

Susanna Breido

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Interviewer: Ludmila Lyuban

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Susanna Aronovna Breido is an elderly woman of 78 years of age. She is not tall, rather slim, with a high forehead, made higher by a slightly receding hairline.

Her hair is gray; she is dressed rather modestly and walks slowly. She hardly ever leaves her home and reads with a magnifying glass.

She lives alone in a three-room apartment with a lot of books and family pictures on the walls. The abundance of thick magazines ['Znaniye,' 'Novy Mir' etc.] amazes the visitor.

These are magazines of past years; they are piled up near the walls, almost reaching the ceiling. She answers my questions gladly.

She collected information about her relatives even before her participation in this program. She remembers a lot of them and keeps several big picture albums.

She was a teacher of the Russian language and literature, so her speech is correct, as if she dictated an interview to her pupils, narrating in an entertaining and inventive way.

She is a very nice, well-disposed and hospitable woman.



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- **My family**

My name is Susanna Aronovna Breido. I was born in Leningrad [today St. Petersburg, known as St. Petersburg until 1914 and Petrograd during WWI] in 1924. I had a chance to see my paternal great-grandfather Yerukhim Breido while he was still alive. He was born in the town of Polotsk [today Belarus] in Vitebsk province in 1826.

When I was born he was already 98 years old; he lived to the age of 106. He was a Polish Jew by birth. He was a craftsman, a household chemistry expert: he made ink, shoe polish, skin ointment,

various cleaning products and so on. Formulas of chemical compositions were handed down through generations. Judging by these formulas, our ancestors traveled to England through Spain, to Germany from America and to Poland from Germany.

My father was especially interested in this subject. Looking at the ancient formulas, which reached our times in manuscript, he asserted that our ancestors on Breido's line reached Polotsk and Vitebsk from Poland. I don't know when exactly my great-grandfather moved to St. Petersburg from Polotsk, but I heard from my relatives that being a craftsman with a business of his own he obtained a permit in the second half of the 19th century from the Petersburg Crafts Board for residence in St. Petersburg with his family [1](#). My grandfather and my father obtained such permits later, as they were in the same craft.

My great-grandfather Yerukhim Breido was married twice and had children in both marriages. He had five children in his first marriage, four sons and a daughter: Grigory, [1850s-1915], Israel [1850s-1928], Rakhmil-Chaim-Ber-Leib, my grandfather [1860-1942], Tsiva [Belenkaya after marriage]; there was another son, whose name I don't know; he left for the USA in 1915.

According to some information my great-grandmother's name was Khvolos. I don't know my great-grandfather's second wife's name. Grandfather Chaim took offence at his father Yerukhim because he 'rewarded' him with a stepmother when he already had children of his own, so he didn't keep in touch with this second family for some time.

I remember my great-grandfather Yerukhim from the time when I was five or six years old. He wore a moustache, a full beard, divided into two parts, and a skullcap. By that time his second wife had already died. I visited him with my father, we brought him lunch, which Grandfather Chaim sent, and it happened on holidays when Father didn't work.

I remembered very well my great-grandfather's wonderful benevolence and deep respect for any person, even for such a small one like I was. He was the only relative who didn't call me Susanna but Rasel, the name my parents really wanted to give me when I was born. I thought Great-grandfather mocked me and teased me.

When I asked him why he did so, he explained to me that my name was 'hidden'; that I wasn't given the name of Rosa because there was already a Rosa in the family, my sister Rakhil; but I was given the possibility to be the 'flower queen,' not in the Sinai valleys, but Sinai sea valleys, to be the white lily. Every conversation with him ended with friendly jokes.

When he spoke Hebrew with my father and discussed complicated stories, which were obscure for me, he translated something for me every two-three minutes, because he thought that a child shouldn't be left in the dark. I couldn't acquire a better lesson as a teacher-to-be. His influence on my father was great.

Once I asked my great-grandfather why his other grandchildren didn't visit him. He replied that the grandchildren paid homage to him but his work didn't interest them and my father was the only one he could talk to heart-to-heart.

He told my father that he had to get back to the comments he had done earlier on the Talmud, because life had forced him to reconsider everything all over again. They talked a lot about the history of various nations and religions. It seems to me now that it was what is called kabbalism.

Kabbalists have to know the history of various nations as well as the history of their own faith. They never mentioned in their conversations that people choose their destiny and their time.

My great-grandfather was an Orthodox Jew, he observed all the Jewish traditions and prayed a lot. He taught that if one found oneself in a foreign country, in a non-Jewish society, one should never express disrespect for the traditions of the other nations, as this makes one disrespectful of oneself; though one should know very well and stick to one's own traditions. Of course, my father told me all this when I grew up, because at the time when I was in touch with my great-grandfather, I was too small to understand such things.

However, I remember how children from a Jewish boarding school and a school on Vassilyevsky Island [district of Leningrad] came to us for lunch every Friday and Saturday, called my great-grandfather rebbe Yerukhim, sometimes rebbe Yerukhim Polotsky, and the word 'rebbe' means 'teacher.'

Great-grandfather Yerukhim was very sick at the close of his life; he suffered from dropsy and didn't get up from bed. He lived with his grandson from his second marriage, a revolutionary sailor, who didn't really show respect for his grandfather. Mother told me that the sailor shaved Grandfather's moustache and beard off before he died, in order 'not to have trouble with that later,' as he said. But Yerukhim, who was affectionate and friendly with everyone, forgave him that outrage. My grandparents were exiled from Leningrad at that time and lived in Novgorod. Father was in exile in Siberia.

Great-grandfather died in Leningrad in 1932. He was buried near an old office, a red brick building near the synagogue. But owing to reforms and reconstructions, which took place later, his grave was lost. When we returned from Novgorod in 1939, we weren't able to find Great-grandfather's grave.

My paternal grandfather, Rakhmil-Chaim-Ber-Leib Breido, was born in Polotsk in 1860. He had a 'weak heart' from birth, as they called it at that time; and he suffered from 'breast pang' fits, which is now called stenocardia. That is why he was given so many names – it was considered that it would help to 'cheat death, if it comes to take him away.' They called him Chaim at home. He was a successor of his father's craft and worked at the chemical workshop.

Chaim married Rivka or Riva Galyorkina in 1880. Grandmother Riva was born in 1860 in Polotsk into the family of a First Guild Merchant [2](#), Irma Galyorkin, my great-grandfather. Great-grandmother's name was Mira; her maiden name was Sverdlova. It was a very well off family.

Irma Galyorkin owned a glass factory in Novka between Polotsk and Vitebsk, a lot of land with vegetable gardens in both cities, a whole block of profit houses in Polotsk, various stores, etc. However, my great-grandfather, a merchant, seemed not to be delighted with the marriage of his daughter Riva and provided only a cereals store as her dowry. Grandfather Chaim's family lived from hand to mouth and, as I was told, the 'younger sons always wore the cast-off clothes of the elder children.'

Grandmother Riva had probably had no education, but she was very thrifty and independent. She cooked perfectly and her food was most delicious on Jewish holidays. To all appearances she was one of the elder Galyorkin children and also 'gave orders' in her own house later on. Matriarchy

was very well pronounced. Grandfather Chaim, a very good-natured person, obeyed my grandmother. She kept the household and brought up the children.

She was in command of the children too; she had six of them, besides two daughters, who died as babies. Five sons: Samuil [1881-1944]; Grigory [1882-1944]; German [1887-1959]; Aron, my father [1889-1944]; Isaac [1897-1933] and a daughter, Tsylya [1894-1961]. The four elder sons were born in St. Petersburg, Isaac and Tsylya in Polotsk, where Grandfather Chaim decided to move, after he took offence at his father, when the latter married for the second time. Grandfather Chaim's family returned to St. Petersburg when my father was eight.

Grandfather Chaim proceeded with his craft. Subsequently my father Aron became his successor and his brothers assisted him. Grandfather was an official owner and holder of the Breido Brothers Chemical cooperative [3](#). In 1931 the cooperative was shut down based on an accusation of using hired labor.

Father worked at the Breido Brothers Chemical cooperative until 1930. Grandfather Chaim was the owner and Father was the chief administrator, who managed everything. He was dealing with the watches [duty teams], kept the accounting and held negotiations with the suppliers and customers.

Though he could communicate perfectly with various people, he didn't like to deal with the purchasing issues, he never had this streak, this capability. However, he was the only one who dealt with the formulas and was a remarkable expert in that field. They rented space for the cooperative. Jews and Russians worked in the cooperative. If there was even the slightest opportunity to help someone, Father did that immediately.

On 15th January 1931 the workshop was shut down, Father was accused of using hired labor, regardless of the fact that members of the cooperative received a certain share payment, and at the end of the year the profit was distributed between all of them; besides, Father and his brothers worked from early morning till late at night. But no one was interested in this.

They were 'bourgeois' for the authorities and they were to be 'dispossessed' as kulaks [4](#). Grandfather as an old man was exiled to Novgorod, to the '101th kilometer,' he was deprived of his rights for three years. [Editor's note: For any of several reasons the Soviet government did not allow people, who were exiled, to live closer than 100 kilometers to big cities. Novgorod was considered a big city.]

The brothers were exiled to other cities. Father was arrested as the principal, put into the famous Leningrad 'Kresty' prison and later transferred to 'Butyrka' [Butyrskaya Prison in Moscow]. Someone informed my mother about the time when Father was to be transferred and together with us, children, she went to see him. Soldiers with dogs surrounded the train; it was impossible to talk to Father, we could only see him. When we came home, our neighbor, a Jew, came to us, brought a picture of his wife together with our little Ada [the interviewee's youngest sister], and tore it to pieces in front of us. Thus we became a family of an 'enemy-bourgeois.'

In Novgorod Grandmother and Grandfather rented a room in the house of the Belenky family, who were cantonists [5](#). I still remember their Novgorod accent. The Belenky family was also Jewish, however, being cantonists and baptized, they had more civil rights. My grandparents returned to Leningrad in 1939. I met them when they were people of pension age.

Grandfather, as well as his father, wore a moustache and a beard and a skullcap. Grandmother didn't wear a headscarf as many other Jewish women did, but remained bareheaded. Grandfather was sick most of the time and didn't visit the chemical workshop any more. He handed over all his knowledge to my father, though they had to seek advice from him regarding formulas, especially when new compositions were invented.

My father's parents were Orthodox Jews, Yiddish was their mother tongue and they spoke only this language with each other. However, Grandfather also knew Hebrew. I remember that he always sat in the room with his prayer books. He was sent somewhere; then he came back and continued his prayers. All Jewish traditions were observed in the family. I remember how Grandmother was washing and cleaning the dishes endlessly; they only ate kosher food.

All relatives celebrated Jewish holidays at my grandfather's. Up to 30 people gathered there. Grandfather lived with his daughter's family in a big apartment one floor above his daughter. Grandfather checked that everything was according to the rules: prayers, candles lighting, all ceremonies. This was so in Leningrad, as well as in Novgorod. Grandfather attended the synagogue and in Novgorod he prayed in some chapel, where ten Jews [that is, a minyan] gathered for praying. Grandfather Chaim, unlike his father, had no interest in any other religion; he thought that Jews should by all means preserve their religion and traditions, that is why he was strongly against mixed marriages.

Grandmother Riva supported her husband with regard to traditions. She died in 1940 of pneumonia. She, as many Galyorkins, had weak lungs, but suffered from such a form of tuberculosis, which allowed her to live up to the age of 80. She was buried at the Jewish Preobrazhensky cemetery in Leningrad. The funeral was carried out according to the Jewish rite.

Grandfather Chaim died at the beginning of the winter of 1942 in Leningrad, which was besieged by the Germans. He starved, in spite of the fact that his daughter Tsylya, with whom he lived, tried to provide some food for him. She sold her belongings, but it wasn't enough. It was certainly not possible to keep kosher during the blockade [6](#), as there was nothing to eat at all. Grandfather died of dystrophy. It was really difficult to bury him. Albert, Grandfather's younger son Isaac's son, knocked up not a coffin, but a plywood case, which fell into pieces when it was pulled downstairs from the third floor. Tsylya's husband Lyova Katznelson dragged Grandfather's corpse on a piece of plywood to the Preobrazhensky cemetery, paid off the cemetery attendant with Grandfather's bread [that is, his daily ration [7](#)] and buried him there.

I know little of Grandfather Chaim's brothers and sisters. His brother Israel Breido left for Palestine in the 1920s. In 1927 Israel wrote to my father and invited him to Palestine, saying that there were all the conditions for setting up a workshop. However, Father refused flatly, saying that this country was his only home and this was where he belonged. Later on Israel liquidated all his business in Palestine and moved with his family to South Africa, to Johannesburg. He purchased some kind of a store there and strenuously invited [his nieces] to come to his place. However, very soon, literally in several months, an accident happened: he was run over by a car and died. Thus none of us left for Johannesburg, it wasn't meant to be.

Great-grandfather Yerukhim had more children, but I know something only about Grandfather Chaim's stepbrother Isaac, who was born in 1889, the same year my father was born. At first he worked at the Breido Brothers cooperative, but later they had a fight and he quit. He married a

Russian woman and converted to Russian Orthodox Christianity. His name was changed to Alexander Zaozersky and my parents and other relatives terminated all relations with him. However, when he died at the end of the 1940s/beginning of the 1950s, his wife called my mother and invited her to the funeral service in the church. She said that her husband, before he died, spoke only the Jewish language [i.e. Yiddish] in delirium and she hadn't understood a word. Mother replied that she should have invited her then, so that she could have translated. Mother didn't go to the burial service.

The narration about Grandmother Riva's brothers and sisters should start with her sister Rakhil Galyorkina, who was my maternal grandmother. So, my parents were cousins. There were several such marriages in their family. It was done for the purpose of preserving the family capital within the family. But sometimes they really fell in love, as in such a big family they met each other often.

My grandmother Rakhil Strunskaya [nee Galyorkina] was born in Polotsk in 1870. Her husband, my maternal grandfather, Aba Strunsky, was a Polish Jew. He was born in 1869, but I don't know in which town. He was a cabman, driving passengers who arrived in Polotsk, especially those who came by night trains. The owner of the horses was a merchant, Irma Galyorkin. During the daytime Aba played the violin, he was one of the best violinists in Polotsk. He played at weddings and funerals, both rich and poor.

Grandfather Aba's elder brother was a civilian in the Tsarist Army. He hit an officer with a bottle on the head because he called him a 'dirty Jew.' In order to avoid the punishment, he had to be secretly transported to America in a ship's hold. I don't know anything about my grandfather's other brothers and sisters.

The Galyorkins could have hardly liked their younger daughter's husband, as he came from a totally different environment. As dowry, Grandmother Rakhil got the house where her family lived. They had three children: Braina [1895-1975], Moishe-Zalman [1890-1906] and Dina, my mother [1898-1983]. My grandmother Rakhil died in 1899 when she was very young, only 29 years old. She had consumption. She infected her husband Aba, her son Moishe and her elder daughter Braina with tuberculosis.

When his wife died, Aba called on his parents for assistance. His father and my great-grandfather, was a 'forest controller' as they called it, though I don't know what exactly his responsibilities were. Two years later Aba died of tuberculosis. The Galyorkin brothers immediately turned out his parents from the house and took the children into their families. Before Aba's parents lived with his family in the same house.

My grandmothers Rakhil Strunskaya and Riva [Breido] had five brothers: Leib [1842-1930s], Lipa [1860s-1920s], Isaac [1844-1915], Moisey [1846-1938] and Don [1850-1921]. Leib Galyorkin lived in Vitebsk. He was a First Guild Merchant, a wholesaler, just like his father. He had seven children: daughters Dina [1892-1967], Temma [Emma, 1882-1964], Chaya-Rokha [Anna, 1880-1944], Maria [1883-1976] and sons Girsh [Grigory, 1880-1919] and Rafail [1885-1919]. As a merchant, Leib had the right to educate his children, both in Russia and abroad.

Emma obtained high school education; Maria graduated from the Medical Institute in Derpt [today Tartu, Estonia]; Girsh and Rafail got technical education and Anna graduated from two universities: Sorbonne [France] and Bern [Switzerland]. They were certainly all Orthodox Jews until the Soviet

power came.

Leib Galyorkin's daughter, Anna Lvovna [she was Lvovna according to the passport, as her father's name Leib was translated into Russian as Lev] was born in 1880 and was a revolutionary in her youth. She had a sham marriage with a famous social democrat, Iosif Solomonovich Blumenfeld. Documents about his life and activity are now kept in the Museum of History in the Peter & Paul's Fortress in St. Petersburg. He was born into the family of a rabbi in Odessa.

He was a prominent revolutionary, Plekhanov's follower [8](#), and had to hide, as he was persecuted for using false documents; he used various names. He was the organizer and typesetter of underground printing-houses of the RSDRP [Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party], a delegate to the First RSDRP Congress, the organizer of the printing-house where the 'Iskra' newspaper was printed.

Anna was the revolutionary Chicherin's fiancée before she met him. She married Blumenfeld fictitiously in order to get a dowry from the Galyorkin family, which was used later on to set up the Iskra printing-house. She took the printing equipment from Russia abroad. The wedding took place in Paris in the 1900s. She remained friends with Iosif Solomonovich until the end of their lives, but they never lived as husband and wife.

Our family preserved a warm relationship with Iosif Blumenfeld, especially Father's brother Grigory: they were Party comrades; my father and he also assisted each other. Iosif married other women in 1924 and in 1925. When Iosif Blumenfeld was fired, my uncle gave him a job as an accountant at the cooperative. My father employed Boris Smelnitsky, the violinist, as a guard. Mother was indignant, 'Boris is playing chess again with Isaac in his office, and who is going to be responsible if something gets lost? If it were your personal workshop you wouldn't have tolerated that, but it isn't. If he's the guard, he has to guard.' Mother recalled that conversation later.

Anna Lvovna Galyorkina didn't get married for the second time. She worked as a teacher in Lonjoumeau [France] in a school of professional revolutionaries in the 1910s. After returning to her motherland in the 1920s she worked in a library of the Leningrad Polytechnic Institute and later became a pensioner, got awards and had a good state pension. She lived with the family of her niece Bella, her brother Girsh's daughter. They were taken from besieged Leningrad in 1942 to Balashikha near Moscow, where their relatives lived. Anna Lvovna died there of cancer in 1944.

Her younger brothers Girsh and Rafail worked at the glass factory of their uncle Lipa Galyorkin in Novka. They perished there in 1919 during a pogrom. Rafail was never married. Girsh's wife was left with four children: Bella [1905-1980], Abram [1907-1966], Sophia [1903-1990] and Mendel [1911-1949]. The eldest, Bella, was 14 years old at that time. Bella worked as an accountant in trade. She got married and had a daughter, Anna.

Bella's brother Abram was a construction engineer, during the war [9](#); he served in the field-engineering forces on the Leningrad frontline. He found himself in a brigade, which made mass graves using explosives at the Piskaryovsky cemetery. Each grave was for 1,000 people. When one grave was full, they started a new one. Everybody who participated in that digging was later on assigned to various frontlines. They were told, 'Hitler shouldn't know about our losses.' Abram died after the war.

Their other brother Mendel was also in the war, he was a medical attendant and was taken prisoner when wounded. He was blond with blue eyes and didn't look like a Jew, so no one gave him away. The Germans sent Mendel to forced labor in Germany, where he worked at a farm. The landlady of the farm, a German, knew that he was a Jew but didn't give him away to the authorities, though there wasn't much use of his work, as he was very weak after the wound and often fell sick. After the war he was transported to the Soviet Union but died in 1949.

Leib's brother Lipa Galyorkin inherited a glass factory from his father in Novka, a small town between Polotsk and Vitebsk. Lipa had a technical education; he re-organized the factory and purchased new equipment. 'Novka' became the largest glass factory in the province. About 700-800 non-Jewish workers, taken on from neighboring villages, were employed at the factory before the Revolution [10](#). They were all provided with accommodation: a special compound was constructed for them near the factory. After the revolution he remained its General Manager, a management was formed out of the employees, though the positions of engineers were held by Lipa's relatives and other Jews, who obtained education abroad: in England, Germany and Switzerland.

Workers who were dissatisfied with that condition arranged a pogrom in 1919, having asked a 'Green' gang for help [11](#). The Reds and the Whites [12](#) were at war with each other and there were also the so-called Greens, who put together armed gangs, for example, the famous bandit Makhno [13](#), and plundered the population. The bandits killed Jews and robbed their houses. Eleven members of the Galyorkin family perished in that massacre, including Leib's sons, Girsh and Rafail. Lipa himself was in Petrograd at that time and avoided death.

When he returned home and, approaching Novka, found out about the pogrom, he went to Vitebsk, where his elder son Irma worked as the head of the Revolutionary Militia. The militiamen came to Novka but it was too late. The investigation revealed that the factory committee initiated the pogrom. It contacted the gang in advance; the local citizens drew up lists of Jews and participated in robbing their houses. The workers' leaders didn't make it a secret and at the meetings openly called for getting rid of the Jews. It is difficult to say why no measures were taken in order to prevent the massacre.

The court hearing took place in the Vitebsk province military-revolutionary committee for 18 days. Fifteen of the accused were sentenced to execution by shooting; others were convicted for various terms of imprisonment. However, the All-Union Central Executive Committee Presidium reversed this tribunal resolution in January 1920 and released the accused.

It was a heavy blow for Lipa. He considered himself guilty of what had happened and committed suicide, having drunk acetic acid. His elder son Mendel began to work at the factory instead of him. He was later on exiled for that to a camp in Siberia and perished there. Lipa had four other sons: Isaac [1899-1990], Yeremey [1900-1983], Lasar [1907-1942] and Israel 1910-1989]. Lasar perished on the front, Yeremey also was in the war together with his wife Maria. He was a medical officer. Their son Rafail perished near the town of Belaya Tserkov in Ukraine.

Another brother, Isaac Galyorkin, lived in Polotsk. From his father Irma Galyorkin he inherited land, vegetable gardens, profit houses in Polotsk and owned a distribution market for his goods. However, when he shipped cabbage to Petersburg in railroad carriages, they said that his profit was small, but he got the right to be in any city, visit Riga, Petersburg, educate his children, i.e., it

was done not for the sake of money but for the sake of these rights.

Isaac brought up my mother from the age of four after her parents had died of consumption. He was married twice. He had two daughters from his first marriage, Dina and Mira. His second wife had a daughter of her own. Anna, Leib Galyorkin's daughter took Dina to St. Petersburg. Dina passed exams and entered Bestuzhev courses [an academy for women in the Russia Empire established by the Society of Progressive Intellectuals.]. However, after that she had a fit and was considered mentally ill and she returned home.

That is why Isaac Galyorkin didn't provide for my mother's education – he believed that it could make one go mad. His daughter Mira didn't get any education either; her father took her from school after the fourth grade. Mira married her cousin Abram Sverdlov; they lived in Klimovichi in Belarus. When the war broke out they got evacuated across the Urals. Isaac was at the Leningrad frontline and survived. After the war Mira and her husband returned to Klimovichi, but later moved to Isaac in Leningrad.

Moisey Galyorkin lived with his family in the village of Shumilino between Polotsk and Vitebsk. He brought up my mother's sister, Braina, who was six years old when her parents died. But soon after that an accident happened. Braina was placed on a hot stove after a bath and got badly burnt. After that Lipa Galyorkin took her in. He provided her with a very good gymnasium [high school] education later on.

Moisey Galyorkin had three other sons and a daughter: Nota, David [1880-1942], Samuil [1885-1942], Irma [1887-1955] and Gita [1891-1965]. David and Samuil perished during the siege of Leningrad. Samuil's son Sleima and David's son Zalman perished on the front in 1942. Zalman's wife Sonya, a teacher, evacuated pupils from school # 166 [14](#), where I studied, from Leningrad, but they found themselves on territory occupied by Germans. She perished together with her two small children in a mobile gas chamber. Irma Moiseyevich survived the blockade and took part in the defense of Leningrad.

Nota Moiseyevich was evacuated over the Urals together with his wife and daughters. Relatives of his wife, Emma Wulfovna Fridman – her brothers with their wives and children – were shot by the Germans in Shumilino in 1942. Nota's son Yakov was in the war and reached Berlin. He is a disabled war veteran. Together with his son Nota, Moisey was procuring cattle. Nota was my mother's fiancé for some time, until my father took her away to Petrograd in 1917. Gita Moiseyevna married her cousin German Breido, my father's brother.

My father Aron-David Chaimovich Breido was born in St. Petersburg in 1889. Soon after his birth the family moved to Polotsk. At a certain age he went to cheder, though he studied there for one and a half years only. When the family returned to St. Petersburg in 1897, he didn't study at official institutions. He began to work at an early age, as did his brothers. At first he worked as a 'boy' at the 'Bricklen & Robinson' confectionary. At the age of eleven he became an apprentice at his father's handicraft shop.

He mastered the high school course on his own, with the help of Grandfather, Great-grandfather and a large number of books, which he read and ordered later on. He was even allowed to indicate in formal papers that he obtained high school education, though he never took any exams anywhere. Father was a very capable person, he had an exceptional photographic memory, and if

he had studied, he could have achieved a lot. He was chosen by Grandfather from childhood to continue with the family business, though he didn't have a special chemical education, but he was a wonderful, self-taught person.

I don't know how Father came to 'Tolstoyism,' but since the age of 16 he was a member of that free philosophical society, he visited the great writer Lev Tolstoy [15](#) in Yasnaya Polyana and received one or two letters from him, which were destroyed later on, when the Tolstoyans were persecuted. Father became a vegetarian since that time: he never ate either fish or meat, or eggs. He was an Orthodox Jew, but he was interested not only in studying religion, but also in the issue of life and death, as well as in other philosophical issues, since his youth.

The theory of 'non-resistance to evil by force' by Lev Tolstoy was very congenial to him. There were people of various national groups among the Tolstoyans, including a lot of Jews. This theory didn't contradict the Jewish religion; its main thesis was the absence of violent pressure on a personality. In a way it agreed with the Jewish religious teaching.

When World War I broke out in 1914, the Tolstoyans arranged a Petrograd Municipal Medical-Nutrition Detachment, which set up nutrition stations for starving people and a mobile surgery hospital at the Western frontline. My father was a member of that detachment and worked as a corpsman at that hospital, which was situated in the village of Voleyka near the town of Molodechno in Belarus. Father was an employee of the Russian Red Cross Society, which was headed by Yekaterina Peshkova, the wife of the famous Soviet writer Maxim Gorky [16](#). Father knew her very well. Working at the hospital, he reflected a lot on the fate of the Jewish people and kept a diary, which I read as a grownup. Here are some excerpts from that diary:

"...The fascination and sorrow I feel for the Jewry are not comprehensible for Russians. I would love to have the freedom and faith in myself, which Brother Alexander has [Russian Orthodox Priest], but I will never give up my belonging to the Jewry, until there is this universal faith, love and freedom. I would give away my head, rather than agree to change the 'Jew' in my passport to 'Russian Orthodox,' the same for my children... I noticed how my sense of Jewish belonging effaces itself among those who are close to me in faith; and how I speak about the Jews with a shade of pride and dignity among those who humiliate them.

I will be a staunch Jew among those who persecute and oppress Jews in any way; but in an environment where there is no such persecution and where there is equality in the eyes of God, I will be equal... I feel that being a Jew, I am most of all bound to the sufferings of the Jews. I like this faith, ancient and clear of any idols; I continue to love it, to understand it, to place it as the foundation and to reveal more future in it than past; something the Jews nurtured in their heart and did not give away to the market of outside books, 100 times deeper and more than is known of them. Their covert teaching of Kabbalah is too early for our century..."

Father was recorded in the wagon train as a civilian as he had an army service delay for ten years based on bad eyesight – he had progressive myopia. He worked at the hospital between 15th December 1914 and the end of 1916. When gas was used on the frontline, 100 Tolstoyans signed the 'Appeal to Soldiers and Officers' about the necessity to put an end to that monstrous and senseless slaughter. The signers were arrested. Father was in bed sick with purulent pleurisy and wasn't arrested, but they didn't want to keep him on the frontline, as he was a Tolstoyan.

They ordered him to go to the Polotsk Military Affairs Management, where the issue about the extension of his release from military service was to be considered. But it was an excuse, not the reason. He was to go to Polotsk because he, as all Jews, was ascribed to the Jewish Pale of Settlement and was considered a petty bourgeois of the Polotsk District.

Notwithstanding all solicitations from the frontline, Father was sent away from the frontline in 1916, though combats took place and there was a lot of work at the hospital. He was transferred from Polotsk to Petrograd hospital for examination, after that to Vitebsk hospital for after-examination, and finally, he was taken away from the frontline. [Editor's note: The authorities suspected Jews of pro-German sentiments and removed them from the frontline and deported those who were living there.] Father got acquainted with my mother in Polotsk and in 1917 he took her with him to Petrograd, to his mother, who was her aunt.

My mother, Dina Abelevna Breido [nee Strunskaya] was born in Polotsk in 1898. She became an orphan at the age of three, was separated from her brother and sister and brought up by the family of Isaac Galyorkin, her uncle. She didn't get any education, but she was taught to read and write. She was also taught how to sew, cook and do household work. She was physically strong, she could ride a horse, work in the garden, climb trees and liked to give orders since childhood, as she had an independent nature. When my mother met my father, she was engaged to Nota Galyorkin, her other cousin, Moisey Galyorkin's son; but she left with Father gladly and, as she said, 'never regretted that for a single moment in her life,' in spite of my father's difficult fate.

My parents got married in 1918 in Leningrad. They had a traditional Jewish wedding and a lot of guests came. When they started to live together, Mother read a lot and Father selected books especially for her, in order to fill the gaps in her knowledge. They lived in a separate apartment, but always close to Grandfather Chaim and Grandmother Riva. Mother was always among her relatives, as there were many relatives working together with my father at the chemical workshop. Everybody sympathized with and pitied my mother, always took into consideration her wishes, because she had a hard childhood. She felt herself totally free by my father's side as he never interfered in any household issues. His business as a man was to procure firewood and the like, but all the other problems in the house were solved by my mother.

We had matriarchy in our family. No one disturbed Mother and no one 'pressed' her. Grandmother Riva was not only her mother-in-law, but also her aunt, her mother's sister. Grandfather Chaim never hurt a fly in his life. Father loved his parents very much. On his way from work he visited them first, and then went home. This made Mother mad, but she couldn't change the system. Father considered that Mother was younger and could survive any worries more easily than his old parents.

All in all, my parents lived in friendship. The most horrible swearword used in our family was the word 'fool'; it was impossible to hear any harsh or rude word from them. It wasn't possible either to swagger, to swank or to show off in our house, as my father despised it. Considering their material condition, they lived very modestly, though it was considered that the children had to be dressed decently and, what was most important, they had to get a good education.

There were three children in our family: Rakhil [Rosa, 1920-1995], Ada, and I, born in 1924. We also had a brother called Aba, who was born in 1927. My parents dreamed about a boy, a son. He was born a handsome and healthy baby, but he was infected with flu at the maternity ward. The flu

created complications in his lungs, since every member of our family had weak lungs. He began to suffer from asthma fits, had to breathe oxygen and died at the age of six months. It was a heavy blow for my parents. After that baby another daughter was born, my sister Ada [1929-1975].

Father was deprived of the universal suffrage for five years and exiled to Turukhtansky territory in Siberia. He was convicted based on Article 59 – ‘economic counter-revolution.’ At first he lived in the village of Vereschagino, later in Baklanikha and worked as an accountant in the ‘Soyuzpushnina’ Department [enterprise specialized in growing fur animals and procuring fur]. There was a big Jewish colony and a Tolstoyan commune in Siberia. Jewish Tolstoyans met my father with warm clothes when they found out that he was to arrive. Later, when he had to be examined by a commission which reconsidered his case, and he was kept at the transit prison in Krasnoyarsk, the Tolstoyans sent for my mother and she managed to see Father for a whole week, living at these Jews’ place.

The commission determined that it wasn’t worth it to deport my father, but they didn’t release him either. He was sent with the last ship to the North down the river Yenisey. Most likely the decision concerning the reviewing of my father’s case was connected with the persecution of the Tolstoyans, because my father’s brother Isaac Breido was also summoned for the review of his case. Though he was not a Tolstoyan, he had the same last name and patronymic name as my father; the other brothers and sisters took different patronymics: his brothers were ‘Yefimovich’ and his sister was ‘Lvovna.’ It was done simply because they wanted so, there was a complete mess with documents at that time and one could write down whatever one wanted.

When the arrests of Tolstoyans started in Leningrad and the Tolstoyan Makarov was ‘accidentally’ run over by a tram [he was pushed under the tram], his wife and daughter came to us and told my mother that we had to take out everything from my father’s belongings which related to the Tolstoyans. The collected works could be left, if no one could be discredited through them.

When Mother remarked that Father wouldn’t be sent farther, since he was already in Siberia, she was told, ‘Not only Aron will be murdered, but also you and your children will be exiled to Siberia, whole families are exiled.’ Mother destroyed pictures and 18 pages of my father’s diary, which he kept in 1916 when he worked as a corpsman at the hospital. But our home didn’t get searched.

When my father was arrested, Mother had to find a job, so we had a day nanny, a Russian called Manya. Those who needed registration [17](#) in Leningrad gladly went to work as nannies. Since a nanny couldn’t manage both Ada, and me I had to go to a kindergarten. Mother worked as an ice-cream vender and at the Club of Sovtorgsluzhaschikh [Soviet Commercial Workers]. When there was no nanny, she worked at home, sewed gloves on a sewing machine; she also knitted mittens, as we had a knitting machine at home.

To be able to send parcels to my father she sold various things and books, of which we had a lot. Mother couldn’t pay as much attention to my education as to that of my elder sister Rosa, who learned German, music, drawing; we had teachers who visited us at home, a whole group of children of the same age were present at the lessons. I didn’t have anything of the kind because our circumstances had changed.

Father was released in the summer of 1934. He left for Novgorod, where Grandfather lived, because it was easier to obtain rehabilitation there, which he did get in October 1934. But after

that 'Part II' started. After Kirov was killed in December 1934 [18](#), the authorities began to exile from Leningrad the families of those who were inconvenient for them.

Mother with us, children, was exiled to Novgorod at the beginning of 1935. We were called 'the family of the deprived'; we were unreliable. By that time my younger sister Ada was five years old and Rosa and I went to school, she was 14 years old and I was ten. Father reckoned that Rosa should stay in Leningrad. 'All the rest will be able to return using our room, i.e., one room in our old apartment', Father said.

Our parents thought that one of the reasons for our family's misfortunes was our apartment, which Father reconstructed from a college assembly hall together with an engineer named Anderson. It was done after I was born. Since I was very small and weak, doctors advised them to take me to the summerhouse immediately and to change our apartment with windows facing north for a different one, a lighter and more spacious one.

When Father was arrested in 1931, we had six rooms in Smolninsky district in the center of Leningrad: Father's office, a dining room, a children's room, a bedroom, a servants' room and a room where Mother's sister Braina lived. The Militia department, located across the street, claimed that apartment, but they didn't succeed. In 1935 our living space was a matter of interest to the house manager, that is, the administrator of the building. He came from Don and he needed rooms for his relatives.

By that time one of the rooms in our apartment was used by the family of Chernyavsky, children of my father's friends; another was occupied by the Tikhvin family; and the third room was used by Braina, so we had two rooms left. Father wanted to leave Rosa in one of the rooms. He called Venaver, Yekaterina Peshkova's assistant at the Political Red Cross [which organized revolutionaries' activities and was shut down in 1937] and together with the help of their organization they succeeded in obtaining a written permission of the Prosecutor's office for the children, that is, us, to stay. But only my elder sister Rosa stayed. Mother took little Ada with her and I was taken temporarily to Uncle Grisha's family, because I was sick.

I went to my school for a short time. Eleven children out of 41 remained in our class, all the rest belonged to families of exiled people; but our teacher gave references to all of us, stating that we finished the school year, though I think, she took an enormous risk. Rosa lived in Leningrad between the age of 14 and 19; she received help from our relatives and children from a Jewish school, who had earlier come for lunch at our place on Saturdays and Sundays. Father was right, not only did we return to Leningrad through this room, but also our relatives who had been exiled before us.

The Tolstoyans always helped each other. When Father was exiled to Novgorod, he got assistance from Molochnikov, the person closest to Tolstoy, who created the museum of the writer in Novgorod. Molochnikov provided Father with a place in his shed, where Father immediately started a chemical shop. When we came to Novgorod, Father worked at 'Vkuskhimprom' [gustatory chemical industry] enterprise. He also helped needy people.

For example, he fictitiously took on Tatiana and Natalia Gippius, sisters of Zinaida Gippius [whose mother was Russian and father, Gippius, was German, 1869-1945], one of the most important representatives of the 'Silver Age' period of Russian Literature. She was a poetess, a prose writer

and playwright and was married to the famous man of letters Merezhkovsky. They emigrated from Russia in the 1920s. The sisters certainly didn't do any hard work in the cooperative, but they were on the legal list, which saved them from starvation and persecution by the authorities.

My parents were very hospitable and provided meals and shelter for anyone who came to us. I remember Mother telling Father: 'You wear the same tolstovka and canvas shoes all the year round, and you give money to print cheap and free literature for people.' These books were printed by the 'Middleman' publishing house, which was headed by Molochnikov and Chertkov. We had a whole pile of books of that publishing house.

I remember Novgorod very well, especially the trip to my parents' place. For the first time I went by train alone, it took me six hours. I visited my grandparents in Novgorod before, but somebody always accompanied me. Aunt Emma, the wife of my father's brother Grigory Breido, gave me a big paper bag of candies for the trip, so on the way I felt like a real grownup and very independent. I studied very well at school in Novgorod, notwithstanding the fact that I fell ill very often. I was the class monitor and taught those who lagged behind.

My friends were of different nationalities, but none of us paid attention to it at that time. The population of the town was 120,000 people; half of them were exiled citizens, so no one avoided me based on that characteristic. I felt that I was a very valuable person.

At first we rented a room, later the cooperative gave my father an apartment in its building, since he was a foreman, the head of the shop and the first Stakhanovite [winner of a socialist competition at the work place] in town. It was a wooden two-story house, located on the bank of the Volkhov River. There were uninhabitable premises on the first floor and the second floor was occupied by the families of two heads of the shop. The apartment had a stove stoked with firewood, but there was a bathroom and a water supply system. I even had a little room near the kitchen, reconstructed from a small pantry, with an area of three square meters.

Father often went for a walk with me in Novgorod and showed the monuments to me. We visited the Tolstoy Museum and the churches. I remember very well that almost all churches were transformed into vegetable storages or stables at that time [20](#). Apparently the synagogue was also shut down, as both Father and Grandfather went to pray to someone's house, where the Jews gathered in a minyan. Father prayed a lot at home too.

My father was an Orthodox Jew. In Leningrad, when I was small, he took me to the synagogue on Staronevsky, near Bakunina Street, and to the Big Choral Synagogue. He said that one should know how to pray and know what our nation is asking from God. Father often attended the synagogue, and when some of our relatives died, he attended the synagogue throughout the whole [mourning] year. Mother kept the fast with him, celebrated all Jewish holidays, though I never saw her pray and she didn't attend the synagogue. Father began to pray even more when he returned from Siberia, after his contacts with the Jewish community there, which preserved all foundations and national traditions.

In Novgorod Father prayed in my room and I could hear everything he said. There was barely enough space between the table and the bed. He kept boxes there [tefillin], which he put on his forehead and his arm, and tallit but he didn't always wear it. I asked him once why he didn't pray like Grandfather. I said, 'Grandfather always uses the same words in his prayers, and you always

say different words. Why?’ Father replied, ‘I pray and thank God for the worthy and useful deeds, that I managed to perform during the day; for what He inspired me with; for His permission to help the others. I ask Him to forgive me for something that I could have done but didn’t want to do or wasn’t able to do. I pray about this every day, that is why the words in my prayers are different.’ His prayers were a peculiar verbal diary with the analysis of his thoughts and deeds.

He didn’t force me to be religious, he said that everybody should solve the issue on one’s own, one could only advise someone else and no one had the right to point the way to someone else. If I became a member of the pioneer organization [20](#), I shouldn’t do something that was not supposed to be done by pioneers. He thought that I would grow up and understand everything myself. However, he always very gladly and comprehensively answered my questions, regardless of the subject of the questions, whether I asked about religion or about life in general, for example the theory of ‘non-resistance to evil by violence.’ I even argued with him. He said, ‘It doesn’t mean that you shouldn’t resist evil. You should resist evil, but not by way of violence.’ I objected, ‘You tell me that evil doesn’t obey the rules of the good. So how can you prove that something is evil?’ Or I asked him, ‘Father, how can God see what an ant, an elephant, a fox or people of different nationalities are doing at this certain moment on Earth?’ And Father replied, ‘God knows who to watch at any given moment.’ What could I say against it?

Father was a very erudite person; he was called a ‘walking encyclopedia’ not without a reason. He read a lot and went to the Public Library very often. Those he communicated with were cultured people, but he could very easily and reasonably talk to them, as he had enough knowledge in the field of literature, history and the present time, let alone special chemical knowledge.

When he returned from Novgorod for a consultation with a famous professor of chemistry from the Technological Institute, the latter was amazed at the level of his knowledge and advised him to seriously consider scientific work in the field of chemistry, in spite of the fact that Father was 45 years old at that time. I respected my father very much. The level he set for himself in life was accessible only to him. But it was easy to be by his side and one wanted to resemble him.

All Jewish holidays were celebrated in our family, and everything was done according to the rules, both Grandfather and Father kept an eye on it. Father didn’t observe Sabbath; it wasn’t possible, as everybody worked. But he always said that ‘God needs not the form, but the content and the faith of a man.’ There was seder on Pesach, and the Haggadah, which told about the Exodus of Jews from the Egyptian slavery, was read. There were special Pesach utensils and traditional meals on the festive table. Everything was cleaned before the holiday; we never ate bread on Pesach but matzah instead. We didn’t go to get it at the synagogue; we made it at home.

On Rosh Hashanah we also had traditional meals and a big round challah on the table. Chanukkah was a holiday of joy and cheerful games. Every evening eight days in a row a candle was lit on the chanukkiyah; we heard the story of the rebellion of Jews against Greeks, we heard about the Temple, about its consecration and about the miracle with the oil pitcher. Children got sweets and money, the so-called Chanukkah gelt. I remember that everybody had their own piggy bank, where we put the coins we received as presents. When the piggy bank was opened, the money was used to buy presents for relatives.

Everybody had fun and played the fool on Purim. Mother made ‘Haman’s ears’ [hamantashen] – triangular cookies with poppy-seeds. The history of the holiday, the story of Esther, Mordechai and

Haman was of course told. So we knew the history of our nation since childhood, the Jewish history of 4,000 years. No one needed to be afraid of appearing worse than someone else; even if somebody said that you were a person of second rank. On the contrary, one could be proud of one's nation and its history.

All our relatives got together on holidays. My parents kept a very close relationship with their brothers and sisters, though Mother's brother Moishe-Zalman died at a very early age. After the death of his parents he was sent to learn the shoemaking craft in Petersburg, but his health deteriorated there and he died of consumption at the age of 17 in Polotsk.

Mother's sister Braina was also sick with tuberculosis, but it was benign. She finished the gymnasium, worked as an accountant and lived with us most of her life. At first my parents sent her money, because she couldn't find a job either in Polotsk or Vitebsk. Later they took her in. After the Revolution she worked in Smolny and belonged to the category of those who 'sympathized with the Revolution'. Braina was a sick woman, she had poliomyelitis and she limped. Later she also developed a mental disease but it was in a neurological boundary stage, so she was able to work. She worked either at home or at the workshop as a day instructor. She died at the age of 80.

My father's five brothers had a hard fate. Father's eldest brother, Samuil Yefimovich Breido, started to work at the age of 13 as an assistant at the chemical workshop. At the age of 21 he was enlisted into the Tsarist Army and served at first in St. Petersburg. Later he participated in the war with Japan [1904-1905], was demobilized and married Vera Rivkina from a wealthy Jewish family – her father owned a factory. In 1922 they returned to Petrograd. Their younger son Isaac was around two years old at that time. Samuil worked as a carpenter, as a tea agent, later at the chemical workshop with my father, dealing with supplies. Samuil was exiled to Samarkand [today Uzbekistan] in 1931 based on Article 59 [economic counter-revolution]. Since he wasn't considered chief at the workshop, he, unlike my father, was exiled without incapacitation, like the other Breido brothers. He returned in 1934 and died in 1944 in evacuation in Ufa. He educated all his four children.

Father's second brother, Grigory [Girsh] Yefimovich Breido, worked either as a lathe operator or as a metalworker apprentice at the 'Arsenal' plant. Later he acquired the highest class qualification in this profession. He was a social democrat [Mensheviks wing] [21](#), 'Arsenal' delegate to the Duma; held the position of Deputy Chairman of the Central Military-Industrial Committee in the Duma. He was great friends with Alliluyev, Stalin's wife's brother; they were neighbors. He accepted stocks of weapons together with the famous revolutionary Krasin. He was in prison more than once, before and after the Revolution. He married his cousin Emma Lvovna Galyorkina, Leib Galyorkin's daughter. They had three children: Victor, born in 1910, Ima, born in 1912, and Tsylya, born in 1914.

After the Revolution Grigory Breido became disappointed in the changes that took place and together with his friend Iosif Blumenfeld dropped out of the Party, left for his wife's motherland and worked at the glass plant in Novka. He survived miraculously the pogrom that happened at the plant, as he was in Petrograd on business together with his uncle Lipa, the plant manager. Grigory's wife and children were saved by the Russian nanny, who hid them at her relatives' place.

In 1931, when Grigory's parents and brothers were exiled from Leningrad, he was included by his revolutionary friend, who held an important position at that time, into the delegation that was to

visit the tractor plant [CTZ] in Chelyabinsk in the Urals. That helped him to avoid further persecution. He organized a mechanical workshop at the CTZ in Chelyabinsk. However, it didn't save him from the 1937 'repressions campaign' [the so-called Great Terror] [22](#), when he was arrested and exiled to the camps near Solikamsk as an 'enemy of the people' [23](#). It is not inconceivable that Stalin 'got him' for his friendship with Alliluyev, because no solicitation on the part of the old revolutionaries worked. He was jailed based on Article 58 [political counter-revolution] and he died in the camps in 1944 [24](#). In 1954 he was rehabilitated posthumously [25](#). His wife and children were not persecuted and stayed in Leningrad.

My father's third brother, German [Yeremey] Yefimovich Breido, had a weak health from birth: congenital heart [valvular] defect and bad eyesight [progressive myopia]. His parents considered that he wouldn't be able to work at the chemical workshop and sent him to Finland to be apprenticed to a tailor. However, on his return home he never worked as one, but assisted his brothers Aron and Samuil at the workshop. He never showed any interest in politics.

He married his cousin Gita Moiseyevna Galyorkina and had two sons: Mark [Morduchai], born in 1913 and Albert [Aba], born in 1918. In 1931 he was exiled to Voronezh without incapacitation and returned to Leningrad in 1934. During the war he was in evacuation in Ufa with his family. His children got university education. German proceeded with the business of his brother Aron, who had died. German Breido died in 1959, Gita Moiseyevna died in 1982 and they were buried at the Jewish cemetery.

My father's sister's name was Tsylya Lvovna Katznelson. Her husband Lev [Lyova] Israilevich came from a family of rabbis from the clan of David. He wasn't religious though. He finished college and was a pharmacist by occupation, but he worked in the advertisement business, he also advertised the household chemical goods produced by the Breido Brothers. Lev Katznelson participated in the construction of Belomorkanal [All-Union Communist Construction in Siberia], which was constructed by convicts. He was doing administrative work there. He also worked as an administrator at the workshop of the famous Leningrad prison Kresty.

My father didn't like many of Lyova's actions, but when Lyova dragged Grandfather's body on a piece of plywood to Preobrazhensky cemetery in the winter of 1944, Father said that God might forgive Lyova for his sins for such a deed. The Katznelson family lived together with my grandparents, Tsylya's parents, in one apartment. Tsylya had a sight disability, so she didn't study and worked at the cooperative of the blind. They stayed in besieged Leningrad during the war. They had three children: daughters Mira and Vera and son Israel. Tsylya died in 1961 of a heart attack and was buried at the Jewish cemetery.

Father's younger brother Isaac [Ichke] Chaimovich Breido was a member of the Bund [26](#) and later joined the anarchists. He worked at the chemical workshop of the Breido Brothers, but not together with my father. Isaac had a weak health, which is why he worked in tooth powder production. In 1931 he was exiled to a free settlement in the town of Shadrinsk in Archangelsk region, the severe weather conditions of which had a bad effect on his health. In 1933 all the Tolstoyans were jailed. Uncle Isaac had no connection with the Tolstoyans, but his patronymic was 'Chaimovich,' just like Father's. Maybe someone messed something up, but no one wanted to clear up the details, so Isaac was summoned to be transferred to Kresty prison for the review of his case. He didn't reach Leningrad but died in the transit prison. He left behind a son called Albert, who was born in 1927.

My father's brothers had different personalities. Grandfather Chaim, as well as my father, never forced his opinion on anyone; he considered that everyone had to make their own decisions concerning religion, occupation, participation in revolutionary activities and party membership. That is why Grandfather's sons differed from one another: my father was religious and belonged to the Tolstoyans; his brothers didn't distinguish themselves by being too religious; at the same time Grigory was a revolutionary and was declared an 'enemy of the people'; German was never interested in politics; Isaac was a member of the 'Bund' and later an anarchist. However, they all tried to provide an education for their children and lived in friendship with each other.

• Wartime years

The further destiny of our family developed in the following way. I returned to Leningrad from Novgorod together with my mother in 1939. Father came back a little earlier, in 1938, and began to work in Pushkin, which was called Detskoye Selo at that time. Iosif Blumenfeld arranged everything. There was this dormitory where it was possible to set up a chemical workshop, and this is what they did. Father quickly got registered in Leningrad and after that we could also come back. Father worked at the Leningrad Industrial Combine and combined this with other jobs, simultaneously working at other places, consulting and setting up business.

When the war broke out, he worked in Novaya Derevnnya and on Suvorovsky Prospekt. They produced cleaning products for wood and metal, skin ointment, waterproof hunters ointment, photoelectric cells, sealing wax, ink, stamp ink, all of it was required on the frontline. It was difficult to get raw materials in besieged Leningrad; Father knew cellars where the craftsmen kept useful materials, so workshops were set up closer to those material storages and thus it was possible to supply the frontline. Father was busy with this work during the blockade, when he was not in hospital with exacerbation of tuberculosis and was able to plod somewhere.

The work he did was hard even for a physically healthy man. A cauldron with mastic, shoe polish or skin ointment weighed no less than 80 kilograms. It was very difficult to stir this thick hot paste, having practically just one lung. Besides, it was harmful to compose chemical compounds and dyes. Twice he was brought on a sleigh from Novaya Derevnnya through the whole city, because he collapsed right in the street.

I remember my last conversation with Grandfather Chaim, when we spoke about my father. It happened in 1942; Grandfather sat close to the so-called 'burzhuika,' the small stove, and was warming his hands. He said, 'People can be divided into three categories: in the first are those for whom what is mine is mine, but what is yours is also mine; in the second category are those for whom what is mine is mine and what is yours is yours; and finally, most generous and reliable are those for whom what is yours is yours and what is mine is also yours. Your father belongs to this last category.'

Our relatives sent letters to us, persuading us to evacuate, but we couldn't do that, because at the end of 1941 a misfortune happened to my elder sister Rosa. She finished school in 1938 and entered the Medical Institute, and was transferred to the fourth year of studies before the war. When the war broke out, she started to work as an anesthetist at a children's hospital and at the same time she continued her studies at the Institute. In October 1941 a little girl was dying of diphtheria at the hospital and Rosa began to make artificial ventilation for her 'mouth to mouth'

and sucked out the diphtheria coat.

I don't know what happened to that girl afterwards, but Rosa fell sick with a serious type of diphtheria. She was put in the infectious diseases hospital and the doctors struggled for her life for one and a half months. She was given injections of anti-diphtheria serum four times, but the amount destroyed part of her brain. She was discharged from the hospital with a diagnosis of 'organic brain damage' and she remained handicapped till the end of her life.

At first she worked at home and at the chemical workshop, finished courses of nurses/dietitians [nutritionist specialist] in 1943-1944 and worked in a hospital in the regular preventive and medical attendance service, but after a severe fit she got into the hospital and never worked after that. Later on she was placed into a psychiatric hospital time and again for 13 times.

I finished nine grades of high school before the war and on 26th June 1941 I entered a six-month nurses' course. We studied theory one day, and on the next day were on duty in the hospital. However, in two and a half months the courses were shut down, since all young men were taken away to the frontline. Besides being on duty at the Central Garrison Hospital, I also worked as a nurse/registering clerk at the health post in 'Krasny Shveinik' factory and 'Krasny Pechatnik' printing-house in Moscow district. Every other 24 hours I was able to spend a night at home.

In January 1942 I was to accompany the wounded across Lake Ladoga [27](#), but I fell ill with double pneumonia and recovered only in May. I was sent to an anti-epidemiological detachment, as I wasn't fit for military service. The task of the detachment was to collect children who were left without parents, take away the dead bodies of citizens from apartments, attics, laundries, staircases and streets, and to deliver those who had fever to hospitals. We were given two weeks to accomplish the task.

I managed to see the real 'face' of the war and the siege during that period and it was dreadful. We delivered the children to a children's home on Zayachiy Island. Dead bodies were taken to the crematorium. The number of children and dead bodies collected was secret information. We were able to find out about it only 40 years later; but at that time everybody reported on his own job only to his own manager.

The next task was Lagoda, where we deployed a tent hospital in order to arrange a barrier for infection. I was on duty in the hospital and studied at the surgeon nurses' courses. In October 1942 all staff from the aerostatic regiments was sent to the frontline under the order of Zhukov [28](#). We hung sandbags when the aerostat descended and took them off when it had to ascend. However, in November 1943 I found myself in the hospital again because of a heart disease. When I was discharged I walked with difficulty and worked at a different detachment. Besides my work at the accounting service I also worked as a clerk and phone operator until January 1944.

After the siege was lifted I was transferred as a phone operator to the antiaircraft-artillery regiment headquarters. I was a Komsomol organizer [29](#), which is not an elected post, but an appointed one in the army. We guarded the Levashovsky airdrome. At the end of 1944 I got into hospital again with a tuberculosis exacerbation and was demobilized afterwards. The doctors told my mother that I wouldn't survive until spring 1945, but they were wrong, I appeared to be 'enduring.'

My younger sister Ada was twelve years old when the war broke out. She fell ill right after Rosa [with severe typhus], recovered, but felt bad for some time and was very weak. Both Rosa and me stayed sick at home. Ada had to go to the market every day and carry water together with Father, since the pipes burst during the first winter. So many deaths were around... such burden appeared to be above her strength. She couldn't cope with it and tried to commit suicide. She was saved, but Mother took her to work at the workshop, so as to keep an eye on her all the time.

Our family survived the blockade with difficulty. In 1942 Grandfather Chaim died of dystrophy, Father was more dead than alive: he was very sick, he had only one lung left, lost 36 kilograms and looked like a real skeleton, but he lived to see the lifting of the siege and even up to August 1944. When he died, he was buried according to the Jewish rite. Men said prayers at the synagogue, where women weren't allowed in, and did everything properly. He was buried at the Jewish cemetery. One Belarusian said the following words at his coffin, which I still remember, 'One can live a life in various ways. Life is a book. A book may be thick, but when you read it, nothing remains in your memory. And it may be a thin paperback book, but you will remember each page and each line all your life. Such was Aron's life.' This was my father.

The terrifying blockade time remained in the memory of everyone who survived it. I had horrible nightmares for a long time. I remember how I went home from work, turned to 6th Sovetskaya Street, and saw that the building, in which my classmate Igor Raisky lived, was gone. The place where it had been located was cordoned off as a spot of a direct bomb hit. I knew that my classmates, who were accepted to the sea cadets' school, were to have a celebration of the event there at that time. They were all killed. There was a lot of crushed glass around and it was one block away from my house. I came home with gray temples.

Memory keeps various things. I remember: There was a three-day line for bread. People didn't leave their place in the line, they only replaced each other. There was an interruption in production at the bread-baking plant because of the lack of water. A truck loaded with piled-up dead bodies from the Sverdlov hospital morgue went by. A dead body of a naked girl with long loose golden hair stood at the side of the truck, reminiscent of the Summer Garden statues. Everybody standing in line was deeply shocked. Once I was walking home, counting the corpses I saw, which were carried either on a piece of plywood or on a sleigh. I counted 19. Why was I walking and counting? Now I can't explain that 'blockade state' to myself.

Before the attack on Vyborg 'Katyushas' were zeroed in, some military men were finding targets, measuring the distance to it for the future combat. A group of mortar men, aged 40-45, stood near the headquarters dugout where I worked as a clerk. They were talking and preparing for the combat. Suddenly there was a casual volley and then nothing was left, only a piece of scorched ground. I still can't calmly listen to famous poet Mezhirov's poems: 'Artillery hits its own people: undershoot, overshoot, undershoot.'

After the combat two tanks pulled over at the dugout. I remember the remains of ground intestines on the tracks. The tankers went to get water and with buckets of water washed off what was recently their own and foreign soldiers. They were doing it busily, calmly, but how to live with that later on? There were a lot of deaths around and the feeling of fear was always there. However, the shelling and bombing didn't cause external panic, they merely killed the nerves. Not only the living conditions on the frontline of the city-front, but also continuous internal feeling of danger turned

us, yesterday's schoolchildren, into grownups.

There was a notice on the door of our apartment: 'We exchange everything for food.' Prices for various goods at that time were as follows: wedding ring – 2 kilograms of bran; Grandfather's clock – we asked for 2 kilograms of millet, but were given 1.5. One kilogram of bread cost 500 rubles and a junior grades' teacher's salary was 475 rubles. A soldier's pension for the second category of disability was 42 rubles. There were people who came to look at the stuff, then told us that they didn't like anything and took something with them – they just stole it. But there were also those, who were ready to help at any time. The siege showed us who is who.

Once a person came to us to buy the Schroeder concert piano. He offered us to evaluate the instrument and promised to bring us rice, millet and other food products one to two times per month for this price. He promised to pick up the piano after he paid the entire amount. He visited us for a year regularly, paid the total amount, but never picked up the piano. We were at a loss.

Everything cleared up later: when that man visited us again, he asked us to sell the piano to somebody else, and give him half of the money, because his son had got into a car accident, he was a driver for an air crew commander. That commander perished in the accident. The son was under trial and they needed money for an attorney. It appeared that the man had German relatives, but he hid it, in order not to do any harm to anyone, because the country was at war with the Germans and he felt partly guilty for his nation.

When his son was on the front this man swore to help some family to survive the siege. And he did save us by bringing us food during a whole year. His son returned from the front and now we had to save him. Mother tried to give him the total amount, which we got from the sale of the piano, but he took only half of it and said that if it hadn't been for his son's accident, he would have never come to see us again.

In summer 1944 my fatally ill father decided to summarize all household chemical compound formulas, which he created during his whole life, in one copy-book. He created them using the experience of various countries, nations, our expert chemists, combining those, which were already known and inventing substitutes for the materials which weren't available.

More than 300 products were manufactured by him or with his help in Leningrad under the most difficult conditions of the blockade. But he was able to write down only 30 formulas including detailed production technology, using short intervals between the hospitals.

Absolute blindness, high temperature and, finally, total immobility didn't allow him to accomplish this task. He preserved a clear consciousness and started to dictate the formulas to his daughter Ada. She wrote them down into small notebooks, seven by five centimeters. Thus she wrote down around 50 formulas. Father left these formulas to my mother, so that after his death she would continue the family business with our other relatives. Father continued to take care of the people around him till his last breath.

If I talk about all our relatives, the following picture appears. Out of those 57 members of the Breido-Galyorkin family, whom I knew, 30 were on the front, and two were civilians, not based on the draft but volunteers. 21 perished. Ten perished on the front, three in the mobile gas chamber, four in besieged Leningrad and three in evacuation after they were transported from Leningrad,

being sick. Nine became disabled on the front. All those, who came back from the front, have been awarded.

30 were awarded medals 'For the Defense of Leningrad.' These figures prove the absurdity of some people's statements, pronounced sometimes even from the high tribune, about Jews who weren't in the war but stayed deep in the hinterland. Our small people displayed real courage and heroism in this war.

My mother loaded herself with a huge burden during the blockade. She worked and took care of all the sick people. She could divide a small piece of bread into three parts, without touching Father's portion; since everybody was sick, she sold everything she could and exchanged it for bread. Soya-based milk was distributed at the chemical workshop; it could also be exchanged for bread. Mother wasn't able to save my physically weak father, however, if it hadn't been for her, we, her children, would have died too. We all worked to the best of our abilities in this time, which was difficult for both the country and the city. We were all awarded medals 'For the Defense of Leningrad.'

• After the war

After the war Ada and I continued our studies. She went to school and I signed up for elementary school teachers' courses following my regiment commander Pyotr Alexeyev's advice. He told me that I should be a teacher, since I could 'listen and hear,' but the medical commission wouldn't have allowed me to enter the full-time department at the Pedagogical College because of my tuberculosis, but there was no such restriction at the courses. At the end of our studies we were automatically transferred to the Pedagogical College, and after graduation I entered the part-time department at Leningrad Pedagogical Institute, the Faculty of Literature. At the same time I worked at a school in junior grades.

After graduating from the Institute in 1952 I continued to work at the same school in senior grades, teaching Russian language and literature. It was the biggest girls' school in the city: 2,000 girls. I worked there for 19 years. When our Head of District Education became headmaster of a prestigious school where English was studied seriously, he offered me a position in that school.

However, by that time we had already moved into a separate apartment in a different district of the city and it was difficult for me to go to work so far, so I decided to look for a job in a school nearby. He said, 'They won't take you', knowing that I was a Jewess. And he turned out to be right. I was accepted and on the next day I heard, 'We are sorry, but this position is taken already.' It happened because I was Jewish, so I went to work in the school he invited me to and I worked there until 1983. I still keep in touch with my former pupils.

My sister Ada had a tragic fate. At first everything went rather well for her. She had a real gift for languages, mathematics, biology and other sciences. She finished school with a golden medal [i.e. with distinction] and entered the Faculty of Biology of Leningrad State University in 1948. There were a lot of candidates and only few were accepted. It was very difficult to enter, especially for Jews, as anti-Semitism could be felt and Jews weren't popular at the University [30](#).

Almost every student was a medal winner. Starting from the first year she began to simultaneously study at the Medical Institute in order to properly master anatomy and physiology. She graduated from university as a physiologist in 1953. It was at the height of anti-Semitism, but she was a very

gifted person and proved herself at the sub-faculty with her works and was accepted to the post-graduate department.

As a student she married her university mate. Oleg Grigoryevich Kusakin was Russian. In 1953 their daughter Yevgeniya was born. Ada had bad kidneys, the birth was premature and very hard, the baby was taken out with the help of forceps and this process lasted for two hours. It is now known that after 45 minutes of brain being 'starved' of oxygen during the delivery irreversible effect occurs, which leads to severe mental diseases.

It wasn't known at that time. When it was found out that the baby had organic brain damage, Oleg insisted that she was given away to a special institution, but my mother and Ada didn't agree. When Zhenya was six years old, Oleg deserted his family. Certainly it was a heavy blow for Ada. Oleg left for Vladivostok.

After defending her Ph.D. thesis in 1957, Ada began to work as a biochemist at the Institute of Cytology. In 1975, a day before defending her thesis for a Doctor's degree, she committed suicide. There was preliminary defense, academicians and friends arrived. No one expected it. Of course she was very excited and chain-smoked, which didn't happen before, but there were a lot of reasons for that: a hopelessly handicapped child; a mentally diseased sister; an unhappy private life; worries connected with the trial over a good friend of hers, a famous Soviet human rights-defender, Sergey Adamovich Kovalyov; natural agitation before the defense of the thesis. And she couldn't stand all this strain. They had six people in their department with medical education, who had a very good attitude toward her, but no one noticed that she was in an absolutely abnormal, psyched-out state. They apologized later to my mother and me.

After Ada's death, my mother fell seriously ill. She died of cancer in 1983. Two handicapped people were left with me, Rosa and Zhenya, who couldn't be left alone and without supervision. I had to quit my job and retire. Rosa died in 1995, Zhenya died in 1996. When they died I felt void and without any incentive to live.

• Recent years

I was never married, but it wasn't a sacrifice to my sick relatives. A close friend of mine was murdered on 5th May 1945 in Berlin. We agreed to meet on the first Saturday after the war in Leningrad at the corner of 5th Sovetskaya Street and Grechesky, but the encounter didn't happen... many girls of my generation didn't get married as their real and potential fiancés perished in the war.

Besides, I had a personal reason. I suffered from hereditary diseases. The type of tuberculosis that I inherited from my father [which he inherited from his mother] wasn't hazardous and contagious for people around me, but my children would have most probably inherited it. My friend Yakov knew it and he wasn't afraid of it, but I couldn't take this risk with anyone else.

At present I live alone and stay in almost all the time. I get a pretty decent pension [more than 3,000 rubles = \$100. Average pension in Russia is no more than 40 USD], as a teacher with 37-year experience, war and blockade veteran, so this money is enough for me to live on. An employee from Sobes [social security agency] visits me, purchases food for me with my money. 'Hesed Avraham' [31](#) offered assistance to me, but I refused, since I think that there are a lot of

Jews in ward of Hesed, who need help much more than I do.

Events that take place now in Israel certainly upset me. I watch the news on TV, listen to the radio and worry for the citizens of Israel, because real war is happening there and I know very well what it means. Besides, my relatives, my former pupils and Jews just like me, live there. I grieve about them; it isn't a foreign country for me. But what is most important, there seems to be no way out of the existing situation. And it is now possible to see 'Death to Jews' posters in the streets [in Russia], which really brings sad thoughts.

Despite the Orthodoxy of my father and grandfather, neither me, nor my sisters grew up in a religious way. Of course the Soviet ideology, Soviet school and institute affected us. We grew up as atheists. Father died early and Mother wasn't religious. She tried to celebrate Jewish holidays after the war, lit the Chanukkah candles, cooked traditional Jewish meals as far as possible, but there was no one to say prayers and keep an eye on the observance of the ceremonies.

We lived in a communal apartment [32](#) at that time together with Russians, but it wasn't them, but the Jewish neighbors who made rows. The most quarrelsome was a Ukrainian Jewish woman from Kiev, who yelled every time that Mother lit the candles with what she claimed were her matches, which was certainly not true. There was another Jewish family that was also very unpleasant, especially the wife, who informed against her friend during the hard years of the Stalinist repressions. [For Soviet people the word 'repression' carries a heavy political connotation and is associated with Stalin in the first place.] But there was also another Jewish family, who were very nice and cultured people.

So it's not the nationality, but the person her or himself that is important. After the war anti-Semitism reappeared, but those who preached it were people of low culture, regardless of their position. Really cultured Russian people, whom I met during my life, were never anti-Semitic. In my opinion the cultural level of those hooligans, who nowadays place anti-Semitic posters in Moscow, is at its lowest.

- **Glossary:**

[1](#) 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.

[2](#) First Guild Merchant

In 1824 a First Guild Merchant [there were also merchants of Second and Third Guild] was

supposed to pay 2,200 rubles for a Guild Certificate and between 75 and 100 rubles for a special 'store ticket.' He was allowed to be engaged in 'domestic and foreign wholesale trade with various Russian and foreign goods and commodities in any place,' he was permitted to 'own ships and other vessels, stores, factories and plants – except for distilleries.' He was also allowed to 'transfer funds to Russian and foreign cities, to discount bills and other banking business in general.' Merchants of lower Guilds had fewer opportunities.

3 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.

4 Kulaks

In the Soviet Union the majority of wealthy peasants that refused to join collective farms and give their grain and property to Soviet power were called kulaks, declared enemies of the people and exterminated in the 1930s.

5 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.

6 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.

7 Card system

The food card system regulating the distribution of food and industrial products was introduced in the USSR in 1929 due to extreme deficit of consumer goods and food. The system was cancelled in

1931. In 1941, food cards were reintroduced to keep records, distribute and regulate food supplies to the population. The card system covered main food products such as bread, meat, oil, sugar, salt, cereals, etc. The rations varied depending on which social group one belonged to, and what kind of work one did.

Workers in the heavy industry and defense enterprises received a daily ration of 800 g (miners - 1 kg) of bread per person; workers in other industries 600 g. Non-manual workers received 400 or 500 g based on the significance of their enterprise, and children 400 g. However, the card system only covered industrial workers and residents of towns while villagers never had any provisions of this kind. The card system was cancelled in 1947.

8 Plekhanov, Georgy (1856-1918)

Russian revolutionary and social philosopher. He was a leader in introducing Marxist theory to Russia and is often called the 'Father of Russian Marxism'. He left Russia in 1880 as a political refugee and spent most of his exile in Geneva, Switzerland. Plekhanov took the view that conditions in Russia would not be ripe for socialism until capitalism and industrialization had progressed sufficiently. This opinion was the basis of Menshevik thought after the split in 1903 of the Social Democratic Labor Party into the Bolshevik and Menshevik factions. After the outbreak of the Revolution of 1917, he returned from exile. Following the triumph of Lenin he retired from public life.

9 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.

10 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.

11 Greens

Members of the gang headed by Ataman Zeleniy (his nickname means 'green' in Russian).

12 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.

13 Makhno, Nestor (1888-1934)

Ukrainian anarchist and leader of an insurrectionist army of peasants which fought Ukrainian nationalists, the Whites, and the Bolsheviks during the Civil War. His troops, which numbered 500 to 35 thousand members, marched under the slogans of 'state without power' and 'free soviets'. The Red Army put an end to the Makhnovist movement in the Ukraine in 1919 and Makhno emigrated in 1921.

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 Tolstoy, Lev Nikolayevich (1828-1910)

Russian novelist and moral philosopher, who holds an important place in his country's cultural history as an ethical philosopher and religious reformer. Tolstoy, alongside Dostoyevsky, made the realistic novel a literary genre, ranking in importance with classical Greek tragedy and Elizabethan drama. He is best known for his novels, including War and Peace, Anna Karenina and The Death of Ivan Ilyich, but also wrote short stories and essays and plays.

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

16 Gorky, Maxim (born Alexei Peshkov) (1868-1936)

Russian writer, publicist and revolutionary.

17 Residence permit

The Soviet authorities restricted freedom of travel within the USSR through the residence permit and kept everybody's whereabouts under control. Every individual in the USSR needed residential registration; this was a stamp in the passport giving the permanent address of the individual. It was impossible to find a job, or even to travel within the country, without such a stamp. In order to register at somebody else's apartment one had to be a close relative and if each resident of the apartment had at least 8 square meters to themselves.

18 Kirov, Sergey (born Kostrikov) (1886-1934)

Soviet communist. He joined the Russian Social Democratic Party in 1904. During the Revolution of 1905 he was arrested; after his release he joined the Bolsheviks and was arrested several more times for revolutionary activity. He occupied high positions in the hierarchy of the Communist Party. He was a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, as well as of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee. He was a loyal supporter of Stalin. In 1934 Kirov's popularity had increased and Stalin showed signs of mistrust. In December of that year Kirov was assassinated by a younger party member. It is believed that Stalin ordered the murder, but it has never been proven.

19 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.

20 All-Union pioneer organization

A communist organization for teenagers between 10 and 15 years old (cf: boy-/girlscouts in the US). The organization aimed at educating the young generation in accordance with the communist ideals, preparing pioneers to become members of the Komsomol and later the Communist Party. In the Soviet Union, all teenagers were pioneers.

21 Mensheviks

Political trend in the Russian Social Democratic Party. The Menshevik Party was founded at the 2nd Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Party in 1903, when the Party split into the Party of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. The latter were in the minority when the issue of election to the party leadership was discussed. Mensheviks were against giving full authority to the Central Committee of Bolsheviks, although they admitted the inevitability of a socialist revolution and dictatorship of the proletariat. The Mensheviks did not acknowledge the October Revolution. They believed Russia was not mature enough for socialism. In 1924 the Mensheviks ceased to exist.

22 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.

23 Enemy of the people

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

24 Gulag

The Soviet system of forced labor camps in the remote regions of Siberia and the Far North, which was first established in 1919. However, it was not until the early 1930s that there was a significant number of inmates in the camps.

By 1934 the Gulag, or the Main Directorate for Corrective Labor Camps, then under the Cheka's successor organization the NKVD, had several million inmates. The prisoners included murderers, thieves, and other common criminals, along with political and religious dissenters. The Gulag camps made significant contributions to the Soviet economy during the rule of Stalin.

Conditions in the camps were extremely harsh. After Stalin died in 1953, the population of the camps was reduced significantly, and conditions for the inmates improved somewhat.

25 Rehabilitation in the Soviet Union

Many people who had been arrested, disappeared or killed during the Stalinist era were rehabilitated after the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956, where Khrushchev publicly debunked the cult of Stalin and lifted the veil of secrecy from what had happened in the USSR during Stalin's leadership. It was only after the official rehabilitation that people learnt for the first time what had happened to their relatives as information on arrested people had not been disclosed before.

26 Bund

The short name of the General Jewish Union of Working People in Lithuania, Poland and Russia, Bund means Union in Yiddish. The Bund was a social democratic organization representing Jewish craftsmen from the Western areas of the Russian Empire. It was founded in Vilnius in 1897. In 1906 it joined the autonomous fraction of the Russian Social Democratic Working Party and took up a Menshevist position. After the Revolution of 1917 the organization split: one part was anti-Soviet power, while the other remained in the Bolsheviks' Russian Communist Party. In 1921 the Bund dissolved itself in the USSR, but continued to exist in other countries.

27 Road of Life

It was a passage across Lake Ladoga in winter during the Blockade of Leningrad. It was due to the Road of Life that Leningrad survived in the terrible winter of 1941-42.

28 Zhukov, Georgy (1896-1974)

Soviet Commander, Marshal of the Soviet Union, Hero of the Soviet Union. Georgy Zhukov was the most important Soviet military commander during World War II.

29 Komsomol

Communist youth political organization created in 1918. The task of the Komsomol was to spread 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.

30 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.'

31 Hesed

Meaning care and mercy in Hebrew, Hesed stands for the charity organization founded by Amos Avgar in the early 20th century. Supported by Claims Conference and Joint, Hesed helps for Jews in need to have a decent life despite hard economic conditions and encourages development of their self-identity.

Hesed provides a number of services aimed at supporting the needs of all, and particularly elderly members of the society. The major social services include: work in the center facilities (information, advertisement of the center activities, foreign ties and free lease of medical equipment); services at homes (care and help at home, food products delivery, delivery of hot meals, minor repairs); work in the community (clubs, meals together, day-time polyclinic, medical and legal consultations); service for volunteers (training programs).

The Hesed centers have inspired a real revolution in the Jewish life in the FSU countries. People have seen and sensed the rebirth of the Jewish traditions of humanism. Currently over eighty Hesed centers exist in the FSU countries. Their activities cover the Jewish population of over eight hundred settlements.

32 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.