

# Mendel Kreimer

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Kishinev

Moldova

Interviewer: Nathalia Fomina

Date of interview: May 2004



Mendel Kelmanovich Kreimer is a tall gray-haired old man wearing thick-lens glasses. He is intelligent, bilious and short-tempered. He has a hearing problem and speaks loudly for this reason, and bangs his fist on the table to get attention. He often asks me to turn off my tape-recorder for unknown reasons. He doesn't remember much about his relatives, but he has very sweet memories of them. When he talks about his wife Enna, his face softens and that's when one can tell how much kindness his stern appearance hides. He carefully keeps the rare photographs of his dear ones in a thick album. He didn't agree to give us some of them for scanning. I could hardly manage to convince him to be photographed. Mendel hardly gets along with his daughter-in-law and grandson. He didn't even want to tell me their names. He lives alone in a one-bedroom apartment in a small building, hidden in a yard on Stefan cel Mare Street. His apartment is rather plainly furnished. However, his spacious and bright room is ideally clean.

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## **My family background**

My maternal grandfather, Shlomo Tzalik, came from a Cohanite family [Descendants of Aaron, the high priest in ancient Israel, bearing specific roles in the synagogue service]. He was born in Bessarabia [1](#), in Kishinev in 1862. During the Romanian rule [see Annexation of Bessarabia to Romania] [2](#) my grandfather was a grocer. He was very religious. He had a big white beard and moustache, wore a black kitel and a hat and was very tidy. My grandfather went to the synagogue, and also prayed at home with his tallit and tefillin on. I loved him dearly and went to the synagogue and prayed for him. I stopped going there after his death in 1932. I remember how we all went to Grandfather Shlomo's place for the seder on Pesach: there were about forty relatives who got together. We enjoyed it greatly. My grandfather spread his spiritual strength on us.

My maternal grandmother Beila [Tzalik] was very kind and sweet. She was a housewife like all the Jewish women of the time. We have none of my grandmother's photographs: actually, photographing wasn't a custom with Jews. I know that my grandfather's family suffered from the 1903 pogrom [see Kishinev pogrom of 1903] [3](#): their house was ruined and their belongings were stolen. After the pogrom my grandfather's family rented an apartment. Anti-Semitism was rather

strong at this time in Russia, and the government was aware of pogroms. The government's position was that if two people fight and the third one wins - divide and rule. The government supported the Black Hundred [4](#) fighters unofficially during this horrific pogrom. When the Jews saw that they had nobody to count on, they organized Jewish self-defense units [see Jewish self-defense movement] [5](#): they were butchers at first, and began to kill these bandits. The tsarist police had to interfere and stop this pogrom.

My grandfather died in 1932 at the age of 70. He was buried in the Jewish cemetery and later, some time in the 1960s, a part of the Jewish cemetery was removed to make a park. We moved the gravestones, and my grandfather lies near my grandmother, and some other members of our family. My grandparents had five children. My mother's older brother Yefim Tzalik and his family moved to Buenos Aires from tsarist Russia. This might have happened after the pogrom. All I remember about him is that his son was a notary in Brazil. We corresponded with him before World War I. Another brother, Solomon [Tzalik] was a bachelor. He lived in Kishinev and died before the war.

My mother's older sister Esphir was married to Iosif Vyvartsev. They moved to Kishinev from Russia. I don't remember what he did for a living. Esphir was a housewife. They had two children: Fenia and Lyonia [affectionate for Leonid]. Lyonia was ten years older than me. Fenia was his older sister. She married Shafir, a doctor from Kishinev. He studied medicine at the Petersburg University. When the revolution began in 1917 [see Russian Revolution of 1917] [6](#), he moved to Sorbonne in France. Later, he became a well-known therapist in Kishinev. Lyonia got married in 1939. I attended his wedding. There were many other relatives there. It was a traditional Jewish wedding, but it didn't prevent Lyonia from divorcing his wife later. During the Great Patriotic War [7](#) Esphir and Iosif stayed in Kishinev and were killed. Fenia and her husband evacuated to Alma-Ata [today Kazakhstan]. Lyonia was at the front. After the war they lived in Kishinev. Lyonia remarried a few times. We kept in touch with them. They have both passed away.

My mother's sister Lisa was married. Her family name was Lembritskaya. She had no children. Aunt Lisa was an assistant doctor. She fell ill with cancer. I remember that she stayed in our home and my mother looked after her till her last day. Aunt Lisa died in 1940.

My mother, Surah Kreimer [nee Tzalik] was born in 1892. My mother didn't get any education. She could hardly write her name. She was very religious having been raised in a Cohanite family with very strict religious rules. My mother was very good and nice. I never asked her how she and my father met or whether theirs was a love or arranged marriage.

My paternal grandfather, Berl Kreimer, also came from Kishinev. Grandfather Berl served in the tsarist army and took part in the Russian-Turkish war [1877-1878] [8](#). My grandfather told me there was a Territorial Army formed then to liberate Bulgaria from the Turks [see Liberation of Bulgaria from the Ottoman Rule] [9](#). In tsarist Russia my grandfather was a timber dealer. He rented forest areas, hired people to cut the trees to sell wood. During the Romanian rule after 1918 he owned a Laundromat. My father's mother died long before I was born. I don't remember her name. My grandfather remarried. His second wife, Inda, must have been very pretty, when she was young. She came from a village. Her brother owned a tavern in a village near Kishinev. Inda and my grandfather had a son and a daughter: they were my father's stepbrother and stepsister, Isaac and Mania. Grandfather Berl died before Grandfather Shlomo. I don't remember his funeral. My father

also had a brother and a sister. His older brother Leizer and his wife moved to Argentina. They had no children. We lost contact with him before the war.

My father's older sister Basia [Brihtan, nee Kreimer] finished a gymnasium in tsarist Russia. Her husband Mendel Brihtan was a journalist in Kishinev. His father, Izko Brihtan, was a merchant of the first or second guild [see Guild I] [10](#) in Kishinev. They had two children: Mikhail and Dina. I have a table economic calendar of Bessarabia with an inquiry section and an address-calendar issued in Kishinev in 1895. Mendel Brihtan wrote about Pushkin [11](#) in Kishinev in this calendar. Mendel Brihtan also debated with Krushevan, the first anti-Semite in Kishinev [Krushevan: editor of an anti-Semitic newspaper, leader of the Black Hundred 'Union of Russian people' in Kishinev], in mass media. Before the 1903 pogrom, Brihtan and his family left Kishinev for America to save their lives. They had a very hard life there for a long time, but they must have managed in the end, considering that they could afford to give their children a good education. Dina was an English teacher and Mendel owned a printing house. My father corresponded with them before World War I, but I failed to restore communication after the war.

My grandfather Berl sent my father's younger brother Moisey to study engineering in Germany. When he was a third-year student, Moisey became fond of social democratic ideas, and got actively involved in politics and gave up his studies. My grandfather was very angry about it: he had wasted his money. In 1919, after Bessarabia was annexed to Romania, Moisey ran away to Russia. He was a brilliant mathematician and lectured in Odessa. This is all I know about him.

My father's stepbrother Isaac graduated from the Medical Faculty of Odessa University. During World War I he was at the front where he gained medical experience. After the war he worked in Kishinev as a dentist for Kogan, a female dentist. He had three children: David, Zina and Bella. David and Zina were doctors. Zina worked at the ambulance. Uncle Isaac's wife, whose name I don't remember, died in evacuation in Central Asia during the war. Uncle Isaac died in Kishinev in the 1960s. I kept in touch with his children after the war. My father's stepsister Mania Kreimer and her mother lived with us. During the war they stayed in Kishinev and were killed.

## Growing up

My father, Kelman Kreimer, was born in Kishinev in 1886. My father was six years older than my mother. He finished elementary school in Kishinev. Before World War I my father served in the tsarist army. He had beautiful handwriting and served as a writing clerk. His military service was in Poland which belonged to the tsarist Russia then. Their military unit was located near the hunting ground which belonged to a tsarist family. When the family came to hunt, the soldiers were taught to hunt wild boars. They also had to learn safety rules to be on the safe side. This is what my father told me about his service. My father got married in the 1910s after the army. I never asked him about the wedding, but I'm sure it was a Jewish wedding. It couldn't have been otherwise at that time. I know that my parents' first daughter was born soon after their wedding and died in infancy. I don't even know her name. My second sister, Dina, was born in 1914. I was born seven years later, on 21st July 1921.

My father owned a leather goods store at the time. He purchased leather goods from manufactures in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Germany paying cash for them. He also arranged railroad shipments. My father got broke during the inflation in Germany. He kept all his cash in German Marks. When I was small I saw a whole heap of Mark notes in the wardrobe. My father lost such a

whole lot of money: he was so shocked that he even wanted to commit suicide, but my mother managed to calm him down. She was a strong and intelligent woman. My father had no employment for a year or two. My sister Dina and I had lunches at our Grandfather Shlomo and Grandmother Beila's house, and my parents had meals at Grandfather Berl's house. We survived through those hard years.

My sister Dina completed elementary school and four years of secondary school. Since my father couldn't afford to pay for her further education, Dina was sent to ORT [12](#). It was a Jewish organization where children from poor families studied different professions. Dina studied sewing. Later, my father managed to get a job as a financial controller in a joint-stock company. This transportation company arranged passenger transportations by the following routes: Kishinev-Orgeyev, Kishinev-Gonchesti, Kishinev- Kreuleni, and Kishinev-Leovo. My father was smart and honest. He managed to increase the company profit significantly within two months and his salary doubled. He told me that their drivers were mainly children of wealthy parents who had escaped from the revolution in Russia in 1917. Many of them owned their own vehicles. My father had to work a lot: almost twelve hours per day and had no days off. In winter he often had to walk to the town since vehicles would get stuck in deep snow. My father only had a day off on Yom Kippur and Pesach, when he went to the synagogue and took me with him.

My mother made sure that we observed all Jewish traditions. We spoke Yiddish at home. All Jews observed all rules during capitalism in Bessarabia. [The interviewee means before Bessarabia/Moldova became a part of the Soviet Union in 1940.] Religion saved our people from disappearing since mixed marriages were forbidden. Judaism is actually the only mono- national religion, the one nation's religion. Pesach was the main and most favored holiday. We went to Grandfather Shlomo's house for the first and second seder. [Pesach, like all Jewish holidays lasts two days outside the Holy Land.] Grandfather always conducted seder. There was only family there. Each relative had a seat assigned to him. The youngest kids were to steal the afikoman - a piece of matzah, that grandfather hid away. Everybody had wine and there was a full glass for Prophet Elijah. The door was kept open for him. We observed these rituals accurately. We also sang Pesach songs. I remember a special feeling of joy that I had never felt before.

We fasted on Yom Kippur. I fasted after the age of 13. Frankly speaking, I only managed half the day. When I went into the yard with grapes, my mother would scream, 'God help us!', fearing that the neighbors would see this disgrace.

It's impossible to forget Chanukkah! All children went around to their relatives collecting Chanukkah gelt. Chanukkah gelt meant getting sweets and other joys of life. Chanukkah was a joyful feast. We, boys, also played with the dreidel. There were special games and special rules.

On Purim, my mother made hamantashen and fluden. For fluden she bought special patterned waffles and boiled nuts in honey for filling. There was also baklava. I have vague memories about them, but there were performances: purimspiels presenting Mordechai, Esther and Ahasuerus. I don't remember whether I went to the synagogue to listen to the Scroll of Esther [Megillat Ester]. If Grandfather Shlomo had lived with us I would have remembered more about rituals. After he died in 1932, I stopped going to the synagogue.

My father sent me to the elementary school in Kishinev: 'Magen David Jewish gymnasium for boys.' There was Hebrew taught there and a few Judaism- related subjects in Hebrew. When I finished

four grades, my father realized that he couldn't afford to educate me any further. He decided a man had to learn a profession and sent me to a commercial school. This was the way it happened during capitalism: how the human mind worked. I had to pass the exams in the Romanian elementary school in order to enter this commercial school. I need to say that my generation of young people in Kishinev was lucky to have great teachers. They were the best lecturers of Russia who had escaped from the revolution of 1917, and King Ferdinand I [13](#) of Romania gave them shelter. After Bessarabia was annexed to Romania in 1918 they taught Russian in gymnasiums for five or six years before they learned sufficient Romanian to teach in it. They were well-educated and good people. I must say, I had some talents, but I didn't care about studying. Eberwei, the director of our gymnasium, was a German teacher. Eberwei and Scheibler were authors of all German textbooks in Romania. Scheibler was our English teacher. We also studied French.

My father sometimes failed to pay school fees on time. One day I got expelled from school. However, working for his transportation company he managed to resolve this problem. Romanian authorities censored all mailings. Bessarabian Christian clergymen had confidential correspondence. For example, when Christian priest Orgievskiy wanted to send a letter to the Bessarabian metropolitan in Kishinev past the Romanian censors writing about the monastery profits, etc., he asked my father to transport such letters. I delivered those letters to their addresses at night. This was my income. Our class tutor, Zubkov, was also an accountant for the Orthodox Church Bank of Bessarabia. [Editor's note: There is no evidence available for such a bank in Moldova and it is unlikely that the Orthodox Church had its own bank. Probably Zubkov worked at the office of the Bessarabian Metropolitan.] My father requested one of the clergymen to pull strings for our family to pay half the school fees. It worked out well. Zubkov called me and said, 'You must receive at least seven to eight marks.' We had a ten- point system. 'If it is below seven, you will have no indulgences'. I tried my best and had some success.

Kishinev was a small town, the majority of its population, which was 50,000 or 60,000, if my memory doesn't fail me, was Jewish [According to the all- Russian census of 1897, in Kishinev there were 108,483 residents, 50,237 Jews among them.] Jews resided in various districts of the town wherever they could afford, but tried to have Jewish neighbors around to feel safer. The locals respected Jews who believed in God and respected other religions. There were Russians and Bulgarians in Kishinev. Romanians believed all Bessarabians to be too Russified and had little trust in us. Bessarabia was under the rule of the Ottoman Empire for 300 years and then there were 108 years of the Russian tsarist rule. Of course, we were more attached to the Russian culture, though the Romanian culture also had its positive sides, but still they are so different, these two cultures.

I realized that one had to be strong to stand for oneself, when I was young. My friend Ardelianu's father, a Romanian, served in the fire brigade on Sadovaya Street, and his mother was German. They were a very decent family. Ardelianu and I went to the town gym where we had to pay a fee: this wasn't the Soviet way where everything was free of charge. When I worked at night for my father: delivering letters, there was always a risk of attacks by hooligans and I had brass knuckles with me. This was dangerous, but I didn't care. I could fight and had no problems in this regard. I could walk with a girlfriend in a park at night and she would be safe with me. I was in love with a Jewish girl, Clara Stiglitz. She studied at the Jeanne D'Arc gymnasium. I had a close friend whose name was Ilia Barenstein. Ilia came from a traditional Jewish family. We met at a New Year's party. I had only Jewish friends and we got together at parties. I often visited Clara Stiglitz and once I met



her friend Enna Goldstein, a short pretty girl. It would have never occurred to me that many years later Enna would become my second wife.

### During the War

When Cuzists [14](#) came to power, my German teacher Schreiber, who had pro-fascist ideas, became mayor of the town. Two months later the Iron Guard [15](#) fighters, who were worse than Hitler's forces, killed Armand Calinescu, Minister of Home Affairs of Romania. [Armand Calinescu, Premier of Romania was murdered in September 1939.] This happened approximately in 1938. Karl II, the King of Romania [see King Carol II] [16](#), ordered to kill one or two activists of the Iron Guard in bigger towns. Here, in Kishinev, on the corner of Pushkinskaya Street and Alexandrovskiy Avenue, where there is a newspaper kiosk now, a gendarme guarded the bodies of two sentenced Iron Guard fighters. There was a note in Romanian: 'This will happen to every traitor of the state.' Later, my gymnasium fellow student told me that the Germans had killed Schreiber during the war. They said that he simultaneously served the German and English intelligence.

My older sister Dina became a dressmaker after finishing a sewing school. She did very well and very soon she had her own circle of customers. She earned well. She also helped my mother a lot with running the house. My mother had a severe gynecological surgery and couldn't lift any weights. I also tried to make her life easier and did my own laundry. We cared a lot about each other in the family. My parents supported each other. Theirs was a hard life. My father was well-read and knew many interesting things and I enjoyed talking to him, when he was free. In 1939 Dina got married. She had a big wedding party with a chuppah and a rabbi. Unfortunately, I can't remember her husband's first name. His last name was Villerman.

In May 1940 I successfully passed the exams for a Bachelor's degree. Our examiners were teachers from out and we had to know everything by heart and demonstrate good intellectual skills. At this time the Soviet troops came to Bessarabia [also see Annexation of Bessarabia to the Soviet Union] [17](#) and I went to work as an accountant in the Border Forces Construction Agency on the bank of the Prut River, the new borderline between Romania and the USSR. This was construction site 12 of the Kiev military department of the NKVD [18](#) USSR. This organization was responsible for the construction of barracks and fortifications. They paid well and offered good working conditions. There was an earthquake in 1940 in Kishinev. It destroyed the roof of the neighboring two-storied house and ruined the ceiling in our house. I requested my boss Zyrianskiy, also a Jew, to help me repair our house. Stalin issued an order about providing assistance to civilians after the earthquake and my boss promised to help. Two weeks later our roof was repaired. He kept his word: only the best, very decent and honest people served in the frontier troops at that time. In spring 1941, I had a free two week vacation in the central trade union recreation home in Odessa. I was accompanied by an NKVD employee since Bessarabians weren't allowed entry into the USSR, so that they didn't know what was actually happening there. I saw the reality for the first time: lines for sugar and calico. They artificially created a paradise in Bessarabia with plenty of goods and low prices. The Soviet power was good at making this sham, and my father used to say that the Soviet power was a purimspiel.

When the war began on 22nd June 1941, the military office mobilized me and my friend Ilia Barenstein for grain harvesting on the bank of the Dnestr. We were taught to mow and harvest and to leave no crops for the enemy. Later, we were taken to dig tank ditches near Odessa. The soil

there was like stone! However, I was used to hard labor since childhood, and it was no problem for me. There was a Soviet slogan: 'who works not for us, works for the enemy!', and it was mandatory to fulfill the standard scopes. Stronger guys helped those who failed to complete their scopes. Then Stalin issued an order that he had no trust in Bessarabians, and we were sent away! German troops were approaching Nikolaev and Odessa region. Ilia and I walked to the east.

I was thinking of getting to the town of Chkalov in Orenburg region, where we had distant relatives and I expected to hear about my parents. Field kitchens left everything behind them in a hurry: I remember cabbages on the sides of roads. Then a column of vehicles from the construction organization caught up with us. The driver recognized me and stopped and when Zyrianskiy, my former boss, heard that we had no documents, he said he could take us to Dzhankoy in the Crimea. He gave us food and helped us to obtain an evacuation certificate from the town executive committee in Nikolaev. Also Zyrianskiy offered his warranty for me to obtain 500 rubles allowance. We said our 'good byes' in Dzhankoy. After the war, when I worked as an accountant at the furniture factory in Kishinev, our chief engineer's name was also Zyrianskiy. We talked and he said, 'This was my uncle. He perished in the Crimea.'

From there we took freight trains moving in whatever direction. There was no sufficient food. At railway stations we got some hot meals: a kind of soup, at evacuation points. We arrived at a station near Stalingrad on the Volga and from there went to Ulianovsk up the river by boat. From there we went to Orenburg in the Ural. We found my distant relatives, but they weren't happy to see us. They had no information about my parents, or sister. Winter was coming and it was getting cold. What were we to do? We went to Central Asia in the south. On the way Ilia and I lost each other. I arrived at Fergana [today Uzbekistan] and went to the evacuation office. It sent me to the nearest kolkhoz [19](#) to work as an assistant accountant. They gave me a warm welcome, accommodated me in the kolkhoz office and provided food: Uzbek people are very hospitable. They grew cotton. I collected data about cotton quantities from accounting clerks of crews and sent it to the district executive committee.

In autumn, when it often rained, the crews had to dry cotton before shipping it to storage, and I couldn't check the accuracy of the data received from the accounting clerks. They happened to cheat me. I talked to the chairman of the kolkhoz: 'The accounting clerks cheat me and I send the wrong data to the district executive committee, but I don't want to cheat on the Soviet power.' He replied, 'We've created all conditions for you and we give you food. What else do you want?' and I said, 'I want to work honestly and not cheat. I'll complain to the district executive committee.' The next morning I went to the district town. After I had covered eight kilometers the chairman caught up with me riding his horse. He began to threaten me with his whip, 'I'll kill you!' I replied, 'So what? I'm not scared. I've seen worse things.' He growled, 'What do you want?' I told him that I wanted to work honestly. I didn't want to send fictitious data to the district executive committee. He asked me if I would go to a tractor operator training course. I said that I'd love to, as long as I would work honestly. I studied there for three months before I fell ill with spotted fever. I was taken to the district hospital. I was unconscious for ten days, but I was strong and recovered. I could hardly walk with a stick as I felt so exhausted. I returned to the kolkhoz, but I couldn't work any longer and they fired me giving me food and money for my work. I sold some food products there.

I kept thinking about my parents and sister. I decided to look for them in the Caucasus. I arrived at Krasnovodsk [today Turkmenistan], and wanted to cross the Caspian Sea to get to Makhachkala

[today Russia], but I couldn't get a ticket without a pass. Fortunately, I met Polish Jews who had evacuated from former Polish territories [see Annexation of Eastern Poland] [20](#). We talked in Yiddish. By the way, I think Yiddish needs to be preserved as a language since it gave the opportunity to American and European Jews to understand each other. These Poles worked as loaders in the dock. They offered me to help me get on a boat illegally, but I didn't want any problems and refused. I told them my story and they offered me to work with them as a loader. Krasnovodsk was a seaport, there was a desert around it, and tankers shipped fresh water from Makhachkala. Dockers and railroad people constituted its main population. They helped me to get a job as a loader and accommodated me in their hostel. I'm still grateful to them for their assistance. I was so happy to have a clean bed. I washed myself and felt human again.

The Poles did my work for me at first: I couldn't lift a spade to load sand or mortar. It lasted a week. They found a vacancy for me: housing and utility assistant manager. My boss Lapin drank all day long. I was to process all accommodation and housing registration documents, but I wasn't materially responsible. I gave Lapin all monthly payments I received from tenants and he kept all the receipts. A month later, the accounting office called me and declared there was about two thousand rubles missing. I told them that I had given all the money to my boss, but they didn't listen to me. In the evening I told my friends and started crying. They calmed me down: 'Don't worry, we saw the receipts in the toilets.' I went to a militia office and told them I'd seen the receipts in the pits. They hired janitors who picked these receipts and cleaned them. When they inspected the receipts, they fired Lapin and wanted to appoint me as the manager, but I refused: 'I shall not work with you. If you suspected me, I have no trust in you either.'

Through this whole time I studied Russian which I'd never learned at school. I went to the library on weekends where I read books and newspapers. Once I saw an announcement in a newspaper about an accounting course in Ashgabat [today Turkmenistan] for those who knew Moldovan, to work as chief accountants in Moldova after the war. I sent my documents there and received an invitation. Soviet laws encouraged studying and nobody would have stopped a person going to study. I was accommodated in a good hostel. There were experienced trainers evacuated with the Kharkov Financial Economic College. I finished this course with honors in 1943 and was sent to work as assistant chief accountant in the Raypotrebsoyuz which was a district consumption office, in Molotov region, Charjou district [today Turkmenistan]. I tried to do my work well.

Half a year later, I did an audit in a village and met my future wife Ludmila Zaitseva, who was Russian. She came from Belgorod [today Russia]. She was two years younger than me. Ludmila finished a midwife course in Kharkov and was sent to work in Central Asia [see mandatory job assignment in the USSR] [21](#). I walked to her covering eight kilometers to the village. I stayed overnight with her and went to work in the morning. I covered 16 kilometers every day, but it wasn't a problem for me: I was young. Our feelings were what mattered. Then my chief accountant invited me to his office and said that his niece had fallen in love with me. He tried to slander Ludmila: 'She is this and that...' Her sin was that she dared to wash in the aryk wearing her swimming suit. This was something outstanding to do in Uzbekistan. I stopped him: 'I don't care about her past. I love her'. And we got married.

The chief accountant couldn't help taking revenge: he demoted me and reduced my salary. I was assigned as an accountant in a grain stocks office. I complained to the HR department in the Oblpotrebsoyuz, which was the regional consumption office. They assigned me as chief accountant



in the Raypotrebsoyuz on the border with Afghanistan. My wife and I received a small room with a stove and a bed: this was the wartime and any luxuries were out of the question. We were very happy. In this area they grew silkworms. All district leaders wore silk shirts, but the workers couldn't afford them. I established the procedure to deliver silk to stores past the district officials. The officials didn't like this, of course. They wanted to send me to the army, but I was rather short-sighted. Besides, the first secretary of the district committee supported me. He was a decent Turkmen. I was a diligent employee, and the chief accountant of the Oblpotrebsoyuz, a woman, made me her assistant in Charjou. My wife and I moved to Charjou. I received a furnished apartment. Our son was born in 1944, in March. We named him Valeriy after Valeriy Chkalov [22](#).

I went to do audits. In one district I discovered about 99,000 rubles in cash: this was an unrealistic amount for them, it couldn't be true. I went to talk with the chairman of the Oblpotrebsoyuz: 'What a shock - they steal industrial goods and food products during the war, this mustn't happen!' He replied, 'They told you to go to the base and take whatever you want. You refused, but the regional officials didn't, and we can't live otherwise. If you make much ado about it, they will send you to the army.' I received a notice and was sent to a reserve regiment in Kattakurgan, an artillery management platoon where they trained march companies to the front within three months: this was March 1945. Three months later, at the target shooting I was aiming at the target with my left eye, though I was required to do this with my right eye. I could see better with my left eye and I hit it!

The regiment commander approached me, and I stood up with excitement: 'Why are you aiming with your left eye?' I told him that I could see better with my left eye, and I had succeeded. He said, 'You aren't subject to regular service and they had no right to train you for it.' He sent me to the commission that confirmed that I wasn't subject to regular service. I was made a writing clerk in the food logistical service. I tried to help my former fellow comrades by providing them with more food. Two months later I fell ill with hepatitis. We were staying in mud huts and there were rats in them. I had to stay in hospital for a month. Then I got a two-week vacation and went to see my wife and son. This was summer and we had won the war, but there was still war with Japan [23](#), and our companies were sent to the Far East. After the victory over Japan our regiment was liquidated and I went back home to Kishinev.

## Post-war

We arrived in Kishinev in 1946. My parents' home was ruined by bombing. I didn't find any neighbors. My cousin Fenia Shafir had returned from evacuation in Alma-Ata. She told me that my parents, my sister Dina and her husband had perished during evacuation. She didn't give me any details, though. I still think that Fenia had some information of their death, but never told me anything. At first my wife, my son and I stayed in a hotel on Mikhailovskaya Street. I used the money I had received at demobilization. I could get a job in Kishinev, but no apartment. I became chief accountant of a catering trust. We moved to Beltsy. My wife went to work as an assistant obstetrician in the maternity hospital. I worked honestly, but honesty had no way in the Soviet Union. The director of the trust, Burlachenko, didn't like it when I fired the senior accountant of a commercial 'chaynaya' for breach of trust. [Editor's note: 'chay': tea in Russian. In the 1950s, in the USSR cafes they served tea, snacks and vodka.] He issued an order appointing me the senior accountant of this 'chaynaya.' I understood that there was nothing else to complain about.

A few years later, I was transferred to the Kishinev saw mill and received an apartment in a new two-storied building on Kuibyshev Street. I moved there alone, and later my wife obtained a certificate that I had a job in Kishinev. She needed it to resign from work at the maternity hospital. The next day I received a telegram from our neighbor in Beltsy: 'I've got the keys to your apartment. Your wife and son have left.' This came to me as a surprise. My wife and I never had any conflicts. I had a heart attack at work on hearing this, though I was a healthy man. Later, I found out that she had met a Russian man, quite a drunkard. This was an unexpected blow. I didn't think I deserved it. A year later I bumped into my prewar girlfriend Clara Stiglitz, who said that Enna Goldstein was also in Kishinev. I was very happy to hear this. I knew Enna well, her house, her upbringing and human qualities. We began to see each other.

Enna was born into a wealthy Jewish family in Kishinev in 1921. Her father, Shopse Goldstein, owned a house on Kagulskaya Street. He was a tradesman. He also worked as a lab assistant in the Kogan mill, a big enterprise in Kishinev. Her mother, Leya Goldstein, was a housewife. Leya always supported her poor neighbors giving them potatoes or wood, etc. Enna followed into her mother's footsteps. Enna had a younger sister named Mera. They both studied in the French gymnasium named after Jeanne D'Arc. Enna finished the gymnasium. Shopse was a very smart and enterprising man. A few days before the Soviet rule was to be established he told the bank employees, 'You can have this money to remove me from the list of big clients.' When the Soviet power was established, he gave two of his six rooms to the passport office manager, which helped him to avoid nationalization of his house and save his family from exile to Siberia like many other wealthy families in Bessarabia. However, his wife and daughter had the following entries in their passports: wife of a businessman, and daughter of a businessman.

When the war began, Shopse arranged for his wife and daughters to evacuate. He bought a pair of horses and a wagon, loaded his best belongings on the wagon and moved after his family. In the Caucasus, when the frontline was approaching and Shopse started on his way to escape, his landlord went with him. He killed Shopse on the way and took possession over his property. The mother and the daughters dropped their passports stating that they were the family of a businessman into the Dnestr after they crossed the river over a pontoon bridge in Dubossary. They only had birth certificates left: they'd lost their other documents. They stayed in Central Asia, some place in the Kokand region [today Uzbekistan] during the war. They had a very hard life like everybody else. Enna learned to make brynza: the sheep cheese, from the local elders. She picked up Uzbek within half a year, and the locals respected her a lot for doing this. Enna had a good conduct of German and went to teach German in a local school. After the war Shopse's younger brother, who was raised in his brother's family after their parents died, sent them an invitation letter to go to Chernovtsy [today Ukraine]. He graduated from a Medical College in Chernovtsy. He lived in a very small room where they all stayed. Enna worked as a shop assistant in a bookstore and Mera was a medical nurse in an eye clinic. Mera married Izia Averbukh from Chernovtsy. They had a son. She worked as a surgery nurse in this eye clinic for 30 years. They still live there.

In the early 1950s Enna decided to go back to Kishinev where she had friends. She finished a course for medical nurses and went to work at a nursery school. That was when we met. In 1953 I divorced my first wife officially and my son stayed with her following the decision of the court. In 1954 Enna and I got married. We had a small wedding dinner that was quite customary in those years and had a good life together.

The attitude towards Jews changed radically in the country after the war. In my opinion Stalin borrowed some anti-Semitic ideas from Hitler after the war. Where did it start? They closed Jewish schools, though in big towns only a few Jewish families sent their children to Jewish schools, but in smaller ones they still taught and spoke Yiddish. In 1949 Mikhoels [24](#) was murdered. They feigned a car accident where he died. They also closed Jewish theaters and the last synagogues, taking away everything related to religion. In early 1953 the so-called Doctors' Plot [25](#) began, potted of lies from the beginning to the end. However, I grieved when Stalin died in 1953: I was devoted to the Soviet power. I sincerely believed in justice, friendship of people and all those principles that the Soviet power only declared on paper. Enna used to say: 'You don't know them while I happened to make a closer acquaintance with them.' However, I didn't give up my faith. I witnessed many misdoings at work, but I always believed there were decent people holding higher posts.

My son wrote to me that his stepfather didn't want him to live with them and that they beat and tortured him. His mother dictated Valeriy on purpose. She didn't want him and wanted him to live with me. I remember how sorry I felt for him and cried: he was my dear son! When Ludmila brought Valeriy, I was happy. Enna said, 'I'm raising other children, and I will manage with your own son.' Enna treated Valeriy even better than I did. She spoiled him. She said, 'I don't want him to feel that I'm his stepmother. I must treat him so that he can never tell that I'm not his own mother.' For this reason she didn't want her own children to avoid division on one's own and somebody else's. I often argued with her about it, but she was insistent and even had abortions. I'm particularly sorry about it now. Three years later, Valeriy's mother came to visit Valeriy. She already had a daughter with her second husband. A year later her brother who was on vacation in Odessa came to see me. He probably wanted Ludmila and me to make up, but I told him that there was no forgiveness for the betrayal. Then he said that Enna was a great woman and I was lucky to have her. I knew it very well!

Valeriy was an average pupil at school. He also studied music. I wanted him to learn to play the accordion at the music school, but at that time the memory of cosmopolitanism [see Campaign against 'cosmopolitans'] [26](#) was still fresh and he was enlisted in the 'bayan' [Russian folk accordion] class. That was a more Russian version of an accordion. Valeriy had a good ear and I spent a lot of time teaching him at home. I wanted him to grow up a developed and understanding man. Studying music also develops work skills: I raised Valeriy to be a hardworking man. During the elections there were electoral offices at schools, and Valeriy's school invited him to play at concerts arranged for attracting voters. He also played at school parties. All young people had fun and danced while he played. He wasn't comfortable with it though.

Enna was a kind and sensitive person. I would like to mention one event. In the early 1950s, when she worked at the nursery school, young mothers came to the school to breastfeed their babies. One young mother was always very nervous about missing work and she had problems with breast milk. She was also always hungry. She was desperate. Enna calmed her down, offered her some food and said, 'It's all right, if you come to work half an hour later. Your baby is what matters.' The woman calmed down and had milk to feed the baby. Enna supported her a lot. That young woman, I've forgotten her surname, was Moldovan. She worked as a seamstress in garment shops. One day, about eight or ten years later she came to see my wife: 'I'm doing very well now. I sew in a special garment shop for the Central Committee employees. I can't forget what you've done for me and want to do you a favor.' She took my wife's and my measurements and made her a lovely

dress and a nice suit for me. Later, she worked as a fabric and garment foreign purchasing representative of Vneshtorg of Moldova. After that she went to work in Moscow. Her son graduated from a medical college and had a baby and she requested Enna to stay with them in Moscow for at least a year to nurse the baby, but Enna refused: 'I have a family, and I can't afford to leave them for that long.'

Enna was a skilled medical nurse and could replace a doctor. Parents weren't concerned about leaving their kids in her care. They knew that Enna would take care of them, if they had fever or diarrhea. She was also a great housewife. She liked cooking and having guests. She did it well and our friends liked getting together in our home. She always bought the best and fresh food for such parties, got up at 4am and took a few days to do the cooking. The guests always praised her talents while I used to tell her off for wasting her energy. We celebrated Soviet holidays: 1st May, October Revolution Day [27](#), New Year, and gathered together during Jewish holidays with our Jewish friends.

I used to buy matzah for Pesach from the synagogue. Enna liked matzah and matzah dishes. The synagogue also sold matzah flour. We had special crockery for Pesach and a special samovar. We followed the kashrut and didn't eat pork. Enna was great at making traditional Jewish food! She made terrific gefilte fish. Her father liked her cooking gefilte fish before the war. This dish took a lot of time and energy to prepare. She usually picked a pike or a carp for this dish. She also made tsimes with beans and sweet and sour stew. She exchanged recipes with other housewives. She used to say that 'the way to a man's heart lies through his stomach.' She was a wise woman and said to me, 'Why do you fight with those directors and are always changing jobs? Do you want to change the Soviet power? You need to understand what I mean: one doesn't have to be intelligent to tell the truth while one does to tell a lie and make other people believe it, and one doesn't need to be very intelligent to be telling the truth like you do.'

Valeriy finished school and I wanted him to continue his musical education. He went to take exams at a music school in Slobodzeya. However, this wasn't what he wanted to do, and he made a poor performance on purpose not to be admitted there. He said, 'I don't feel like entertaining people.' He liked spending time in the shed crafting and drilling, and I realized this was what he wanted to do. At that time I worked as a chief accountant at a nail forming plant. They had the best crew of tool mechanics there. The first director of our plant was Butman, a Jewish man, who managed to hire the best specialists. I asked my son, 'So, what do you want to do?' and he told me that wanted to work at my plant. I told him, 'I can't pull strings for you. You are a Komsomol [28](#) member. Go to the town committee and obtain a request for a job interview at the plant. I'll arrange for a skilled worker to train you at the plant.' Basically, I managed to encourage my son to get a good job.

However, I had conflicts with both the chief engineer and shop superintendent. They issued fictitious innovation proposals to receive bonuses and they were based on fictitious estimations of saving materials and salaries. I had to review these proposals to make sure there were real advantages in them. I had enemies and they put obstacles on the way for my son: he couldn't receive a grade for a long time. However, he learned the profession and read reference manuals and they had to award him a category [professional grade] six months later. He liked this job and was doing well at it.

One year later Valeriy was recruited to the army. He served in the rocket forces in Zaporozhiye. They often went on training to Siberia. One day we received a letter from his commandment expressing their gratitude for his good service and fair labor. Valeriy was responsible for the radio station of the regiment commander. My wife and I visited him there. At school Valeriy had a very nice Jewish girlfriend. She had all excellent marks. I've forgotten her name. My wife liked her a lot. She went to see Valeriy in his military unit on vacations, but her father was against their marriage: Valeriy's mother was Russian, and he had no higher education. They loved each other, but, regretfully, she couldn't disobey her father. Two years later Valeriy's friends introduced him to a Russian girl. They got married. Their son was born in 1972. I don't want to talk about it.

Valeriy worked as leader of a crew of tool mechanics for 40 years. A year ago he went to work at another plant. His previous director was an anti- Semite and Valeriy suffered such abuses that he had to quit this job. He got a job at the electric machine plant. He is valued here and has good work conditions. He says, 'It's like paradise. I'm sorry I didn't listen to you.' I had told him for three years, 'Just move away from this anti- Semite.'

When Gorbachev [29](#) came to power and perestroika [30](#) began, I accepted it with all my heart hoping for improvement and more democracy. I think Gorbachev made many mistakes. He had to remove Soviet forces from Germany, Poland and other countries, members of the Warsaw Pact under the condition that they undertook an obligation to enter any military block, NATO or others. The Soviet forces left barracks and houses in these countries. They should have built houses and barracks in the USSR so that the military had lodgings, when they returned. However, Yeltsin let us down the most. When the Presidents of Ukraine, Belarus and Russia discussed the independence of their countries in Bielovezhskaya Puscha [Belarus national park, where Yeltsin signed the break-up of the Soviet Union with the Ukraine and Belarus] in 1991, this was actually a coup since the population voted for the USSR at the referendum before. Yeltsin was to get a bullet in his forehead for this. One must call a spade a spade. This is my vision of those events.

During perestroika I received my pension, but still worked at the 'Medpribor' plant. This plant provided services to almost all medical institutions repairing medical equipment. There was a lot of room for machinations of all kinds. All medical institutions of Moldova were to send their used X-Ray tapes to the plant where they extracted silver from them and burned the tapes in incineration units. The silver was supplied to the mint in Leningrad. There were many problems, but I managed to disclose all machinations. In order to do this I studied the operations process. I believe an accountant must know the production processes in order to adjust the accounting process of the production for the good of business.

My wife Enna died in December 1996. We lived together for over 40 years. Enna was very smart and we had a good life. She never allowed any conflicts. If we had arguments, she never left them last till evening. She used to say, 'Life is short, and we mustn't waste it arguing.' Our neighbors used to stop talking for months, but Enna said, 'I can't afford such luxury'. She always tried to find humor with me. I also did my best. I saw how devoted she was to me, and this is so rare in our days. I feel sorry I didn't value her as she deserved. Only when one loses something, one realizes what he had and what he lost. When Enna was alive, work was number one in my life, and my family came second.



Today I have a decent life thanks to Hesed [25](#) and our religion obliging Jews to support each other. I don't have to search garbage cans like other old people. I'm proud that many people envy us, and that we get assistance and are provided for. A visiting nurse cleans, cooks and does my laundry twice a week. I also try to do some work. I try not to make her feel like a housemaid. I try to have no conflicts with her. If I want something, I ask for it politely. I understand that when we grow older our drawbacks grow stronger. Twice a month I get a ride to the Hesed Day Center Yehuda where I stay all day long. We have breakfast and then they measure our blood pressure, tell us what's going on in Israel, and around the world: a sort of political hour. We then have amateur groups sing us songs and perform for us. I enjoy talking to people and having discussions.

I don't go to the synagogue: it's hard for me to walk. Besides, I don't think our rabbi was right giving no opportunity for many Jews to move to Israel. I understand the rule that only those having Jewish mothers are believed to be Jews, but the Israeli army accepts not only Jews to serve in it, and they defend the country and don't deserve to be considered different. They need to take into consideration that Arabs have five to six times a higher birth rate than Jews, and this factor will impact the future of Israel. I follow up news from Israel. I watch television programs from Israel or America. I listen to all parties to be able to make conclusions. Enna and I always wanted to move to Israel, but she didn't want to leave her Valeriy behind. When my son was offered to take his wife with him his wife replied, 'The Jews have bored me here and you think I will go there?'

## Glossary

### **1 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 Moldova.

### **2 Annexation of Bessarabia to Romania**

During the chaotic days of the Soviet Revolution the national assembly of Moldavians convoked to Kishinev decided on 4th December 1917 the proclamation of an independent Moldavian state. In order to impede autonomous aspirations, Russia occupied the Moldavian capital in January 1918. Upon Moldavia's desperate request, the army of neighboring Romania entered Kishinev in the same month recapturing the city from the Bolsheviks. This was the decisive step toward the union with Romania: the Moldavians accepted the annexation without any preliminary condition.

### **3 Kishinev pogrom of 1903**

On 6-7 April, during the Christian Orthodox Easter, there was severe pogrom in Kishinev (today Chisinau, Moldova) and its suburbs, in which about 50 Jews were killed and hundreds injured. Jewish shops were destroyed and many people left homeless. The pogrom became a watershed in the history of the Jews of the Pale of Settlement and the Zionist movement, not only because of its

scale, but also due to the reaction of the authorities, who either could not or did not want to stop the pogromists. The pogrom reverberated in the Jewish world and spurred many future Zionists to join the movement.

#### **4 Black Hundred**

The Black Hundred was an extreme right wing party which emerged at the turn of the twentieth century in Russia. This group of radicals increased in popularity before the beginning of the Revolution of 1917 when tsarism was in decline. They found support mainly among the aristocrats and members other lower-middle class. The Black Hundred were the perpetrators of many Jewish pogroms in Russian cities such as Odessa, Kiev, Yekaterinoslav and Bialystok. Although they were nowhere near a major party in Russia, they did make a major impact on the Jews of Russia, who were constantly being oppressed by their campaigns.

#### **5 Jewish self-defense movement**

In Russia Jews organized self-defense groups to protect the Jewish population and Jewish property from the rioting mobs in pogroms, which often occurred in compliance with the authorities and, at times, even at their instigation. During the pogroms of 1881-82 self-defense was organized spontaneously in different places. Following pogroms at the beginning of the 20th century, collective defense units were set up in the cities and towns of Belarus and Ukraine, which raised money and bought arms. The nucleus of the self-defense movement came from the Jewish labor parties and their military units, and it had a widespread following among the rest of the people. Organized defense groups are known to have existed in 42 cities.

#### **6 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.

#### **7 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.

#### **8 Russian-Turkish War (1877-78)**

After the loss of the Crimean War (1856) the Russian Empire made a second attempt in 1877 to secure its outlet from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean by conquering the strategic straits

(Bosporus and Dardanelles) and strengthening its position in the Balkans. The pretext of the war declaration was pan-Slavism: protecting the fellow Christian Orthodox and Slavic speaking population of the Ottoman controlled South Eastern Europe. From the Russian controlled Bessarabia the Russian army entered Romania and attacked the Ottomans south of the Danube. With enthusiastic Bulgarian support the Russians won the decisive battles at Plevna (Pleven) and the Shipka straight in the Balkan Mountains. They took Adrianople (Edirne) in 1878 and reached San Stefano (Yesilkoy), an Istanbul suburb, where they signed a treaty with the Porte. This provided for an autonomous Bulgarian state, under Russian protection, bordering the Black and the Aegean seas, including also most of historic Thrace and Macedonia. Britain (safeguarding status quo on the European continent) and Austria- Hungary (having strategic interests in the region) initiated a joint Great Power decision to limit Russian dominance in the Balkans. Their diplomatic efforts were successful and resulted in the Treaty of Berlin in 1878. According to this Bulgaria was made much smaller and large populations of Bulgarians remained outside the new frontiers. Eastern Rumelia as an autonomous Ottoman province was created. In Berlin the Romanian, the Serbian and the Montenegrin states were internationally recognized and Austria-Hungary was given the right to occupy Bosnia and Herzegovina to restore order.

## **9 Liberation of Bulgaria from the Ottoman rule**

Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire in early 1877 in order to secure the Mediterranean trade routes. The Russian troops, with enthusiastic and massive participation of the Bulgarians, soon occupied all of Bulgaria and reached Istanbul, and Russia dictated the Treaty of San Stefano in 1878. This provided for an autonomous Bulgarian state, under Russian protection, bordering the Black and Aegean seas. Britain and Austria-Hungary, fearing that the new state would extend Russian influence too far into the Balkans, exerted strong diplomatic pressure, which resulted in the Treaty of Berlin in the same year. According to this treaty, the newly established Bulgaria became much smaller than what was prescribed by the Treaty of San Stefano, and large populations of Bulgarians remained outside the new frontiers (in Macedonia, Eastern Rumelia, and Thrace), which caused resentment that endured well into the 20th century.

## **10 Guild I**

In tsarist Russia merchants belonged to Guild I, II or III. Merchants of Guild I were allowed to trade with foreign merchants, while the others were allowed to trade only within Russia.

## **11 Pushkin, Alexandr (1799-1837)**

Russian poet and prose writer, among the foremost figures in Russian literature. Pushkin established the modern poetic language of Russia, using Russian history for the basis of many of his works. His masterpiece is Eugene Onegin, a novel in verse about mutually rejected love. The work also contains witty and perceptive descriptions of Russian society of the period. Pushkin died in a duel.

## **12 ORT**

(abbreviation for Rus. Obshchestvo Rasprostraneniya Truda sredi Yevreyev , originally meaning "Society for Manual [and Agricultural] Work [among Jews]," and later-from 1921-"Society for

Spreading [Artisan and Agricultural] Work [among Jews]") It was founded in 1880 in St. Petersburg (Russia) and originally designed to help Russian Jews. One of the problems which ORT tackled was to help the working Jewish youth and craftsmen to integrate into the industrialization. This especially had an impact on the Eastern European countries after World War I. ORT expanded during World War II, when it became a world organization with branches in France, Germany, England, America and elsewhere, in addition to former Russian territories like Poland, Lithuania and Bessarabia. There was also an ORT network in Romania. With the aim to provide "help through work", ORT operated employment bureaus, organizes trade schools, provided tools, machinery and materials, set up special courses for apprentices, and maintained farm schools as well as cooperative agricultural colonies and workshops.

### **13 King Ferdinand I (1865-1927)**

King of Romania (1914-1927). He supported Romania's engaging in World War I on the side of the Entente, against the Central Powers, thus putting the interest of the nation beyond his own German origin. The disintegration of empires in the aftermath of the war made it possible for several provinces to unite with Romania in 1918, after a democratic referendum: Bessarabia (in April), Bukovina (in November) and Transylvania (in December). On 15th October 1922, Ferdinand was crowned king of the Great Romania at the Reunification Cathedral in Alba Iulia, a symbol of the unification of all the Romanian provinces under the rule of a single monarch.

### **14 Cuzist**

Member of the Romanian fascist organization named after Alexandru C. Cuza, one of the most fervent fascist leaders in Romania, who was known for his ruthless chauvinism and anti-Semitism. In 1919 Cuza founded the LANC, which became the National Christian Party in 1935 with an anti-Semitic program.

### **15 Iron Guard**

Extreme right wing political organization in Romania between 1930-1941, led by C. Z. Codreanu. The Iron Guard propagated nationalist, Christian-mystical and anti-Semitic views. It was banned for its terrorist activities (e.g. the murder of Romanian prime minister I. Gh. Duca) in 1933. In 1935 it was re-established as a party named 'Everything for the Fatherland', but it was banned again in 1938. It was part of the government in the first period of the Antonescu regime, but it was then banned and dissolved as a result of the unsuccessful coup d'état of January 1941. Its leaders escaped abroad to the Third Reich.

### **16 King Carol II (1893-1953)**

King of Romania from 1930 to 1940. During his reign he tried to influence the course of Romanian political life, first through the manipulation of the rival Peasants' Party, the National Liberal Party and anti-Semitic factions. In 1938 King Carol established a royal dictatorship. He suspended the Constitution of 1923 and introduced a new constitution that concentrated all legislative and executive powers in his hands, gave him total control over the judicial system and the press, and introduced a one-party system. A contest between the king and the fascist Iron Guard ensued, with assassinations and massacres on both sides. Under Soviet and Hungarian pressure, Carol had to

surrender parts of Romania to foreign rule in 1940 (Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to the USSR, the Cadrilater to Bulgaria and Northern Transylvania to Hungary). He was abdicated in favor of his son, Michael, and he fled abroad. He died in Portugal.

### **17 Annexation of Bessarabia to the Soviet Union**

At the end of June 1940 the Soviet Union demanded Romania to withdraw its troops from Bessarabia and to abandon the territory. Romania withdrew its troops and administration in the same month and between 28th June and 3rd July, the Soviets occupied the region. At the same time Romania was obliged to give up Northern Transylvania to Hungary and Southern-Dobruja to Bulgaria. These territorial losses influenced Romanian politics during World War II to a great extent.

### **18 NKVD**

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

### **19 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.

### **20 Annexation of Eastern Poland**

According to a secret clause in the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact defining Soviet and German territorial spheres of influence in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union occupied Eastern Poland in September 1939. In early November the newly annexed lands were divided up between the Ukrainian and the Belarusian Soviet Republics.

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

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

### **22 Chkalov, Valery (1904-1938)**

Russian test pilot, and hero of the Soviet Union. He developed several advanced aerobatic moves. In 1936-37 he conducted continuous, no-land flights between Moscow and Udd island (the Far East) and Moscow - North Pole - Vancouver (US). His plane crashed during a test flight.

### **23 War with Japan**

In 1945 the war in Europe was over, but in the Far East Japan was still fighting against the anti-fascist coalition countries and China. The USSR declared war on Japan on 8 August 1945 and Japan signed the act of capitulation in September 1945.



## **24 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

## **25 Doctors' Plot**

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

## **26 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'.

## **27 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.

## **28 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.

## **29 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.

### **30 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.

### **31 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.