

# Alexander Tsvey

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Russia

Moscow

Interviewer: Svetlana Bogdanova

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*Alexander Tsvey is a tall and slender, good-looking man with vivacious young eyes. He lives by himself in a 2-room apartment of a five-storied house, built in early 1970s on the outskirts of Moscow. The way the apartment looks, I can say that the lady's presence is not felt here. There are a lot of books- a good collection of verses and military memoirs. There are a lot of pictures on the walls, namely of his mother, children, grandchildren and his deceased wife.*

[My family background](#)

[Growing up](#)

[During the war](#)

[After the war](#)

[Glossary](#)

## **My family background**

My paternal great grandfather Moses Tsvey lived in the town Sebezh, Pskov oblast not far from Latvian border [about 500 km to the west from Moscow]. I do not know when and where he was born. Moses was a jeweler, making bronze and copper ware. He also worked as a watch mender. He was an educated and well-read man, which was a rarity among Jewish craftsmen. Moses was a peculiar man. He was a vegetarian, which was not common with Jews. His family did not stick to vegetarianism and great grandfather let everybody choose their own way. Besides, great grandfather was a free thinker criticizing certain dogmas of Judaic religion. He did not recognize some of the rites. I do not know what exactly he disapproved of, but I know that he did not cover his head and smoked on Sabbath to boot. They wanted to excommunicate him from the synagogue for that. Back in that time it was a rigid punishment. They took into account his literacy and his large family and he was not excommunicated, fortunately. Great grandfather remained living the way he was used to.

I was interested in the origin of the last name Tsvey [the similarly pronounced 'zwei' means 'two' in Yiddish]. I asked grandfather about it. Then, I had an idea that it was a distorted version of the ancient Jewish name Tsvi. Name or a surname Tsvi is widely spread in Israel. I think the clerk misheard the name and put Tsvey instead of Tsvi.

My paternal grandfather Moishe Tsvey and grandmother Basya-Riva Tsvey (nee Mostova) lived in the town of Volyntsy [800 km to the west from Moscow] Gomel oblast, Belorussia. My paternal great grandfather Berl Mostov also lived in the town Volyntsy. I do not know when and where he

was born. He was an elderly tall man. He was well respected in the town. My father took after him, and I after my father, but my mother and all her kin were of short height. Great grandfather Berl was a merchant. The Mostovs family was one of the three richest families in the town. Great grandfather Berl died in 1919. I do not know how many children were there in the Mostovs family. My grandmother Basya-Riva was born in 1883.

Grandmother was a stately and beautiful woman. My grandfather fell in love with her and wooed her. There is a family legend - grandmother told grandpa: «Prove that you love me!» and he took off valenki [warm Russian felt boots] in wintertime and had been running around on the snow until grandmother agreed to marry him. Of course, grandmother was the boss in the family.

My father was the first-born. Grandmother gave birth to him in 1902. I know only his Russian name [Common name] [1](#) Yuri. He must have had a Jewish name, but I did not know it. Mother had escaped to talk about father. He was a grey-eyed, tall and good-looking man. He played mandolin very well. The Tsvey family was musical on the whole. Unfortunately there is little I know my father's siblings. Now the family is gone, and there is nobody I can ask questions. I remember father's brothers Abram, Israel, Solomon, Efim and sister Sofia.

The family Tsvey was well-off. They dealt with leather - beginning from the tannery, making leatherwear and selling it. Grandfather had his own store. Children also were involved in work. They bought skin of the animals and tanned it. Being the eldest my father did most of the work. He tanned the skin manually by using hazardous chemical agents, staying by the tub with the solution for tanning. He must have undermined his health during work and was afflicted with tuberculosis, which caused his death, also during his work. After revolution as of 1917 [Russian Revolution of 1917] [2](#) authorities took production from grandfather and the family was bereft of the source of income.

My father's siblings were married and had children. Unfortunately, I do not remember anybody but the youngest brother, Solomon. I was bonded with him. Uncle had been taking care of me all his life. Solomon was born in 1912. He used to say that he had chosen his profession because of me. He was present during my mother's parturition. It was dark and Solomon held a candle while mother was giving birth. Parturition was hard and Solomon decided to become an obstetrician to help suffering women. He became a brilliant gynecologist. He devoted his life to work and remained single. The person who helped to bring hundreds of babies in the world, did not have his own children. Solomon died in Saint-Petersburg in 2000. The only thing I can say about other father's brothers is that Abram was drafted in the army and was killed in action during the first days of World War II [Great Patriotic War] [3](#).

My mother's family lived in a Jewish town Drissa [now Verkhnedvinsk, Belarus, about 220 km from Minsk]. Mother's father Israel Perlov was the most revered man in the Jewish community of the town. I do not know what he did for a living. I did not know my maternal grandmother, not even her first name. Her maiden name was Novik. Grandparents had four children. Haim was the eldest (in Russian Efim), born in 1900. In 1902 my mother Tsilya Perlova was born. Her Russian name was Sima. After my mother two sons were born: in 1904 Fayvel or Fyodor in Russian and 1907 the youngest Joseph was born, in his family called Russian name Iosif. Grandmother died when she was giving birth to Joseph. Of course, it was hard for the widowed grandfather to take care of four small children. When the mourning period was over, he was married to the widow with a child. In 1916

their common child, Mikhail, was born. In 1918 grandfather died. Mother remained a full orphan at the age of 16. She did not even manage to finish secondary school.

Grandfather's brother Moses Perlov also lived in the town with his wife Dobe-Liba (Dora) and their children – mother's cousins Efim, Abram, Solomon and Simon. Almost all of them perished in the front in 1940s and after World War II we did not keep in touch with their family. I only knew one of grandmother's brothers out of all Novik's kin. I do not remember his name. Mother kept in touch with his children all life long. The Noviks lived in Moscow, on Arbat [street, from the second half of the 18th century it became Moscow's most aristocratic and literary neighborhood and home to the city's intelligentsia]. It was the most intelligent branch of the family. One Novik became the rector of the institute and the other deputy of the regional prosecutor,.

I do not know how my parents met. It was a love wedlock. They had a traditional Jewish wedding. After wedding mother moved to father's house. They lived with his parents. Grandmother used to boss around in the family and had quite a difficult authoritarian character. Mother-in-law was hard on my mom and blamed her in everything. Mother was an orphan and her brothers were far away and there was nobody to stand up for her. Besides, nobody told my mother about father's disease- open form of tuberculosis. Father's kin was aware of it and they found it unnecessary to inform mother of it.

## Growing up

I was born in 1925 in the town Volyntsy. I was named Israel after my deceased maternal great grandfather. I do not know what was the reason of the tiff between my parents. All I know is that they separated in 1927.

Mother's elder brother Efim finished vocational school and acquired a profession of an accountant in his native town. Then he left for Moscow. He must have insisted that mother also moved with him to Moscow. Efim did not have his place at that time, so he rented a room in house where common people lived. They were really indigent. We had a passage room. An artist named Zhukovskaya lived in the next room. Every morning she passed through our room and walked to the toilet to pour out her night pot. There was hardly any furniture in our room- 2 chairs, a table, mother's bed and my cot. We had nothing to live on, so mother found a job at sugar mill as a packager. I did not have a baby-sitter, so I went to work with mother. I was in the workshop observing the assembly line with sugar bales. In spite of the fact that mother was lonely and worked hard, she remained brisk and cheerful. Her life was extremely difficult, but I never remember her being despondent. In general, all Perlovs, including my mother were very energetic and vivacious.

Efim was involved in commerce in Moscow and was promoted rather swiftly. He was assigned deputy chairman of the all-union procurement organization Tsentrosoyuz, which bought out and sold production manufactured by different small-scale companies. Efim had a personal car, which was rare back in that time. He was assigned to the same post after World War II as well. Efim was married. His wife's name was Roza. They had two children - daughter Lina and son Mikhail. When Uncle Efim became a dignitary, he was literally made to join the party. He also talked his younger brothers Fyodor and Joseph into moving to Moscow. Efim took good care of them as they were poor orphans. Brother welcomed soviet regime and became its active sticklers. Joseph was an active Komsomol [4](#) member. He married a Jewish girl Sara, also Komsomol member. Joseph was a

passionate orator, devoted to the ideas of the party and revolution. He was a political go-getter. In 1934 he became the secretary of the party committee of one of the largest plants in Moscow (I do not remember which one). Then he was assigned the secretary of the regional party committee and then later on the secretary of Kursk [about 450 km to the south from Moscow] municipal party committee. Joseph did very well before the outbreak of repressions [Great Terror] [5](#). Then in 1938 there was a brief article in the paper «The Secretary of Kursk municipal party committee is mistaken», wherein Joseph was unfairly castigated. He went to Moscow to seek truth and did not come back. He was arrested and in 1938 shot without trial. We found about it only in the 1960s when we got his rehabilitation certificate [Rehabilitation in the Soviet Union] [6](#), but back in 1937 mother had been staying by walls of NKVD [7](#) days and nights and still did not manage to find anything about the brother. They even did not let her give him a parcel with the rusks and tobacco. I had never met a more decent and honest man than my uncle Joseph. Two of Joseph's children survived- sons Vladimir and Stanislav. Vladimir now lives in Israel. I correspond with him. Stanislav immigrated to the USA in the 1990s.

Uncle Fyodor was a frontier man by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. He was promoted to the rank of a major no matter that his brother was repressed. It was Stalin's politics- imprison one and persecute - another. Fyodor was married to a Russian, Klavdia. They had 6 children. Unfortunately, I do not remember their names. All of them became worthy people. Now they live in different Russian cities. Their stepbrother Mikhail graduated from Moscow Construction institute, then worked as a chief engineer for a construction company in Barnaul (Altaskiy Kray, Russia, 3000 km from Moscow). Mikhail was married to a Jewish girl, whose name I forgot. They did not have children. He died from blood cancer in the 1950s at a rather young age.

My father died from lung tuberculosis in 1927. He was buried in Volyntsy. I do not know where his grave is. Mother did not tell me hardly anything about father. Even Uncle Solomon did not tell me all about him. Grandfather commemorated the day of father's death till the end of his days. He always went to the synagogue on that day and read kaddish for his son, who died earlier than he. Candles were lit at home on that day. Father's kin probably felt guilty and tried to help mother the best they could. Grandfather's family had been taking care of me, especially uncle Solomon.

In late 1920s father's parents and brothers moved to Leningrad with families. Grandmother died in 1940. She was buried in Leningrad Jewish cemetery in accordance with the Jewish rite. Grandfather got married for the second time. She was also a Jew. Grandfather remained religious till death. It is difficult for me to judge his religiousness, but I know that he strictly observed Jewish traditions, observed kashrut. Grandfather died in 1966 in Leningrad having survived the siege [Blockade of Leningrad] [8](#). He was buried next to grandmother in accordance with the Jewish rite, the way he wished.

Mother coped with her work and took an active part in social life. She was noticed and then promoted to the post of deputy the regional council [regional administration], though she was not the member of the party. Then mother was hired by the plant as a time-keeper. Again her skills did not remain unnoticed. She was assigned as an instructor to the children's board by BTsIK [Bsesoyuzny Tsentralny Ispolitelny Komitet, All-Union Central Executive Committee]. Mother was a young, single and beautiful woman. Of course, she drew attention. Her director asked to accompany him to different events. She was twice at the jubilee of Kalinin [9](#). Mother said that Kalinin was still a ladies' man despite of his elderly age.

Mother did not work in the children's board for a long time. She had been on the trips all over the country, supervising orphanages and organizing work. I stayed at home with a nanny. Those were the times of hunger. There was a dreadful starvation in Ukraine [Famine in Ukraine] [10](#), there was hunger in Moscow as well. We were famished. A lump of sugar was a rare dainty for me. Couple of times mother got the cards [Card system] [11](#) for the canteen for the privileged workers. We had a lavish meal there. I remember when I was in the metro in 1935, I saw a man eating a candy. My eyes looked so hungry and wretched that mother promised to buy me a candy. On Sundays we went for lunch to our relatives, usually to uncle Efim, mother's eldest brother. He was more well-off than others. It was an event for me. At home I ate 'black' [black, rotten] frozen potatoes - it was not the name of the dish, but the color it looked like, and aunt treated me with potatoes fried in sour cream. It seemed the acme of richness to me. In summer mother took me to the dacha [summer house] of her acquaintances. When I was 6, she managed to send me to the children's spa in Crimea. I was afflicted with lung disease because of constant malnutrition. Mother was very worried. She sent me to winter and summer sanatoriums in the forest. Life was hard on mother and I. She often said that she was mother and father for me. Mother left father when she was 25 and she never got married again. She feared that my step father would not treat me the way she would like to. She adored me and I doted on her as well. In 1938 children's board terminated its work and mother went to work in city park, one of the recreation and entertainment parks of the city, as a director.

Mother and her brothers were totally unreligious. They were bereft of parents rather early and there was nobody to teach them traditions and religion. Mother knew some words in Yiddish. When I was little she sang me some Yiddish songs. I also remember Jewish aphorisms. Mother spoke Russian with her brothers. They considered Russian to be the language of all peoples in USSR. I was raised Russian and did not think of religion at all.

I went to school, when I turned 8. I had studied in Russian school, not far from our house for the first 3 years. Then the house, where we lived, was demolished and we were given a room in a communal apartment [12](#) in a different district of Moscow. My former school was far from our house and I was transferred to another school. I made new friends there. A Russian boy Volodya Belin was my chum. I was a good student. Mother kept on telling me if I wanted to achieve anything in my life I should study well. I preferred sciences at school and mathematics was my favorite subject. When I was in the 7th grade I was the only student from school who was sent to the town Olympiad in mathematics and I took a prize. I did not feel Anti-Semitism at school. Both teachers and my peer treated me very well. At that time nationality was of no importance. I even did not know whether there any other Jews in my class. I did not feel any inferiority complexes because of my nationality. I did not feel myself harmed of lower-class. I was confident. I was a pioneer [13](#) and Komsomol member. My mother and I were very poor at that time. When I was in the 7th grade there was a party at school and I did not have anything dressy. All my pants were patched and short. I wore them everyday, but I wanted to dress up on the holiday. I went to uncle Fyodor and he gave me his pants. Uncle was of short height and his pants were ankle length to me. I lowered the belt and wore them on the party.

I was named Israel at birth. My tender name was Izya. I did not like it. I came to liking the name Sasha a lot, a short name from Alexander when I heard a popular romance song: «Sasha, do you remember our dates in the maritime park...». When I was in the pioneer camp at the age of 15, I

was asked what my name was and I said at once: «Sasha!». Thus, since that time I had 2 names- one passport name and another name was used by my friends, colleges and kin. Officially I did not change my name. I did not want people to think that I changed my name to conceal my nationality. I was not going to do that. Jewish people have double name, so have I - Alexander Israel.

Our family was not touched by repressions after death of uncle Joseph. Before leaving for Moscow he wrote letter to Stalin asking to look into the issue and exonerate his honest name. I wrote all his letters. Joseph wrote that he was a loyal son of the party and we knew that it was true. All of us were aware that it was unjust but he could not have thought that Stalin had something to do with that. We thought that all those things were done behind his back and believed that Stalin would look into the issue and punish the guilty. We did not associate Stalin with the assassination of Kirov [14](#), loved by all people. We were shocked by it as well as by the wave of new repressions. We merely cursed the enemies of the Soviet regime [enemy of the people] [15](#).

I often read in memoirs of different people that World War II was unexpected. It is not true, everybody understood that we would not escape war, besides soviet propaganda had been disseminating that thought starting from junior school age. Since childhood we were taught that our invincible army would crash any enemy and if a a guile enemy attacked our country, the war would be over very soon on his territory. Schoolchildren were taught at civil defense class how to shoot, use personal protective equipment, render assistance to the suffering and wounded. We were raised with patriotic movies, faming our country and army. When in Germany fascists came to power, soviet regime condemned them. Anti-fascist movies were demonstrated in our cinemas, namely «Professor Mamlock» [16](#), «The Oppenheim Family» [‘Semya Opeengeym’ 1939, feature film about a tragic fate of a Jewish family in the Nazi Germany. Producer: Grigoriy Roshal. Story based on Lion Feuchtwanger’s Die Openhemern]. Then Molotov-Ribbentrop non-aggression agreement was signed [Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact] [17](#), and anti-fascist campaign was put to end. There were no more anti-fascist movies and propaganda. Of course, many people were bewildered.

## During the war

In middle June 1941 I went to the pioneer camp in the vicinity of Mozhaisk [about 100 km to the west from Moscow]. It was a common summer recreation area, I could not have dreamt of anything more. I was 16 , with the height of about 180 cm. I took an active part in all camp events. Shortly after my arrival in the camp I had sharp abdominal pain and fever during volleyball game. I was isolated and I did not feel any better. They called Ambulance. They said I had an acute appendicitis. I was taken to hospital, straight on the operation table. It happened on 22 June 1941 when World War II was unleashed. When I was on the operation table, Germans had already started bombing Moscow. The nurses took us to the air-raid shelter. In a month I was discharged from the hospital, but my wound still did not heal up. School did not start on the 1st of September in accordance with the schedule. Moscow looked different, camouflaged. At times I went to the downtown area, which looked strange. There were trees on the roof of Bolshoy Theatre [18](#). Moscow river was masked as a high-way with the floating so-called roofs. We got used to the raids of Germans and calmly went down to the basement of our house.

In middle October 1941 there was a rumor that Germans approached Moscow. The city was panic-stricken. Thousands people moved towards East - in cars, on foot, trying to find a sponce from Germans. On the 16th of October 1941 mother’s brother Efim came to pick us up. His family and



the family of his driver were in the wagon with precious things. Mother and I tried to squeeze in some clothes in the car, linen and a bag with rusks and headed out. There was no room in the wagon and we had to sit with our legs pressed to the bellies. Accidentally we met mother's junior brother Fyodor in the street. His family was evacuated a long time ago and he joined us. Now we were packed like the tin of sardines. In the evening we came to Gorkiy [about 400 km to the East from Moscow]. We spent night in a school gym. Of course, we had to sleep on the floor. We had stayed there for 2 days and then went to Kazan [about 800 km to the east from Moscow] by ship. Again we had to sleep on the floor behind the ladder to the engine room. The only thing I remembered in Kazan was delicious buckwheat porridge with meat [grechnievaya kasha]. Fyodor got the cards for the canteen, where we tasted that porridge. There he went to the drafting point and we and Efim's family took a train and went to Alma-Ata [about 3200 km to the east from Moscow]. Mother did not find a job there and we had to go to her cousin, Alla Perlova, to a hamlet Shakhtstroy in Kazakhstan [about 2000 km to the east from Moscow]. It was a God-forsaken place - just mines and coal dust. Mother was a businesslike woman with good organizational skills. She became the chairman of Russian Red Cross Community [in Shakhtstroy]. We lived in the common barrack, but we were not desponded by the tightness. We escaped danger and it was the most important. I went to the 9th grade of the local school there in Shakhtstroy.

In December 1942 I was drafted in the army. I was in the 10th grade and had not turned 18 yet. I and some of my classmates were sent to Ufa [Bashkyrya, about 1200 km to the east from Moscow] infantry school, to the mortar gun battalion. At school I was issued a certificate that I finished the first half year with straight excellent marks. Mother sturdily got over the coming separation. There were no tears nor wailing.

Our train came to Ufa on the 12th of January 1943. The school was in the city center. The auditoriums and barracks with double-tiered bunks were in the 3-storied premises. Upon arrival we went to the bathhouse. We were given uniforms, soldier's boots; we were taught how to put foot wraps on. Then we were shown our bunks. I was to sleep on the upper bunk. We started school immediately. March drilling, crawling, studies on mortar guns and infantry military statute. We hardly had any leisure time. We got up at 6 and went to bed at 23. We had one hour of rest after lunch. Even on Sunday we had to do something- clean the territory or ski etc. When we ran out of food brought from home, we were starving even though the cadet's ration was not bad for that time: 800 grams of bread, 50 grams of butter, 65 grams of sugars, but the feeling of constant hunger was caused by a significant physical loading. I was perseverant in military studies. I took a keen interest in gun studies, taught by senior lieutenant Nazarov. He was an intelligent red-haired man of medium height, aged about thirty. Nazarov did not conceal his emotions when cadets did not solve or understand the task. Once he loudly made a remark on my success: "Look... Tsvey -well done and as for the rest - vice versa!" The guys kept on teasing me calling me "Well done". Later on Nazarov wrote me warm words in his letter to the front, then we did not keep in touch.

Then we had classes on shooting-range. I was an excellent marksman. In June mother came to Ufa for couple of days. I was so happy to spend those days with my mother. The commander gave me leave for couple of days. In late June the load was even harder on the soldiers. In the morning we were awoken by alarm. In the afternoon we were supposed to run with gas-masks. How could I have stood that and found stamina?! I think my energy was coming from the thirst for knowledge nurtured by mother. Not all cadets were able to overcome the difficulties in the studies. I noticed

the gloomy looks and retarded walk of some soldiers. They hardly spoke and remained introverted. Maybe those guys were thinking of the coming battles and the consequences? Most often guys like that were expelled from school at the rank of sergeant and sent in the lines.

Meanwhile mother returned in Moscow and stayed with her junior brother Fyodor as our room was taken by the family of a front-line soldier, whose house was demolished during bombing. The family illegitimately took my mother's room. Court proceedings took over a year and finally her room was returned. At that time mother worked as a director of the production and studies workshops. Apart from Fyodor and mother there were 7 people in one room. Mother came home only to spend a night. She wrote me about her wandering. I worried about her and tried to cheer her up, assuring her that every cloud had a silver lining.

There was a graduation party at school. After the concert we were supposed to dance with the ladies invited from medical school. I was in high spirits. We had been just given officer's uniform, all new: boots, waist belt, shoulder straps. It looked nice. Another reason for me to feel happy was that I was among the 10 of the top students, who graduated with excellent marks. By the order from the ministry of defense we were conferred lieutenant rank in advance. I had to recite the poems on stage. Suddenly one of the commanders rushed in the room. "Go take your documents! Have dinner! Today we are leaving to the front". There was a perturbation and hassle caused by certain phrase we heard. There was no festive mood any more. Meanwhile the club was filled with actors and audience: newly arrived cadets, officers and invited girls. When draftees gathered in the yard, the anchorman announced: «And now junior lieutenant Tsvey appears on stage, leaving to the front today». I recited verses with the inner anxiety without seeing the audience in the hall. I said good-bye to the school, commanders and teachers. I believed that things would turn well. When I was leaving the club with my things I heard the applause addressed to me. I joined the lines and heard the order: «Quick march!». The 11th February 1944 was coming to an end...

I was lucky: I was in the lines when our troops were attacking in – Byelorussia, Poland, and Eastern Prussia [Germany]. I did not feel bitter disappointment when during the first days of war our army was being constantly defeated. But still dreadful and fierce war was ahead of us- 452 days before the victory.

We went to the Byelorussia with the comfort in a sanitary car. Finally we went through all authorities in the headquarters and I arrived at 40th Amur rifle regiment # 102 of Far Eastern division of 48 Army. The division was formed on the Far East, and was named accordingly. In afternoon 19th of March I reported commanders of mortar gun squad on our arrival. I was lucky that our squad was just out of battle and positioned six kilometers away from the leading edge. The closest residential area was a village of Yashitsy [This village does not exist today. It might have merged with a bigger town or may have disappeared for some other reason.]. To the north from it is the town of Zhlobin [Belarus, about 500 km to the west from Moscow]. There in couple of months after fierce battle Germans stopped their assault. We knew about it at school and said as if having a premonition: «When we come to Zhlobin, we crack that nut». That was the way it happened ... Commander of mortar gun squad asked whether I was lieutenant Tsvey. It seemed to me that he was surprised. When I confirmed that I was Tsvey he jovially said: «Well, we'll see how Jews will fight».



The regiment settled in the place. Next day I received a platoon. In couple of days something happened that I would never forget in my life. A soldier was shot in front of the regiment aligned in a hollow square. I even did not understand the reason. Either he deserted or he was a traitor. I still remember that nervous tremor. Military prosecutor read the verdict and shot the kneeling soldier in the occiput. I also was shocked that the soldier did not say anything before death. We had been looking silently on that terrible procedure and then we had no discussion on that.

So, I became a platoon commander. There were two large mortar guns in our platoon, each served 5-6 people. Three carried the parts of the gun: mortar barrel, gun-carriage base plate, the rest carried mines. Besides, there were aide of the commander and an orderly. The total number of people were 12 in platoon, excluding commander. Most of the soldiers were aged 19-20, two or three of them were older than that. All of them were battle-seasoned and had awards. I still remember my front-line comrades.

I think that sergeant-major Volodin became the dearest man for me on the front. Unfortunately I do not remember his name. «Sergeant-major Volodin», he was called that way. We usually called each other by last name and rank. He was very kind and benevolent. He looked like Mordvinian. He spoke Russian with an accent. I felt his care from the first days, though we did not get in touch that often nor were we bosom friends. It was hard for me to abide by the grief over his death. On the 15th of April 1944 we moved to the leading edge. The gun-soldiers were 800 meters away from the infantry trenches. Firing points were dug in the forest, 4 rollings were made, disguises, shots. Of course, the adversary noticed our positions and sometimes was shooting at us. We systematically were moving to the leading edge, the infantry, to be on duty, and supported night reconnaissance operations. We thought that Germans would attack and we would be resisting their assault. May just fled. From the events of that day I remembered the return of sergeant Prikhodko. Before that he was spoken about in the regiment. Prikhodko was distinguished in one of the battles by performing a feat. I saw a short, freckled modest man who did not look heroic at all. Prikhodko was awarded with the Red Banner [19](#), though he was listed for the title of the Hero of the Soviet Union [20](#). There were rumors that 'the misconception' was caused by one of the regiment clerks. At any rate, our commander expressed his indignation. Soon during the inspection of the regiment, carried out by general-major, the commander of our corps publicly raised the issue on the 'mishap'. As people are not awarded for one and the same feat twice, the verdict of the general was concise and simple: "Include in the list for the conferment of the title Hero". Everybody found out about it...

It seems to me that on the 10th of June 1944 our division took off and headed on a trip for many days. Where? What for? Nobody knew. Having walked for over a hundred km we reached the destination point on the 17th of June, which was called the town of Rogachev [about 450 km to the west from Moscow]. Of course, we could not have assumed that we had to take part in one of the most large-scale operation of our troops, called Bagration. In the book written by marshal G. Zhukov [21](#) «Memoirs and Recollections» [«Vospamyanya I razmyslenya», Moscow, 1968]: «...The task of the 1st Byelorussian front was to crash Zhlobin-Bobruisk grouping. The key cities plus river Dnepr, Drut, Beresina, Svisloch and a number of shallow boggy rivers and streams were the base of the echeloned defense of the adversary, which covered the main Western Warsaw-Berlin strategic direction.»

In spite of that the fact that headquarters focused significant forces to exterminate the 'Center' we still believed that for the operation to be successful it was necessary for the troops participating in

Bagration to get ready thoroughly. There were trenches, dugs-out, people, horses and weapon... It was clear that the intensive preparation was underway. Germans were shooting comparatively rare, but each released shell hit the mark. We did not even have time for a respite from a long trip. At night we were ordered to bring materials to the river for the construction of the bridge. We did it in groups 8-10 people. In 2-3 days we were given a more difficult and dangerous task: carry the boxes with shells to the river Drut, separating us from Germans and stack them on the neutral stripe in special niches, dug by the infantry men. About 6 people carried one box. I accompanied such groups for quite a few times. Our caravan was walking along the neutral stripe and suddenly German flash rocket emerged producing bright light; we could not drop a box as Germans would notice the movement so we had to stand still hoping that the enemy would take us for trees or bushes on the bog. Good thing that it took us only 300 meters to the nearest trenches. Of course, at that moment we felt so miserable- bullets were whistling, but we could not hide or even lie down. Soon the flash was gone and we could move forward. It recurred couple of times before we reached the destination. On the 23rd of June we were read the order on tomorrow's assault. It was also mentioned there that mortar gun soldiers and gun soldiers would be distributed to the rifle squads by platoons and cross the river. My platoon #3 was to join rifle squad #9. Gun platoon under command of sergeant-major Prikhodko also joined that squad. Soon the orderly came over with the order to follow squad #9. We moved towards the river rather slowly, with frequent halts. Even though the trenches were rather deep we had to bend down as shell were exploding in the closest vicinity. During one of our halts Prikhodko happened to be close by and we had a talk that I had remembered for all my life. Prikhodko spoke Yiddish to me. I was taken aback. Shortly before we met, somebody told me that Prikhodko was a Jew. I did not believe in it at that time. Now I admired Prikhodko. The hero was to go in the battle with me, and he was my tribesman!.. «Are you a Jew?!» - I said dubiously. He firmly answered me in Yiddish. I said that I did not believe him. His last name Prikhodko was purely Ukrainian and I asked him to speak Russian as I did not know Yiddish. Prikhodko said that he was raised in the orphanage where he got that name, but remembered Yiddish since childhood. Gradually we were approaching river. Strange as it may be I was calm and cheerful at that time. My companion was frankly sad. 'Why are you so wistful, sergeant-major?!' - I said in a patron way. - 'You will be conferred the title Hero after battle'. 'Ah... - he brandished with his hand and said as if he was predoomed: - Hope the head will be safe'. 'How come?!' - I, self-assured boy, who was to take in the first battle, was cheering up a front-line soldier who went through thick and thin beginning in 1939.

Finally our rifle squad came to the breakthrough boundary, located in the trenches on the high bank of Drut. By that time artillery transferred fire deeper to the German defense positions. Aviation showed up in the air. Tanks were roaring. We could see everything vividly from our trenches: steep descent to the river, bridge, filled with corpses and horse carcasses, and further on the opposite bank infantry men running along acclivity to German trenches. Germans rather accurately and rhythmically were firing at bridge from long-distance weapons. Rapid fire... successive fire... pause. And again, repeated in the same succession. I noticed that many commanders of platoons gave the order "advance!" when there was a pause. It took the first group of soldiers couple of minutes to cross the bridge, but next groups were caught under demolishing fire. Judging by the rhythm of the fire I understood that I should run to the river without waiting for the pause; moreover than gun soldier had to carry heavy equipment. When our platoon was given a command to cross, I decided to run to the river a little bit earlier before the pause. I just had a hunch and I think I did not see things around me. I jumped from the trench, ordered: platoon, follow

me and dashed to the crossing. When I was approaching the bridge, there were fragments of shells not far from me. I could only assume what fortification the bridge had. I got on and off the bridge, being half-knee in water. «Forward, forward, forward!» I ran for about a hundred meters away from the bridge and finally I fell on the ground and looked around worrying about my soldiers, whether they were alive, thinking whether ammunition was safe. Things were all right. Guys ran up and lied down close by. On the back of the bridge there was a squall of German long-distance weapon. We got up and ran again and with sudden advances approached the first trenches of the enemy. We practically ran out of mines. All of a sudden we saw sergeant-major Volodin holding the bridle on the horsed cart with mines. He calmly asked where to place the mines. Then I was thinking how could he had managed to cross the bridge with the cart? Finally, we fired the first volley at fascists. Soon close to us mortar guns were installed by the soldiers from other platoons. They were much less lucky during forcing Drut. There were casualties, besides somebody lost the barrel from the mortar gun. For right now our fire did not help the infantry that much and no advancement was observed. Finally, the defense of the adversary was broken through. The enemy was retreating and our army #48 headed to Bobruysk [about 600 km to the west from Moscow]. I became more sturdy within those 2-3 days. I felt myself a true front-line soldiers and gained more self-respect. Pyotr Prikhodko was lethally wounded on the day of the breakthrough and perished on the 26th of June 1944. He was buried in the common grave in the village Zapolie of Rogachevsk region [Russia]. Later on he was posthumously named Hero of the Soviet Union. Secondary school № 1 [22](#) was named after him in Kremenchug [Ukraine], the city where he was born in 1918. I found out about it from the letters written by students of that school in many years after war. I wrote them about the feat of Pyotr Prikhodko and about our crossing the river Drut.

Defeated troops of the enemy were stampeding towards the West. We had to chase them. First, we moved towards Minsk [Byelorussia], then we turned to the south towards Baranovichi [about 800 km to the west from Moscow]. We walked 65 kilometers in one day. We did not have to carry mortar guns as they were on the carts. We were really thirsty. I remember how I bent over a small puddle, covered by some midges and sucked on the water through my sweaty and dirty kerchief. In early August we crossed the border with Poland. I was happy to liberate my motherland, Byelorussia. Now we were to take fierce and ruthless battles in Poland.

Once, one of the commanders of the regiment found it necessary to take agitation leaflets to Germans. I was called in the headquarters and asked whether mortar gun-soldiers could help out. I promised to give it a thought. In theory, there were special mines called agitation ones. They were exploded at a certain distance in the flight. I did not know whether they were used in practice, I just saw them on the picture, when I studied at school. I started thinking whether I was possible to remake a common fragmentation mine into agitation one. I decided to make an experiment. Of course, I asked for preliminary permission. Mine flies from the tube with armed fuse under the action of gasses, formed during combustion of the shells. As soon as a mine encounters the object, it is exploded into about 350 fragments.

My idea was to unscrew the main fuse (of course very gingerly), remove a considerable amount of the explosive material from the body and put some leaflets instead as well as sand to preserve the necessary weight. As a result during explosion the mine would split in some large parts and leaflets would fall out from it. Germans would pick them up and read. It sounded pretty simple. What we had to do was to think what weight to put in the mine body to determine the distance of the flight. I

performed all those steps.

On the 25th of October a serious battle ordeal was ahead of me. There was a hamlet on the hill, in 300 meters ahead of us. Germans were well noticeable when we looked in binoculars. Nobody even questioned that the adversary could clearly see us as well. My front-line experience prompted me that Germans would not linger with fire. The premonition of danger spurred me on to take actions swiftly. Having determined the location of our observation point, I told the data for firing over the phone. Shortly after that the first mine was exploded to the right and behind. Having made an adjustment, I gave a new order. The second mine exploded in the yard of the hamlet. Now the whole group was able to fire. Having informed that the target was straddled we were permitted to leave the observation point. I cried out to the orderly who was close by that it was time to run away from here. We jumped out from our pits and ran towards the thickness of the forest. At once we heard the sound of flying shells. We ran 'home' among tall trees and it seemed to us the shells were exploding right behind us. We were egged on by blind fear; our hearts were thudding and we started walking only when we understood that the blasts were distant.

It was the end of 1944. We moved forward with fierce battles, liberating one inhabited locality after another. Once after a battle four men in civilian clothes were taken out from a village house. The suits looked fit. Especially it referred to one husky man with military bearing. Those disguised Germans stood by the porch surrounded by our soldiers and nobody seemed to know what to do with them. It did not last long. All of a sudden battalion party organizer came up. He took out his pistol and started to cry out some threats. Captives kept silent. They must have hoped that they would be taken to the rear, where their fate would be decided. The first shot by the party organizer was unexpected for me. A huge husky man fell on the ground. Other men followed them. All of them met death silently, but one. He knelt and whispered rather loudly: «Jesus, Maria!..». Though I was aware that disguised German soldiers were in front of us as well as we apparently had no opportunity to convoy them in the rear, all the same I felt ill at ease seeing the fusillade of unarmed people face to face. I think that the party organizer was authorized to do that.

It was gloomy. Our infantry moved forward along with our squad and battalion commanders with their headquarters. I remained the senior at the firing point. Soon we started firing, first at the distance of one kilometer. In a while there was an order to increase the distance. The attack appeared to be successful so that we could move forward. But we received no orders towards that. We kept on firing incessantly, which lead to overheat of the mortar guns and plates of guns were deeper settling in the ground. There was a strong smell of the powder. Suddenly, time as if stopped. The telephone was silent. We did not know what to do. I do not remember how long the silence lasted. Uncertainty caused even more agitation. Germans started shooting at the hamlet from gun and some of the houses were on fire. It was getting dark for some reason -either because so much time elapsed or because it was cloudy or due to the fumes over our positions. Soon we were stricken with fear. Someone frantically cried: «Tanks! Tanks!». The clatter of German machines was vivid. What were we to do in that situation?! There were no thought to escape. Besides, mortar plates were so deep in the ground that it would take long to remove them. To leave ammunition on the battle field meant to be in tribunal court. We had to protect ourselves somehow and be ready for the worse. I was afraid to be hold in captivity. For me a Jew, an officer and communist it would equal tormenting death. That is why I always had a pineapple grenade by me. At that time I had two German grenades. Without a slightest doubt I would put them in action.

But these thoughts were not important. My priority was how to stop the running soldiers. We did not panic, though the roaring of the German tanks was getting harder and harder. It seemed they were in hamlet. The infantrymen were running to the rear by one or two. I took out the piston from the holster started brandishing with it and cried to the running soldiers: «Don't move!.. or I will shoot!..». One of them was affected by my words, he squatted. The other one kept running. I shot, but I could not kill our soldier, the bullet went past his head. It worked. He lied down immediately. I saw junior lieutenant running. He seemed to be crying out something being happy that he was among ours. I "discharged". I think I blurted out all swearwords I knew. I remember that junior lieutenant very well. I think he was my age, but he looked even younger than that. It must have been his first battle. First he looked numb, completely being unaware of what was going on, but my foul language and manipulations with the revolver did their work. There were flashes of thoughts in his eyes. Soon and couple of other soldiers lied down not far from us. At that time our artillery was acting. Terrible din was produced the shells of Katyushas [the 82mm BM-8 and 132mm BM-13 "Katyusha" rocket launchers were built and fielded by the Soviet Union in World War II. The launcher got this unofficial, but immediately recognized name from the title of a Russian wartime song, Katyusha.]. Their appeared to blast close by. We squeezed in the dug-out and were frightened by thought that one of the shells would blanket us. I do not remember how long that consternation lasted. Then things calmed down and it was clear that German counterattack was over. What happened? Germans gave our infantry to move forward and then send their tanks in its flanks making it severed from the main subdivision – us mortar gunners. It is not hard to imagine what our rifle division thought when German tanks showed up in their rear. Good thing that their tanks were not accompanied by infantry. To our luck, having deterred us they approached the hamlet and turned back. Other than that they could raze us to the ground. We did not have any anti-tank weapons. As far as I know the unsuccessful operation was ended as follows: squads of the 48th and 2nd attack army took initial positions. By the way, some of the generals decided that none of the officers should be awarded for that operation.

During the days, when we came to the second echelon I did some silly thing that might have turned really bad against me. Our nutrition got pretty bad. Once, they brought a soup, in which grains of wheat could be counted. I composed a 'funny' song on that subject. It started with the words:

Knock-knock-knock.  
Today's soup is brought.  
Tastes like water salty,  
For you not to go potty».

I sang my composed crambo to the officers. I remember that in the tent where I sang the song, there was a commander of the battalion, his new deputy on political issues [Political officer] [23](#) Ioffe and couple of more officers. Somebody, I think Ioffe recommended me to forget that song and I did what he told me. A year and a half passed and once in summer our squad was in Armavir [Russia]. I went to town park. There, the head of regiment counterintelligence department SMERSH [24](#) was sitting on the bench by himself. All officers knew him, of course. All of a sudden he asked me to take a seat by him. We had a small talk and then he asked me to sing the song that I composed in Poland. He said it in a peaceful, even paternal tone. First, I fumbled and then I finally sang the first couplet. He said that at that time I was spared as I was too young. Neither at that



time, nor later on, I did not manage to find out who informed them of that song.

I implicitly came across with SMERSH in the lines. At that time I was friends with Valeriy Moskovkin. He was of medium height, blond, a little bit older than me. He was a good man and rather literate officer. Moskovkin came to our squad from hospital. Before that he served in a different army. Once, he came back rather late at night to the dug-out, drank vodka and told me (there were only two of us) that they had found him even here. He thought that he would be left in peace after his wound. The sense of his words was pretty clear. SMERSH demanded from him to stooge on his comrades. I do not know why he was so frank with me. Maybe he wanted to admonish me not to blurt anything. Of course, I pretended not to understand anything and I asked him no questions.

On the 30th November 1944 we took part in combat engineering works on the leading edge. We had been making mortar-gun trenches all night long. We were involved in preparation for the coming attack. Combat engineers exploded frozen earth and we 'finished' the pits. Frankly speaking it was eerie to work 100 - 200 meters away from the trenches of the adversary.

The year of 1944 was over. It was full of the hardest and most dangerous events in my life. In January I was a military school cadet and took final exams. By December I had been in severe battles in Byelorussia and Poland. I had a contusion and was in the hospital. I can bravely say that I became really battle-seasoned and skillful officer. The final year of war with the fascist Germany was ahead of me. Fierce battles, the bitterness of loss and the joy of victory were waiting for me.

Our squad entered on the territory of Eastern Prussia on the 19th or 20th of January 1945. That picture was engraved on my memory. It was dusk. We were marching and almost entire forest horizon was glowing with fire. It was the den of the fascist beast! Soldiers were anxious for vengeance on the enemy. Perhaps only those who were in the battle can understand without judging that some times front-line soldiers were overwhelmed with the feeling of vindictiveness. First we had quite an amusing adventure. Hardly had we come in the forest, met we a soldier guarding four cows. The sentinel must have been from the division which came here earlier. Some of our commanders started bargaining with the soldiers and asked him to give us one cow. Touching his gun, the sentinel said that he was fulfilling the order of his commander and would not give the cow. When he saw the gun pointed at him, he obeyed at once. Then we had a real ordeal with that cow, which did not want to follow us. We did everything- beat a poor animal, tied it to the cart, even danced in front of it. We had been pulling our trophy all night long, foretasting the stew at the first halt. Good thing we were moving slowly, with frequent stops. We passed the forest at dawn. In front of us there was a huge barn in a winter haze. There were great many geese, chickens, swine and pigs. All those forsaken cattle and poultry were clucking, grunting, mooing. It was an end to our lean and undiversified food. Since then a new life started and we became true gourmands.

I remember the events, connected with the battle by a tiny railroad substation. On the 26th of January our advancement was stopped by a strong gunfire of Germans from an inconsiderable hill, where they had pillboxes. The fire of our mortar gunner practically was of no help to the infantry. In words of the rifle squad commander he lead his soldiers to onslaught the hill having drunk pretty much alcohol. As a result he died as well as many other our guys. In the end the hill had been taken. When we were up the hill, having followed the infantry we saw our soldiers taking two huge German gun soldiers from the pillbox. The feeling of hatred towards them was so strong that they



were shot immediately. I did not see who shot them. I just saw the falling on the frozen earth. In a jiffy, some of the soldiers started taking off the boots from the German guy. He cried out that the German was alive and tried to resist. All of a sudden a junior lieutenant, commander of gun platoon showed up. There was a wide dagger in his hand. Before we could say Jack Robinson, junior lieutenant started striking one blow after another as if in frenzy and crying out something. All of us were numb. Then somebody said that on the eve he got a letter informing him of the death of one of his kin.

It was the April of 1945. On our front sector the troops of the enemy together with the fugitives were pressed to the coast of the Baltic Sea. Germans hoped that ships would come and help them. Having that expectation they were fighting most fiercely. Our commandment decided to spare the infantry and sent aviation. Hundreds of aircrafts were incessantly bombing the territory, held by the enemy. The eradicated land was strewn with crashed cars and guns, cadavers and horse carcasses. Our regiment was not directly involved in the battles for a month. We moved in the second line, when the enemy was defeated. We were positioned 100 km away from the sea closer to the town Heiligenthal, Lower Saxony, Germany. The war was not over yet. Battles were held for Königsberg [25](#) and militaries of our squad had a respite.

I had to fulfill another task. It was not in connection of the battle but it was fraught with danger. On the 3rd of April 1945 commander of the mortar gun squad and I were called in the regiment headquarters. One major had a talk with us there. I remember that talk very well. He asked us to take a seat and said in a non-mandative way that we had to clear the coast from the cadavers. Of course, captives were supposed to do that. Three teams of captives, each consisting 80 - 100 people, were formed in 3 squads. We were offered to be at the lead of this job. We silently listened to him. I even was not asking myself why it was me who was chosen for such an unusual task and who suggested that we should do it. Of course, we could not object to anything and the major informed us that 12 soldiers and a sergeant-major were send for the guarding and direct supervision over work of the captives. Accommodation was provided for us and captives. The major ordered me to contact the captives directly. I said calmly to the major that Germans would kill me, but he said that I had nothing to fear as I would have guards. Then I asked what would happen if I killed anybody he also said that nothing would happen. There were no questions to ask and I went to meet with Germans. I went armless to the house, where they lived. Czech, who I was assigned the head of the group, was interpreting for me. I sat on the chair in the center of the hall. Germans surrounded me. Having informed them of the tasks and the conditions I toughly added: 'I am a Jew. 8 of my relatives perished in the war as well as millions of my tribesmen. I hope I will have to resort to the weapon to establish order and discipline.' Sergeant-major interpreted my words to the Germans, who were sitting still. Of course, my actions looked like a boyish self-assertion. I was 19 at that time. Now I can look differently at that. Well, it happened. I should say that even did not have to rise my voice to Germans. They were bona-fide, very polite and obliging.

### **After the war**

We met Victory day [9 May 1945] in the vicinity of Königsberg, on the coast of the bay Freshgaf bay. When Berlin was captured on the 1st of May it was clear that the war was winding up. But still the 9th of May 1945 was a true fete for all of us. Everybody was exulting. Militaries were shooting in the air, giving hugs and kisses, drinking to the victory and future happy life, their household, their kin and commemorating the perished.

I got 2 military orders: Order of the Red Star [26](#) and Order of the Great Patriotic War 2nd class [27](#).

I was not demobilized at once. Our squad served in Krasnodar [Russia, 1300 km from Moscow] for another year. I had a good reputation among squadron commandment. A separate training battalion was formed in our division and I was the only officer out of entire division who was assigned commander of training mortar gun platoon of that battalion. I was highly appreciated by commanders. I was eager to study in Moscow artillery military academy, but I did not pass entrance exams in Moscow. I was a battery commander, I had a 10-year education and battle experience, i.e. fit in all respects, but still I was refused. I did not fit in accordance with item 5 [28](#). I did not doubt that. Then I decided to enter officers' institute, gun department. I was not admitted either. I was told that I was young and had time to obtain education. They also said that there were a lot of officers with high rank having no education at all, so the benefits were for them. I could not picture myself without being educated and I decided not to stay in the army and enter civilian institute after demobilization. In 1946 I was demobilized.

In August I came to Moscow. Since childhood I dreamed to be a cinematographer of an actor. I took an attempt to enter cinematography institute, but failed again. Then I opened up a reference book for school-leavers to find out which institute was closer to our house. Moscow Engineering and Construction Institute and I submitted my documents to the mechanics department. In September 1946 I started classes in the institute. I had straight excellent marks for the entire 5 -year period. I was a patriot and took an active part in social work. I was a deputy secretary of Komsomol committee at the institute [Komsomol units existed at all educational and industrial enterprises, headed by Komsomol committees involved in organizational activities]. 2 months before graduation from the institute the rector Boris Ukhov called me. It was the year of 1951. Jewish Anti-fascist Committee [29](#) was exterminated, cosmopolite processes were finished [Campaign against 'cosmopolitans'] [30](#), they did not even try to conceal anti-Semitism. Even under that condition the rector said that he and other teachers knew me very well, were aware of my success and would recommend me to the post-graduate studies. In the end he said: 'We want to show everybody that we are not biased against anybody'. I has always been lucky to meet good people. In actuality the academic council at the institute unanimously recommended me to the post-graduate and party organization supported my candidacy as well, but when the state exams were over I was not admitted to post-graduate department. I was told that there was no vacancy in the chair. There were 10 offers to the scientific and research institute when I was given mandatory job assignment [31](#). I was to choose either to work at the plant or at the construction site. When I said that I wanted to work at scientific and research institute, deputy minister of higher education, who was present there, said that I should be grateful for having been left in Moscow. I said that they were doing evil and that the history would not forgive them that. The rector of the institute was sitting there with his hands on his head. He was ashamed and could not even look in my eyes. The secretary of the party committee merely did not show up at the mandatory job assignment board. Then after Stalin's death [1953] I asked why he was not present. He said he was reprimanded for the party organization to act on its own and recommend me, a Jew, to the post-graduate studies.

I got a mandatory job assignment to the trust 'Stroitel' as a mechanic. It was a small-scale plant. It looked like a construction site, where automobile plant named after Stalin, later Likhachev [32](#) was being build. I did not get along with the director of the plant. He was a semiliterate man and an inveterate anti-Semite to boot. In 1952 I was transferred to the construction trust to the

department of the chief mechanics. After Stalin's death I got an invitation letter to the post-graduate department of my dear Engineering and Construction Institute. In 1954 I was admitted there and in 2 years I brilliantly defended my dissertation. In 1959 I began teaching at Moscow Road Transport Institute, Construction Mechanics. I had worked for that institute all my life. I am still employed there. I was promoted rather rapidly. Soon I became senior teacher. Then I defended doctorate theses [33](#) and became a professor. I am respected both by my colleagues and peers in spite of my reputation of being strict, reserved and a man of principle. There were cases when my colleagues asked me to put good marks either to their children or acquaintances and I had to refuse them as those students knew hardly anything. My reputation was important for me and I could not prevaricate. Pro-rector of our institute did not want to talk to me when I refused him in one of those requests. In spite of that when there was a secret vote of the academic council for conferment the title of the senior staff scientist, there was a unanimous vote. The vote had taken place for 4 times and I was elected unanimously all the time. My jubilees are always celebrated in our chair. People always sincerely greet me. I am keen on poetry. I compose my own verses, write recollections about war. The Institute assists me in publishing my books and prints them in its typography. I never came across anti-Semitism at work.

I think anti-Semitism commenced at war. I did not feel it towards me, but it was conspicuous in Stalin's anti-Semitism policy. They tried not to give high ranks to the Jews, delayed awarding or gave lower-class award than it was in the list. During war there were rumors that Jews 'fought by Tashkent' [Tashkent is a town in Middle Asia; it was the town where many people evacuated during the Great Patriotic War, including many Jewish families. Many people had an idea that all Jewish population was in evacuation rather than at the front and anti-Semites spoke about it in mocking tones]. During the war there was no mass anti-Semitism among soldiers and officers. But there has always been pathological people who imbibed it with mother's milk.

In post war years, beginning from 1948 anti-Semitism was all-wide state policy. I remember what I felt when read the information about the tragic death of Mikhoels [34](#). It was terrible. At that time it was informed that he died in a car accident, but it was clear that it had been insinuated. There was an open struggle against the so-called cosmopolitanism, against Jews in fact. I understood the misery of those satirical newspaper articles, wherein Jewish surname of the actor or a writer, known under alias name, was mentioned. After such a divulgement I had such a feeling as if I was stamped in dirt. After arrest and execution of the members of the Jewish anti-fascist committee I understood that it was an open struggle against Jews. It was the time when Jews were fired. Open meetings were held, where hidden enemies of the Soviet regime were stigmatized. Real anti-Semitism reigned in the country. The most terrible things started after 'Doctors' plot' [35](#). I like any other Jew was indignant. I worked for a construction company with one of my former fellow students. We got along very well. When there was an article in the paper regarding 'doctors-poisons' she pretended not to notice me in the morning. She did not want to greet me, talk to me. It was as if boiled water was poured on me. I still shudder when I go back to that time. People blamed Beriya [36](#) in that. We always believed Stalin and remembered his words in one of his pre-war speeches: 'Anti-Semitism is a wrong way, which leads astray' [1939]. Only after Khrushchev's speech [37](#) at XX Party Congress [38](#) I understood that Stalin was devil incarnate. I stopped believing in him, but I still believe Lenin [39](#) and consider him to be a great man.

I met my wife-to-be Inga Kisina during my studies at the institute. Inga was born in 1932 in Moscow in a very intellectual Jewish family. She was an only child in the family. Inga's father Mikhail Kisin was a scientist, an expert in the field of heating and ventilation. Mikhail was an assistant professor of Moscow Engineering and Construction Institute and was the chief of the laboratory at the scientific and research institute. He was a great, interesting intellectual man. He died in 1954, at a considerably young age, 52. Inga's mother, Mira Kisina, was also an engineer in one of the design institutes in Moscow. She is still alive. Her age is 96. Inga and I got married in December 1951. I was about to finish the institute and Inga was in the 3rd year. We got registered in the marriage registration office and in the evening we had a wedding party for our kin and friends. Mother and I had a room in a communal apartment, and wife's family also lived in communal apartment in the center of Moscow, in 3 poky rooms. My wife and I moved in one of them after wedding. Later on, when we had two children, we still lived in that room. In 1953 I was afflicted with tuberculosis. I found out about the death of my father-in-law when I was on a treatment course in Crimea sanatorium. Of course, I left everything I went to the funeral. Soon doctors found out that Inga had a diabetes. She was a very good person, beautiful, smart and intellectual. She was a giver rather than taker. She has worked for scientific and research institute all her life, but still she found time to take care of children. As for material side, life was hard on us. We constantly had debts and could not only afford luxury, we could not even afford to go on vacation to the suburb of Moscow. Children often went to pioneer camps. My wife and I were atheists and raised our children soviet. We even did not break the subject of religion in our family. We gladly marked soviet holidays - 1st of May, 7th of November [October Revolution Day] [40](#), Soviet Army Day [41](#), Victory Day [42](#). We invited our friends to come and share potluck with us no matter that we could not afford a feast.

Our elder son Yuri Tsvey, named after my father, was born in 1954, and my daughter Irina was born in 1959. On her birthday, the 15th of December was the all-union census. I had to spend a night at my mother's place, as when people came to put my data, I was supposed to stay at the place, for which I had a residence permit [43](#), and I had it for my mother's apartment to take over the room in the event she died. Early in the morning my neighbor gave me a call and said that my daughter was born. I rushed to the delivery house and saw TV cameras and crowds of people. Then I got a note from my wife saying: 'TV came over from the Program 'Daily News' and had been teasing Irishka (we knew how we would name the daughter before she was born) and I for 2 hours. But at last they changed linen, put flowers and said that the video would be shown on TV. Of course, we turned TV on when it was evening news was broadcast. First it was informed that all-union census commenced on that day. Then we saw the ward of the delivery house. Inga was in bed and there was a tiny moppet by her, my daughter Irina. The announcer said: «Inga Tsvey is giving information on her newly born daughter in the delivery house '. 'Daily News' was broadcast throughout USSR. We received telephone calls with congratulations from every corner, where our kin and friends lived.

Son and daughter followed into parents' footsteps. Both of them graduated from Moscow Engineering and Construction institute. Son did well as he was capable. Upon graduation he worked as a designer/engineer for some period of time. Then computers appeared and he was keen on programming. He became a brilliant programmer. Then there was a hard period of time, when the engineers got skimpy salaries. Son was married already and in 1995 his son Alexander was born. He had to provide for his family and to look for a new job. He went to work in commerce. Now he is a realtor. Son is rather well-off, but he does not enjoy his work that much.

Irina is joking that she has been on camera since the first day of her life. After graduation from the institute daughter was involved in work on TV. She was the anchorwoman of one of the popular TV amusement programs. Now Irina is working on the radio as deputy chief editor of radio station Moscow Echo. Irina is married, but she preserved her maiden name Tsvey. She knew it would make me happy. Many people at work advised her to change her name, but daughter said that she did not want to disgrace her father, whose Jewish name did not bother him when he was fighting in the lines.

In late 1970s wife's disease was progressing. It was getting really bad: Inga became blind. Then she had gangrene. She died in 1988 at the age of 56. She was buried next to her father, in city Vvedenskiy cemetery in Moscow. In 1986 my dear mother, whom I loved so much, died at the age of 84. Mother had been sick for a long time. I was tossing about my sick mother, family and work. My mother was buried in Vvedenskiy cemetery.

When in 1948 the state Israel of founded I was beaming with joy. Figuratively speaking I think of Russia as mother and of Israel as father. I have always followed the history of Israel. I would not like to live there. I am Jew in my blood, but Russian in my soul. My mother and wife are buried here. I cannot imagine myself not hearing Russian language. I love it very much. Nobody spoke Yiddish in my family. I was raised in the Russian speaking environment, in the family where people were thinking in Russian. Russia is as dear to me as Israel. During my first visit to Israel in 1991 I was rapt by the country, but I did not think of staying there, I felt homesick.

Like most people I took perestroika [44](#) and social democratization with joy. I never like the word 'perestroika' as I am conservative, but I welcomed Gorbachev [45](#), because for the first time we heard lively words from the head of the state. He was not just falteringly reading the speech, written by somebody else. I did not like that Gorbachev talked too much and beat around the bush. The leader should give certain tasks and clearly answer questions asked.

I consider breakup of USSR [1991] to be despicable. In my opinion our government should be blamed for that as they followed their career interests. I think that perestroika could be more fruitful if our country was plundered in the most savage way. As a result there was a de-stratification of society, the top was practically merged with oligarchs, the gangsters.

As for material side, it is pretty good, especially as compared with most of my coevals. Teachers got a pay rise. I got 5000 rubles, which was less than 200 USD, now my salary is 7000 rubles. Of course, it is not big money, but I also receive double pension, 6000 rubels. It is quite enough for me to get by, and still there is enough for making presents for my grandchildren.

## Glossary:

### **1 Common name**

Russified or Russian first names used by Jews in everyday life and adopted in official documents. The Russification of first names was one of the manifestations of the assimilation of Russian Jews at the turn of the 19th and 20th century. In some cases only the spelling and pronunciation of Jewish names was russified (e.g. Isaac instead of Yitskhak; Boris instead of Borukh), while in other cases traditional Jewish names were replaced by similarly sounding Russian names (e.g. Eugenia instead



of Ghita; Yury instead of Yuda). When state anti-Semitism intensified in the USSR at the end of the 1940s, most Jewish parents stopped giving their children traditional Jewish names to avoid discrimination.

## **2 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.

## **3 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.

## **4 Komsomol**

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

## **5 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.

## **6 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.

## **7 NKVD**

People's Committee of Internal Affairs; it took over from the GPU, the state security agency, in 1934.

## **8 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.

## **9 Kalinin, Mikhail (1875-1946)**

Soviet politician, one of the editors of the party newspaper Pravda, chairman of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of Soviets of the RSFSR (1919-1922), chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR (1922-1938), chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR (1938-1946). He was one of Stalin's closest political allies.

## **10 Famine in Ukraine**

In 1920 a deliberate famine was introduced in the Ukraine causing the death of millions of people. It was arranged in order to suppress those protesting peasants who did not want to join the collective farms. There was another dreadful deliberate famine in 1930-1934 in the Ukraine. The authorities took away the last food products from the peasants. People were dying in the streets, whole villages became deserted. The authorities arranged this specifically to suppress the rebellious peasants who did not want to accept Soviet power and join collective farms.

## **11 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.

## **12 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.

## **13 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.

## **14 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.

## **15 Enemy of the people**

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

## **16 Professor Mamlock**

This 1937 Soviet feature is considered the first dramatic film on the subject of Nazi anti-Semitism ever made, and the first to tell Americans that Nazis were killing Jews. Hailed in New York, and banned in Chicago, it was adapted by the German playwright Friedrich Wolf – a friend of Bertolt Brecht – from his own play, and co-directed by Herbert Rappaport, assistant to German director G.W. Pabst. The story centers on the persecution of a great German surgeon, his son's sympathy and subsequent leadership of the underground communists, and a rival's sleazy tactics to expel Mamlock from his clinic.

## **17 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact**

Non-aggression pact between Germany and the Soviet Union, which became known under the name of Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Engaged in a border war with Japan in the Far East and fearing the German advance in the west, the Soviet government began secret negotiations for a non-

aggression pact with Germany in 1939. In August 1939 it suddenly announced the conclusion of a Soviet-German agreement of friendship and non-aggression. The Pact contained a secret clause providing for the partition of Poland and for Soviet and German spheres of influence in Eastern Europe.

### **18 Bolshoy Theater**

World famous national theater in Moscow, built in 1776. The first Russian and foreign opera and ballet performances were staged in this building.

### **19 Order of the Combat Red Banner**

Established in 1924, it was awarded for bravery and courage in the defense of the Homeland.

### **20 Hero of the Soviet Union**

Honorary title established on 16th April 1934 with the Gold Star medal instituted on 1st August 1939, by Decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet. Awarded to both military and civilian personnel for personal or collective deeds of heroism rendered to the USSR or socialist society.

**21** Georgy Zhukov (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.

**22** 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.

### **21 Political officer**

These "commissars," as they were first called, exercised specific official and unofficial control functions over their military command counterparts. The political officers also served to further Party interests with the masses of drafted soldiery of the USSR by indoctrination in Marxist-Leninism. The 'zampolit', or political officers, appeared at the regimental level in the army, as well as in the navy and air force, and at higher and lower levels, they had similar duties and functions. The chast (regiment) of the Soviet Army numbered 2000-3000 personnel, and was the lowest level of military command that doctrinally combined all arms (infantry, armor, artillery, and supporting services) and was capable of independent military missions. The regiment was commanded by a colonel, or lieutenant colonel, with a lieutenant or major as his zampolit, officially titled "deputy commander for political affairs."

### **22 SMERSH**

Russian abbreviation for 'Smert Shpionam' meaning Death to Spies. It was a counterintelligence department in the Soviet Union formed during World War II, to secure the rear of the active Red Army, on the front to arrest 'traitors, deserters, spies, and criminal elements'. The full name of the entity was USSR People's Commissariat of Defense Chief Counterintelligence Directorate 'SMERSH'. This name for the counterintelligence division of the Red Army was introduced on 19th April 1943, and worked as a separate entity until 1946. It was headed by Viktor Abakumov. At the same time a

SMERSH directorate within the People's Commissariat of the Soviet Navy and a SMERSH department of the NKVD were created. The main opponent of SMERSH in its counterintelligence activity was Abwehr, the German military foreign information and counterintelligence department. SMERSH activities also included 'filtering' the soldiers recovered from captivity and the population of the gained territories. It was also used to punish within the NKVD itself; allowed to investigate, arrest and torture, force to sign fake confessions, put on a show trial, and either send to the camps or shoot people. SMERSH would also often be sent out to find and kill defectors, double agents, etc.; also used to maintain military discipline in the Red Army by means of barrier forces, that were supposed to shoot down the Soviet troops in the cases of retreat. SMERSH was also used to hunt down 'enemies of the people' outside Soviet territory.

## **25 Königsberg (since 1946 Kaliningrad)**

6 April 1945: the start of the Königsberg offensive, involving the 2nd and the 3rd Byelorussian and some forces of the 1st Baltic front. It was conducted in part of the decisive Eastern Prussian operation (the purpose of this operation was the crushing defeat of the largest grouping of German fascist forces in Eastern Prussia and the northern part of Poland). The battles were crucial and desperate. On 9 April 1945 the forces of the 3rd Byelorussian front stormed and seized the town and the fortress of Königsberg. The battle for Eastern Prussia was the most blood shedding campaign in 1945. The losses of the Soviet army exceeded 580 thousand people (127 thousand of them were casualties). The Germans lost about 500 thousand people (about 300 of them were casualties). After WWII, based on the decision of the Potsdam Conference (1945) the northern part of Prussia including Königsberg was annexed to the USSR (the southern part was annexed with Poland)

## **26 Order of the Red Star**

Established in 1930, it was awarded for achievements in the defense of the motherland, the promotion of military science and the development of military equipments, and for courage in battle. The Order of the Red Star has been awarded over 4,000,000 times.

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

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

## **28 Item 5**

This was the nationality factor, which was included on all job application forms, Jews, who were considered a separate nationality in the Soviet Union, were not favored in this respect from the end of World War WII until the late 1980s.

## **29 Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (JAC)**

formed in Kuibyshev in April 1942, the organization was meant to serve the interests of Soviet

foreign policy and the Soviet military through media propaganda, as well as through personal contacts with Jews abroad, especially in Britain and the United States. The chairman of the JAC was Solomon Mikhoels, a famous actor and director of the Moscow Yiddish State Theater. A year after its establishment, the JAC was moved to Moscow and became one of the most important centers of Jewish culture and Yiddish literature until the German occupation. The JAC broadcast pro-Soviet propaganda to foreign audiences several times a week, telling them of the absence of anti-Semitism and of the great anti-Nazi efforts being made by the Soviet military. In 1948, Mikhoels was assassinated by Stalin's secret agents, and, as part of a newly-launched official anti-Semitic campaign, the JAC was disbanded in November and most of its members arrested.

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

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

**32** Likhachev plant: The oldest and the biggest Russian vehicle manufacturing enterprise founded on 2nd August 1916, best known for its 'Zil' brand. The 'Zil' trucks were widely used in the Soviet Union and Soviet occupied countries after the 1970s as well as in the Soviet Army. The enterprise also manufactures limousine vehicles buses and refrigerators. It has over 20000 employees and manufactures 209-210,000 vehicles per year. It has produced 8 million trucks, 39,000 buses and 11,500 cars in total.

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

### **34 Mikhoels, Solomon (1890-1948) (born Vovsi)**

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

### **35 Doctors' Plot**

The Doctors' Plot was an alleged conspiracy of a group of Moscow doctors to murder leading government and party officials. In January 1953, the Soviet press reported that nine doctors, six of whom were Jewish, had been arrested and confessed their guilt. As Stalin died in March 1953, the trial never took place. The official paper of the Party, the Pravda, later announced that the charges against the doctors were false and their confessions obtained by torture. This case was one of the worst anti-Semitic incidents during Stalin's reign. In his secret speech at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956 Khrushchev stated that Stalin wanted to use the Plot to purge the top Soviet leadership.

### **36 Beriya, Lavrentiy Pavlovich (1899-1953)**

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

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

Soviet communist leader. After Stalin's death in 1953, he became first secretary of the Central Committee, in effect the head of the Communist Party of the USSR. In 1956, during the 20th Party Congress, Khrushchev took an unprecedented step and denounced Stalin and his methods. He was deposed as premier and party head in October 1964. In 1966 he was dropped from the Party's Central Committee.

### **38 Twentieth Party Congress**

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

### **39 Lenin (1870-1924)**

Pseudonym of Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, the Russian Communist leader. A profound student of Marxism, and a revolutionary in the 1890s. He became the leader of the Bolshevik faction of the Social Democratic Party, whom he led to power in the coup d'état of 25th October 1917. Lenin became head of the Soviet state and retained this post until his death.

### **40 October Revolution Day**

October 25 (according to the old calendar), 1917 went down in history as victory day for the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia. This day is the most significant date in the history of the USSR. Today the anniversary is celebrated as 'Day of Accord and Reconciliation' on November 7.

### **41 Soviet Army Day**

The Russian imperial army and navy disintegrated after the outbreak of the Revolution of 1917, so



the Council of the People's Commissars created the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army on a voluntary basis. The first units distinguished themselves against the Germans on February 23, 1918. This day became the 'Day of the Soviet Army' and is nowadays celebrated as 'Army Day'.

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

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

#### **43 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.

#### **44 Perestroika (Russian for restructuring)**

Soviet economic and social policy of the late 1980s, associated with the name of Soviet politician Mikhail Gorbachev. The term designated the attempts to transform the stagnant, inefficient command economy of the Soviet Union into a decentralized, market-oriented economy. Industrial managers and local government and party officials were granted greater autonomy, and open elections were introduced in an attempt to democratize the Communist Party organization. By 1991, perestroika was declining and was soon eclipsed by the dissolution of the USSR.

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

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