

Boris Iofik

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Russia

St. Petersburg

Interviewer Olga Egudina

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I met Boris Iofik in his more than modest one-room apartment in one of the new districts of St. Petersburg.

He lives alone.

The only living soul in his apartment except the owner is his parrot.

Boris Moisseevich is not easy to be interviewed. His modesty is the reason.

Boris had to pass through terrible ordeals: partisan group, blockade of Leningrad, evacuation, and front, but he sincerely considers to have performed no exploits, nothing special.

Even now, when Boris leaves his apartment to do the shopping with great difficulties (he feels the weight of years and the serious wound received at the front-line), he tries to do his best helping his neighbors.

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- **My family background**

I remember neither my great-grandmothers nor my great-grandfathers. To tell the truth, I also can tell nothing about my grandmothers and grandfathers. Once in my life I saw my maternal grandmother, but I do not remember her. I only know that my mother's parents came from OPOCHKA. [OPOCHKA is situated 130 km far from Pskov.]

I was born on June 18, 1924 in Pskov. My parents lived in OPOCHKA, but Mom went to Pskov to give birth. Pskov was rather big city (a regional center), and she expected medical service to be better there.

My Mom's name was Rakhel Zalmanovna, I am sorry not to remember her maiden name. She was born approximately in 1900 and died in 1958 in Leningrad. My father's name was Moissey



Borissovich Iofik. He was born also approximately in 1900. I do not remember the place where my parents were born. But I know that they got acquainted and married in OPOCHKA. All her life long Mom was a housewife. She finished only a secondary school. Father studied somewhere, but I do not remember where. He worked in distribution network. In OPOCHKA he was a seller, and later in Leningrad he became a shop manager. He took part in the Soviet-Finnish war [1](#) and managed to come home alive.

Later father was mobilized and took part in the Great Patriotic War [2](#), though by that time he was already not a young man. He perished at the front-line in 1944 somewhere in Estonia. Before that he was wounded and spent a lot of time in hospital. He sent us photographs from the hospital. Later he left the hospital and was sent to the front-line again. In 1944 we received a notification that he had died a hero's death.

• Growing up

So I was born in Pskov, but my native city (a city of my childhood) was OPOCHKA. It is situated 140 kilometers far from Pskov. Velikaya, the most beautiful and the biggest river of Pskov region runs in OPOCHKA. Our city was provincial, very cozy and clean. Most roads were paved. We lived there in a big apartment. Mother's brother and sister (i.e. my uncle and aunt) lived together with us. I remember nothing about them, including their names. But I know that during the war Germans executed them by shooting.

Many years later I went on an excursion to Pushkinskiye Gory. [Pushkinskiye Gory is a settlement in Pskov region, a memorial place of Pushkin, famous Russian poet.] From there I went to OPOCHKA by bus. I wanted to find the place of mass execution of Jews, but unfortunately I did not manage.

My sister Zhanna was born in OPOCHKA in 1920. She got no special education (only a secondary school). She studied in OPOCHKA, and continued in Leningrad. Later Zhanna worked as a technician at some institution. She was married, but had got no children. My sister died in 2004 in St. Petersburg. Since our childhood we were not very close: we had different friends, different circles of acquaintance.

In OPOCHKA there lived many Jews. They lived not separately; there were no special Jewish residential areas. Jews were engaged in different professions, I mean there were no specific Jewish occupations.

I do not know why father decided to leave OPOCHKA for Leningrad. We moved in 1930, when I was only 6 years old. My uncle and aunt remained in OPOCHKA and died there. For a short period of time we lived in the suburb of Leningrad (in a small settlement, I do not remember its name), but then arrived in Leningrad. We settled in a communal apartment [3](#) in the city centre. Father worked, and Mom kept the house. Our apartment was very large: a lot of families lived there.

Mom worked hard at home: in communal apartments neighbors were on duty in turn. It meant that each family had to clean the apartment during a certain period of time: a week per each family member. We were 4, therefore Mom had to clean the kitchen, the long-long corridor, the bathroom, the toilet the whole month. She also had to solve all the problems with food: it was not easy to buy food (because of its shortage). Mom often had to stand in line to buy this or that. Don't forget that at that time there were food cards [4](#)! I remember that some time later we moved to another

apartment: also communal and also very large. I lived in communal apartments till 1985, when authorities gave me this flat (it happened because I was a disabled former soldier). And Mom remained a housewife till my father's death. After that she started working as a news vendor.

I became a schoolboy in Leningrad. My school was very good. It was situated rather far from our house: it was necessary to cross several busy streets, but from the very first class nobody saw me off. It seems to me that at that time children were more independent, it was not customary to take too much care of them. I studied well. I was interested in exact science: physics and mathematics. I had got a lot of school friends; unfortunately all of them had already died. I remember our teachers hazily, but I still keep in my mind the face of our form master. I guess I can recognize her if we meet. But, you see now I can meet nobody of them: all of them have already gone!

I remember that our teachers were good. They were serious and respectful towards children. We had no problem during studies: if we did not understand something in class, we had an opportunity to ask for explanation, to have extra studies. Our teachers never refused. On the whole, my school memoirs are pleasant. I remember that we often went to the cinema. We preferred first shows: tickets were much cheaper than in the evening. I did not go in for sports seriously, but we used to play football with boys in our yard. We never had real footballs (for us it was an impermissible luxury), we used some rag balls. I can imagine that at present children would only laugh at our balls! I never was a hooligan; most probably I was as good as pie. I always had a lot of friends: both Russians and Jews. Nationality of my friends was of no importance for me.

Our family was united. I do not remember any conflicts between parents or between parents and children.

Our family had little money, but we were used to good food and dressed with the best. Mom was a very good housewife: she always knew where it was possible to save money. In my opinion, at that time all families were in the same boat, at least the families around us.

At home we had not many books. I remember my father reading a newspaper, but I never saw him or Mom with a book in their hands. As for me, I acquired a taste for reading being already adult. I even finished courses for bookbinders. But I'll tell you about it later.

I do not remember my parents discussing any political events. Perhaps they were not interested, but probably they did not want to talk about it in presence of children. Therefore I know nothing about their attitude to the communist regime.

My parents were not religious people in full sense of this word. But they celebrated Pesach and Chanukkah every year. Mom usually cooked very tasty gefilte fish and a lot of guests came to our place. It is interesting that we never published the cause of our meetings. Our neighbors thought that we celebrated our family dates. I do not know whether my parents attended a synagogue. For some reason it seems to me that they did, but kept it from children. I guess they were afraid that we could let the secret out: Soviet authorities struggled against religion [5](#). Yiddish was my parents' mother tongue, but to tell the truth, they spoke Yiddish only when it was necessary to keep something from me and my sister. Most of my parents' friends were Jewish.

- **During the war**

In summer we usually went to OPOCHKA, where my uncle and aunt lived. In summer of 1941 we also were going to visit them, but the war burst out.

In 1941 I finished 9 classes. On June 21 together with my schoolmate Grisha Gilbo we celebrated our birthdays: I was born on June 18, and Grisha on June 21. And next day the war began. Father was mobilized during the first days of war. For me the war began in September 1941, when we together with Grisha joined a voluntary youth partisan group. The staff of the group was situated near to our house: at the Lesgaft College of Physical Culture (in Decabristov Street).

Our group was sent to the area of forthcoming military actions near Volkhov. On our way there Grisha got seriously ill (running temperature, etc.). I did not want to leave my sick friend to his fate, but the commander of our group did not give me his permit to stay with Grisha. We left him at a roadside station. The commander took away his weapon and even his flask of vodka. Grisha remained there alone, and since then nobody knew anything about him. Later after the end of the war his relatives tried to find Grisha or at least some information about him, but failed. I want my memoirs to become a monument to my lost friend...

Our partisan group was placed in earth-houses near the neutral territory: a large mine-field about 2 or 3 kilometers long. Several times a week a person came to pilot us across that field. We usually reached the highway where German and Finnish transport moved, or the railway. We fired at the German columns in march or put explosive under the railway bed.

In December 1941 our group was sent back to Leningrad. We moved along the Road of Life across the Ladoga Lake [6](#). Trucks with evacuating people were coming in the opposite direction. We saw several trucks breaking through ice into the water together with its passengers...

We returned to the besieged city and I found a job at the Baltic factory as an assistant to the mechanic at boiler shop. I went through all horrors of the hungry and cold winter in the besieged Leningrad. In winter water supply was cut off. Bread ration was scanty. We used to divide the ration into 3 pieces, fried them using a small stove, and ate one piece after another during day time. People who could not keep from eating their bread ration at once, often died.

Hard times came in December and January: bread ration became awful (125 gr). We ate everything we could: coffee grounds (we cooked cakes), leather belts (we boiled them), glue (made jelly). Everybody slept dressed. It became very hard to bring rations home from the shop because of the frequent bombardments. I remember that together with our neighbor we went to the shop to change our ration cards for bread and came under bombardment. A bomb exploded near the house where we stood in line. A lot of people were killed.

It was impossible to get anywhere. Municipal transport was in collapse. People walked (if they were still able to walk!).

Dead citizens were buried not in coffins, but sheeted. Their relatives brought them to the cemetery (if they managed) or left them in the street (if they did not). It was possible to see trucks full of dead bodies piled carelessly.

In February I got ill with dystrophy, but was saved by a miracle. It was Mom who saved me: her love, go-go spirit, and quick wit. To save my life, she sold different things, exchanged, bought food. For example, she changed her gold watch for 5 loaves of bread (she made that bargain with a

seller at a baker's shop). Our acquaintance, an engineer from the Kirovsky factory brought us linen oil, and took away good woolen suits of my father and my bicycle. [The Leningrad Kirovsky factory (former Putilovsky factory) was one of the largest machine-building and metallurgical enterprises of the USSR.] I'll never forget mess of linseed cake and jelly made of joiner's glue: at that time I admired its taste.

Mom set me up, but got ill herself. Later she was evacuated from Leningrad to Sverdlovsk region in a very bad shape. There she lived till the raising of blockade.

But beginning from March 1942 it became a little bit easier: bread ration was increased to 150 gr, and later to 250. Thawing weather frightened us: we expected epidemic diseases. But dystrophic people managed to clear ice and garbage from the streets. Tram resumed operation. In May people sowed lawns with fennel and sorrel to have some vitamins. Some people decocted needles and drank the infusion, but it was not effective.

You see, nevertheless the city went on living and working, though it was covered with wounds and bloodstained. Padded tanks and field guns were repaired; foundry shops of factories went on functioning. Women stepped into men's shoes running machines. The Centre organizing public lectures, advanced training courses for doctors, the Theatre of Musical Comedy, the Philharmonic society, broadcasting resumed their functioning. In August 1942 at the Philharmonic society they arranged premiere of the 7th Leningrad symphony by Shostakovich. [Shostakovich Dmitry (1906-1975) was a great Russian and Soviet composer.] Karl Eliasberg was the conductor. [Eliasberg Karl (1907-1978) was a well-known conductor, famous for leading the orchestra in the besieged Leningrad in 1942.] The house was packed. But it happened already after my departure from Leningrad. I know about it from different people who were present at that historical concert.

Nevertheless in June 1942 when I grew a little bit stronger, I went to the staff of our partisan group again. But the medical board did not give me permit for military service (because of my eye trouble), therefore I left for Sverdlovsk region to my mother. There I worked as a mechanic at the fulling-mill (the factory produced valenki). [Valenki - felt boots made of milled wool.] . At the same time I studied at school and finished 10 classes. After that I went to Sverdlovsk and entered a technical college (I do not remember what college exactly). But it happened that I studied there a short time.

At the end of 1943 I was invited to the local military registration and enlistment office. [Military registration and enlistment offices in the USSR and in Russia are special institutions that implement call-up plans.] I remember that my way there took a lot of time: the military registration and enlistment office was situated somewhere in outskirts of the city.

By that time I already got stronger, I was boarded and passed for general service. Of course, my eyesight did not improve, but authorities bated demands for recruits. We were taken to a military unit in Sverdlovsk region by train. We moved in a heated goods van [a heated goods van was a freight car adapted for transportation of people.] The military unit we were brought in trained recruits. We were going to be trained and get military rank of sergeants, but at the front-line everything was not well. That was the reason why our training course was interrupted, and we were given the ranks of privates first class.

I was sent to infantry as a submachine gunner (regiment #1050, division #301) to the 1st Belarus front. I started fighting at the Polish border. We were charged with an important mission: to liberate peoples of Europe from fascist aggressors. The majority of population of Poland waited for us and welcomed as liberators. They did not run to the West from the coming Red Army. And we, soldiers did our best not to disgrace the name of the Soviet soldier.

Polish people lived under oppression of Germany more than 4 years. Jewish population of that country was almost cut down ruthlessly by fascists. A lot of Poles were killed, too. But the war worked less ruin in Poland than in cities and villages of Bryansk, Orel regions and Eastern part of Ukraine. In the Polish countryside peasants had bread and had saved cattle harmless. In cities people lived half-starving. Heavy speculation flourished. Shops were empty, one could find there only hand-made wooden spoons.

I served like all other soldiers; I did not do any duties of a commander. I often rushed to the attack, including bayonet attacks, I shot certainly. I did not take part in hand-to-hand fights. What can I tell you about the war? It is a hard work! Your comrades, friends die every day. Every day can become the last one for you. I performed no exploits, but fought honestly. I never sheltered myself behind my friends. So, I can say that I faced up to my responsibilities. We used to joke: an infantryman's hard lot is 2 hours at the very front-line and 2 months in the hospital. From that point of view I was lucky: I was wounded only once. Now I'll tell you about it in more detail.

In January 1945 I took part in a hard fighting not far from Warsaw on the right side of the Vistula River. There I was seriously wounded and shell-shocked: an artillery shell blew up very close to me. I lost consciousness, my brother-soldiers carried me out from the battlefield. I was wounded in my foot: my heel bone was shattered. I spent more than 3 months in hospital in Poland. I was lucky to manage without operations. After hospital (at the end of April 1945: shortly before the end of the war) I was sent to the motorcycle battalion of the 2nd mechanized army of general Radzievsky. [General Radzievsky Alexey (1911-1954) was a Soviet military leader.]

Infantrymen looked at us with envy: usually in motorcycle regiment losses were noticeably less. Our tasks were different; we seldom advanced to the attack on foot. I took part in fights near Berlin as a submachine gunner on a motorcycle. My place was in the buddy seat of the motorcycle, wherefrom I executed fire. I celebrated the Victory Day 60 kilometers far from Berlin (in Furstenberg). I was decorated with an Order of the Great Patriotic War (1st Class) [7](#) and a lot of medals (I do not remember the number of medals!). I keep them in my entresol pinned to a pillow, so that nobody will have problems after my death.

• After the war

After the end of the war I was appointed a technical supervisor of buildings in Furstenberg. The supervising person was responsible for boiler-houses, water supply, and sewerage system. Certainly not all buildings of the city were my responsibility (only a part of them). My work was troublesome. I knew German a little and it helped me to communicate with my German subordinates (stokers, carpenters, yard keepers).

Here I'd like to tell you some words about Furstenberg. It was a little cozy German town situated half-way between Berlin and the Baltic Sea. There is the Havel River, and a lot of channels. Soon

we got to know that Ravensbruck, a concentration camp was situated near the town. It was one of the most terrible camps, mainly for women. About 130,000 women and several hundreds of children were imprisoned there. 93,000 prisoners were killed. On April 30, 1945 the survived prisoners were liberated by the Soviet Army. Several kilometers from Furstenberg there is a little town Luhen. It was the last location of Himmler's headquarters. [Heinrich Himmler (1900-1945) was a German high-ranking Nazi politician. He headed the SS. By the end of the war he was the second-most powerful man in Nazi Germany. As Reichsführer-SS he oversaw all police and security forces including the Gestapo.]

Many years later I got to know that in Ravensbruck well-known Mother Maria was executed. [Nun Maria Skobtseva (known as Mother Maria, 1891-1945), a Russian poetess was one of the important figures of French Resistance.] I remember that her life history impressed me greatly. I found out that in Paris Mother Maria basically procured forged documents for Jews, helped them to escape from the occupied zone of France, sheltered them and hid children whose parents had been already arrested. And on March 31 the prisoner #19263 (Mother Maria) was executed in the gas chamber of the Ravensbruck concentration camp. She did not last 2 months till the day of liberation.

On official business I frequently went to Berlin. Each time I went to the cinema there. I saw The Girl of My Dream. [Die Frau meiner Traume, German film. George Yakobi was its producer.] In the Soviet Union they showed it with the following subtitle: 'This film was taken as a trophy in war.'

The film impressed me deeply. Till now I dream of buying a DVD with the film, but I did not manage. I guess the point was in our hunger for something beautiful, bright ('a piece of cake') after all horrors of the war. My life in Germany was fine. Around me there were many people, including our officers (many of them were already married and had got children). But I longed to go home. In 1947 I decided to get demobilized, but the commanders persuaded me to serve a year more (additional service). I was busy with the same task, I was already used to it, therefore I had plenty of spare time. I decided to prepare for a college entrance exams. Of course, I wanted to study in the USSR.

In 1948 I visited Leningrad during my leave, got to know everything about entrance examinations at the Leningrad College of Fine Mechanics and Optics. Then I returned to Germany and got demobilized. During my leave I managed to marry Tsilye Rubezhova. She did not change her maiden name. My wife graduated from the Library College, and worked as a librarian. But when we got acquainted, she was still a student. It was my neighbor who introduced me to her. My wife wanted to go to Germany with me and even left the College. We reached the frontier, but she was not permitted to cross it (I don't remember the reason). I gave her money to return to Leningrad. She continued her studies and graduated from her College. A year later I came back to Leningrad and entered the Leningrad College of Fine Mechanics and Optics, according to my plans. In 1949 my wife gave birth to our daughter Galina. My daughter also graduated from the Library College (she followed in her mother's footsteps). At present she lives in Canada. She has got a son Alexander born in 1975.

I was a part-time student and worked at the machine-building factory named after Karl Marx. And suddenly, when I was a student of the 3rd course I was invited to the local military registration and enlistment office. They took away my passport [in the USSR and Russia the internal passport is the

basic document proving the citizen's identity] and said: 'You will serve again.' It happened in 1951. I was promoted to the rank of junior lieutenant and sent to construction troops at the Ministry of Internal Affairs. We built military units. It is interesting that we knew nothing about the constructions we worked on. It seems to me that they belonged to anti-aircraft defense. I was a commander of platoon, and later I was appointed deputy chief of the staff.

In my platoon there were guys from the Western Ukraine and Belarus. They were illiterate, but kind and dutiful. And in the other platoon there served soldiers from the Caucasus, and there happened murders and other troubles. Buildings we constructed were situated near Moscow. Therefore I decided to enter the Moscow Academy at the Ministry of Internal Affairs. I passed through all entrance examinations, got excellent marks, but was rejected for medical grounds. A pretext was my poor eyesight, but in fact the reason was anti-Semitism. I got very angry and started writing official reports to authority about my demobilization. Not to waste time, I entered the Leningrad Construction College (correspondence course). At last (in 1955) I was demobilized.

After my demobilization I came back to Leningrad (to our communal apartment). I found job at the ELECTRON Research Institute (they worked out new models of TV sets). I started as a technician. In 1958 I graduated from my College. At the ELECTRON I worked many years (till my pension in 1992). Soon after my graduation I became an engineer, later - the head of the group and the leading designer. My work was very interesting, creative. I often went on business trips, most often to Moscow. I always worked with pleasure and got on with my colleagues well. We met not only at work, but also at home. In 1960 I got ill with arthritis. I felt very bad and had to undergo an operation. After operation I could not bounce back: my teeth started dropping out.

Doctors told me that it was necessary to change the climate. Our Institute had got a branch in Odessa (Crimea), and I was moved there. There I worked a year, living in a hired apartment. I regained my health. I liked the city very much: cheerful southern seaport. There lived many Jews, but certainly not so many as before the war [8](#). Then I returned to Leningrad.

During my work I came across no manifestations of anti-Semitism. I was suggested to join the Communist Party, so that I could fill a higher position, but I refused: my position suited me fine.

In 1955 I got divorced. Tsilye got married for the 2nd time, and her husband took her away to Riga, where she lives at present. We are still on friendly terms with her.

I also remained single not for long. A year later I got married for the 2nd time. My 2nd wife's name was Sofia Shmuklerbaum. She worked at some building company, but hadn't got any special education. In 1957 our son Yosef was born. But our marriage did not last long. My son graduated from some technical college in Leningrad (I do not remember what college exactly). Approximately in 1978 my son emigrated to the USA. There he acquired a profession of the programmer and got married. I have a grandson Michael. Yosef settled in the new place and invited his mother to live with him. At present I almost lost touch with her.

I liked to spend my spare time in museums. Each day off I visited a museum. I preferred to go there alone. In our city there is no museum I failed to visit several times. I guess I was able to guide through the Leningrad museums myself. Certainly, by now I don't remember that much.

I became a pensioner and at first I was in low spirits without work: I didn't know what to do with myself. Therefore I decided to study at some courses. I chose binding courses (probably I was moved by my love to books). It was always a pleasure for me to have a neat beautiful book in hand. Therefore I tried to make all books beautiful. Many years I bound books in the library of the Hesed Avraham Welfare Center [9](#). At present the library at Hesed Center fell into decay: nobody keeps an eye on it, the number of books decreased, and I have nothing to work on. Till now I keep a full set of binding equipment at home and sometimes bind books for myself or for my neighbors.

I remember the Doctors' Plot very well [10](#), especially expose of Lidia Timashuk and her frank confession that the charges were framed-up. [Timashuk Lydia (1898-1983) was a doctor. It was she who paid attention to strangeness in treatment of Zhdanov (in 1948 Zhdanov was a well-known figure of the CPSU), resulted in death of the patient. It was the beginning of Doctors' Plot.]

Of course I often thought about the reasons of arrests around me, but understood that I had to keep silence.

When Stalin died, I did not grieve. I worried about the future of my country.

Regarding the Hungarian events and the Prague spring, I was concordant with the official opinion [11, 12].

I was not indifferent to the Israeli wars [13, 14]. I am Jewish and it was very pleasant for me to hear about Israeli victories. As a former soldier, I also admired military art of the Israeli army.

I also was pleased to know about demolition of the Berlin wall. [Berlin wall was erected in 1961 to divide Western part of Berlin from the Eastern one. It was symbolical that its concrete was used to construct highways of the united Germany. It was demolished in 1989.] I could not understand the purpose of dividing a country and its people into 2 parts.

Reforms of Gorbachev [15](#) (the so called Perestroika [16](#)), distressed me rather than made happy. I was sorry to know about the USSR disintegration. In the USSR everybody kept order, and pilfered less. At present I consider our democracy to be forged.

I used to visit Hesed Center to play chess there, but at present I have pain in my legs, so twice a month they come and bring me to the Day Time Center [one of the Hesed programs]. There we spend all the day long: we have meals, sometimes excursions. Hesed Center gives us necessary medicine at half-price. But you see the point is that we lack intercommunication. I do, and the others, too.

Last year I was crossing the road, stumbled and fell down. Unfortunately right near that place workers were occupied with repaving. I managed to fell down in the molten asphalt and burnt both hands. I spent in the hospital more than 2 weeks and was discharged with my both hands still bandaged.

At home I usually do everything myself, but at that time I was absolutely helpless. And then they sent a woman (a volunteer of Eva Jewish Society) to my place. [The St. Petersburg Jewish Charitable Organization Eva was founded in May 1989. The organization runs a lot of programs for pensioners, lonely elder or bed-ridden persons, needy invalids, etc.] She helped me about the house until I was my own master again. They saved me, really.

- **Glossary:**

1 Soviet-Finnish War (1939-40)

The Soviet Union attacked Finland on 30 November 1939 to seize the Karelian Isthmus. The Red Army was halted at the so-called Mannengeim line. The League of Nations expelled the USSR from its ranks. In February-March 1940 the Red Army broke through the Mannengeim line and reached Vyborg. In March 1940 a peace treaty was signed in Moscow, by which the Karelian Isthmus, and some other areas, became part of the Soviet Union.

2 Great Patriotic War

On 22nd June 1941 at 5 o'clock in the morning Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union without declaring war. This was the beginning of the so-called Great Patriotic War. The German blitzkrieg, known as Operation Barbarossa, nearly succeeded in breaking the Soviet Union in the months that followed. Caught unprepared, the Soviet forces lost whole armies and vast quantities of equipment to the German onslaught in the first weeks of the war. By November 1941 the German army had seized the Ukrainian Republic, besieged Leningrad, the Soviet Union's second largest city, and threatened Moscow itself. The war ended for the Soviet Union on 9th May 1945.

3 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.

4 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.

5 Struggle against religion

The 1930s was a time of anti-religion struggle in the USSR. In those years it was not safe to go to

synagogue or to church. Places of worship, statues of saints, etc. were removed; rabbis, Orthodox and Roman Catholic priests disappeared behind KGB walls.

6 Road of Life

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

7 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.

8 Odessa

The Jewish community of Odessa was the second biggest Jewish community in Russia. According to the census of 1897 there were 138,935 Jews in Odessa, which was 34,41% of the local population. There were 7 big synagogues and 49 prayer houses in Odessa. There were heders in 19 prayer houses.

9 Hesed

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

10 Doctors' Plot

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

11 1956

It designates the Revolution, which started on 23rd October 1956 against Soviet rule and the communists in Hungary. It was started by student and worker demonstrations in Budapest started in which Stalin's gigantic statue was destroyed. Moderate communist leader Imre Nagy was appointed as prime minister and he promised reform and democratization. The Soviet Union withdrew its troops which had been stationing in Hungary since the end of World War II, but they returned after Nagy's announcement that Hungary would pull out of the Warsaw Pact to pursue a policy of neutrality. The Soviet army put an end to the rising on 4th November and mass repression and arrests started. About 200,000 Hungarians fled from the country. Nagy, and a number of his supporters were executed. Until 1989, the fall of the communist regime, the Revolution of 1956 was officially considered a counter-revolution.

12 Prague Spring

The term Prague Spring designates the liberalization period in communist-ruled Czechoslovakia between 1967-1969. In 1967 Alexander Dubcek became the head of the Czech Communist Party and promoted ideas of 'socialism with a human face', i.e. with more personal freedom and freedom of the press, and the rehabilitation of victims of Stalinism. In August 1968 Soviet troops, along with contingents from Poland, East Germany, Hungary and Bulgaria, occupied Prague and put an end to the reforms.

13 Six-Day-War

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

14 Yom Kippur War

The Arab-Israeli War of 1973, also known as the Yom Kippur War or the Ramadan War, was a war between Israel on one side and Egypt and Syria on the other side. It was the fourth major military confrontation between Israel and the Arab states. The war lasted for three weeks: it started on 6th October 1973 and ended on 22nd October on the Syrian front and on 26th October on the Egyptian front.

15 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.

16 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.