for 46 years. I defended my candidate and doctor's dissertation, received my scientific status of professor and became scientific deputy director. I have about 300 scientific works. I traveled all over the world. My first trip was to the Assembly of the Union of Geodesy and Geophysics in Switzerland in 1957. This is a strong international union uniting geodesists and hydrologists and many other professionals. I received a ridiculous per diem on this trip. I remember they gave us $30 for two weeks, but since this was the first trip of Soviet professionals abroad the receiving firm did everything they could to establish good relationships with Soviet tourist agencies. We were accommodated in a luxury hotel near Bern.

We were shocked at the life abroad. Besides plentiful shops and beautiful places we were shocked at their business management skills. The manager of the affiliate of the tourist company in Bern was a 23 to 25-year-old girl. We were trying to get more money in addition to the allowances that we had. We found out that we could refuse from lunches and get reimbursement for them which

was two or three times more than we received at home. This girl had discussions with us and we were shocked when she opened a safe and gave us the necessary amount of money without asking anybody's permission or approval. We only signed a receipt.

I bought many clothes for my wife, my son and my relatives for the money I received in compensation for my meals. A year later I went to a similar meeting in England. Of course, these trips happened because I was a member of the Communist Party and secretary of the Komsomol unit - what I mean by that is that I was a public figure - but also because I had scientific potential. I was a senior scientific employee and had scientific works.

I had an interesting job. I went on expeditions every summer. At that time I got involved in the issues of observation of the earth from space. It was very interesting. I had access to Russian, American and French cosmic photographs. Later we began to cooperate with the Americans in those issues. I traveled to America and Americans visited our country. I had an experimental ground near Kursk and they were absolutely surprised that it was located on a former military base. When our spy working for American intelligence sold our secrets this base was closed and turned over to the Academy of Sciences.

To decipher the cosmic photographs we had to identify the geodesic characteristics of the surface and compare them with earth-based photographs. We conducted open research with Americans in this field. This subject was a progressive direction and at the conference of geodesy and physics in Germany I was elected chairman of our working group. At that time it was necessary to obtain permission of the Central Committee of the Party to become chairman of an international committee. I couldn't tell them that I needed this permission and pretended that it wasn't quite what I wanted. What else could I do, when respectful people wanted me to become their chairman? Our interpreter was a KGB 29 informer, and she wrote in her report that I refused indistinctly, when they wanted to elect me and our organs closed the issue of my traveling abroad for six or seven years.

There was a special procedure of traveling abroad at that time. There was a special commission in a Party district committee which checked the reliability, looked closely into people's biographies and asked idiotic questions related to the course of scientific communism. We had interviews. Now these interviews seem crazy. They instructed us: 'You can only walk in groups of three or more' fearing that the agents of the world imperialism were on guard and would not miss a chance to drag to their side or kill the star of Soviet science.

They also gave other instructions like: 'do not make soup in a sink': our actors brought boilers with them and since they didn't have plates or mugs they plugged the sinks to boil soup or pasta to save money to buy clothes and gifts for their families. They also asked us whether we knew the words of the anthem by heart. There were old Bolsheviks in those commissions who were even crazier. So, after the report of this interpreter I wasn't allowed to go on trips for six years. I could only communicate with my American colleagues, when they visited me.

My former supervisor, Grigoriy Ovsyuk, helped me a lot. He was working in the presidium of the Academy of Sciences and was well respected there. He was also chairman of the housing commission of the Academy. This was an important position at that time considering the deficit of dwellings. He was the one to decide whether to give an apartment to someone or not: to academicians, not common employees! He pressed on our foreign department to have their KGB

representatives make the necessary arrangements for me with the relevant KGB office, and they allowed me to travel again.

I visited the USA several times. I went to their aerospace ground in Kansas and flew their aircraft. We used aircraft and helicopters for taking photographs with our equipment to compare the results and determine the level of accuracy. This Soviet-American program was complicated. Once I had an argument with our 1st department dealing in the issues of state security. They blamed us that we were disclosing our state secrets to the Americans. They would forecast the crops from our photographs and regulate the wheat prices to sell us wheat. I convinced them that it was nonsense, because if an American intelligence man drives a car from Moscow to Sochi he would disclose all so-called secrets along the way.

I conducted expeditions to study hydrology in Cuba twice. Later our institute issued an Atlas of Cuba with the whole hydrogeological part. Then I worked in China. We performed a similar program as we did with the Americans, entitled ‘Natural resources research from space’. I became deputy director of the institute for science.

In 1970, when the foreign mass media published articles about the oppression of Jews in Russia, a group of Jewish communists from Argentina arrived in Moscow looking for evidence that this wasn’t true and that Jews were prospering in the country. They gathered a group of prosperous Jewish scientists in Moscow. They were deputy directors of research institutes, including me. By the way, I never understood why we had this meeting or who they were. We had a meeting in the House of Friendship of the People. One of the employees there, a former employee of our institute, explained to me what it was about.

The chief editor of ‘Our Soviet Russia’ magazine, the only magazine in Yiddish in the USSR, with ridiculous circulation, was there. This was a pro-Soviet magazine. This editor entertained us with his chattering saying that knowing Yiddish one could travel anywhere. There were Jews speaking Yiddish all across the globe. He said he had been traveling all over the world and even in Shanghai met a man who could speak Yiddish.

We were sitting round the table talking about our life. There is a very powerful diaspora in Argentina. There are many Jews who escaped from Germany, when Hitler came to power. They gathered proof that we had a good life. We told them that we didn’t see distinct signs of anti-Semitism. The career level of the participants of this meeting was high and this was sufficient proof for them. They didn’t care about our well-being. My wife was also successful. She became a candidate of sciences and was chairman of the local committee [Mestkom] 30.

In 1980 my mother died. She had heart problems and had six or seven heart attacks. Her heart turned out to be like a cloth, even when she was young she was ill. I remember that she walked from the railway station to the dacha carrying bags, and then lay down in bed screaming from pain in her heart. Then there was the tragedy with my sister and my mother fought for her life for four years, but lost this battle. My mother was buried in Donskoye cemetery. My father died five years later, in 1985, and was buried there as well. I believe my father died from old age. He wasn’t ill. He grew older and older and then he sat in this arm-chair - where I am sitting now - and stayed there till he died. One morning before going to work I helped him sit in this chair and he died in it.

My wife Galina and my mother didn't get along and nothing could be done about it. Two women in one kitchen – that's impossible. In 1969 we bought a cooperative apartment thanks to Grigoriy Ovsyuk who included me in the list. We bought a two-bedroom apartment from the Academy of Sciences and moved there. We lived there till 1980. When my mother died, we couldn't leave my father alone and moved back to my parents' apartment. We left our apartment to Andrey. He was married at the time.

When Israel was established in 1948, I was in the army and didn't know anything about it. Then, when I returned home, I didn't pay attention to the issue of emigrating. I didn't care about things, just like any other common person in the Soviet Union. Regretfully, I need to confess that my non-Jewish attitude was very strong at the time. Many employees of our institute moved to Israel. There was only one scandalous departure to America. One professor worked a long time in a health care agency in Switzerland. He developed contacts with Americans and decided to emigrate. The attitude toward him was disgusting and I didn't even take part in this whole story. Everybody condemned him blaming him of betrayal. I didn't understand him and also condemned him.

Now I think different about Israel. I had a heart surgery in Israel. In 1992 I had a heart attack that I overcame, but it resulted in stenocardia. I had a medical examination and they said I needed surgery. I asked the director of this clinic where he would advise me to have surgery - in our country or abroad -and he said that he was a good surgeon but had nothing for post surgery treatment. Therefore, he concluded, if I had a chance of having it in Israel, I should go there. I had friends in Israel. I stayed with them for some time and got to know more about the country. Life there was wonderful in 1993 or 1994.

My friends told me that I had to obtain the citizenship and medical insurance in Israel or the surgery would cost me about USD 25,000. I wrote an application, but it turned out that it was not specified in my birth certificate that I was a Jew. They didn't indicate it at that time. A year later I returned to Israel and they declared that they didn't believe my new birth certificate and that I could throw it away. They knew that for a small bribe one could become a Jew immediately in Russia. They asked for my old certificate which didn't say that I was a Jew, but had my mother's name, Raisa Aronovna, and my father's name, Moisey Filipovich, and they processed all necessary documents for me. I obtained mandatory medical insurance from the Ministry of Absorption. I returned to Moscow and a year later went to Israel with Galina. I had all medical examinations and they sent me to the American-Israeli cardiologic clinic. It was a nice clinic, but since I wanted to expedite the surgery and go back to Moscow, and also wanted a Russian speaking professor from Russia to do the surgery I had to pay an additional USD 2,000. In May I had coronary artery grafting and could go home a short time later.

When perestroika began in the 1980s, I didn't pay much attention to it. I didn't take part in any movements. I wasn't indifferent and was really glad about it, but I was ill at that time. I thought positive of Gorbachev 31 unlike many other people. I understood that a young and smart leader was very good for the country. I think it was a wonderful idea of democracy and glasnost, but I cannot say that the results were good. Still, it's much better than it used to be. The country became open and people got more opportunities. Smart people can build their life without caring about Party district committees or mean secretaries of the party organization. As for contracts in society I think they are inevitable. It was transmission from one system into another in a short time and there was no different way.

I continue working. I edit books written by the director of my institute. He writes a lot and the academy allotted money for the publication of his works. My wife and I have enough for a good life. I have a big pension as a veteran of the war and we have Galina's pension as well and we can make do without my son's support in everyday life. When we need bigger amounts, my son helps us. We often spend time at the dacha in summer and in winter. Though I can hardly walk after the stroke, we keep in touch with our relatives and friends. Our friends visit us and we have parties. I identify myself as a Jew. I don't know why. It's hard to say. It's in the blood - just like my deceased grandmother used to say: 'Blood is most important'.

- **Glossary**:

1 Cantonist

The cantonists were Jewish children who were conscripted to military institutions in tsarist Russia with the intention that the conditions in which they were placed would force them to adopt Christianity. Enlistment for the cantonist institutions was most rigorously enforced in the first half of the 19th century. It was abolished in 1856 under Alexander II. Compulsory military service for Jews was introduced in 1827. Jews between the age of 12 and 25 could be drafted and those under 18 were placed in the cantonist units. The Jewish communal authorities were obliged to furnish a certain quota of army recruits. The high quota that was demanded, the severe service conditions, and the knowledge that the conscript would not observe Jewish religious laws and would be cut off from his family, made those liable for conscription try to evade it.. Thus, the communal leaders filled the quota from children of the poorest homes.

2 Nikolai's army

Soldier of the tsarist army during the reign of Nicholas I when the draft lasted for 25 years.

3 Jewish Pale of Settlement

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

4 Russian Revolution of 1917

Revolution in which the tsarist regime was overthrown in the Russian Empire and, under Lenin, was replaced by the Bolshevik rule. The two phases of the Revolution were: February Revolution, which came about due to food and fuel shortages during World War I, and during which the tsar abdicated and a provisional government took over. The second phase took place in the form of a coup led by

Lenin in October/November (October Revolution) and saw the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks.

5 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.

6 Struggle against religion

The 1930s was a time of anti-religion struggle in the USSR. In those years it was not safe to go to synagogue or to church. Places of worship, statues of saints, etc. were removed; rabbis, Orthodox and Roman Catholic priests disappeared behind KGB walls.

7 Pogroms in Ukraine

In the 1920s there were many anti-Semitic gangs in Ukraine. They killed Jews and burnt their houses, they robbed their houses, raped women and killed children.

8 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.

9 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.

10 Civil War (1918-1920)

The Civil War between the Reds (the Bolsheviks) and the Whites (the anti-Bolsheviks), which broke out in early 1918, ravaged Russia until 1920. The Whites represented all shades of anti-communist groups – Russian army units from World War I, led by anti-Bolshevik officers, by anti-Bolshevik volunteers and some Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries. Several of their leaders favored

setting up a military dictatorship, but few were outspoken tsarists. Atrocities were committed throughout the Civil War by both sides. The Civil War ended with Bolshevik military victory, thanks to the lack of cooperation among the various White commanders and to the reorganization of the Red forces after Trotsky became commissar for war. It was won, however, only at the price of immense sacrifice; by 1920 Russia was ruined and devastated. In 1920 industrial production was reduced to 14% and agriculture to 50% as compared to 1913.

11 NEP

The so-called New Economic Policy of the Soviet authorities was launched by Lenin in 1921. It meant that private business was allowed on a small scale in order to save the country ruined by the Revolution of 1917 and the Russian Civil War. They allowed priority development of private capital and entrepreneurship. The NEP was gradually abandoned in the 1920s with the introduction of the planned economy.

12 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.

13 Communal apartment

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

14 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.

15 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.

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

17 Molotov, V
P. (1890-1986): Statesman and member of the Communist Party leadership. From 1939, Minister of Foreign Affairs. On June 22, 1941 he announced the German attack on the USSR on the radio. He and Eden also worked out the percentages agreement after the war, about Soviet and western spheres of influence in the new Europe.

18 Fighting battalion
People’s volunteer corps during World War II; its soldiers patrolled towns, dug trenches and kept an eye on buildings during night bombing raids. Students often volunteered for these fighting battalions.

19 Blockade of Leningrad
On September 8, 1941 the Germans fully encircled Leningrad and its siege began. It lasted until January 27, 1944. The blockade meant incredible hardships and privations for the population of the town. Hundreds of thousands died from hunger, cold and diseases during the almost 900 days of the blockade.

20 Babi Yar
Babi Yar is the site of the first mass shooting of Jews that was carried out openly by fascists. On 29th and 30th September 1941 33,771 Jews were shot there by a special SS unit and Ukrainian militia men. During the Nazi occupation of Kiev between 1941 and 1943 over a 100,000 people were killed in Babi Yar, most of whom were Jewish. The Germans tried in vain to efface the traces of the mass grave in August 1943 and the Soviet public learnt about mass murder after World War II.

21 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.

22 War with Japan
In 1945 the war in Europe was over, but in the Far East Japan was still fighting against the anti-

fascist coalition countries and China. The USSR declared war on Japan on 8 August 1945 and Japan signed the act of capitulation in September 1945.

23 Mikhoels, Solomon (1890-1948) (born Vovsi)
Great Soviet actor, producer and pedagogue. He worked in the Moscow State Jewish Theater (and was its art director from 1929). He directed philosophical, vivid and monumental works. Mikhoels was murdered by order of the State Security Ministry.

24 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'.

25 Entrance interview
graduates of secondary schools awarded silver or gold medals (cf: graduates with honors in the U.S.) were released from standard oral or written entrance exams to the university and could be admitted on the basis of a semi-formal interview with the admission committee. This system exists in state universities in Russia and most of the successor states up to this day.

26 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.

27 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.

28 Soviet/Russian doctorate degrees

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

29 KGB

The KGB or Committee for State Security was the main Soviet external security and intelligence agency, as well as the main secret police agency from 1954 to 1991.

30 Mestkom

Local trade-union committee.

31 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.