

Arkadi Milgrom

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Kherson

Interviewer: Zhanna Litinskaya

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Arkadi Milgrom came to my hotel room for an interview. He apologized for not being able to invite me to his home since he was in the process of repairing it. Arkadi is not tall, but a stately man in good shape looking young for his age with thick gray hair and sad, even doleful face. Arkadi told me an interesting story about his town. He said he wanted to tell the story of his family to leave the memory of them. Arkadi took me to Hased and to the synagogue. Local Jews temporarily rent a building for their synagogue while the old synagogue that was returned to the community is under repairs. One can tell that Arkadi is proud to tell about the accomplishments of the Jewish community of Kherson. He is preparing for Yom Kippur. He says he and his wife have fasted and celebrated all Jewish holidays for a few years.

My ancestors came from Krasilov, a small town that before the revolution of 1917 [1] belonged to Volyn province in 430 km from Kiev. In my childhood the population of the town accounted to 7 thousand people and Jews constituted about 40%. During the Soviet rule the town gained a status of district center of Kamenets-Podolskiy region, and now it belongs to Khmel'nitsk region. The nearest district town was Proskurov [present regional town Khmel'nitskiy in about 400 km from Kiev]. The road to Proskurov crossed Krasilov and another road connected Krasilov with Starokonstantinov town. There was a relatively big square in the center of the town where there was a market twice a week. Local Jewish families lived in the central part of the town. There were shops and stores also owned by Jews on one side of the square. There were grocery stores, baker and butcher stores, a glass and woodwork shops, garment shops, soap works and a forge. There were cabs taking people to the railway station and back to the center, saddle makers, carpenters and tinsmiths. In general, the town had all necessary facilities and provided its products to neighboring villages. There were also long one-storied buildings that served as inns near the center. Some of them were for visiting villagers: they rode their wagons under a tent. These shops and inns operated until the late 1920s when NEP [2] was liquidated. There was local intelligentsia in the town: Polish doctors Velikanets and Skhish and Mankovski, Polish owner of a sugar refinery. He had Polish and Ukrainian workers at his refinery. After property expropriation [3] Jewish owners, who had to give their shops to the state also had to go to work at this refinery.

There were two synagogues in the central square of Krasilov. Local Jews mainly visited a big beautiful synagogue with a splendid prayer hall ornamented with stucco molding and richly ornamented balcony and gallery on big holidays. They came to another synagogue, also two-storied, but not so richly ornamented to pray on weekdays. There was a Beit Midrash nearby, a mikvah and sheds. In the early 1930s, when Soviet authorities were destroying all religious institutions [4] the bigger synagogue was removed and the smaller synagogue and its auxiliary facilities were used to grain and vegetable storage. There was a stand for town leadership made in the center of the square to watch parades during Soviet holidays.

My father's family lived in house in the center of the town. A part of the house was an inn. My paternal grandfather Iosif Milgrom ('milgroim' is 'pomegranate' in Yiddish), was born in 1868. I don't know for sure where he was born: either in Krasilov or in the nearby village of Kulchiny. I don't know anything about his parents either. My grandfather had few brothers and sisters, but I only knew his sister Rachil. She was one or two years younger than my grandfather. Rachil's family – her husband Isaac Goldenderg, their son Pinia and their married daughters Yenta and Sosia and their children – lived nearby. They visited us on holidays and always brought gifts with them. I used to play with Rachil's grandchildren whose name I don't remember, regretfully. They all perished on the first days of occupation during the Great Patriotic War [5] in 1941. They were shot along with other Jews of Krasilov. Only Yenta's husband survived. I don't remember his first name. His surname was Portin. Before the Great Patriotic War he was director of a restaurant. In 1937 he was arrested [6] like many others. I don't know what were the charges against him, but he was sentenced to 10 years in a penitentiary camp. It's hard to say whether it was fair or not, but Portin survived thanks to this sentence. When he returned to Krasilov after the war, there were none of his family left there. I don't know what happened to him then. They said he got married and moved to Israel in the 1970s.

My grandfather Iosif was a tall stately young man whom his neighbors called 'Yos'ka the redhead' for his red hair, a rare color among Jews. His hair had a light brown and goldish tint. He received a traditional Jewish education in cheder. Iosif was an apprentice of a blacksmith and when his training was over he worked some time. Later he became a grain wholesale dealer and made his living from wheat and barley sales. After he got married and had children he turned his house into an inn for local farmers and merchants. There were rooms and a kitchen in the living quarters and in another half of the house there were visitors with their wagons, horses and loads. Visitors had meals that my grandfather's beloved wife and my grandmother made.

Leya Milgrom, nee Gleizer, was born to the Jewish family of tailor Nukhim Gleizer in Krasilov in 1876. I only knew my grandmother's older brother Iosif Gleizer of my grandmother's family. Iosif was born in the 1860s. He lived with his wife Tsupa and their children in Krasilov. Iosif and Tsupa had ten children: Yan, Moishe, Shoil, Shmil, Yona, Tula, Tuba, Sarra and Rieva. Moishe moved to USA in the early 1900s. All other children lived in Kiev. After Iosif died in the middle of the 1930s Tsupa also moved to Kiev. During the Great Patriotic War Tsupa was in evacuation somewhere in the Ural. She died in Kiev after the war. Yona is the only living Iosif's child. He lives in Israel and occasionally sends me holiday greetings. Iosif's grandchildren live all over the world. I have no contacts with them.

My grandmother and grandfather were deeply religious. My grandfather had a big beard and always wore a kippah or a big black hat to go out. He prayed every morning with his tallit and tefillin on and went to the synagogue. My grandmother Leya wore a wig during the day and before going to bed she put on a lace nightcap. My grandmother had an imperious character and her daughters-in-law called her 'Catherine the Second' [7], a Russian Empress with an imperious character. My grandmother was actually the head of the family even when her children grew up and had their own families. The family celebrated Jewish holidays and Sabbath. My grandmother always followed kashrut strictly, even though she cooked for their visitors with Ukrainians among them.

My grandmother and grandfather had four children: one daughter and three sons. The oldest daughter Golda, born in 1895, had no education. She could only speak Yiddish and never learned to speak Russian properly. She was a very kind woman and her husband and children called her like Sholom Aleichem [8] 'Golda the Heart'. Golda married Aba Shil'man, a Jewish man. He also made his living as a dealer purchasing minor lots of goods in Proskurov selling them to local traders. Aba was a successful dealer and provided well for his family. During liquidation of NEP Aba was exiled to mines as a bourgeois and anti-Soviet element. He worked as a worker in a mine in Krivoy Rog [600 km from Krasilov] a few years before he moved to his brother in Baku [3000 km from home, today Azerbaijan]. Aunt Golda, her daughter Tania and son Boris also moved to Baku in the middle of the 1930s. Boris perished during the Great Patriotic War. Aba died in 1948 and aunt Golda lived with her daughter in Baku until 1985 when she turned 90 years.

My father was the next child and then came his brother Moishe, born in 1901. During the Civil War [9] Moishe moved to Poland. He lived in Opole Lublin district. My father happened to visit Lvov in the 1930s. He met with Moishe and was photographed with him. This is the only memorable we have from my father's brother Moishe. This is all information I have about him.

My father's brother Berl, born in 1904, was the youngest in the family. Before the revolution of 1917 Berl was a Zionist and follower of Jabotinsky [10], and after the revolution he became a Komsomol [11] leader of Krasilov. Berl didn't have any education either. He was an apprentice of a blacksmith who rented a shed for a forge from grandfather Iosif and then he worked as his assistant until the forge was closed during liquidation of NEP. Then Berl became a supply dealer for the sugar refinery. When the Great Patriotic War began, he and his family - his wife Malka and their children, Nukhim, born in 1934, Emil, born in 1937, and daughter Etah, born in 1939, evacuated to Kazakhstan. From there Berl went to the front and aunt Malka gave birth to their son Leizer in 1942. Berl perished at the front and aunt Malka and their four children returned to Krasilov in 1945. Then she moved to Baku where her aunt Golda and her family lived. Malka lived there to the end of her life. She died in the late 1960s. Malka's sons Nukhim and Emil finished a Navy School and became sailors. They lived in Baku. Leizer also lives there and Etah who took her husband's surname of Kreinina moved to Israel with her family in the late 1970s. We have no contacts with them.

My father Itsyk Milgrom was born in 1898. He inherited grandfather Iosif's color of hair and now he was called 'redhead' Itsyk. He was short, shortsighted and wore glasses since childhood. Although my father studied in cheder, he wasn't religious, but he observed traditions showing respect to the older. He even occasionally went to the synagogue with grandfather. My father could read and write in Yiddish and Ukrainian, but he didn't have a real education. At about 13 he became an apprentice of painter Skarupski who didn't have children and he taught my father the smallest details of his craft. If it hadn't been for the revolution and Civil war my father would have become a skilled master of his craft. Until the middle 1920s my father worked with Skarupski. My father married my mother in 1919. Their marriage was prearranged by matchmakers which was customary with Jewish families, though my parents knew each other since childhood.

I know very little about my mother's father Avraam Sirota. He died before I was born. He was born in Krasilov in the 1860s and died from a disease in 1919. From what I heard Avraam was a forester when he was young. He lived in a house in the woods. Later he and his family - my mother's

mother Sima and their children, moved to Krasilov where he bought a small two-bedroom apartment in a private house. I remember this apartment. My grandmother Sima lived in this apartment until she died in 1935. It was a wooden house whitewashed on the outside. There were wooden floors in the living room and ground floors in a smaller room and the kitchen. My grandfather bought this apartment from the Garber family who lived in the second part of this house. My grandmother Sima, born in the 1870s, was a short fat black haired woman. Both grandfather Avraam and grandmother Sima were religious like all other Jews of the town. Grandmother always put on her wig before going out and at home she wore a dark kerchief. I have no information about grandfather or grandmother's relatives. All I know is that grandmother Sima was an orphan. She had no brothers or sisters. My grandmother prayed every day and went to the synagogue on Saturday and holidays. She lit candles on Sabbath and recited a prayer.

My mother's older sister Yenta, born in 1895, lived in Mikhailovtsy, about 15 km from Krasilov, before she got married. Her husband Moishe-Yankel Shoichet, a tall stately black-haired man was a good match for her. She was strong and had black hair. They worked in the field and on the farm. They kept cows, pigs and poultry and were quite wealthy working hard for their wealth. Even during famine in 1933 [12] Moishe Yankel sold flour in Krasilov and managed to support our family and grandmother. After grandmother Sima died they moved to her house in Krasilov. Yenta and Moishe-Yankel perished during fascist occupation in 1941. Yenta and Moishe-Yankel had five children: Zoya, their oldest daughter, married a rich Jew from Baku. Her husband was jealous and beat her and uncle Moishe took his daughter back home from Baku. About two months before the Great Patriotic War she married Itsyk Shpiegel, a local Jew. He perished at the front in 1943. Zoya stayed in occupation with her parents and perished. The youngest Usher, born in 1927, perished with her. Yenta also had sons Shloime, Iosif and Itsyk. Itsyk was an electrician. He died in an accident at work when he was killed by electric current. Shloime went to the army before the Great Patriotic War, then he went to the front where he was wounded. Then he returned to his Byelorussian wife and they lived in Byelorussia [today Belarus]. I don't remember his wife's name. Shloime died in the 1960s. He didn't have children. Iosif, born in 1923, was the most talented in the family. He was an excellent mathematician and chess player. In 1940 he entered Odessa University. During the war Iosif went to the front. He didn't continue his studies after the war. Iosif married Anna, a Jewish girl, and they moved to Tashkent. They had three children: Mikhail, Roman and Yeva. Their two sons drowned in the local river. In 1991 Iosif, his wife, their daughter and her family moved to Israel. They live in Beer Shevah. Iosif occasionally sends us holiday greetings.

My mother's brother David, born in 1897, went to USA by boat during the Civil War. He married Rosa, a Jewish woman. David and Rosa owned a shop of bed sheets and lingerie. They had a good life, but they didn't have children. During famine in Ukraine my uncle sent grandmother money and she could buy food in Torgsin [13]. After the war David found me and supported me many years. David died in 1970 and his wife lived two years longer.

My mother Etah was the youngest in the family. She was black-haired and swarthy in contrast to her father. She was born in 1898. My mother finished two or three years in a Jewish school. She learned to read and write. When she was about 12, a 'Singer' dealer convinced my grandfather and grandmother to buy a sewing machine and train my mother in sewing. The family was very poor and they paid installments for a Singer sewing machine for about 15 years, but my mother learned a good craft and became one of the best seamstresses in Krasilov. My parents got married in 1919.

They never told me about their wedding, but since they came from religious families I think that they had a traditional Jewish wedding. Shortly after their wedding my mother's father Avraam died in 1919. My parents settled down in my father's big house and my mother became the first daughter-in-law in this house.

In 1920 my sister Dvoira was born. Later she adopted the name of Dora. On 20 July 1924 I was born. I was named Avraam after my grandfather, but in 1972, at the height of the state Anti-Semitism I changed it to Arkadi [14], that sounded alike to make the life of my son and me easier. We lived in grandfather Iosif's house. There were four families living in this big house and four adult women: grandmother Leya, my father's sister Golda, my mother and later - my father brother Berl's wife Malka. All of them obeyed grandmother Leya who watched that there were no arguments and misunderstandings between the housewives. Every family had a cow. Cows were kept in a shed that served as an inn in the past and later was leased for a forge. I remember a huge pit excavated in the yard to dump sugar beetroot wastes and compact them to make food for cows. It was a lot of fun for the children. There were hay stocks in the attic for winter. On weekdays each housewife cooked for her family. On Friday they got together to cook for Sabbath: gefilte fish, jellied meat and bread. After grandfather came from the synagogue the family sat down to dinner. My grandmother lit candles and grandfather recited prayers. My father took part in the celebration of Sabbath out of respect for my grandfather. He couldn't observe traditions properly since he had to go to work at the sugar refinery and, besides, he wasn't a true believer. Uncle Berl was an atheist and a Komsomol member and in the middle 1930s he joined the Communist Party. However, all Jewish holidays were celebrated in the house.

Pesach was the main holiday. Fancy kosher crockery was taken down from the attic. Before Pesach the family whitewashed the walls and stove, polished the floors rubbing them with kerosene, replaced curtains and prepared starched tablecloths. My grandmother joked that we had to prepare for Pesach as thoroughly as for 1 May. My grandfather conducted seder, of course. He reclined on a beautiful velvet cushion and asked questions and I replied being the youngest in the family. Later I passed this honorable mission to uncle Berl's son Nukhim. My favorite holidays were Sukkoth and Simchat Torah. There was a tent used for wagon parking on ordinary days, but on Sukkoth we removed the roof tiles and replaced them with reed and straw and installed three missing walls. This made our sukkah. We had meals there a whole week and grandfather told me and his younger grandchildren about the holiday. On Simchat Torah I danced around the synagogue with other children. We had an apple on a stick and a burning candle on top of it in our hands.

We were rather poor. What my father was earning was not enough and my mother had to go to work. She sewed at night drawing curtains tight on the windows fearing financial inspectors [state officer responsible for identification of illegal businesses]. My mother put her sewing machine onto a blanket to reduce the sound of it: she was afraid that somebody might hear and report on her. In 1932 a sewing shop was organized in Krasilov and all seamstresses were forced to go to work there. My mother had no other option, but joining this shop and taking her sewing machine there. A few years later, when the shop split they gave my mother back an old shabby sewing machine - instead of hers.

My sister studied in a 7-year Jewish school. There were five schools in Krasilov: one Jewish primary school, three 7-year schools: one Jewish, one Polish and one Ukrainian and a Ukrainian 10-year

school. My friends were one year older than I. On 1 September 1930 they went to the first grade and I joined them. I liked the primary school teacher Mirra Hovar, a tall, stately, nicely dressed lady with her hair neatly done. She took her new schoolchildren to their classroom, but she sent me away saying that I was too young to go to school yet. I ran to my mother's shop and begged my mother to help me go to school. My mother managed to convince the teacher and she let me stay in class few days. I stayed in the classroom two days and then didn't want to go to school again. It was hard to stay quiet for long and I felt like going to play with my friends. In 1931, a year later, I went to the first grade of this Jewish primary school and I enjoyed going to school.

I remember famine in 1932-33. My father occasionally received rationed food at work. My mother, my sister and I went to gather spikelets in the field. My mother went after work and my sister and I - after school. On weekends we gathered them from morning till night. My mother received 300 grams of bread and one herring for what we gathered. My mother sister Yenta's husband Moishe-Yankel supported us bringing food from the village. My father's brother David sent my grandmother some money a few times and she bought food at the Torgsin store, so we didn't starve, but we always felt hungry. My mother also shared food with those whose situation was even more miserable than ours. We always had music the teacher Aron, Arn Kleizmer he was called in the town, having dinner with us. Aron taught my sister to play the violin for a meal. When the period of famine was over, he continued teaching her for free. She didn't want to study music and was always hiding from the old teacher. As for me, how I dreamt of playing the balalaika! There was a folk orchestra in our school and I kept nagging at home: 'I want a balalaika, buy me a balalaika'. A balalaika cost 3 rubles, but it was too much for our family to spend 3 rubles. I kept asking for a balalaika for three years until my father bought it and I joined our folk orchestra. However, I was no good at hearing the tunes and soon I was expelled from the orchestra and after that I put away my balalaika.

Shortly after the period of famine militia units began to walk people's home demanding money and gold and arresting them. Aba Shilman, aunt Golda's husband, was the first one in our house who was arrested. He was kept in a militia cell for seven weeks (there was no prison in Krasilov). Every day he was called to interrogations where they demanded gold. There were criminals in Aba's cell who were taunting him. So he gave up and agreed to give away the only golden piece in his home: a thin golden chain that he had bought to give to his daughter Tania on her 18th birthday. A local Ukrainian militiaman convoyed Aba home and Aba told aunt Golda to give him the chain. The militiaman took the chain, came up to Tania and put it on her neck. Perhaps, he felt ashamed that they kept a man under arrest for seven weeks for such a thin little chain. Shortly afterward Aba was sent to mines. Then grandfather Iosif was arrested. He was kept in the same cell in the militia office. It was summer and the window in the cell was kept open. I was a thin boy and it was no problem for me to get through the bars into the cells. One evening I brought my grandfather some food. We were sitting and talking there and the guard must have heard our conversation. He came to the window and when I got out of the cell I fell right into his hands. I started kicking and screaming and the militiaman let go of me. They released my grandfather about two weeks later since he didn't have any gold. One evening two Jewish militiamen Duvtsik Tseinis and Berl Fishberg came for my grandmother. They told grandmother to get dressed and didn't even give her time to lace her shoes. They took her to the cell across the autumn mud. They often arrested women then hoping that their husbands would bring gold for them. My grandmother was kept in this cell just

one day, but later she often cried recalling this. They didn't arrest my father knowing that he was a worker and earned his living working hard for it. In 1935 my father working in the crew of Nikolay Kobetski, a Polish man, took an obligation with his crew to operate three equipment units instead of one. They became best performers and all crewmembers received bonuses. Since Nikolay was their crew leader the plant built him a nice new house. However, before two years passed all Polish employees were arrested in 1937. Authorities declared them Polish spies. Nikolay was also arrested. Nobody ever saw him or any of those who were arrested again. Sometimes they even had to suspend work at the plant since there were not enough employees. My father didn't sleep at night fearing that they would come for him, but, fortunately, our family didn't suffer the repression of the 1930s.

In 1935 my grandmother Sima died. We, children, didn't go to the funeral. Our parents sent us to our neighbors, but I know that my grandmother was buried in accordance with Jewish traditions. Old Jews prayed at her funeral and Jewish women cried for her sitting on the floor. By that time the synagogues had been destroyed [Struggle against religion], but grandfather continued paying. Jews got together for a minyan in one of nearby houses. In 1937, when I turned 13, I had bar mitzvah. Of course, this was done in secret, but my grandfather taught me all details: how to handle tefillin and pray. I was a pioneer already and if somebody got to know about it at my father's work or at school it would have caused a problem. I went to pioneer meetings and liked Soviet holidays 1 May and October revolution days [15]. Local Soviet and party officials stood on the stand in the central square during parades. I liked this as well and it was in no conflict with the Jewish ritual of coming of age. Soviet holidays were days off and we had a festive dinner and enjoyed our free time.

My sister Dora finished a 10-year school in 1936, then she finished a teachers' school and worked as a primary school teacher in Pechisk village near Starokonstantinov. In 1939 I finished a 7-year school and went to the higher secondary school. Graduates of all lower secondary schools of the town came to complete their secondary education here in this school and there were four 8-grade classes, four 9-grade and four 10-grade. There were Jewish, Ukrainian and Polish schoolchildren. We got along very well and spoke actually three languages: Yiddish, Polish and Ukrainian, easily switching from one language to another. We played football at the school stadium after classes, went fishing and swimming in the lake in summer. I liked mathematic and physics. I also liked geography. I read a lot about other countries and travels and dreamed of going to Odessa Navy College. I also wanted to become an artillerist if I had to serve in the army. In the late 1930s there were talks about Hitler and the war in Western Europe, but it seemed too distant to us. Of course, we didn't know anything about German abhorrence of Jews. There was a feeling of the war, but nobody believed that Hitler could dare to attack the USSR. We believed that our country was powerful and unconquerable. Fathers of many children were recruited to the army: to the Finnish campaign [16], or just some military training. They didn't call my father since he overstrained his back severely at work and was almost an invalid. He quit work by 1940. In late 1940 my grandmother Leya died. When the war began grandfather Iosif was a widower.

We heard about the war that began on 22 June 1941 from Molotov [17] speech on the radio. There was a single radio in the central square and at 12 o'clock the whole town gathered there. On that same day we, senior schoolchildren had a meeting at school. Commissar of the aviation regiment of Krasilov said a patriotic ardent speech. He said that each person had to help the front as much

as he could. We went to the regiment to stuff cartridge belts for automatic guns in planes. Cartridges were stored in huge barrels in the middle of a field. We took them out, cleaned with kerosene and stuffed cartridge belts. We did it for about five days. When German troops came nearer the aviation unit moved farther to the rear and we were sent to excavate an anti-tank trench on the bank of the lake. We were standing almost waist deep in water and mud digging a trench about 6 meters wide and one meter deep. My sister Dora was with me. She came home on vacation. When fascists were near we were dismissed. They said there was a freight train at the station and we had to try to move away. Young recruits-to-be were taken to the east of Ukraine to make a reserve for the army. Our military commander ordered us to move away. He said our Motherland would be in need of us in the future.

We ran home to convince our families to leave. Grandfather said he wasn't leaving. He remembered Germans of the time of WWI [18], he didn't think they could harm Jews. My mother didn't want to leave my father who was almost bedridden having unbearable pain in his back. My mother told us to go to Kiev and come back home about two weeks later when everything was over. We took a small bag with a change of underwear, soap and toothbrushes. At the last moment before leaving home I packed a few family photographs – for the memory. My grandfather gave me a huge amount of money for the time – 30 rubles. We ran to the station and actually stormed into a train. 15-20 residents of Krasilov managed to get into a carriage. Those were young men and few women with small children. The train departed. It headed to Dnepropetrovsk. This was on 2 July 1941, 10 days after the Great Patriotic War began. There were many refugees from Western Ukraine in the train. They told us about brutalities of Germans against Jews, although there was no mass massacre at the beginning of the war. One woman gave us a thin blanket and my sister and I slept at night under it. Our trip lasted for about 20 days. We got meals on the way. We arrived at Filonovo station in Stalingrad region in 1500 km from home. We stayed in the railway station building for a few days. Then kolkhoz representatives came to the station looking for workforce. About 12 of us – few from Krasilov, a brother and sister from Zhitomir and a woman with a 20-year-old daughter – went with one of them. We came to Kamenka farm Kruglov district Stalingrad region. This was a distant and backward place. People were very poor and even chairman of the kolkhoz Soloviov wore patched pants. They never saw a plane or a train. They were cossacks [19], Russians and Ukrainians. They had never seen 'zhydy' [kikes]. When we arrived all residents gathered to look at us thinking that we were one-eyed or had horns. However, we had a warm reception. We were accommodated in a vacant and empty recently built house. We slept in one room: women in one corner and boys in another. We worked in the kolkhoz [20]. I had a hard and unusual work to do taming young bulls. I worked with Abram Sher from Krasilov. We had to catch young bulls in the steppe and to catch one we had to run about 10 km over feather grass in the steppe. Then we harnessed bulls in the yoke making them pull heavy loads. We were well paid for this work. A month later Abram and other guys of 1923 year of birth were recruited to the army. We lived there until October 1941. When fascists came nearer chairman of the kolkhoz told us to leave if we wanted to save our life. Some time before I wrote aunt Golda in Baku telling her where we were. Aunt Golda replied telling us to come to Baku. In the district town my sister obtained a certificate confirming that she was working in a kolkhoz, but they didn't include me in this certificate.

The kolkhoz gave us bread and a bag of dried bread to go and I stuffed my shirt with tobacco leaves. We were taken to the station and from there we went to Stalingrad [Volgograd at present, today Russia]. From there we went to Astrakhan where we stayed at the railway station 10 days waiting for a boat. It was good that we had tobacco with us. I smoked since the age of ten, but we also exchanged tobacco leaves for food. My sister had accommodation in the room for women with children and I slept curling up by the door. Once a high-ranked NKVD [21] officer woke me up. I tried to run away, but he after asking me who I was and where I came from, he treated me to tea and cookies and told me to not be afraid of anybody there. About ten days later we took a boat to Makhachkala. We met few people from Krasilov there. My sister friend Gitl Fishel's husband worked in the port. They took us to their home. Their apartment was packed with evacuated people. We stayed about ten days on the staircase near their apartment. Looking back into the past I am astonished at how lucky my sister and I got. Once we bumped into a militiaman with a gun in Makhachkala conveying an arrestant. My sister recognized her classmate from Krasilov in him. Unfortunately, I've forgotten his name. He was evacuated to Makhachkala with a militia office from Krasilov. He helped us obtain bread coupons and made arrangements for us to have free meals in a diner. He also got train tickets for us. It was required to have a permit to leave Makhachkala for Baku. We took a train and reached the Khachmaz station [today Azerbaijan] where there was a raid all of a sudden. Frontier men ordered all passengers without a permit to gather on the platforms. There was a fee to be paid to come onto the platform and platforms were fenced. I helped my sister to climb over the fence and then I climbed over it and we jumped off on the other side of the fence escaping from the raid. It was 9 o'clock in the evening. It was dark and cold. This was November. My sister had a vest on and I was wearing a jacket. We had no clothes with us. My sister began crying and I tried to console her. We went to the town. Khachmaz was like an orchid. There were fruit trees growing in the streets. We went to an open air cinema where we enjoyed watching the prewar comedy 'Ivan Ivanovich is angry'. After the movie we spent the night on a bench in the park. In the morning I left my sister and went to town looking for a place to stay. I saw a nice woman of oriental appearance at the market. She was selling apples. I asked her whether she could help me to find a place where we could stay. We went from one house to another, but there was nothing for us and this woman took my sister and me to her house, though she didn't know who we were. I am still grateful that she accommodated us, total strangers, and treated us like her own family. I only don't remember her name. We were accommodated on a glass windowed verandah. The hostess, her husband and their five or seven children were in the house. We didn't go out fearing another raid. Once, when there was nobody at home I saw a little boy dragging a book with Hebrew writing in it. I picked the book. It was Talmud. So I discovered that we were in the family of mountain Jews. Our host and hostess were very happy to hear that we were Jews. They didn't want to let us go, but we were eager to go to Baku. Then they found my aunt and a few days later she came to visit us and there was a military man accompanying her. My aunt gave us and our landlords some money. She couldn't take us with her since we didn't have a permit. The hostess' husband came to our rescue. He was a smuggler. He crossed the mountains to Iran to purchase some goods there. He knew all paths and roads well. He described us the way we should take in detail. We had to reach a certain station, say a password at a baker's shop and they were to take us across the mountains. It was as he said. A few days some taciturn people lead us across the mountains and then put us on a train to Baku. We finally reached Baku. We headed to Mirzofatali Street where our aunt lived. I almost got in a raid on the way, but I saw the militiamen on time and hid behind some box-tree bushes in a garden. When we finally came to my aunt she

was overwhelmed with joy.

A few days later my sister went to work at a military plant where aunt Golda's daughter Tania and her husband Misha worked. My sister worked in a forge shop. She was a blacksmith assistant. She had to start a mechanical hammer. Tania's friend introduced me to chief of a special artillery school in Yerevan [today Armenia]. He was visiting an Armenian family in Baku. He looked at my school record book for 9 grades and took me to Yerevan with him. So I came to special school #17. There was military discipline at school and we wore military uniforms. We studied school subjects and artillery. I finished this school with all excellent marks in September 1943. Then I was sent to the artillery school in Tbilisi [today Georgia] where I took military oath. I can say that the dream of my youth came true: I became an artillery man. I was aware of brutalities of Germans on the territories they occupied. Aunt Golda received letters from her acquaintances and neighbors from Krasilov who described the situation, but they didn't mentioned anything about our family. When in early 1944 Krasilov was liberated, I wrote the town authorities requesting them to write me about my family. This letter reached Motia Kucheruk who was my classmate. She worked as secretary of the local executive committee. Motia wrote me a detailed letter about how my family perished and sent me a certificate. My parents and other Jews from Krasilov were shot in Manivtsy village 18 kilometers from Krasilov. Grandfather Iosif, who refused to go to the shooting spot was killed on the way there. So I became aware that my sister and I were orphans.

The term of studies in my school was 6 months, but it was continually extended in relation to victories of the Soviet army. We started training for service in the army at the time of peace, but we managed also to participate in combat action. Before finishing my school I submitted my documents to join the Communist Party. We were patriots and wanted to go to the front when we became communists. I became a candidate to membership in the Party. In March 1945 we were put on a sanitary train that brought patients to a hospital in Tbilisi. We headed to the front. The train crossed Kiev and we were allowed a daylong leave. I remember Kiev in ruins. I see Kreshchatik [the main street of Kiev] in ruins before my eyes. I helped some soldiers working on the ruins. We tied ropes around a huge wall of a 5-storied building that was about to collapse and removed it. I was looking for my relatives named Gleizer on my mother's side. I didn't find any and returned to my train.

I was enrolled in regiment 92 of the 6th fighting anti-tank artillery brigade. I was assigned commanding officer of a platoon. My rank was junior lieutenant. I was at the front line for over a month, and I participated in big combat actions for Czech towns Morawska Ostrawa and others. On 3 May, 6 days before the end of the war, I was wounded with a percussion mine and shell-shocked. Our medical assistant tried to remove the splinter, but failed. I was taken to the army hospital where I had a surgery. They removed the splinter and sent me to the rear. The war was over. We were in the army hospital in Ratibor [present Raciborz] in Poland. I celebrated Victory Day in this hospital. All officers who could walk saluted shooting from their weapons in the yard of the hospital. Later I was sent to Tbilisi by a sanitary train. When the train was passing Baladzharj station near Baku one officer and I were taken off the train and moved to Baku. I stayed in hospital 45 days to recover from my wounds and shell shock. I had problems with speaking and stuttered for a long time. After I recovered I was certified as fit for service with limitations. I could choose to stay in the army or retire. I decided to retire. I dreamed of getting higher education in Odessa Navy College. Commander of our artillery brigade took quite an effort trying to convince me to continue my

service, but I stood my grounds and insisted on retirement. A few days later, when I faced all difficulties of everyday life that I wasn't used to, I ran back to my unit – take me back here. Well, they refused and I realized that I had to find a place in this life. I didn't have a profession, so I went to the district party commission and asked them to help me with getting a job. They sent me to the Caspian harbor office. They organized a course of design technicians at the shipyard. I was admitted to this course and after finishing it I got a job of technician at the plant. I started working in January 1946. However, I didn't give up dreaming about the Navy College. In summer our plant developed lists of the employees willing to enter the Navy College in Odessa. In this case the plant was paying a stipend in the amount of average monthly salary and after finishing this college graduates were to return to work at the plant that actually paid their studies. There were 5 other applicants: Jews, Russians, Ukrainians, but no Azerbaijani applicants. The management tried to convince at least one Azerbaijan employee to have his name on the list of applicants, but it was in vain. Since there were no national applicants they sent nobody to study. I didn't dare to go to study all by myself and live on a miserable stipend.

My sister and I lived with aunt Golda. I often went to visit my schoolmate Lev Vazel living with his parents in Baku. Once Lev came to us bringing news: my uncle David from America whom we had no contacts with since 1936 was searching for me through Krasilov. I got his address and wrote him a letter describing everything that happened to my family: about my parents and relatives who perished, my sister and my wanderings and my service in the army. I also mentioned how willing I was to study. My uncle promised his support if I went to study. In 1947 I quit the plant and went to Odessa where I entered the Equipment Maintenance Faculty at the Odessa Navy College. My second childhood dream came true. My uncle David supported me through five years of studies. He sent me one parcel each year with everything a young man needed: a coat, a suit, shoes, socks and handkerchiefs. He addressed this parcel to my distant relative since I was afraid that someone in my college might discover my relationships with abroad [22]. She also helped me to sell the contents of the parcel and I spent this money on living until another parcel arrived. I was not the only one whom uncle David supported. He organized a US association of Jews who came from Krasilov and they began to provide assistance to their relatives in Ukraine helping them to go through hard postwar years. In summer 1948 my sister and I went to Krasilov. There were only few Jews who survived the Great Patriotic War left in Krasilov. We went across the mournful road that our dear ones covered to their shooting place. I have a small faded photograph that I've kept from that time. Later relatives and my uncle David collected money to install a monument. Uncle David also supported me in the first years after graduation. He died in 1970. It felt hard visiting Krasilov, but I always felt homesick as well. In the middle 1970s my wife and I and my sister Dora and her husband went to Krasilov. We walked the streets we knew so well, stood by the remnants of our house and then went to Manivtsy where there was a monument installed already. There were flowers by the monuments. It meant that there were still people in Krasilov who remembered those who perished.

The period of my studies coincided with state anti-Semitic campaign of struggle against the so-called 'cosmopolites' [23]. Director of my college Budnitski was a very loyal, just a fair man. Thanks to him lecturers and professors fired from other educational institutions for cosmopolitanism found shelter in our college. One was Nudelman, professor of resistance of materials, then there was mathematician Krein and others. However, there were also party meetings in our college where

they held up to shame for references to foreign scientists. Professor Sokolov, who was over 90 years of age, became a cosmopolite for his reference to some works of English scientists that he made in his book in 1910. After a meeting Sokolov was fired and shortly afterward he died of a heart attack. I faced open anti-Semitism when receiving my job assignment [24] in 1952.

By that time I was already married. I met my future wife Lilia Yarkho at a college party. Lilia was born to a Jewish family in Slutsk town near Minsk in Byelorussia in 1929. Her father was a shochet in the synagogue and her mother was a housewife. Lilia was the oldest child. She had two sisters: Irina, born in 1939, and another girl whose name I don't remember. She was only few months old at the beginning of the war. Lilia's mother had no breast milk and the girl was fed with cow milk in a village near Slutsk where Lilia's grandmother lived. Lilia's mother failed to evacuate them and Lilia's grandmother and little sister perished. Lilia, Irina, their mother and father went to Kazakhstan. Irina died of hunger. After the war the family moved to Kherson where Lilia's uncle was director of a shipyard. After finishing school Lilia entered the Chemical Engineering Faculty of Odessa Polytechnic college. Lilia and I got married shortly before we were to receive a graduation job assignment. We were hoping to get jobs in one town. There was no wedding party. We had a civil registration and in the evening we had a get together with friends in the hostel. We drank some campaign and ate bread and sausage and tinned miniature sprats. This was all we had. Lilia lived in a hostel for girls and I lived in one for men. Our friends understood our situation and sometimes they left us alone in a room. Before receiving a job assignment we spent long hours reading locations of jobs on a board. There was also Baku written there and everybody thought I was to go there. However, before the time of distribution of assignments they changed Baku to Kherson. Naturally, when my time came I asked them to send me to Kherson where my wife came from. There was deputy Navy minister at this meeting. He decided that I had to go to work in the Far East in Sakhalin Island in 8000 km from my wife and relatives. I was to have a medical checkup and the medical commission discovered that I had residual tuberculosis processes and forbade me to go to Sakhalin. Deputy minister sent me to another clinic to be examined by a different commission and only after they confirmed my diagnosis he approved my assignment to Kherson, however reluctantly. Anyway, it cost me lots of nerves.

We arrived in Kherson in 1952. I went to work in the port right away. My wife had to find a job since she had a free diploma [she did not have to complete the mandatory job assigned by the university] and was to follow her husband. This was another time we understood what it meant to be a Jew in this country. She couldn't find a job for a whole year, although she had a diploma of chemical engineer. As soon as people heard what her nationality was they said there were no vacancies. In 1953, during the period of the 'doctors' plot' [25] employing a Jew was out of the question. We heard by chance that there was a chemical laboratory to be opened at the motor repair plant and that there were vacancies there. I went to talk with first secretary of the Party district committee. I put our documents on his desk: diplomas, marriage certificate, my Party membership card and my wife's Komsomol membership card and told her about our problems. The secretary called this plant and sent there was a young specialist coming from her personally. My wife was welcomed at the plant. They employed her. She was at the incentive of the plant laboratory. She was involved in purchasing equipment and hiring personnel. Everybody else was promoted, but Lilia retired from the plant as engineer after working there for 45 years.

The attitude toward me at my work was also tense. This was before Stalin died in 1953, and I was deeply mourning after him like all Soviet people, and afterward. I often heard people mocking me, particularly my name of Avraam [Jewish names were targets of mockery, vulgar jokes and often exclusion at the time]. It was often mispronounced.

In 1955 our son was born. We named him Igor. The first letter I was in honor of my father Itsyk. Igor studied well at school. When it came time for him to receive his passport I decided that Igor should not suffer from his patronymic like I had suffered from my name. In 1972 I officially changed my name to Arkadi. It was very hard for me. I thought I was betraying the memory of my grandfather, but really being Jewish caused me so much annoyance in my everyday life. After finishing school and service in the army Igor finished the Irrigation and Drainage Faculty of Kherson Agricultural College. In 1980 he married Alla Belashova, a Ukrainian girl. Alla finished a Pedagogical College. She is a biologist. My wife and I had no objections to their marriage. We saw that they were happy and this was the most important thing for us. We liked Alla. My grandson Dmitri was born in 1980. He followed into his mother's steps. This year he has graduated from the Faculty of Biology of Kherson Pedagogical University. Although my son married a Ukrainian, he feels his belonging to the Jewish nation and he has raised his son in the spirit of respect of the Jewish culture and traditions.

My wife and I have had a modest life. We lived in her parents' apartment until we received one. We've never had a dacha [summer cottage] or a car, but we always spent our vacations nicely. I often received a stay in recreation homes due to my lung problems. After our son was born we often went to Odessa and Crimea. However, my favorite spot to spend vacations was Baku, my second Motherland. My sister lived there for many years. In 1947 Dora's Jewish boyfriend from Krasilov, who courted her before the war, Yakov Goltsfarb found Dora. Yakov wanted to marry my sister before the war, but my mother was against their marriage. She didn't like Yakov. Yakov served on a submarine and became a warrant officer. He took part in the war and was wounded. He came to Baku in 1947 and Dora married him. They had a civil ceremony in a registry office and arranged a wedding dinner for their friends and relatives. In 1948 their daughter Iraida was born. They had a good life. Yakov held good positions after the demobilization. My sister was a typist at the same plant where he was working. Iraida went to work at the design office of the plant after finishing a college. Everything went well until the breakup of the USSR [26] in the 1990s resulted in blood shedding conflicts between Armenia and Azerbaijan. I kept telling my sister that everything was going to be all right, but she and her family and many other Jewish families moved to Israel in 1990. Now my sister, her husband and their daughter live in Ness Ziona in Israel. They often write us that they are happy with their life in Israel. Iraida was married to an Azerbaijani man who left her after they moved to Israel. She hasn't remarried.

Before the middle 1960s I often met with my cousin sister Tania's family in Baku. In the middle 1960s her husband died of radiation disease. It turned out that his office had no insulation from the adjusting X-ray laboratory and Misha was exposed to rays for many years. Tania grew very old and withdrew into herself. She lived with her mother in Baku. Aunt Golda died in 1985 and Tania over lived her for 10 years.

My wife and I didn't celebrate [Jewish] holidays when we were young. We believed we were real internationalists. However, we tried to have Jewish friends to feel free in our own environment. When in the 1970s emigration to Israel and USA and Germany began, we had to consider the issue

of departure like all other Jews. I told my wife then that I couldn't leave this country; this land where our dear ones were buried is our Motherland. I've visited my sister in Israel, but it only was another proof that I am closer to the spirit of my Ukrainian land. I am very concerned about the situation in Israel, though. If I were young and strong I would probably go to Israel to try to be useful to my country, but I don't want to be a dependent there. Of course, life is hard in our country now. We've lost our savings and we also lost the feeling of our big family: the State of Soviets. However, we've got opportunities for democratic development of various nations, including Jews. Now at my old age I've returned to Jewish traditions, language and religion. I am a member of a religious Jewish community of Kherson. I go to the morning and evening prayer at the synagogue every day. I cannot say that I've become religious: it's impossible to make over what has been instilled in our minds for many years, but I am trying hard to be closer to religion and to the culture and language of my ancestors. My wife and I celebrate all Jewish holidays and cook Jewish food. We enjoy going to the Jewish charity center Hesed. We study Ivrit and socialize with our Jewish friends. This makes our life easier and fills it with meaning.

GLOSSARY:

[1] 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 WWI, 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.

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

[3] Nationalization: confiscation of private businesses or property after the revolution of 1917 in Russia.

[4] 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.

[5] 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.

[6] 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.

[7] Catherine the Great (1729-1796): Empress of Russia. She rose to the throne after the murder of her husband Peter III and reigned for 34 year. Catherine read widely, especially Voltaire and Montesquieu, and informed herself of Russian conditions. She started to formulate a new enlightened code of law. Catherine reorganized (1775) the provincial administration to increase the central government's control over rural areas. This reform established a system of provinces, subdivided into districts, that endured until 1917. In 1785, Catherine issued a charter that made the gentry of each district and province a legal body with the right to petition the throne, freed nobles from taxation and state service and made their status hereditary, and gave them absolute control over their lands and peasants. Catherine increased Russian control over the Baltic provinces and Ukraine. She secured the largest portion in successive partitions of Poland among Russia, Prussia, and Austria.

[8] Sholem Aleichem, real name was Shalom Nohumovich Rabinovich (1859-1916): Jewish writer. He lived in Russia and moved to the US in 1914. He wrote about the life of Jews in Russia in Yiddish, Hebrew and Russian.

[9] Civil War (1918-1920): The Civil War between the Reds (the Bolsheviks) and the Whites (the anti-Bolsheviks), which broke out in early 1918, ravaged Russia until 1920. The Whites represented all shades of anti-communist groups - Russian army units from World War I, led by anti-Bolshevik officers, by anti-Bolshevik volunteers and some Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries. Several of their leaders favored setting up a military dictatorship, but few were outspoken tsarists. Atrocities were committed throughout the Civil War by both sides. The Civil War ended with Bolshevik military victory, thanks to the lack of cooperation among the various White commanders and to the reorganization of the Red forces after Trotsky became commissar for war. It was won, however, only at the price of immense sacrifice; by 1920 Russia was ruined and devastated. In 1920 industrial production was reduced to 14% and agriculture to 50% as compared to 1913.

[10] Jabotinsky, Vladimir (Ze'ev; 1880-1940): Zionist leader, soldier, orator and a prolific author in Hebrew, Russian, and English. Born in Odessa he received a Jewish and general education. He became involved in Zionist activities at the beginning of the 20th century. During World War I he established and served as an officer in the Jewish Legion, which fought in the British army for the liberation of the Land of Israel from Turkish rule. He was a member of the Board of Directors of the Keren Hayesod, the financial arm of the World Zionist Organization, founded in London in 1920, and was later elected to the Zionist Executive. He resigned in 1923 in protest over Chaim

Weizmann's pro-British policy and founded the Revisionist Zionist movement and the Betar youth movement two years later. In 1935 the Revisionists seceded from the World Zionist Organization after heated debates on the immediate and public stipulation of the final aim of Zionism and established the New Zionist Organization. Jabotinsky also founded the ETZEL (National Military Organization) during the 1936-39 Arab rebellion in Palestine. He died in New York.

[11] 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.

[12] 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.

[13] Torgsin stores: Special retail stores, which were established in larger Russian cities in the 1920s with the purpose of selling goods to foreigners. Torgsins sold commodities that were in short supply for hard currency or exchanged them for gold and jewelry, accepting old coins as well. The real aim of this economic experiment that lasted for two years was to swindle out all gold and valuables from the population for the industrial development of the country.

[14] 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.

[15] 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.

[16] 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.

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

[18] World War I – a military conflict, from August 1914 to November 1918, that involved many of the countries of Europe as well the United States and other nations throughout the world. World War I was one of the most violent and destructive wars in European history. Of the 65 million men who were mobilized, more than 10 million were killed and more than 20 million wounded. The term World War I did not come into general use until a second worldwide conflict broke out in 1939 (World War II). Before that year, the war was known as the Great War or the World War.

[19] A member of a people of southern European Russia and adjacent parts of Asia, noted as cavalymen especially during tsarist times.

[20] Collective farm (in Russian kolkhoz): In the Soviet Union the policy of gradual and voluntary collectivization of agriculture was adopted in 1927 to encourage food production while freeing labor and capital for industrial development. In 1929, with only 4% of farms in kolkhozes, Stalin ordered the confiscation of peasants' land, tools, and animals; the kolkhoz replaced the family farm.

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

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

[23] 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 antisemitic 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'.

[24] Mandatory job assignment in the USSR: Graduates of higher educational institutions had to complete a mandatory 3-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.

[25] Doctors' Plot: The Doctors' Plot was an alleged conspiracy of a group of Moscow doctors to murder leading government and party officials. In January 1953, the Soviet press reported that nine doctors, six of whom were Jewish, had been arrested and confessed their guilt. As Stalin died in March 1953, the trial never took place. The official paper of the party, the Pravda, later announced that the charges against the doctors were false and their confessions obtained by torture. This case

was one of the worst anti-Semitic incidents during Stalin's reign. In his secret speech at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956 Khrushchev stated that Stalin wanted to use the Plot to purge the top Soviet leadership.

[26] Breakup of the USSR: Yeltsin in 1991 signed a deal with Russia's neighbours that formalized the break up of the Soviet Union. The USSR was replaced by the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).