

# Riva Pizman Biography

Riva Pizman

Mogilyov-Podolskiy

Ukraine

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Riva Pizman is a rather short, growing stout woman. She has short, black, wavy hair with streaks of gray. Riva has bright black eyes and a charming smile brightening her face. Through Riva never finished even a primary school; she has a correct and literary manner of speech. Even when she talks about sad things, her sense of humor never fails her. Riva reads a lot. Her family has quite a collection of books: it includes books by Russian classics and foreign authors. There are also books by Jewish writers translated into Russian. Riva likes poetry. Perhaps, it is thanks to her younger son Mikhail, an engineer, started writing poems and had his first book published recently. Riva and her husband Aron live in a 2-bedroom apartment, which they received from the plant where her husband worked his whole life. The plant built this house for its employees on the bank of the Dnestr in a picturesque district of Mogilyov-Podolskiy in the 1970s. During WORLD WAR II there was a ghetto in this area. There is a tank on the pedestal across the street from their house. This Soviet tank was the first to come into the town on 19 March 1944, on the day of liberation of the town from the occupation. Riva likes walking on the bank of the river where many trees grow. Riva is the soul of the family. Her son lives with his family, but he visits his parents after work every day. They discuss how his day was at work, and at times he asks his mother's advice. Riva's granddaughters come by to share their little secrets with their grandma. Riva has a smart sharp mind, and her opinion often has a decisive significance. Riva and her husband care about each other. They always tease each other a little, but one can tell love in each word they say. They've celebrated the 55th wedding anniversary recently.

I know very little about my grandmother and grandfather. My parents became orphans at an early age. My paternal grandfather's name was Moische Gershberg, but I don't know my grandmother's first or maiden name. They lived in Mogilyov-Podolskiy. I don't know what my grandfather did for a living. As for my grandmother, I think she was a housewife like all other married Jewish women at the time. I don't know how many children they had, but besides my father, I knew his two older brothers: Froim and Isaac. My father Shloime Gershberg was born in 1890. His mother tongue was Yiddish, as well as his brothers'. He never told me about his childhood. It must have been hard: he

was a little boy, when his parents died. All I know is that they died in the 1900s, and that my grandmother lived a little longer than my grandfather. They were buried in the Jewish cemetery in Mogilyov-Podolskiy. I don't know how religious my grandfather and grandmother were. My father was an atheist, when I knew him. Only my father's older brother Froim was religious. He went to the synagogue on Jewish holidays and celebrated Sabbath and holidays at home. His children were atheists, though.

My father had to go to work at an early age. He became an apprentice of a cabinetmaker. Later he started working on his own making furniture. Of course, this was plain furniture that he made, but his customers were common people. His older brother Froim was also a carpenter. My father's brother Isaac was a tailor. They were married. Froim had five children: son Vladimir [Common name] [1](#), Velvl was his Jewish name, and daughters Golda, Rosa – her Jewish name was Reizl, Musia and Anna, whose Jewish name was Hana. My father's brother Isaac had three children: sons Isosif and Vladimir and daughter Miriam.

My mother's parents also lived in Mogilyov-Podolskiy. I don't know, when or where they were born. My grandfather's name was Faivish Weinstein and my grandmother's name was Riva. I don't know my grandmother's maiden name. I was named after her. There were five children in the family. The older son's name was Srul and then came three daughters: Sheila, Lisa and my mother Golda. Mama was born in 1891. The youngest Mikhail, his Jewish name was Moishe, was born in 1895. My grandfather was a tailor and my grandmother was a housewife. My mother told me that the family was religious. They celebrated Sabbath and Jewish holidays at home. They spoke Yiddish. I don't know what kind of education mama, her sisters or brothers got. Mama could read and write a little, but I don't know how she learned it. My grandfather taught his daughters his profession. I don't know what my mother's brothers did for a living. My grandmother and grandfather died in the early 1900s, when my mama and her younger brother were still in their teens. My mother's older brother and sisters raised the younger children.

My mother's older brother Srul got fond of revolutionary ideas after World War I and attended a group where they studied works of the theoretical revolutionaries. When the czarist government arrested few members of their revolutionary underground organization, Srul and few other members moved to Brazil. As far as I know, there were no contacts with them. Sheila married a Jewish man from Simferopol and moved to live with her husband. This is all I know about her. My mother's sister Lisa married Abram Goltzman from Mogilyov-Podolskiy. Lisa was a housewife. She had two daughters: Mariam, her Russian name was Maria, and the younger one was Riva, like me, also named after our grandmother. My mother's younger brother Mikhail moved to the USA during the revolution of 1917 [2](#). For some time the family corresponded with him. In 1932-33 during the period of famine [3](#) Mikhail sent us food parcels and money. Shortly before WORLD WAR II having relatives [Keep in touch with relatives abroad] [4](#) was no longer safe. This raised suspicion of espionage. Mama was very scared that authorities might learn that she had relatives in America. They kept writing us for some time and sent wedding photographs of their children, but mama did not reply and then the correspondence terminated. Mama destroyed the photographs and the address and later we didn't try to find our relatives.

My mother became independent at an early age. In the early 1900s some distant relative of hers died and left her little store to my mother. Perhaps, she felt sorry for the orphan girl and wanted to

help her. Whatever it was, my mother became the owner of this store. She purchased and sold everyday goods: matches, kerosene, needles, soap, etc. After the revolution my mother's store was expropriated. This was when mama began sewing at home. She altered old clothes and did it so well that everybody believed the thing was brand new. She had her clients: at first poorer women, but later she got wealthier clients, who liked her sewing.

I remember the prewar Mogilyov-Podolskiy: a clean, cozy and quiet town buried in verdure on the bank of the Dnestr River. On the other side it is surrounded by a range of lime hills covered with woods. The Dnestr was the border between the Ukraine and Bessarabia [5](#).

Mogilyov-Podolskiy is a Jewish town. Jews constituted a bigger part of the population before the revolution. Vinnitsa region was within the Pale of Settlement [6](#) before the revolution. Jews settled down in the central part of the town. There were few 2-storied stone houses in the center, but mostly people lived in small clay houses. The houses adjoined closely to one another. Ukrainians, Greeks and Moldavians lived in the suburbs of the town. They were farmers and supplied food products to the town. There was a market in the center of the town. There was a shochet, and Jewish housewives brought their poultry to him to slaughter. There was a synagogue across the street from the market. There was another synagogue near our house, few prayer houses, and there was a cheder in the town. There was also a Russian Orthodox church, a Catholic cathedral and a Greek Orthodox church in Mogilyov-Podolskiy.

There were few cemeteries: a Jewish, Catholic, Christian Orthodox and a common town cemetery. There were no conflicts in the town: people respected each other's religion and traditions. After the revolution the Soviet regime started struggle against religion [7](#) [editor's note: In reality it was not started right after the revolution but much later, in the 1930s.]. They closed the cheder, one synagogue and converted the Greek church into a storage facility. After WORLD WAR II the second synagogue was also closed. The younger generation was not religious, and older people went to pray in prayer houses despite the ban on religion. There was a Jewish school before WORLD WAR II. I remember children from this school: they were different from other schoolchildren. We had bags or satchels to take to school, while the Jewish children went to school with wooden cases hanging on their shoulders on leather belts. There were Magen David painted on their cases. Children of the poorest, uneducated and usually very religious people went to the Jewish school. More educated and secular people, like our family, sent their children to Russian schools for them to know fluent Russian and have no problems with entering higher educational institutions.

Jews of Mogilyov-Podolskiy engaged in crafts: they were cabinetmakers, carpenters, tailors, barbers, tinsmiths, vendors. After the revolution all bigger stores were expropriated, but smaller vendors continued their trade. There were Jewish doctors, teachers and lawyers. Most Jews were rather poor earning just enough to make ends meet. Jewish families usually had many children, as many as God gave them. Many children died in infancy, but three or more survived in each family. Mama told me that there was a strong Jewish community in the town before the revolution supporting the needy providing clothes and food products. After the revolution religious people were persecuted and the community terminated its activities. However, the tradition to help those whose situation was poor remained. I remember how mama took whatever clothes she could to our neighbor, who was a widow woman and had four children.

During the Civil War [8](#) there were Jewish pogroms [9](#) in the town made by the gangs [10](#) torturing Jews, beating and robbing them. These were also made by Denikin troops [11](#). Mama told me about one pogrom. Don't know how my parents met, but they got married in 1918. They had a Jewish wedding with a chuppah, a rabbi and many guests. At the height of the wedding party the Petlura soldiers [12](#) broke into the house. Mama was very pretty, and in her wedding outfit she looked strikingly beautiful. The bandits feasted their eyes upon her and said it was sinful to spoil the wedding for such bride. They were served some vodka, which they drank and left the wedding. Of course, this was an exceptional case since usually the Petlura gangs left a bloody trace behind them.

After the wedding my parents rented a little house where all four children were born. There were 2 little rooms and a kitchen in the house. It was heated with a Russian stove [13](#) located in the kitchen. Mama cooked on this stove as well. Papa was a cabinetmaker and made whatever plain furniture we had. Papa also made plank beds for us. My older brothers slept in one room, and my sister and I slept in another where our parents also slept. My father also made chairs, cupboards and wardrobes. The most luxurious piece of furniture we had was a rectangular table with thick carved legs that my father made. It was my father's dream that the whole family would be getting together at this table, including my mother's and his own brothers and sisters and their children, but this dream was not to come true: we were not that wealthy to afford such gatherings. Only on rare occasions the family got together at this table. Mama was saving a part of her earning to buy a house.

My parents' first child Grigoriy - his Jewish name was Gershl, was born in 1920. In 1921 Mikhail, Moishe named after grandfather Moishe Gersberg, was born. My sister Anna, whose Jewish name was Hana, was born in 1926. I was born in October 1929. I was named Riva after my maternal grandmother.

My parents became atheists after the revolution. They observed no Jewish traditions. Their marriage was their last tribute to traditions, and they gave it for the sake of their relatives, rather than for themselves. We, children, were raised atheists. Our parents only spoke Russian with us. They only switched to Yiddish, when they didn't want us to understand the subject of their discussion. However, we somehow picked some Yiddish, though nobody taught us specifically. I can still understand Yiddish, though I can't speak it. We didn't celebrate Sabbath or other holidays. Saturday was an ordinary day. My father went to work, as usual, and mama worked about the house. Of all relatives, only my father's older brother Froim was religious. He and his wife went to the synagogue on Jewish holidays, celebrated holidays at home and followed kashrut, but we looked at them as if they were vestige of the past. My father's brother Isaac and my mama's sister Lisa were atheists. My father and Froim were very close. Froim always invited us on Jewish holidays and we joined in with them to celebrate. Froim's wife only cooked Jewish food, and I can still remember her delicious gefilte fish, puddings from matzah and potatoes and strudels. They must have conducted the seder according to the rules, but we never participated in it. Froim told us about the Jewry and the history of Jewish people and I still remember what he told us.

When I was 4, my father fell severely ill. It all started from ordinary flu. He recovered, but then he went outside to chop some wood and caught cold since this happened in winter. My father fell ill

with meningitis and shortly afterward he got paralyzed and never recovered. He could move around, but he could work no longer. His hands were shaking, and he could not hold any tool. My mama had to take over supporting our family of 6 people. Besides being a pretty woman, she also had a strong character, was a smart, honest and fair person. She raised her children kind, caring and devoted people. It helped us to survive through the hard times, particularly, the period of WORLD WAR II. Mama worked from morning till night, and we could manage somehow. Mama altered our old clothes, and we had even better clothes than other boys and girls. We also had sufficient food. Mama also managed to involve my father in the life of the family: she let him go shopping to a nearby store. Father learned to talk, however illegibly, but we learned to understand him. Mama loved going to the cinema in the park near our house. She took us, children, and my father joined us to go to the cinema. We never missed one movie. All I remember about the movies is that they were mute movies with captions. There was music accompaniment: I don't remember whether it was live music or a record player. Mama and papa also went to the theater every now and then. One of the sons accompanied them to the theater helping our father to walk that far. However busy mama was, she always found time to talk to Father and always asked his advice, even if she didn't follow it.

Our family survived the famine in 1932-33. Of course, this was my mother's support that helped us. She continued sewing for her clientele who paid her with food products. Mama took her golden ring and a chain with mogen Duvid [magen David] to the Torgsin [14](#) store where they sold food for foreign currency and jewelry. My mother's brother Mikhail from the USA sent us food products and money through the Joint [15](#), so we didn't starve like others during this period.

In 1936 my mother's dream came true. She bought a small 2-bedroom apartment in a 2-storied house in the Komsomolskaya Street in the suburb of the town. There were 4 apartments in this house. There were two small rooms, a fore room and a kitchen in the apartment. It was so good to have our own apartment! I remember how we were happy to move into our new apartment. Mama hired two wagons to haul our belongings to the new place. When the older children went to school, mama bought a used desk for them to study. Mama took every effort to make our home a cozy place to live: she made new curtains and quilt rugs. There were no comforts in the apartment. There was a toilet in the yard and we fetched water from the well from across the street. Our neighbors were a Ukrainian family of the Kolesniks and two Jewish families: the Zilberts and the Goizbergs. All families had daughters of about the same age with me. Galina Kolesnik and I have been lifelong friends. Zilbert was a wealthy man. He owned a mill. His daughter Yevgenia was also my friend. Goizberg was a military. Shortly after we moved into our new apartment he got an assignment in Leningrad, and his family followed him there. Two older Ukrainian women, the Romanenko sisters, moved into their apartment. Ours was the only house with Jewish tenants in our street - the rest of tenants were Ukrainian. We had a big backyard. There was a swing in the yard. My friends and I spent much time playing in the yard.

My older brothers studied in an 8-year Ukrainian school. When my brothers grew older, they started helping mama about the house. My brothers actually raised me. My brothers went shopping, cooked food, cleaned the apartment and looked after me. After finishing school my older brother Grigoriy became an apprentice of a mechanic at the machine building plant. He bought me my first doll, a rubber naked doll, when he received his first wage. I was ill and had to stay in bed and he wanted to cheer me up. Mama made dolls from whatever cloth leftovers she had. The doll



my brother bought me seemed a real beauty to me. He also bought me brown shoes with buckles: these were also my first shoes, since all I had before were what I got from my sister and brothers. I was even reluctant to step on the floor wearing the shoes: I didn't want to daub them. One year later my second brother finished school and went to work as a shop assistant in a store. My brothers gave mama their wages.

I went to a 10-year Ukrainian general education school in 1936 before I turned 7. I remember my first teacher Tina Mikhailovna Voloshina. She was a young beautiful woman. She loved children and she taught us to like studying and our school.

I only had one Jewish classmate. His name was Lev Guss. We lived in the suburb where there were few Jewish families living. I made Ukrainian friends at school and felt myself very comfortable with them. I was no stranger for them, either. I don't think there was any anti-Semitism before the war.

My sister studied in my school as well. She had more Jewish classmates than I did. Anna's best friend was her classmate Larisa Lerner, a Jewish girl. She also had other Jewish friends. I often spent time with my sister's friends. They sometimes danced to the record player or went to the dance pavilion and I joined them to go there. Of course, I just watched them dancing. We were not like modern accelerate girls.

I knew Ukrainian and had no problems with studying at school. My favorite subject was Russian literature. I wanted to become a teacher of the Russian literature, when I grew up. I became a young Octobrist [16](#), and then a pioneer [17](#) in the 3rd form. There was a ceremony by the monument to Lenin [18](#) where we gave the oath of young pioneers: "To love the Motherland dearly, to live, study and fight according to the teaching of the great Lenin and the Communist Party". And then we had red ties tied round the neck.

Our teacher of physics Krachkovskiy was a very nice person. He loved music. He organized and conducted a choir at school. I liked singing and happened to have a good ear for music. I attended the choir since I was in the 2nd form and sometimes was a soloist. We usually sang Ukrainian songs at school concerts. Later I also went to the dancing group. We had concerts on all Soviet holidays- 1 May, 7 November [19](#), Soviet army Day [21](#), and New Year, of course. In the morning all schoolchildren and teachers went to the parade and then returned to school. We invited parents and relatives to our concerts. We didn't celebrate Soviet holidays at home since mama was always busy doing her work and didn't have time for celebrations.

I know very little about the period of arrests in 1937 and the following years [21](#). Nobody was arrested in our family. After WORLD WAR II, mama told me about this period. She said NKVD [22](#) people arrested people at home at night. People were afraid of falling asleep at night listening for the noises behind their front door. I also recall how my parents mentioned that Guzman, director of the plant where my brother Grigoriy was working, and my father's acquaintance Givand were arrested.

In 1939 Hitler's armies attacked Poland. Then the Finnish campaign [23](#) began. I remember this well since my parents were very concerned: it was about time my brothers were to go to the army. When the war was over, we all sighed with relief. My older brother Grigoriy was recruited to the

army in 1940. In March 1941 my brother Mikhail was to go to the army. Some time before mama went to the military registry office to ask the commander to let one son stay at home considering that my father was paralyzed. The commander promised my mother that Grigoriy would be demobilized in June-July being the breadwinner in the family, but Mikhail had to go to the army. Before going to the army Mikhail bought me my first winter coat from thick coffee-colored woolen fabric. He wrote us from the army, and in each letter he added few words for me. He told me to study well at school and that he would work to help me to finish in college, when he returned, but this was not to be.

I remember the Sunday of 22 June 1941 [Great Patriotic War] [24](#). It was a warm and sunny day. I was playing with my friends outside, when mama came out and told us that the radio had just announced Germany attacked the Soviet Union. Since we didn't have a radio, I think our neighbors told mama about the war. I got very scared for my two brothers. My older brother was immediately sent to the front. The town was bombed for the first time on 23 June. We lived near the railway station, and German planes started bombing the railroad track. The shell splinters broke the window and flew into the corridor, but other than that, the house was not damaged.

Mama was a strong woman and tried to hide her feelings from us, but we knew that Grigoriy and Mikhail were in great danger. Mama supported us as much as she could, but how much could she do having to care about two daughters and her paralyzed husband? Many people were saying that Germans would do us no harm and those, who wanted to leave the town were panic-strikers, but mama decided we should evacuate. Somebody told mama there was the last train at the station and we hardly had any time left to pack. We packed whatever there was at hand, put my father into a wheel cart and rushed to the station, but there was no train there. Some people waited at the station since morning, but there was no train at all. Later we got to know that the party town committee people had evacuated few days before, and that there was no town evacuation scheduled. People were leaving the town on foot, to find their relatives in the neighboring towns or villages, but we could not go far with our paralyzed father. So we stayed Mogilyov-Podolskiy. In the end of June German air raids became more frequent. We took shelter in the basement. Some local Ukrainians were robbing the Jewish houses abandoned by their owners. Even though we stayed in our house one night some people from the suburb came into our house. We knew them, they were from the Kozak family. They broke down the door grabbing everything they could get. They wanted to kill mama to take away the sewing machine. Mama grabbed my sister and me and we ran outside and took hiding in a ditch. My father stayed in his bed. The robbers pulled down his mattress and pillow from under him. Our neighbors - sisters Romanenko also came into our apartment pretending they wanted something for themselves. They took few things, including the sewing machine, which they gave back to us, when we returned to the apartment in the morning. However, the robbers took away a lot more that the sisters managed to save for us.

In early 1941 German troops entered Mogilyov-Podolskiy and stayed till middle August, when the Romanian troops replaced them. Mama hated it that Germans behaved as if they were masters of the town and mentioned to some neighbors that Germans had no rights here. They reported on her that she was agitating people against the German regime. Few Germans and Ukrainian policemen came into our apartment one day. One of the policemen was our neighbor Kushniruk. Mama said something to him that he didn't like. He hit her on her arm with his rifle butt and broke her arm.

Mama was taken to the town prison where she was kept few days. My mother sister Lisa's daughter Riva came to her rescue. Riva worked as a teacher. Director of her school Ivanov had the German commander of the town staying in his apartment. Riva asked her director to talk to the commander about my mother. All I know is that on that very day my mother was released. At night the Dnestr flooded the riverside where the jail was located. All prisoners drowned. Our neighbors who had reported on my mama, started telling all that the God punished my mother and that if Germans failed to kill her, she drowned in the Dnestr. How surprised they were to see my mother alive! In late July there were German and Romanian forces in Mogilyov-Podolskiy. Once mama went to see an old tailor, who was an acquaintance of hers. He was fitting a coat on a Romanian officer. Something was going wrong and his hands were shaking. Mama offered her help and finished the trying on. The coat came out all right, and the major came to mama's home to thank her. He mentioned that she could count on his help, and mama needed his help very soon. In early August a Romanian soldier came into our house. He wanted to take something from our home. Mama pushed him outside saying that he was not the one to have a word in her home. She was arrested again and taken to the school that was converted into a barrack for Romanian soldiers. She was forced to sit on a big stone in the school yard. They placed a bunch of grenades beside her. Mama was sure they would blast her, but at that moment the major was passing by. He asked mama why she was sitting there. The Romanians wanted to give him an explanation, but he ordered them to let mama go and never again come into our apartment. Mama avoided death for the second time.

Our Ukrainian neighbors supported us well. Even before the ghetto was established, they often brought us vegetables, milk and flour. Zbarskiy, a teacher from school, also visited us. They helped us to survive.

In August 1941 a ghetto was established in Mogilyov-Podolskiy. This was when I realized I was a Jew. The central part of the town and the riverside were fenced, and there were guards at the gate. The Ukrainians within this area were forced to move out and instead, Jews from outside the area were accommodated in their houses. Our house was outside the ghetto and we were to move out of there, when the Romanian major came to our rescue again. He helped us to obtain a residential permit to stay outside the ghetto. We didn't look like Jews. My sister and I wore casual clothes and had long plaits. My sister, my mother and I had to go to the central part of the town looking for clients and buying food products. This was dangerous, but we had to support ourselves. When German troops left, the Romanians ordered all Jews to wear black armbands with yellow hexagonal stars, but we didn't obey. Of course, the risk was big, but mama hated to obey the occupants' orders.

There was a network of concentration camps and ghettos all over Vinnitsa region. This area between the Dnestr and the Bug Rivers was called Transnistria [25](#) where Jews from Bessarabia and Romania were kept. There were few families stuffed in each house. Many inmates of the ghetto were taken to the Pechora camp. They said there were no survivors there. There were raids in town. People were captured to be sent to the Pechora camp. My sister was captured during one raid in May 1942. She went to the market, when gendarmes captured her. The group of captives was convoyed past our house and Anna screamed: "Mama, they've seized me!" Would any mother leave her child in trouble? Mama jumped out of the house, the convoy put my father on the wagon, and we joined the march to Pechora [26](#). My mother only managed to grab her sewing machine hoping that she would manage to earn a little by sewing.



We marched as far as a railroad station where we boarded a train. The closed railcars were stuffed with people. I sat on somebody's backpack and mama was standing. This was a hot summer and there was stuffy in the railcar. People were fainting, but there was no space to fall. We got no food or water. We got off the train on the Rokhny station from where we had to march again. One day later we reached Pechora. This camp was in the territory of a former recreation center for the military in the suburb of Vinnitsa. There were many trees and flowers in the area. The place was surrounded with a high brick wall. There were armed German guards at the gate. The first thing catching our sight was exhausted and dirty children stretching their hands to us. It was hard to survive for all children, but if they lost their parents they were destined to starve to death. The building of the recreation center was very nice. It housed the guards of the camp, and the inmates were taken to the stables with small windows under the ceiling. There were ground floors and the inmates slept on straw on the floor. There was manure that nobody cared to clean. Mama decided we would stay outside while it was still warm. On the first night we woke up from screams and shooting. German soldiers went inside the stable building to take away the people's money and valuables. To scare them more they were shooting into the air. I was so scared that my hand twisted in the morning. Mama was very concerned about it, but later it passed. We had very few belongings left. He robbers even took away my new coat. There was no food provided to the inmates of the camp. Occasionally local villagers came to the fence bringing food products that they wanted to exchange for things. We didn't have anything for this kind of exchange, but even those who managed to get some, did not always had a chance to eat it. If German soldiers saw somebody cooking on the fire, they used to turn over the pots. We came into the camp wearing our summer clothes and shoes. When it got cold, mama got some sacks, made holes in them for us to put them on and we wore them. We also wrapped our feet in pieces of these sacks.

About one month after we came into the camp, Germans took my sister Anna and other young people to a work camp. One young man hid behind a tree and they shot him. Germans were building a road in Vinnitsa region. The camp was in Varnovitsy village, but later, when the construction advanced, they moved it to Zarubintsy village. They provided some food to the prisoners. We didn't have any information about Anna.

In summer 1942 an epidemic of typhus spread in the camp. Many inmates were dying. Every day dead bodies were loaded on wagons with high side boards, driven outside the camp and buried in long pits. My father fell ill and died a week later. We didn't even know in which pit he was buried. Relatives were not allowed to come to the burial place. After the war we went to this place every year to at least bow to this common grave. Former inmates of this camp collected money to install a gravestone on the grave. The villagers look after the burial place.

We were kept in the camp for over half year. After my father died mama decided to escape from the camp. The other inmates said it was impossible to escape from Pechora. We met my cousin, my mother sister Lisa's older daughter Mariam Kritz. She was taken to the camp with her 5-month old baby. Jews were taken to the camp from Tulchin town Vinnitsa region, the first occupied town, from Mogilyov-Podolskiy and other occupied areas. Mariam decided to escape with us. We hardly had any choice: that was to die in Pechora, die on the way from there or try and get home, if we were lucky. Mama and Mariam decided to take the risk. At the last moment a man and a boy joined us. At night, during a relief of guards, we escaped from the camp. Mama had an arrangement with

the local village woman, who used to bring food products to the camp that she would help us to find the way in the area. She took us to a village where we were to cross a river. The woman showed us the shallow of the river and went back home. We didn't know there was a Romanian gendarmerie on the opposite bank of the river. We were captured and taken to the gendarmerie. They beat us mercilessly. Mama was punished with 25 whippings. When they started beating mama I began to scream. A gendarme hit me on my arm with the haft of his whip and I fainted. Mariam was trying to protect her baby, when the gendarme grabbed the baby and threw it aside as if it was some unnecessary thing. Mariam, the man and the boy were also cruelly beaten. When the gendarmes left, Mariam and the man gave our Romanian gendarme the money they had and he let us go away. Mama had our residential permit, which she showed him. She said she and her daughter were looking for some work to do around and he also let us go. I remember how we walked along a road, beaten up, crying, exhausted, when we bumped into an older woman, tall, gray-haired. She didn't look like a villager. She told us to calm down and follow her. When we came to her home, she cleaned our injuries, gave us hot tea and bread. We slept in her hayloft and then she took us to the road and showed the direction. I don't know who this woman was. We tried to find her after the war and thank her for rescuing us, but we failed. When we reached Ozarintsy village, the man and his son stayed there, and we went down a hill heading to Mogilyov-Podolskiy.

We managed to get to the Jewish ghetto in the town. We stayed in Mogilyov-Podolskiy. There was another ghetto established there since there were too many inmates. Our house was within the area of this second ghetto. There were few families from Romania and Bessarabia accommodated in our house. There was no space left for us and we went to my father's brother Froim. Froim gave us shelter, though there were also few other families staying in his house. Besides the Romanian gendarmes and policemen there were also Jewish policemen in the ghetto. On the next day after we came to my uncle's house, somebody reported on us and policemen Pirogovskiy and Ashkenazi, whom we knew before, came to his house to arrest us. My uncle pushed us into the oven of his big Russian stove. My mother and Mariam could hardly fit in there, but I had no problem, being small. The policemen told my uncle they knew that we were in his house. He told them to look around since there was nobody he was hiding in his house. They looked around and even looked into the oven, but didn't find us. They left, and we stayed to live in my uncle's house.

The German commandment ordered to take Jews from Bessarabia to Pechora, but these inmates had money and jewelry to pay off for their escape. Since there was a fixed number of inmates to be taken to Pechora, the Romanians were capturing residents of Mogilyov-Podolskiy. However, some Moldavian and Romanian Jews were still sent to the Pechora camp. In early 1943 Romanians captured about 200 inmates in a raid. They killed them near Skazintsy village, 5 km from Mogilyov-Podolskiy. Many of our acquaintances perished there. The Jewish community installed a monument to the deceased Jews. My husband and I went to the opening ceremony.

Mama continued altering the clothes that the Ukrainian villagers had bargained for food they brought to the ghetto. Mama left the ghetto to go into the town or even to neighboring villages to find customers. Of course, this was risky, but there was no alternative, if we wanted to survive.

We didn't even have proper potable water in the ghetto since the wells had not been cleaned for a long time. There were continuous epidemics of typhus: enteric fever, spotted fever and relapsing fever. Fortunately, my mother and I stayed healthy. There was no soap or other washing means in

the ghetto.

In December 1942 my sister Anna's former classmate came to where we lived. He told us he had seen Anna recently, he was in the same camp with her. He escaped from the camp and was telling Anna to join him, but she refused. The guy's surname was Krupnik. He stayed with his parents in the ghetto. When Mogilyov-Podolskiy was liberated, he volunteered to the front. After the war he studied and graduated from the University in Chernovtsy and stayed to lecture at the University.

On the late night on 31 December 1942 my sister came to the ghetto. We were so happy! I've never had a better New Year present in my whole life. My sister told us about the camp and how she managed to escape. Anna came to Voronovtsy at first. The living conditions were horrible. The inmates were hardly provided any food. The German guards killed weaker and sick prisoners. There was one German guard of French origin. [Probably from Alsace-Lorraine.] He felt sorry for my sister and at times brought her some food. He was telling Anna to escape from the camp. My sister knew that those who tried to escape were killed, if caught, and she thought that his telling her so was a provocation. She told him she was not going to escape, but she was considering a possibility. Some time later the inmates were taken to the Zarubintsy camp guarded by Germans, Romanian soldiers and Ukrainian policemen. In the camp Anna made friends with a Jewish girl from Vinnitsa. My sister was very pretty and did not look like a Jew. Occasionally policemen talked to her. She made a story to tell them that she was an orphan, and her parents died and a Jewish family adopted her. The policemen believed Anna, and one of them even proposed marriage to Anna. They also helped Anna and her friend to escape from the camp. It took them few weeks to get prepared for the escape. They got winter clothes, home made vodka and meat - if they were to be caught, they could tell they were taking this food to their grandmother in the village. They were to wait till lunch time. The policemen gave them a signal, when there were no Germans on the post. Anna and her friend left the camp, crossed the river covered with snow and went on. At times they spent nights in villages. Anna's friend burred and spoke with a distinguished Jewish accent and had to pretend she was deaf and mute. One night they came into a house where they intended to stay overnight. The owner of the house started telling them that he was to take part in the mass shooting of Jewish prisoners of the Zarubintsy and Varnovitsy camps, and the girls understood he was a policeman. They left the house unnoticed and moved on. Anna's friend went to Vinnitsa and my sister returned to the ghetto. Later we heard that Germans killed over 1500 prisoners of these two camps and there were no survivors. Only four inmates managed to escape through the whole period of existence of these camps: Konis, who was the father of my future husband's classmate, my sister's classmate Krupnik, my sister and her friend. There is nobody to even confirm the fact of their imprisonment in the camp since there were no survivors.

My sister stayed with us in my uncle's house. At some time mama had no customers and had to sell her sewing machine. This sewing machine was the only thing we could sell. Soon my mother began to sew again. One of my uncle's tenant's daughter and wife died during the epidemic of typhus in the ghetto, and he gave his sewing machine to my mother.

In late 1943 the Germans began to retreat. Mama often went to listen to the radio at our neighbor's. Each time she came back in a cheerful mood telling us which towns our army liberated again. Our army was approaching the Vinnitsa region and we couldn't wait till they came. We were

hoping to live till the war was over. In early March 1944 German columns began to march past our house in their retreat. One day a German soldier came into our house. We got very scared that he might kill us. He looked at my mother, said to her "Mein Mutter", hugged her and began to cry. Then he left. Maybe my mother reminded him of his mother, who knows ... There were trucks, wagons and military equipment crossing the bridge over the river, when all of a sudden the bridge burst up into the air. The flow of water was taking corpses onto the bank, but nobody approached them. Later people began to pull off their boots and coats. On that same day the railroad bridge over the Dnestr was blasted. We understood that Germans were not coming back, if they had exploded the bridges. On 19 March 1944 three Soviet tanks followed by infantry entered Mogilyov-Podolskiy. We were free! All people came out to greet the liberators, shake their hands and thank them. This was a holiday for all of us.

We returned to our house and our life was gradually coming into its routine. Of course, it was still hard, but we didn't feel it. We were happy that we didn't have to be afraid of air raids, Germans or camps. Schools opened in April. I returned to my school. I was the only Jew in my class, but I faced no anti-Semitism. Everybody tried to support me. We didn't have vacation that summer studying to catch up with what we had missed at school.

We received a letter from my younger brother Mikhail with whom we had no contacts through the whole period of occupation. He was looking for us and wrote my father's brother Froim, who gave us his letter. Mama could hardly write, and I wrote letters for my brother. Mama began to receive allowances per my brother's military certificate. My brother wrote us that at the beginning he was sent to an artillery school. In 1942 he was sent to the front as a lieutenant, in 1944 he was promoted to the rank of captain and had a machine gun company under his command. We received the last letter from Mikhail's aide in July 1944. He wrote that Mikhail perished in Austria on 25 June 1944. He was inspecting the positions, when a shell splinter wounded him on the head. His aide wrote us that Mikhail was a nice person and a good commanding officer and that we could be proud of him. Soon afterward we received a letter from the military unit where Grigoriy had served. They wrote us that my older brother Grigoriy disappeared near Stalingrad. There were three of us left: mama, my sister and I. If it had not been for my mother, we would not have survived. Mama altered clothes or made new clothes, which Froim sell at the market.

In 1946 I finished the 5th form at school. That year our school was disbanded. There were only 13 of 30 schoolchildren left in my class: some perished during the war, others had to go to work to support themselves and their families, and authorities decided to bring two schools together. I thought I it was time for me to support mama, and went to work as a lab assistant at the buttry and went to the 6th form in the evening school where my cousin Riva was a mathematic teacher. Of course, it was hard to study and work but I felt better supporting my mother. I joined [Komsomol 27](#) in the evening school.

My sister Anna got married in 1946. Her husband Yakov Nudrin, a Jew, had returned from the front where he was an officer. He was an invalid of the war. He was 13 years older than my sister. He was born and lived in Vinnitsa. He went to the front on the first days of the war and his family perished during occupation. My sister and her husband registered their marriage in the registry office, and in the evening my mother arranged a wedding dinner. Only our close relatives came to the wedding. After the wedding my sister moved to live with her husband in Vinnitsa. Their first

baby Mikhail named after our brother was born in 1952. Their daughter Vera named after Yakov's mother was born in 1958.

1947 was the year of hardships and hunger. There were food cards, but it was not always possible to get food products by them. Later the cards were cancelled and salaries increased. Life was improving, well, at least compared to the period of the occupation everything else seemed to be paradise for us.

In 1948 I met my future husband Aron Pizman. Aron was born in Mogilyov-Podolskiy in 1930. His father Isaac Pizman was a shoemaker and his mother Nehama Pizman was a housewife. They had two children: Aron and David, born in 1939. Aron's father went to the army on the first days of the war. He perished near Semenovskaya village, Rzhev district, Kalinin region, in 1942. Aron, his mother and his younger brother were in the ghetto in Mogilyov-Podolskiy. After liberation he studied at school and after finishing the 6th form he went to work as a clock repair man at the clock shop. He had to support his mother. We met at a party on 1 May 1948. I liked Aron and so did my mother. She believed him to be a nice and reliable person. Aron met me after my classes in the evening school to accompany me home. He carried my briefcase since I didn't have mittens and my hands froze. Soon he proposed to me and I gave my consent. Aron's mother Nehama became very religious in the ghetto and insisted that we had a traditional Jewish wedding. Of course, I didn't want to argue with my future mother-in-law, and Aron and I decided to obey her. We had a civil ceremony in the registry office on 5 December 1949. It was a frosty day and there was some snow on the ground – the day was lovely. Mama bought a white silk coat underlining at the market and made me a wedding gown. She even made a little rose from leftovers of the fabric. I borrowed a little white crocheted from my friend. Aron didn't even have a white shirt. Aron made me a wedding ring from a silver spoon. In the evening my mother arranged a wedding dinner for us. My sister and her husband, my cousin Riva, Aron and my friends came to our wedding. There were 18 of us at the party. We had lots of fun, sang and danced to the record player. Then I stayed at home and Aron went to where he lived. So we lived one month till we had a Jewish wedding. There was a chuppah installed in the yard of Aron's house, and his mother invited a rabbi from a prayer house – he lived nearby. In the evening my mother-in-law made a wedding dinner for the closest relatives. Only after the wedding I moved to live with my husband. I had to adjust to my mother-in-law way of living. She only cooked Jewish meals, celebrated Sabbath and Jewish holidays and followed kashrut. She often made stuffed fish, chicken broth, very delicious tsimes [28](#), baked different puddings and strudels with nuts, jam, raisins and apples. It was new to me and I tried to learn from her. At first it was difficult for me to tell apart a knife for meat products from one for dairy products and it took me some time to get adjusted and learn to cook following the kosher rules. I observed these traditions though while we lived with my mother-in-law. Of course, I had to go to work on Saturday and didn't go to the prayer house with her. Aron was also an atheist. My mother-in-law was a very smart and tolerant woman. She admitted our ways and said that our generation was never going to be real Jews. She just accepted this as it was. Nehama liked me and even had my photograph over her bed. We got along well and tried to avoid conflicts. And we managed well.

The campaign against cosmopolitans [29](#) in 1948 had no impact on me. I was young and hardly cared about anything, but my personal life.



In 1951 my husband was recruited to the army. I was already pregnant. Our first son Igor was born in 1952, when my husband was away from home. My husband and I did not observe Jewish traditions and our sons were not circumcised. Aron didn't want me to go to work. He believed that a married woman had to take care of the household and the husband had to provide for the family. I had to quit my job, when my son Igor was born. At that time the maternity leave was one month before and one month after the birth. There was no children's food sold and I had to breastfeed the baby. I had to walk 5 km to work and could not come home to feed the baby. I had to choose between my son and my job and I made my choice. My mother-in-law was not too well, and it was hard for her to have a baby in the house, particularly, when the baby was crying and she could not sleep at night. I had to stay with my mother, when my husband was in the army. My mother-in-law often visited us. My husband served in the army for four years and came to visit us on his two-week leave once a year.

In January 1953 newspapers began to publish article about poisoning doctors [doctor's plot] [30](#), who wanted to poison Stalin, and by the way, they all had Jewish surnames. This caused a flow of anti-Semitism. It was hard to believe these articles and I didn't want to believe what they published. However, I didn't get much involved in this: I stayed at home taking care of my son and hardly communicated with other people. I remember how the radio announced that Stalin died on 5 March 1953. I had a feeling that this was the end of the world, as if heaven collapsed onto the Earth. There was a medical school across the street from our home where they had Stalin's portrait in the black frame on the front wall. I stood by the window looking at the portrait sobbing like a child. My mother and relatives grieved after Stalin. When Khrushchev [31](#) spoke on the 20th Party Congress [32](#) about Stalin's 'crimes', I didn't quite believe him. I have always been Stalin's admirer. Our family did not suffer from any persecution, we had a good life, and we studied and worked during his rule. My cousin Riva was awarded a medal for her work and the title of an Honored Teacher of the USSR. I've always respected Stalin as a political leader. This is my point of view and it is my right.

My husband returned from the army in 1955. How I waited for him! All those who had been recruited at the same time as him, returned, but Aron was not coming home. He returned in November. He had changed and matured. He was quite a boy, when he went to the army, but he returned a man. My son didn't recognize him at once. When he returned, Aron went to work at the plant named after Kirov in Mogilyov-Podolskiy manufacturing equipment for food industry where he worked 46 years, starting as a laborer, then he became a tinsmith and then a mechanic. In 1958 he joined the party. After the army he passed exams for the 6th form and went to the 7th form of an evening school. When he came home from school, he had to do his homework, and then early in the morning he left for work. My son and I hardly ever saw him, but I knew he had to get education. He only had excellent marks at school and enjoyed his studies. In 1960 he finished the 10th form and the plant sent him to study at the plant instrument technical school in Moscow, the extramural department. Again he spent all of his time studying and working. He received tasks from Moscow, which he sent back after completing them. Once a year he went to take exams in Moscow. In 1961 our second son Mikhail named after my deceased brother was born. My husband had no time to help me and I actually raised our sons alone till he finished his studies. I was patient and never reproached him for spending so little time with us. After he finished his studies Aron went to work at the design office. He was valued for his good performance. Aron even has few inventions. Aron could finally spend more time with me and the children. He made a very good husband and father.

We didn't observe Jewish traditions, but we celebrated Soviet holidays at home: 1 May, 7 November, Soviet army Day, Victory Day [33](#), 8 March [Women's Day], New Year. We also celebrated birthdays: we had guests and made presents. My mother-in-law visited us on Soviet holidays and we went to celebrate Jewish holidays with her. My mother-in-law understood that Aron was a party member and we were not supposed to lead the Jewish life, even if we wanted to - this was the way this was at the time. I got along well with Nehama. She shared with me what she could not tell her sons. I looked after her, when she was ill. My mother-in-law died in 1969. We buried her in the Jewish cemetery in Mogilyov-Podolskiy. She wanted to have a traditional Jewish funeral and we followed her will. Nehama was buried following the Jewish rules near her mother and sister's graves. Aron's younger brother David recited the Kaddish over her grave. He learned it by heart since he didn't know Hebrew. [Editor's note: The Kaddish is mostly in Aramaic.] David's son was born that same year. He named him Naptan preserving the first letter of Nehama's name in his name.

In the 1970s the Jewish massive departure to Israel began. Our friends and acquaintances were leaving. We did not judge those who decided to leave - if people decided to leave, one should not interfere with their decision, but we did not consider departure from the USSR. My husband and I did not want to look for a fortune in a foreign country. We were used to living here. We had friends, acquaintances here, people respected us and we didn't have any conflicts - so why got elsewhere? The plant where my husband was working built a plant for its employees and we received a nice 2-bedroom apartment in this house - these apartments were called 'khrushchevka' [34](#). We were content with the life we had.

After finishing school our older son Igor did not want to continue his studies. He became an apprentice of a turner at the Kirov plant. One year later he was recruited to the army. After demobilization Igor returned home and worked as a turner. Our younger son was a talented boy. He finished school with honors and wanted to continue his education. We knew that Mikhail had few chances to enter a higher educational institution in Ukraine - Jews were not quite welcome there. Aron once went on business to Voronezh and he liked this town in Russia. He went there with Mikhail. Mikhail passed his entrance exams to the Mechanical Faculty of the Polytechnic College. Mikhail had all excellent marks in his college. We rented a room for him. My husband and I often went to visit Mikhail there and sent him some money to support him. Mikhail received an advanced stipend, but it was too small to live on it. Our older son also went to visit his brother on his vacation. Igor met his future wife, Anna Narolskaya, a Russian girl, there. They fell in love with each other and decided to get married. My husband or I did not care that Anna was not Jewish. We didn't care about the nationality. We believed human virtues to be important. . They loved each other and this was what mattered. They got married and Igor moved to Voronezh. He went to work as a turner at the mechanical plant. Igor was mature enough now to understand that he needed to study. He finished a mechanical technical school while working at the plant and then he finished the evening department of the polytechnic College. He became a foreman in his shop. Anna was chief accountant in a construction agency. Igor and Anna have two children: Pavel was born in 1982, and daughter Svetlana - in 1985. My son and his family came to see us and we went to visit them. Mikhail returned to Mogilyov-Podolskiy after finishing his studies and went to work as an engineer at the Kirov plant. Now Mikhail is chief of the department for introduction of state-of-the-art equipment. He studies new equipment developments and decides what equipment the plant

should purchase, which equipment requires modifications or replacement. When he returned here, Mikhail met a wonderful Jewish girl. Her name is Lilia Weinstock. She was born in Mogilyov-Podolskiy. Lilia finished a medical school and worked as a medical nurse. They got married. Mikhail received an apartment from his plant. Mikhail and Lilia have two daughters: Tatiana, born in 1988, and Nathalia, born in 1992. I helped my son and daughter-in-law to raise the girls. They are very nice, talented and kind girls. They spent a lot of time with us here.

My mama died in 1984. We buried her in the Jewish cemetery, but arranged a secular funeral for her. Mama remained an atheist to the last days of her life.

In the late 1980s Mikhail Gorbachev [35](#) initiated perestroika [36](#) in the USSR. At first I had hopes that our life would improve. I respected Gorbachev, but later I understood that he was a babler and lost interest in what was going on. The breakup of the USSR, that crowned the perestroika was a tragedy for me. I still feel sorry for the time, when we lived in the USSR, when we had everything: free medical care, free education, there was no unemployment and poverty. Of course, there were negative things in the USSR, but there was much good. There will never be this good again. I don't see anything good in this current independence of the former Soviet republics. At least for the time being. The society separated into very rich people and beggars, who cannot live on their salary. Many people have to leave their country only because they cannot feed their families. This could not happen in the USSR. My older son, his wife and children moved to Israel recently. Now they live in Haifa. My son works in a shop, his wife hasn't found a job as yet. My older grandson Pavel has recently returned home after his military service. He will probably go to study to become a doctor. My granddaughter finished school, and now she serves in the army. I even fear to think about this undeclared war in Israel, when my dear people are in danger. I don't think that my son would have had to leave his Motherland, if it hadn't been for the breakup of the USSR.

There is a Jewish community in Mogilyov-Podolskiy, and the Jewish life has revived. There are various events and concerts of Jewish music and dancing. My husband and I used to attend Jewish concerts some time before, but then he fell ill and hardly ever leaves home. I do not want to leave him alone. The community celebrates Jewish holidays. My husband and I went there twice, but we don't like it. We have been atheists and religion is far from us. The community and the Hesed [37](#) provide assistance to older people, and this is a real support. Old people receive food packages and have hot meals delivered to them at home. This is very good and they need it a lot. There are many Jewish publications. We subscribe to newspapers "Yevreyskie Vesty" [Jewish news], "Vek" [Century] and we read them with interest. However, this is done for the leaving generation while young people hardly need it: they have different interests. My granddaughters are far from the Jewry, they live the life like their non-Jewish friends do. My older granddaughter Tatiana has entered Kiev Polytechnic College this year. She will go to Kiev before the start of the new academic year. We will miss her. Perhaps, there is not so much anti-Semitism in Ukraine now, if she managed to enter a higher educational institution in the capital of the country all by herself.

I've lived my life, but if I met a magician and she asked me what I would like for my children and grandchildren and all people of the Earth, I would ask her for decent life to all, so that each could find a suitable job. For each to live where one wants, so that a person didn't have to leave his country for the fear of starving to death. And I would ask for health and peaceful life for all, so that nobody had to go through the horrors of the war that my generation had.

## Glossary:

1 Common name: Russified or Russian first names used by Jews in everyday life and adopted in official documents. The Russification of first names was one of the manifestations of the assimilation of Russian Jews at the turn of the 19th and 20th century. In some cases only the spelling and pronunciation of Jewish names was russified (e.g. Isaac instead of Yitskhak; Boris instead of Borukh), while in other cases traditional Jewish names were replaced by similarly sounding Russian names (e.g. Eugenia instead of Ghita; Yury instead of Yuda). When state anti-Semitism intensified in the USSR at the end of the 1940s, most Jewish parents stopped giving their children traditional Jewish names to avoid discrimination.

2 Russian Revolution of 1917: Revolution in which the tsarist regime was overthrown in the Russian Empire and, under Lenin, was replaced by the Bolshevik rule. The two phases of the Revolution were: February Revolution, which came about due to food and fuel shortages during World War I, and during which the tsar abdicated and a provisional government took over. The second phase took place in the form of a coup led by Lenin in October/November (October Revolution) and saw the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks.

3 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.

4 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.

5 Bessarabia: Historical area between the Prut and Dneestr rivers, in the southern part of Odessa region. Bessarabia was part of Russia until the Revolution of 1917. In 1918 it declared itself an independent republic, and later it united with Romania. The Treaty of Paris (1920) recognized the union but the Soviet Union never accepted this. In 1940 Romania was forced to cede Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to the USSR. The two provinces had almost 4 million inhabitants, mostly Romanians. Although Romania reoccupied part of the territory during World War II the Romanian peace treaty of 1947 confirmed their belonging to the Soviet Union. Today it is part of Moldavia.

6 Jewish Pale of Settlement: Certain provinces in the Russian Empire were designated for permanent Jewish residence and the Jewish population was only allowed to live in these areas. The Pale was first established by a decree by Catherine II in 1791. The regulation was in force until the Russian Revolution of 1917, although the limits of the Pale were modified several times. The Pale stretched from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, and 94% of the total Jewish population of Russia, almost 5 million people, lived there. The overwhelming majority of the Jews lived in the towns and shtetls of the Pale. Certain privileged groups of Jews, such as certain merchants, university

graduates and craftsmen working in certain branches, were granted to live outside the borders of the Pale of Settlement permanently.

**7** 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.

**8** 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.

**9** Pogroms in Ukraine: In the 1920s there were many anti-Semitic gangs in Ukraine. They killed Jews and burnt their houses, they robbed their houses, raped women and killed children.

**10** Gangs: During the Russian Civil War there were all kinds of gangs in the Ukraine. Their members came from all the classes of former Russia, but most of them were peasants. Their leaders used political slogans to dress their criminal acts. These gangs were anti-Soviet and anti-Semitic. They killed Jews and burnt their houses, they robbed their houses, raped women and killed children.

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

**12** 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.

**13** Russian stove: Big stone stove stoked with wood. They were usually built in a corner of the kitchen and served to heat the house and cook food. It had a bench that made a comfortable bed for children and adults in wintertime.

**14** 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.



**15** Joint (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee): The Joint was formed in 1914 with the fusion of three American Jewish committees of assistance, which were alarmed by the suffering of Jews during World War I. In late 1944, the Joint entered Europe's liberated areas and organized a massive relief operation. It provided food for Jewish survivors all over Europe, it supplied clothing, books and school supplies for children. It supported cultural amenities and brought religious supplies for the Jewish communities. The Joint also operated DP camps, in which it organized retraining programs to help people learn trades that would enable them to earn a living, while its cultural and religious activities helped re-establish Jewish life. The Joint was also closely involved in helping Jews to emigrate from Europe and from Muslim countries. The Joint was expelled from East Central Europe for decades during the Cold War and it has only come back to many of these countries after the fall of communism. Today the Joint provides social welfare programs for elderly Holocaust survivors and encourages Jewish renewal and communal development.

**16** Young Octobrist: In Russian Oktyabrenok, or 'pre-pioneer', designates Soviet children of seven years or over preparing for entry into the pioneer organization.

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

**18** Lenin (1870-1924): Pseudonym of Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, the Russian Communist leader. A profound student of Marxism, and a revolutionary in the 1890s. He became the leader of the Bolshevik faction of the Social Democratic Party, whom he led to power in the coup d'état of 25th October 1917. Lenin became head of the Soviet state and retained this post until his death.

**19** 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.

**20** Soviet Army Day: The Russian imperial army and navy disintegrated after the outbreak of the Revolution of 1917, so the Council of the People's Commissars created the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army on a voluntary basis. The first units distinguished themselves against the Germans on February 23, 1918. This day became the 'Day of the Soviet Army' and is nowadays celebrated as 'Army Day'.

**21** 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.

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

[23](#) 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 Mannenheimer line. The League of Nations expelled the USSR from its ranks. In February-March 1940 the Red Army broke through the Mannenheimer 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.

[24](#) 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.

[25](#) Transnistria: Area situated between the Bug and Dniester rivers and the Black Sea. The term is derived from the Romanian name for the Dniester (Nistru) and was coined after the occupation of the area by German and Romanian troops in World War II. After its occupation Transnistria became a place for deported Romanian Jews. Systematic deportations began in September 1941. In the course of the next two months, all surviving Jews of Bessarabia and Bukovina and a small part of the Jewish population of Old Romania were dispatched across the Dniester. This first wave of deportations reached almost 120,000 by mid-November 1941 when it was halted by Ion Antonescu, the Romanian dictator, upon intervention of the Council of Romanian Jewish Communities. Deportations resumed at the beginning of the summer of 1942, affecting close to 5,000 Jews. A third series of deportations from Old Romania took place in July 1942, affecting Jews who had evaded forced labor decrees, as well as their families, communist sympathizers and Bessarabian Jews who had been in Old Romania and Transylvania during the Soviet occupation. The most feared Transnistrian camps were Vapniarka, Ribnita, Berezovka, Tulcin and Iampol. Most of the Jews deported to camps in Transnistria died between 1941-1943 because of horrible living conditions, diseases and lack of food.

[25](#) Pechora camp: On 11 November 1941 the civil governor of Transnistria issued the deportation of Jews. A camp for Jewish residents of Tulchin (3005 in total) was established in Pechora village Vinnytsya region in December 1941. This is known as the 'Dead Loop'. In total about 9000 people from various towns in Vinnytsya region were kept in the camp. They were accommodated in the former 2-storied recreation center building. There were up to 50 tenants in one room. No provisions were made for the most basic necessities of the inmates. Inmates hardly got any food and the building had no heating. About 2 500 Jews were taken away by Germans for forced labor. None of them returned, they all died from forced labor beyond their strength, lack of food, hunger and

diseases. In March 1944 Soviet troops liberated the camp. There were 1550 survivors left in the camp.

[27](#) 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.

[28](#) Tsimes: Stew made usually of carrots, parsnips, or plums with potatoes.

[29](#) Campaign against 'cosmopolitans': The campaign against 'cosmopolitans', i.e. Jews, was initiated in articles in the central organs of the Communist Party in 1949. The campaign was directed primarily at the Jewish intelligentsia and it was the first public attack on Soviet Jews as Jews. 'Cosmopolitans' writers were accused of hating the Russian people, of supporting Zionism, etc. Many Yiddish writers as well as the leaders of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee were arrested in November 1948 on charges that they maintained ties with Zionism and with American 'imperialism'. They were executed secretly in 1952. The anti-Semitic Doctors' Plot was launched in January 1953. A wave of anti-Semitism spread through the USSR. Jews were removed from their positions, and rumors of an imminent mass deportation of Jews to the eastern part of the USSR began to spread. Stalin's death in March 1953 put an end to the campaign against 'cosmopolitans'.

[30](#) 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.

[31](#) Khrushchev, Nikita (1894-1971): Soviet communist leader. After Stalin's death in 1953, he became first secretary of the Central Committee, in effect the head of the Communist Party of the USSR. In 1956, during the 20th Party Congress, Khrushchev took an unprecedented step and denounced Stalin and his methods. He was deposed as premier and party head in October 1964. In 1966 he was dropped from the Party's Central Committee.

[32](#) 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.

[33](#) Victory Day in Russia (9th May): National holiday to commemorate the defeat of Nazi Germany and the end of World War II and honor the Soviets who died in the war.

[34](#) Khrushchovka: Five-storied apartment buildings with small one, two or three-bedroom apartments, named after Nikita Khrushchev, head of the Communist Party and the Soviet Union after Stalin's death. These apartment buildings were constructed in the framework of Khrushchev's program of cheap dwelling in the new neighborhood of most Soviet cities.

[35](#) Gorbachev, Mikhail (1931- ): Soviet political leader. Gorbachev joined the Communist Party in 1952 and gradually moved up in the party hierarchy. In 1970 he was elected to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, where he remained until 1990. In 1980 he joined the politburo, and in 1985 he was appointed general secretary of the party. In 1986 he embarked on a comprehensive program of political, economic, and social liberalization under the slogans of glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring). The government released political prisoners, allowed increased emigration, attacked corruption, and encouraged the critical reexamination of Soviet history. The Congress of People's Deputies, founded in 1989, voted to end the Communist Party's control over the government and elected Gorbachev executive president. Gorbachev dissolved the Communist Party and granted the Baltic states independence. Following the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States in 1991, he resigned as president. Since 1992, Gorbachev has headed international organizations.

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

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