Moisey Goihberg

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My family background

My paternal grandfather and grandmother, Moisey and Zlata Goihberg, who were born in the 1860s, lived in Ivanovka village, in Mohilev-Podolsk district in Vinnitsa province. Ivanovka was a very picturesque village on the bank of the Murafa River. Ivanovka was a small village with a population of 500 people. There were 3 Jewish families in the village, including my grandfather's family. The Jewish families earned their living in the retail trade of essential goods, fuel, grain, etc. They had good neighborly relationships with the Ukrainian population.

My grandfather Moisey was a decent and honest businessman. He was an orderly man. He wore a small beard. My grandfather owned a store where he sold haberdashery, tools and all other essential commodities. He often went to purchase merchandise in Mohilev. In such cases my grandmother Zlata was his replacement in the store. Farmers greatly respected my grandfather's family. My grandfather often gave them food products on credit and sometimes lent them money without charging them interest. They always paid their debts on time.

My grandfather's family observed all the Jewish traditions and celebrated the Jewish holidays. They honored the Sabbath and tried to follow the laws of kashrut. I don't know whether other Jewish families in Ivanovka had a similar level of religiosity. However, I wouldn't say that my grandparents were really religious. They didn't pray and they didn't go to the synagogue in Mohilev, which was about 20 km from Ivanovka. They only went there once a year, at Rosh Hashanah. There was no synagogue in the village. My grandfather kept his store open even on Saturday if it was necessary.

My grandfather Moisey and grandmother Zlata had 4 sons and a daughter. My father Iosif, the oldest, was born in 1893. Motia was born in 1895, Meyir in 1899, Zicia in 1903, and their sister Rachel was born in 1905. There was no school or cheder in Ivanovka and the children received their religious and secular education in Mohilev. The boys finished cheder and Russian elementary school. Rachel also went to the Russian school. This was all the education my father and his brothers got. But they were very intelligent people and achieved many successes in life although

they didn't have a classical education. They spoke Yiddish at home and Ukrainian with their neighbors.

Sometime in 1918, during the Civil War 1, my grandfather went from Mohilev to sell merchandise. He was coming back with 2 or 3 farmers from his village when they were attacked by either Petliura 2 or Denikin 3 units. They beat my grandfather and stole his commodities. The farmers begged the bandits to leave my grandfather alone and tried to convince them that he was a very nice man, but it didn't help. They killed my grandfather and threw his body into the Dnestr River. This happened in the fall, and the following morning the river froze. My father and his brothers went to the river to search for my grandfather's body, but they couldn't find it. My grandfather Moisey wasn't even buried.

After my grandfather's death my grandmother Zlata was inconsolable, but she had to provide for her children. She lived in the village for some time. Around 1921 she moved to America with 3 of their sons and their daughter. They had crossed the Dnestr to Romania and from there left for America. I don't know whether they observed Jewish traditions in America.

Motia and Meyir opened a small commission store in New York. Later, they expanded their business. By the time World War II started they owned two big stores. Motia had two children, a son and a daughter. His daughter fell from a horse in the 1930s and died. His son died in a car accident some time later. Motia died in the mid-1970s. Meyir's daughter inherited her father's business. Meyir died around 1978.

Rachel ran her own business, too. She lived in New York. She owned a laundry. Rachel was married but had no children. She died in the late 1960s. All my relatives abroad were rather wealthy people. My grandmother Zlata lived with Meyir's family. She died in 1938.

It happened so that Motia, Meyer and Rachel went to America from Rumania. Zicia's life story is different. Zicia thought it took too long to obtain all the necessary documentation to move to America. He decided to cross the American-Canadian border illegally. He was arrested and sent back to the Soviet Union. He lived with us until 1928. Later Zicia married a very distant relative who lived in Brazil and left with her. He first worked as a laborer and later he became a distributor of some goods. He was very successful and became a board member at the Savira Company, a garment factory. In the mid-1960s when the iron curtain 4 was removed Zicia visited Kiev. Zicia was eager to see his older brother. He stayed almost two weeks with us. Zicia lives in Rio de Janeiro now. He retired at 90 and his daughter and son took over his business. He will turn 100 in 2003. I don't know whether he has been observing the Jewish traditions in Brazil.Rachel had her business, too. She owned a laundry. Rachel was married but had no children. She died in the late 1930s. All my relatives abroad were rather wealthy people. My grandmother Zlata lived with Meyer's family. She died in the late 1930s.

My father was married by the time of his mother's departure. This was one of the reasons why he stayed in the Soviet Union. In 1918 or 1919, soon after my grandfather was killed, my father was captured by members of a gang, who wanted to kill him. They took him to Yaruga, the neighboring town. Then all the men of Ivanovka, Jews and Ukrainians, went to Yaruga to fight for my father. They came to the ataman [headman or leading cossack official of a town] and demanded that he released Iosif. However strange it may seem they managed to rescue my father. I don't know how they managed this. The bandits probably released my father because so many people came to ask

for him.

That same year my father met my mother, Lisa Voloshyna. She lived in Yaruga, this typical town within the Jewish Pale of Settlement 5. There were many Jews in Yaruga. They lived in peace with the Ukrainians. There were no national conflicts. There were 3 synagogues and rabbis in Yaruga. There also was a Christian church. People in Yaruga respected the national traditions of one another.

My mother's parents, Gersh and Blima Voloshyn, were born in the 1860s and came from Yaruga. Grandfather Gersh had brothers and sisters. I only know his sisters Esphir and Hana. Esphir married Naum Liber, a Jew. The last name of Hana's husband was Balaban. Hana's daughter Mura married her cousin, Itshak Liber, Esphir's son.

My grandfather Gersh Voloshyn was a vine grower. I don't think the wine his vineyard produced was kosher wine. He sold it to Jewish and non-Jewish customers. He owned 2 hectares of vineyard, which enabled him to have a comfortable life. His sons helped him with the work at the vineyard. They all worked very hard, but my grandfather was a very cheerful and merry man and there was always a lot of laughter in my grandparents' house. My grandfather's wife, Blima, was a housewife. They had four children: my mother's older brothers Moisey and Osher, my mother Lisa, and her younger sister Rachel. Their family wasn't very religious. They went to synagogue and celebrated all the Jewish holidays, mainly in tribute to tradition. They spoke Yiddish at home, but they were fluent in Russian and Ukrainian. My parents also spoke Yiddish to one another, but they spoke Russian to me. My grandfather Gersh had brothers and sisters. I only know his sisters Esphir and Hana. Esphir married Naum Liber, a Jewish man. The last name of Hana's husband was Balaban. Hana's daughter Mura married her cousin Itshak Liber, Esphir's son. During one of the pogroms that often happened in Yaruga in the 1920s my grandfather's family was hiding in the vineyard adjacent to the forest. It was a late, cold and rainy autumn. My grandfather caught a cold that resulted in the exacerbation of his tuberculosis. My grandfather died around 1921. My mother's brother Moisey, born in 1882 and Osher, born in 1892 studied at the cheder like all Jewish boys. I don't know whether they studied at the elementary school. They worked in their father's vineyard from an early age and left to study in Leningrad in the early 1920s after their father died.

Moisey and his wife Fania had 3 children: two sons, Srul and Misha, and a daughter named Tania. Moisey was a shop assistant at a food store. When the war began Srul and Misha went to the front. Srul perished defending Leningrad and Misha returned from the war as an invalid and didn't live long. Uncle Moisey, Fania and Tania stayed in Leningrad. Tania was a volunteer medical nurse and was awarded the medal 'For the defense of Leningrad'. After the first and hardest winter of the blockade of Leningrad 6, Moisey, Fania and Tania were evacuated to Middle Asia. They stayed there after the war. Moisey and Fania died in the mid-1960s. Tania died in 1990.

Osher lived in Leningrad. He lived in Leningrad with his wife Luba, and son Grisha. He was a laborer at a plant, I don't know which one. Like his older brother, Osher remained in Leningrad during the blockade. In 1941, during the first winter of the blockade, Osher and Luba were on the edge of death from starvation. Grisha who was about 8-10 years old could still walk, and they gave him a tablecloth to exchange for some bread. It happened on a late evening. Grisha left and never returned. It was a terrible time when even cannibalism was known to have happened. Osher died, too, during that winter, but Luba survived.

My mother's younger sister Rachel was born in 1898. Her husband, Moisey Serson, their two daughters, Dusia and Riva, and their son Naum lived in Yaruga and worked at my grandfather's vineyard. My grandmother Blima lived with them. The Germans occupied Yaruga in the summer of 1941. They exterminated some of the Jews there and moved on. Yaruga, as well as the rest of Vinnitsa province, was in Transnistria 7. All the Jews of Yaruga were taken to the ghetto. Rachel, her husband Moisey, their daughters and my grandmother Blima were in the ghetto. Life there was horrible, with starvation, cold, diseases, tortures and raids. The Jews in the ghetto surrendered their jewelry or other valuables in order to ransom themselves from the Romanians. Rachel's family survived. They were liberated in 1944. My poor grandmother Blima starved to death in the ghetto. After the war Rachel's family stayed in Yaruga. Rachel and Moisey died in the mid-1970s. My cousins Dusia, Riva and Naum live in New York. They moved to America in the 1970s.

My mother was born in 1894. My mother only finished elementary school, but she read a lot, mainly Russian and foreign classics in Russian. She was an intelligent person for her time. She worked at the vineyard along with the other children.

My parents married in 1920. They had a traditional Jewish wedding with a chuppah in Yaruga. But they didn't have a big wedding party. They just arranged a dinner for guests. This was a difficult time when the remnants of gangs attacked the villages. At first my parents lived in the house of my paternal grandparents in Ivanovka.

Growing up

I was born in Ivanovka on 23rd May 1921 and was named after my grandfather Moisey. There was a midwife in Ivanovka named Palashka who helped with my mother's delivery. The inhabitants of Ivanovka treated Jewish families very well, but there was still danger from pogroms. Three of Ivanovka's Jewish families decided that it was better to live in a Jewish environment, and so they left. I was 6 months old when my parents sold their house and moved to my mother's parents home in Yaruga. A few weeks later, the other two families from Ivanovka also moved to Yaruga.

There, my father bought a vineyard. It was hard work taking care of the vines. In the spring they had to unearth the vines and tie them. In the autumn they harvested the grapes and made wine and in winter they sold the wine. This work paid well and provided for my family's living. Besides, the family really enjoyed working with sweet juicy grapes. I grew up and began to help my father at the vineyard which was located on the southern slope of the Ivanov hill. We spent the hottest time of the day in a small lodge on the hill. At harvest time my father and I stayed at the vineyard overnight.

We lived near my grandmother Blima and Aunt Rachel. My father bought half of a house. We had two rooms: a dining room, a bedroom, and a kitchen. The toilet was in the yard. My mother was a wonderful cook. She baked delicious bread. There were mainly old wooden houses in Yaruga, but our house was made of stone. The houses were close to one another, very much like those in Marc Chagall's 8 paintings. I can't remember the titles of his pictures, but the village resembled the images created by this artist. There were no gardens near the houses. There was a shed near our houses where we kept two horses before the collectivization 9. I also used to keep rabbits in this shed. My mother bought vegetables and meat from the local Ukrainian farmers - it wasn't kosher. My mother was a wonderful cook. She baked delicious bread.

The Jews lived in Yaruga and the Ukrainian farmers lived in the adjacent village. The Jews were involved in vine growing and crafts and the farmers grew wheat and vegetables and raised livestock. The craftsmen included tailors, shoemakers, roofers, coopers, barbers, and so on.

There was a church in the central square in Yaruga - it seemed very big and beautiful to me when I was small. Many years later I saw its green cupolas and crosses in my dreams. My father and I visited Yaruga once after the war and I was surprised to see how small the church actually was. There were 3 synagogues in Yaruga. Each one was attended by members of different professional guilds. This was a tradition. Perhaps, it was for the sake of seeing and talking to one another. Besides, they all contributed money and it was good to know that the money went to their own group. My parents attended the largest synagogue of vine growers only on holidays. There were rabbis, a schochet and a melamed in Yaruga. There was a cheder at the synagogue. I didn't attend it, but I remember other boys going to the cheder wearing kippot and carrying huge volumes of the Talmud.

On Sundays there was a market in the central square where farmers from the surrounding villages came to sell their food products. They came on horseback or in bull driven carts or on foot. Those who came on foot put on their shoes before they entered the town, as they were walking barefoot. Girls, women and men wore beautiful embroidered blouses and shirts. Men wore sheepskin hats at rakish angles. The market lasted a whole day. By the end of the day many men got drunk and there were fights. But they didn't touch Jews. I don't remember one single expression of anti-Semitism in pre- war Yaruga. This bright, colorful market existed until the late 1920s.

There was also a cultural center or club in Yaruga. People turned one of the bigger sheds into a club. There was an amateur theater organized in this club in the late 1920s. They staged some plays by Jewish writers; one of them was Sholem Aleichem 10, whose plays were staged in Yiddish. The local Jews spoke Yiddish. They communicated with the Ukrainian farmers in Ukrainian. Ukrainian farmers also knew some Yiddish. My parents also talked in Yiddish to one another, but they spoke Russian to me. I also remember the musician. He had something like a street organ. There was a dove on his organ and for a small fee it picked fortune-telling notes out of a bag. This musician was blind and I felt sorry for him. My mother always gave me some food to give him.

My mother was a very kind woman. I felt that she wanted to warm up and feed all needy people. My father was also kind and intelligent. He was a very respectable man in Yaruga and people chose him to be a judge in resolving routine disputes.

My parents weren't religious people. They went to synagogue only once or twice a year. I don't remember them praying at home. However, they honored and celebrated the Jewish holidays, the Sabbath in particular. On Fridays my mother cooked Sabbath dinner. We had a nice dinner on Friday, but nobody said a prayer or lit candles. Mother made stuffed fish, chicken broth, cracklings and pastries. She didn't cook on Saturday. She wouldn't even light a fire. My parents didn't work on Saturday. They rested, read books or went to see their friends or relatives. So work on Saturday became my chore. My parents didn't follow the rules strictly and they thought it was all right for me to do it. My mother always invited poor people and visitors to our Sabbath dinners.

Pesach was my favorite holiday. Firstly, there was warm weather on this holiday. We could run barefoot on the grass outside. Our feet could feel the warmth of the soil. The housewives prepared thoroughly for Pesach, buying eggs, chicken and geese. Two or three families in Yaruga had

machines for making matzah. My neighbors had one of these machines and we bought matzah from them. I watched them making matzah. It was all so very interesting to watch them making the dough and putting pieces of it into the machine, then to see the thin sheets of matzah coming out of the machine, and afterwards I like to watch the people packing the matzah into baskets and covering them with clean cloths. At home preparations for the holiday started in advance. We did a major clean up. Chametz was removed from the house. We also took fancy dishes down from the attic. The food at Pesach was very delicious. There were mandatory dishes on seder night: matzah, bitter greens, chicken, potatoes, eggs and kosher wine. My father didn't conduct the seder ritual, a tradition for religious Jews. We just had a fancy dinner. We also sent treats to our Ukrainian neighbors at Pesach, and they sent us their treats at Christian Easter. This exchange was customary among Jews and non-Jews in Yaruga.

When I turned 13 my grandmothers demanded that I had bar mitzvah, the celebration of the coming of age of Jewish boys. Circumcision is traditionally done in infancy. My father invited a man who knew Hebrew and Jewish traditions to teach me the prayer that I was supposed to recite. So, I had my bar mitzvah in secret at the age of 13, because at that time the authorities did not allow religious rituals. A rabbi presided at the ritual and many of our relatives and friends attended. My mother made a lekkah, a type of traditional egg caketraditin. She cut it into small slices, put a few into a letter, and sent them to my grandmother Zlata in America.

Our town was small and poor. We didn't have electricity or radio. Only the central street was paved. Sometimes in the spring the unpaved streets turned into impassable mud roads. On holidays the town changed. People dressed up and couples walked in the central square. Later there was another entertainment besides the Jewish theater. It was a cinema that came to town once a week. The cinema showed silent movies, but we enjoyed them. The film projector was manual and sometimes when operators got tired they allowed us to turn the handle, which was the greatest fun ever for us.

People in Yaruga were very cheerful. They were simple and naïve and often became the subject of funny stories and jokes. Thus, old miller Meylekh, a Jew, once went to Odessa on business. He decided to stay at the apartment of our relative Maria Meylekh. When he came into a typical yard in Odessa he looked around him, saw no one, and decided to change his clothes. He took off his clothes and was standing there in his underwear, ready to get dressed. At this moment he heard someone on a balcony say, 'Manya, you have a visitor!' Poor Meylakh froze in the middle of the yard. It is a true story - he just believed that he was in a safe corner and was shocked to know that he was watched.

Once in 1929 my mother took me to Odessa. My doctor, Mashkovskiy, had advised her to take me to the sea, and so we went to Odessa, where we had relatives. I was afraid that we would look too provincial in Odessa. But, as a matter of fact, we were treated very nicely. This was the first time I had ever seen a big town, and I admired the huge houses, streetcars, parks and the sea.

In the late 1920s, during the period of collectivization and dispossession of kulaks 11 someone named Firyubin came to supervise these processes. Firyubin was a communist, although he had no education whatsoever. He organized a meeting, and the people attending the meeting took a unanimous decision to join the collective farm 12 voluntarily. But in reality this decision was not voluntary. Before this meeting Firyubin and his assistants made the rounds of all the families,

offering them the chance to enroll in the collective farm. If people didn't agree they were declared kulaks and enemies of the Soviet power. Some of these people ran away and others were sent into exile to Siberia. My father entered the collective farm. There were 3 collective farms in Yaruga. The Jewish farm was the vine growing and wine making collective farm. My father soon became chief vintner of thee Jewish farm. The two other collective farms were Ukrainian. One of them was agricultural and the other obtained sandstone and manufactured stone mills.

My school years

There were two schools in Yaruga: a Jewish elementary school and a Ukrainian lower secondary school that had 7 grades. The only difference between the two schools was the language of instruction, no special Jewish subjects were taught in this school. . The Jewish school was closed some time in 1935-36. In 1928 I went to the Jewish elementary school. After we finished elementary school, our entire class attended the Ukrainian secondary school, and we had no problems there. We were all fluent in Ukrainian. However, I still do my counting in Yiddish because I'm accustomed to it. The Jewish school was closed down some time in 1935-36.

I enjoyed studying very much, and began to learn chemistry, physics and botany with great interest. I studied well. I had a good voice and liked reciting poems. During the Soviet holidays there were meetings held in the central square. A stand was installed from where the chairman of the village council, chairmen of collective farms and other officials delivered their speeches, and from where I usually read a greeting from the school. I rehearsed my speech at home and my mother and father took my preparations extremely seriously.

In the early 1930s there was a great famine in Ukraine 13. We were hungry, but no people starved to death in Yaruga or the surrounding villages, because the collective farm managed to sell enough wine to provide for those who worked there. My father helped another family that had moved with us from Ivanovka to survive through those years. It was the family of a widow with 3 children. My father supported the widow and her family until her children finished their education and could earn their living.

I studied for two years in the Ukrainian secondary school. In 1934 our family left Yaruga. My parents wanted me to get a good education and so did I. It was hard to say good-bye to our house, to the town and the Ukrainian village where I had many friends. It was especially hard to say good-bye to my grandmother Blima. She was a very nice, kind grandmother. I used to call on her during intervals at school, and she prepared a nice tea for me and gave me cherry jam. I didn't know that I was saying farewell to my grandmother forever. It was hard to leave everything that I loved, but I was looking forward to a new and beautiful life.

We moved to the town of Ovruch in the Zhytomir region. My father was offered an opportunity to establish a transport agency from scratch: to purchase horses, build stables and employ the staff. My father was a very intelligent man, and he managed to do everything promptly. He was chief of this transport agency until the beginning of the war. We received a two- room apartment in the building where the office was located. It was more comfortable than our house in Yaruga: we had electricity, a radio and a bathroom.

Ovruch seemed a big town to me. It had beautiful houses, asphalted streets, a park, a stadium and a library. I read several books in Yiddish and Ukrainian every week: books about faraway countries,

islands and seas, adventures and traveling. I became very fond of books.

Ovruch was mainly a Jewish town. There were several synagogues and a Jewish lower and upper secondary school. Jews held leading positions in the municipal council and the town party committee. There was also a Ukrainian secondary school and a Russian secondary school for children of the military. I studied in the Ukrainian secondary school because I had already been in a Ukrainian school and it was easier for me to continue there. I became a Komsomol 14 member and was very fond of various social activities. I was assistant chairman of the Kkomsomol committee and was responsible for conducting meetings and propaganda for the Soviet authorities. I was also editor of our newspaper and carried the flag at the parades on holidays.

It was during the so-called Great Terror 15 that the arrests of innocent people began. People were surprised at how it could happen that party and trade union leaders came to be branded enemies of the people. It was amazing that outstanding cultural and party leaders, comrades of Lenin, were arrested and declared enemies of the people. My father didn't believe this. A freight forwarder from my father's office was arrested. He vanished and nobody knew what happened to him. Every night when I went to bed, I would say inwardly good-bye to my father. I wasn't sure that I would be seeing him in the morning. Fortunately, he survived the ordeal.

After reading the book Investigating Officer's Notes by Leo Sheinin 16, I decided to enter the Faculty of Law after finishing school. But my father wanted me to become a doctor. I obeyed my parents, and never in my life did I regret it.

There were two medical institutes in Kiev; one of them was in the regional hospital, formerly a Jewish hospital. I gained admission to the Kiev Medical Institute #2. I had no problems gaining admission, as there was no anti-Semitism before the war. At first I lived in the hostel, but it was very hard living there. There were 10 of us sharing one room. It was too noisy to study, so my parents rented me a room in the home of a Jewish family living near Sennoy Market.

I liked Kiev very much: its streets and parks, museums and theaters. I spent all my free time walking in the town. I'm still surprised that I managed to finish two years of school successfully before the war. We went to the Opera, buying the cheapest tickets, listened to symphony concerts, and attended performances at the Jewish Theater located in Kreschatik, the central street in Kiev. I had relatives in Kiev, my Aunt Mura and her husband Itshak Liber who was her cousin. Mura was a dentist at the Communications College and Itshak was a violinist. Their son Vitia was a very talented young man. He knew several foreign languages and studied at the Kiev Institute of Motion Picture Engineers. We were friends and I often visited their hospitable family.

During the war

On the morning of 22nd June 1941 I was lying in bed reading the History of the Russian Communist Party manual, preparing for my exam in Marxism- Leninism, when my landlady Fania ran into my room to tell me that she heard stories told by farmers from Zhuliany [formerly a suburb of Kiev, presently a town neighborhood with an airport] that Zhuliany was being bombed by German bombers and that the war had begun. I ran to see my cousin Vitia. I couldn't believe that this could be true. Vitia was listening to Churchill's speech on the BBC. Churchill was talking about Germany's treacherous attack on the Soviet Union, and said that Great Britain was going to support the Soviet Union. So we heard about the beginning of the war even before we heard Molotov's 17 speech. I

remember crowds of people on Kreschatik Street listening to Molotov's speech. It was a sunny day, but it seemed that there was a cloud over Kreschatik, so serious and grave were the faces of the people.

On the very first day of the war, my fellow-students and I went to the military registration office to volunteer to go to the front immediately. But we were medical students, so we had to continue our studies. Vitia, my second cousin, the son of Aunt Mura and Uncle Itshak, went to the front and perished during the defense of Kiev in the first months of the war. We finished our second year of studies at the Institute. The hospitals of the Institute began to receive the wounded. We helped to carry the wounded patients to the hospital. We also organized a unit to fight against parachutists. We patrolled the ravines coordinating our patrol duty with our schedules at the Institute. This was the area of Babi Yar 18. There were 20-30 of us armed only with pistols. We were lucky to have met no parachutists. If we had, there would have been no survivors in our group, because parachuters were well armed. At that time we didn't know that Babi Yar, where we used to walk before the war, would become a mass grave for hundreds of thousands of people. We were also responsible for meeting trains of refugees from the West. These were mostly families of the military. We took them to the Botanical Garden where they fell asleep either on benches or on the ground. Kiev was often bombed and we were on duty at the Institute. We were not allowed to leave our posts during air raids. It was frightening to be there alone, and I tried to stand beside a support wall just in case a bomb hit the building.

The front was nearing Ovruch and my father decided to move his transport agency to Kiev and transfer it to the authorities. My father had about a dozen carts with open platforms. My father and other Jewish men decided to move their families from Ovruch on these carts. When they arrived in Kiev nobody wanted to accept the horses. My parents moved on to Kharkov and I stayed on in Kiev. In August 1941 our Institute evacuated. The teachers went by train and the students went to Kharkov on foot. It was fun at first. The weather was nice and the road was smooth for the first 30 km. But then it became much more difficult. We covered 500 km in about a month. We stayed in villages and farmers gave us food and milk. Sometimes we felt like staying in those villages. We came to Kharkov at the end of August. My parents found me in Kharkov. They moved on to the Gorky region with some acquaintances of theirs. We didn't know whether we were ever going to see each other again.

Our Institute settled down in the very center of Kharkov. Our classes began on 1st September. We received a very small stipend that was not enough for our living expenses. Some other students and I went to work as nurses at the hospital. We worked at night and studied during the day. Two weeks later evacuation from Kharkov began. The hospital was to be evacuated and the issue of the Institute was still up in the air. The hospital management allowed us to evacuate with them. When we were boarding the train on 19th September we heard on the radio that Kiev had surrendered.

The trip took over a month and at the end of October we arrived in Krasnoyarsk, Russia. I was met there by my relatives from Kiev, Aunt Mura and Uncle Itshak. Mura evacuated with the Communications College from Kiev. They insisted that I tell my parents to come to Krasnoyarsk. I sent them a telegram, but it probably took too long before they received it. At that time there was a staff inspection at our hospital. The commission fired those few students that were working there. Their argument was that the students had to study. Our Institute was evacuated to Cheliabinsk. I didn't want to go that far away from where my parents were supposed to be. I went to Novosibirsk

and was admitted to the 3rd year of Novosibirsk Medical Institute. I had to earn my living and got a job as a nurse at the radio factory. I went to classes in the morning and stayed overnight at the factory. It was a very cold winter and we didn't have enough food. Those students that came from Novosibirsk and were living with their families often took us to their homes to treat us to a meal. Soon my parents came to Krasnoyarsk and I spent my winter vacation of 1941-42 with them.

My father was mobilized into the army, but due to his age he didn't have to go to the front. Instead, he was sent to the logistics department of the Kiev Communications College that was located in Cheliabinsk. He organized a farmyard where they grew vegetables and raised pigs. In 1944 the College reevacuated and my father and mother and Mura and Itshak came to Kiev. In Kiev my father organized another farmyard and was demobilized in 1945.

After I finished my 3rd year in Novosibirsk a representative of the Military Faculty of Moscow Institute #2, located in Omsk came to enroll students for the 4th year. I submitted my application and went to Omsk in August 1942. This Military Faculty was very different from an ordinary faculty. We lived in the barracks, wore military uniforms and had to march everywhere. In May 1943 the Institute was reevacuated to Moscow. The headquarters of the Military Faculty and Military Clinics were located in the old building of Moscow Hospital #2. Well-known doctors and scientists lectured there. Soon we were given the rank of lieutenants of medical services. By that time we were allowed few freedoms. My friend Volodia Shteinberg and I rented an apartment. We were lucky with our landladies. They were two very nice women who worked at the booking offices of the Stanislavskiy and Nemirovich-Danchenko Theaters. All the theaters and other cultural institutions in Moscow were operating in 1943. We often went to plays at these theaters, as well as to the Bolshoi Theater 19 and the Philharmonic. We also went to the Jewish State Theater to watch Tevye the Dairyman by Sholem Aleichem and King Lear staged by the well-known theatrical producer Mikhoels 20. At the end of 1943 we passed our state exams and became professional doctors. We were also promoted to the rank of captains of medical services. We received our diplomas and a personal stamp. I still keep it.

In January 1944 I was sent to the Karelian front. I became commander of the sanitary unit for the infantry regiment. I got a baptism of fire in February. I volunteered to go to the rear of the enemy as a doctor with a battalion. The chief of headquarters who heard of my desire to go to the rear of the enemy asked with a hint of irony, 'Captain, can you ski? Can you shoot an automatic gun, hold the all-round defense and camouflage? So, what are you butting into, you newly born doctor?' He noticed that I was hurt by his comments and advised me to be careful and to follow what the others were doing. I didn't realize then that the chief of headquarters was worrying about me and wanted to save my life. Later I became a doctor for the medical and sanitary battalion and senior doctor of the regiment, but I always remembered the wise chief of headquarters and my dangerous campaign into the rear of the enemy.

I became a member of the Communist Party at the front. I believed it was my duty to be a communist and to face the most dangerous and difficult tasks. In 1944 we were transferred to the Murmansk area, liberated the town of Petsamo, came out to the Norwegian border and liberated the town of Kirkenes, the main navy base of the enemy. Kirkenes was practically destroyed and the fascists took all food stocks when retreating. Every day there were lines of Norwegian children with bowls lining up before the military cooks. Our cooks tried to give food to all needy people.

In November 1944 we left Norway to deploy in the vicinity of the town of Petsamo, in the tundra. I faced anti-Semitism for the first time there. Once we were sitting in the company of doctors. There were women doctors there, as well as the director of the hospital and the visiting chief of headquarters of the regiment. We were talking with him and he said to me, 'You are a good guy, even though you are a Jew'. I froze, but kept silent. The chief of headquarters was senior in rank and if I had decided to sort things out with him it might have cost me several years in prison camps. At dawn on 9th May 1945 I woke up to the sound of people shouting, 'Get up all! Victory!'. People all around were saluting and shooting their guns.

Post-war

My division doctor was appointed human resources manager at the sanitary headquarters of the Belomorsk Military Regiment. He offered me a position as his assistant. I served under him for two years at the construction of the Belomorcanal 21 in Belomorsk, and in 1947 he also helped me to get a transfer to the Kiev Military Regiment. My parents lived in Kiev after the war. My father received an apartment from the Kiev Communications College. I worked as a doctor at the military unit for some time and demobilized after few months. I left my well-paying position with a salary of 2,000 rubles for the position of a common doctor with a salary of 600 rubles. But I was eager to do scientific research in medicine.

I was introduced to my future tutor, Professor Boris Polonskiy, the best urologist in the country. I studied urology under his supervision. Soon I became a registrar at the Onco-Urological Department. I studied urology from zero. Professor Polonskiy patiently taught me everything he knew and could perform well: the science of urology, and practical skills. Soon I began to perform surgeries and soon I was performing complicated surgeries successfully.

At the beginning of 1953 when the Doctors' Plot 22 started along with other anti-Semitic campaigns stirred up in Moscow, I was going through a hard time. In February 1953 I performed a surgery on an elderly man. All the other doctors refused to operate on him. They were afraid that the patient would not survive the operation. At the end of the surgery my assistant told me that by negligence we had transfused the patient with the wrong blood type. This meant death for the patient. We quickly retransfused the patient with the appropriate blood. By some miracle the patient survived. This annoying mistake that was not my fault had serious consequences. The chief doctor of the hospital believed it was his task to get rid of Jews. If the patient had died I would have been taken to court. Before his release from hospital the patient, who didn't know what had happened during his surgery, asked a nurse for my name, saying, 'My granddaughter is a schoolgirl. There are articles in newspapers about doctors that poison people. I want to go to my granddaughter's school to tell children about this wonderful Jewish doctor, Moisey Goihberg. All the other doctors refused to operate on me, but he performed this surgery and saved me.' Every day I opened newspapers with horror. There were satirical articles with Jewish names (specifying their real names in brackets). Assistant Professor Krisson and a few other Jews were fired from our clinic. The party district committee issued a decree stating that it was difficult for a Christian to get employed because many people of different faiths got jobs.

Stalin died in 1953. I cried for him along with many other people not because I loved him, but because I was afraid that things might get worse. In 1954 they found a possibility to get rid of me. There was a party decree about strengthening the villages. I was called to the district health

department and ordered to become head of the district health department in the town of Stavysche near Kiev. I had my objections, saying that I was a practicing surgeon doing scientific research and had never been an administrator. But I was told, 'You have worked enough in Kiev. Somebody else will take up your job.' Only I and another Jewish woman were sent to the village from our clinic. I worked for a year in Stavysche and did well. I also performed surgeries at the local hospital. After a year I was allowed to return to Kiev. I don't know whether it happened because I was a talented surgeon, or because my tutor Polonskiy pulled strings for me, or whether it was due to a general improvement of the situation.

We were enthusiastic about the decisions of the Twentieth Party Congress 23 denouncing the cult of Stalin. I was secretary of the party unit and received a letter at the district party committee that I had to read to the communists concerning the murderous deeds of Stalin and his colleagues. I did this with pleasure. I stopped doing anything for the party at that time.

My life after that was quiet. I defended my candidate's thesis although I was an ordinary doctor-registrar. In 1965 the Institute of Urology was established in Kiev and I was a successful applicant for the position of senior researcher. I worked successfully in that post until 1984. After I turned sixty I went to work as a consultant at the Kiev Oncological Clinic.

I've had a happy private life. I met my wife Mara Khersonskaya, a Jew, in Vorzel near Kiev in the early 1950s. Mara was born in Kiev in 1928. Her father Mikhail Khersonskiy was a party activist. Before the war he was secretary of the Podol 24 party committee. When the war began Mikhail volunteered to go to the front and perished defending Kiev. Mara's mother worked at the Torgmash Plant before and after the war. They were a very intelligent family without any religious prejudices. During the war Mara and her mother were evacuated to the Riazan region. Before we met Mara had graduated from the Philology Faculty of Kiev State University and worked as a schoolteacher of Russian language and literature. We had much in common: we both loved literature and poetry, and were fond of theater and classical music. We courted for two years. After we got married I was sent to Stavysche. At first we lived at Mara's apartment and later we moved to my parents. In due time we bought a big cooperative apartment. That's where we still live.

My father worked at the logistics department of Kiev Garrison. He died in 1976. My mother died in 1984 at the age of 90. My daughter Natalia was born in 1956. She was an ordinary Soviet child. She became a pioneer at school and then a Komsomol member. In the summer she went to pioneer camps. She had many friends. She knew that she was a Jew from early childhood, but we didn't follow any Jewish traditions or lead a Jewish way of life. She tried to enter the Kiev Conservatory after finishing music school. But this was the period when it was next to impossible to enter a cultural institution, especially in Ukraine. My daughter went to Russia and entered the Sverdlovsk Conservatory. She graduated successfully. Upon graduation she returned to Kiev. She is a pianist and works at a concert organization. She married Oleg Samsonov, a Russian, in Sverdlovsk, but divorced him later. I have a lovely granddaughter named Masha. She is a student at the English Faculty of the Kiev Institute of Foreign Languages.

I have identified myself as a Jew all my life. I have been interested in everything Jewish. After the war it was not safe to be a Jew and celebrate Jewish holidays. We went to my parents' to celebrate. My parents celebrated Jewish holidays until the end of their lives. They didn't go to synagogue or pray, but my mother always laid a fancy dinner table and had matzah at Pesach. They bought

matzah secretly from some people in Podol, and fasted on Yom Kippur. In recent years the attitude towards Jews in independent Ukraine has changed dramatically. We have an opportunity to observe traditions and study the language, history and religion. There are many Jewish charity, cultural, religious and youth organizations in Kiev. I have the opportunity to compensate for all those years when we were just Soviet people without any nationality. I read a lot, attend lectures and sometimes make speeches at various Jewish organizations. Unfortunately, I have never been abroad. It was impossible in the past and now we are too old and we can't afford to travel. But I'm still happy. I like Israel and am interested in that country, but I never considered emigrating there. I would only go if Israel needed me as a doctor. However, it would still be difficult for me to move, because I was brought up on the foundations of Russian culture. I love my motherland. I'm a Russian intellectual of Jewish nationality. And now, when all conditions for the development of the Jewish nation have been created in my beloved Ukraine, I am happy.

Glossary

1 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.

2 Petliura, Simon (1879-1926)
Ukrainian politician, member of the Ukrainian Social Democratic Working Party, one of the leaders of Centralnaya Rada (Central Council), the national government of Ukraine (1917-1918). Military units under his command killed Jews during the Civil War in Ukraine. In the Soviet-Polish war he was on the side of Poland; in 1920 he emigrated. He was killed in Paris by the Jewish nationalist Schwarzbard in revenge for the pogroms against Jews in Ukraine.

3 Denikin, Anton Ivanovich (1872-1947)
White Army general. During the Russian Civil War he fought against the Red Army in the South of Ukraine.

4 Iron Curtain
A term popularized by Sir Winston Churchill in a speech in 1946. He used it to designate the Soviet Union's consolidation of its grip over Eastern Europe. The phrase denoted the separation of East and West during the Cold War, which placed the totalitarian states of the Soviet bloc behind an 'Iron Curtain'. The fall of the Iron Curtain corresponds to the period of perestroika in the former

Soviet Union, the reunification of Germany, and the democratization of Eastern Europe beginning in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

5 Jewish Pale of Settlement

Certain provinces in the Russian Empire were designated for permanent Jewish residence and the Jewish population (apart from certain privileged families) was only allowed to live in these areas.

6 Blockade of Leningrad

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

7 Transnistria

Area between the Dnestr and Bug Rivers and the Black Sea. The word Transnistria derived from the Romanian name of the Dnestr River - Nistru. The territory was controlled by Gheorghe Alexianu, governor appointed by Ion Antonescu. Several labor camps were established on this territory, onto which Romanian Jews were deported from Bessarabia and Bukovina in 1941-1942. The most feared camps were Vapniarka, Ribnita, Berezovka, Tulcin and Iampol. Most of the Jews died between 1941-1943 because of horrible living conditions, diseases, and lack of food.

8 Chagall, Marc (1889-1985)

Russian-born French painter. Since Marc Chagall survived two world wars and the Revolution of 1917 he increasingly introduced social and religious elements into his art.

9 Collectivization in the USSR

In the late 1920s - early 1930s private farms were liquidated and collective farms established by force on a mass scale in the USSR. Many peasants were arrested during this process. As a result of the collectivization, the number of farmers and the amount of agricultural production was greatly reduced and famine struck in the Ukraine, the Northern Caucasus, the Volga and other regions in 1932-33.

10 Sholem Aleichem (pen name of Shalom Rabinovich (1859-1916)

Yiddish author and humorist, a prolific writer of novels, stories, feuilletons, critical reviews, and poem in Yiddish, Hebrew and Russian. He also contributed regularly to Yiddish dailies and weeklies. In his writings he described the life of Jews in Russia, creating a gallery of bright characters. His creative work is an alloy of humor and lyricism, accurate psychological and details of everyday life. He founded a literary Yiddish annual called Di Yidishe Folksbibliotek (The Popular Jewish Library), with which he wanted to raise the despised Yiddish literature from its mean status and at the same time to fight authors of trash literature, who dragged Yiddish literature to the lowest popular level. The first volume was a turning point in the history of modern Yiddish literature. Sholem Aleichem died in New York in 1916. His popularity increased beyond the Yiddish-speaking public after his

death. Some of his writings have been translated into most European languages and his plays and dramatic versions of his stories have been performed in many countries. The dramatic version of Tevye the Dairyman became an international hit as a musical (Fiddler on the Roof) in the 1960s.

11 Kulaks

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

12 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.

13 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.

14 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.

15 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.

16 Leo Sheinin
He worked in law-enforcement institutions and wrote stories about the Soviet militia.

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

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

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

21 Belomorcanal
This was one of the construction sites of the Stalinist epoch, where thousands of prisoners were involved in the construction of the canal.

22 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.

23 Twentieth Party Congress

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

24 Podol

The lower section of Kiev. It has always been viewed as the Jewish region of Kiev. In tsarist Russia Jews were only allowed to live in Podol, which was the poorest part of the city. Before World War II 90% of the Jews of Kiev lived there.