

**LINE FIVE: THE INTERNAL PASSPORT**  
**The Soviet Jewish Oral History Project of the Women's Auxiliary**  
**of the Jewish Community Centers of Chicago**

**G. "P"**

**Mechanical Engineer**

BIRTH: 1946, Minsk

SPOUSE: A. P. "P"  
born 1955, Minsk  
Married in 1973

CHILDREN: son, 1978  
daughter, 1974

PARENTS: Dina Z. P., 1921 - , near Minsk  
Zalman. "P", 1911, Vitebsk

SIBLINGS: one brother

MATERNAL GRANDPARENTS:

PATERNAL GRANDPARENTS:

JEWISH ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATIONS (IF GIVEN):

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Women's Auxiliary of the Jewish Community Centers of  
Chicago

NAME: G. "P."

Date: July 9, 1990

Interviewer: Elaine Snyderman

(Please tell me the earliest things you can remember  
about your childhood in Minsk?)

I was born in 1946 and I remember my grandfather and my grandmother on my mother's side, especially my grandfather. He was very steeped in Jewish education. He was a very educated man. He collected books, he knew Hebrew and he told me a lot of times about the history of the Jewish people. And we, our family, my mother and father and his sister and brother, we celebrated some Jewish holidays at their house, with their parents in a private house. That was in my early childhood.

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Then I remember that when my grandmother died my grandfather gave her a traditional Jewish burial. They didn't use Russian, they used Jewish. They used the Jewish Star and they made a special like order of Jewish tradition. Then my grandfather moved from this private house, and I remember each time I visited him in the apartment he presented me with some books of Jewish history and each time, he knew Hebrew, he was a religious man, and he tried to teach me Hebrew. At the time this was not allowed. He would teach me and my cousin together. And all the time he tried to tell us that we should move to Israel and not stay in Russia. He would switch on the radio sometimes, and then explain to us the history and even try to explain Hebrew. But he was afraid that his neighbors might report him.

(What did you mean when you said 'private house'?)

I think that my grandfather had a private house near the center of Minsk on Kamarovska Street and after that the government decided to build a farmers' market so the farmers or somebody else could come into the city to sell their produce. So when they did this they destroyed a lot

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of old houses. A lot of Jewish people had lived in this area. I know some of them are still in Russia and would like to leave.

This had nothing to do with the collectivization of the farms, they just wanted to make a new city.

I just remember that when it was a private house a lot of people gathered there. They celebrated things together. My grandfather read things. But when he got a one room apartment it was difficult to get together with a lot of people for these celebrations. I remember that one time he took me to the synagogue - but it was not a real synagogue, because synagogues were not allowed in Russia. But it was a big house where people gathered together, it was like a big house and they had to keep the meetings secret. This was in Minsk, when I was a little boy. They *davened* with the Torah. Yes.

My grandfather was a very educated man. All his life, before the war, my mother told me that he had been like the director of a cultural book store. All his life he read a lot of books and he collected a library. All his life, he

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presented books to people, to me, to my son, to my cousin. Even a few days before he died, when my wife and I visited him, he could no longer see but he gave us some books. All his life was in books. He was a huge influence for me. All my life I have loved books, so I feel that something inside of me is a part of him.

I guess my grandfather had some education in business. All his other education he got from books.

My father grew up in a family with nine children. So he started to work early, as far as I know, and then there was World War II and he was in the War. Then, after the War --, he was a soldier from the second year of the war. During the war he finished some course but I don't know what it was. But he never finished an institute. He was like a salesman, in some kind of job.

My mother was educated, first of all in the Leningrad Academy of Biology and Psychology. She spent all the World War II in Leningrad where she was a student. She survived, though she told me a lot of times that she buried a lot of

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friends. After that she graduated the Byelorussia Technological Institute. So she is educated. All of the children of my grandfather were educated in different Technological Institutes. So they have a variety of educations.

My grandparents from my father's side were both killed in World War II so I have never seen them. I was born after that. I just heard that the Nazis killed one brother in Chosnicki, the mother and father during the war. And, a lot of times, my father told me how his brother was killed about a mile from the place where he was stationed. They were in the war together but they did not know that they were stationed so near to each other. In Russia, you never know, you don't have the right to know, you just know the number of the place to write. After the War when my father studied through inquiries about his brother he realized that his brother was killed about a mile from where he was.

My father only told me a couple of stories about those times. It was a very difficult time and he doesn't like to talk about it. He spent the time of the war near Leningrad, too. But my mother and father never knew each other

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in Leningrad. They met in Minsk after the War. He said he spent a lot time in the snow; there was a lot of death all around him. So sometimes it was a very difficult time. He didn't know where the Germans were or where the other Russians were. It was a very confusing situation there, a lot of officers died. It was a very difficult time. But, he was a good officer, as far as I can understand. He was a captain after the war, but at the time of the war he was probably a lieutenant.

You know, the Jewish people are usually brave soldiers. For instance, I know that my mother's sister's husband was a pilot and he was one of the first pilots who bombed Berlin. But nevertheless he was treated as a Jew. The Russians did not give much recognition to the contribution of the Jews in their armed forces during the war.

My father had a lot of medals. He had medals for Leningrad and he valued these medals more than others. It is not like the modern medals which Brezhnev and the others give out. They had a lot of meaning for my father. He actually wore some of these medals during the battles. I'm

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not sure if we brought his medals here, some people were not allowed to bring their medals to the United States. I will check on this.

My mother was in Leningrad and was not allowed to leave the city during the War. So she stayed in Leningrad and she buried her friends. She is like self-made. She gave almost her last piece of bread to help bury her friends. It was a terrible time.

After the war, all her family returned to Minsk so she moved from Leningrad to Minsk to live with her family. I don't know exactly how my parents met. Her aunt's husband was the uncle of my father and so they met. You know, Jewish people would like to marry Jewish people. For instance, I don't -- we are trying to keep family traditions.

I remember quite well that when I was a child, third grade, there were a lot of Jewish kids in my class. And when my parents moved near the plant then there were Russian kids and I was probably the only Jewish kid in the class. I remember quite well that my teacher (you know in



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Russia, the derogatory name for a Jew is *zhid*) so my teacher just one time before the class, she started to analyze the parts of the words with *zhid* and so on and the class started to laugh at me. I remember that I hit my neighbor with a pen! After that, he understood that I was fighting for something important to me and he was almost my friend. You have to understand that this was before ballpoint pens and the pen had a sharp point! I was not afraid to pick out the point. Actually, there was some blood and afterwards I didn't go to the school for a couple of days. My father had to go to the school and talk with the teacher and all of that.

Then, this guy started to respect me and we were almost like friends, he was Russian and I was a Jew. And I remember that when we were grown up at the Institute we still had a good relationship. I was probably about eleven or twelve when this happened. Between the two of us, he knew that I would fight, and he started to respect me. He realized that I was a strong guy and that I wouldn't accept any stuff like that. But the teacher was really anti-semitic. So I just hated her and then I dropped that class

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and went to another class. It was not a good experience. But this guy and I were friends until I left that school.

After seventh grade I left this school and went to a technical school. My parents decided to give me some kind of specialty. There is anti-semitism in Russia and they wanted that I should be able to work even if I won't be able to get a good education. You never know what will happen. So I went to technical school to get some kind of profession. At the age of thirteen I went to work at a plant, but that was good for me.

You know, somethings I didn't like when I was growing up, but I didn't have a lot of knowledge at that time so I did what my parents told me. I probably would have liked to do something different now and then but -- You know, in Russia the system is different. For instance, my wife finished school with gold medals, and wanted to be a doctor. She was an excellent student in school. But a medical education for Jews is very difficult. Her mother was a doctor and her aunt is a doctor and they would like to see her be a doctor, but her parents died and she was alone and they decided that she wouldn't go all through the

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exams for the medical school and she had to go to the Byelorussian Polytechnical Institute.

I will explain why. When you have an examination in the Polytechnical Institute, you have a written examination and they don't know your name on the sheet of paper, just a number. But when you have the exams for the medical institute, or, let's say into a Byelorussian university, (they don't like Jews in the university either) so they talk with you like an oral exam and even if you have a good knowledge of the subject they won't give you an excellent mark. So they put you down, so you cannot enter. That is why almost all Jewish people are educated in a Polytechnical Institute or a Technical school and have a technical education.

My brother did this too. He wanted to be a doctor too, but he went for a technical education.

Right now I am happy with the education and career I have, but when I was young I might have liked something else, but I didn't have a choice.

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I lived at home when I went to the technical school. There were no Jews there either. You never know why. All my brothers they would have liked to be journalists or something like that. But I went to a technical school so I could get the knowledge to hold a job.

I was the oldest child in the family and thirteen years later my brother was born. I have no reason why there were just the two of us. I know my mother constantly worked, and my father constantly worked. My mother was pressured into her job so she has a talent for science and that is why I pick up, I tend to have knowledge more and more. She went to a botanic garden to work like a research biologist. And she was pressured into leaving her job, so she never got a science degree -- The same story happened with me, almost, I was just lucky when I entered into this institute, I graduated from an difficult institute with excellent marks, so I got a diploma. All the marks were excellent.

But I would have liked to study more and more, to do post-graduate courses at the Institute from which I graduated. But I was a Jewish kid and they don't like to accept

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Jews in postgraduate work. Moreover, there is protection for kids of the high ranking government workers (rectors, ministers, and so on, and the kids of them were with me in one and the same class. Once upon a time, I went to a Jewish concert so probably they discussed something. The Jewish concert was in Minsk and they took pictures of me at the synagogue with my grandfather. The KGB had these pictures. I was between seventeen and nineteen years old. And they refused to give me the possibility of this course, this was during the Khrushchev years.

But I had practice in the Institute of Heat and Mass Transfer. And the director of this Institute was a very old, intelligent man. He finished the old Russian school, before the Revolution. He knew French and, I guess, he worked with Jewish people or he grew up with them but he was not anti-semitic. He said, "I don't care about nationality." But, of course, he was pressured by other people around him. But if you were a talented man and I worked at his institute and practiced and he said he would take me in for post-graduate work.

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So I was lucky that my teacher was head of the institute and he made them take me in for the post-graduate work. But after he died, (his name was Lykoff), I had to leave the Institute. My chief of the area, just rushed me off.

My father, in his work, was like a salesman. He was not interested in the Communist Party. Michael one time, went from school and said to me, I will be a Communist. This was because his teacher told him, "The first people in the country are Communists." And he said that he knew I would never be a Communist. He was probably right, because there were many things I didn't like. At that time we tried to leave Russia, ten years ago. So he was only one year old when we were going to leave Russia. Now he is eleven.

So my wife could not find a job in Russia because of this. We tried to leave Russia in 1979. They pressured me out of the Institute of Heat and Mass Transfer, and then I applied to leave Russia. I did my thesis, and research in a very interesting field. It was on the Effect of Reiner, he is an Israeli professor, Max Reiner, and he found a very

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interesting behavior of Air. I read his research. It was in articles which were published and I knew this professor from Haifa Technological Institute in Israel. I just continued to do research in this field. So Mr. Lykoff believed it was a very interesting field to work in. But after Mr. A.V. Lykoff's death the chief of my laboratory closed my research in this field. He didn't give me any more possibility to work in this field. I would have had to work in another field. And actually, he pressured me to leave the Institute. And my wife was a student, so I left the Institute, in which I would have liked to work, I would really like to work in this field.

So then we applied for leaving Russia in February 1978. We stood in the line almost one year just to give our documents. There was a line, you know. I put the stamps from my job in the staff department on my documents saying that I was going to leave Russia and Minsk for Israel. At that time it was terrible, what they did to the people. They treated us like they hated us, my wife and myself. Michael was not even one year old at that time. My wife, myself, my mother and my father we all took care of Michael at different times.

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So we were standing in line in February. We applied to get our documents in November and we were refused in December and without any reason. They treated us like animals and it was a terrible time. I applied for revision a couple of times. I told them, we sent letters, we asked for a reason for why we could not leave Russia. We had meetings with high officer of OVIR, but they never talked with you, it was like we were dogs. It made you feel less than human.

My wife lost the job, she never - for two years she was not able to work. After she finished the Institute she was like a young electrical engineer. She worked for the Bio-technological Institute. She just made some designs and drawings and schematics and things like that.

I worked then at different places. I drew some projects for students, I translated some articles from English, from Minsk to Moscow there are some jobs in translation. Sometimes, I worked in some shops to repair some things, radios, small appliance. Then, about a year after refusal I found a job as a design engineer and then I started to work again as an engineer. It was a very small



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position with a very low salary. And, almost to the last day I kept two jobs, to feed my family.

Before we were refused, let's say, I had 300 rubles before, and afterwards, only about 125-150. Almost half what it was before. My wife could not even find a job after the refusal. In the last years when *perestroika* started, but it is was in another field, like a salesman, not in engineering. It was a planning job, just collecting the numbers and distributing the information. She was not able to find a job because any organization considering hiring her made inquiries to OVIR and called on previous employers and because we were going to leave Russia and we had been refused, nobody would accept her for a job. But her friend helped her to find a job because he worked in this organization. It has a low salary. Like 110 or 105 rubles. In the technical institute they pressed my wife to leave this job.

They had two other people who left from this institute and went to Israel. And they simply pressed her, they said, if we don't put stamps on your documents you are not able to apply for leaving if you don't leave the Institute.

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That's how it was. You have to live in Russia to understand this.

My mother helped, with some food, other things. It was a difficult time.

Before we were refused, we lived in a one bedroom apartment on the first floor. It was a five-floor apartment building with four apartments on each floor. In each apartment there were three, four or five people. And each apartment has a small compartment in the basement and people keep potatoes, and different kinds of vegetables in the basement. And the smell from this in springtime, would come into our apartment. And Michael was crying from this. It was bad.

Our daughter was a couple of years older and it was not so bad for her. Of course, she went to school from this apartment and that was not good for her. You know, they grade Jewish kids, so if you are Jewish and you try to be one of the best pupils in the class, you have to be a couple of grades above your friends. You have to do much better work to be considered equal.

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We had lived there about one or two years and I had a terrible conversation with her teacher. He discussed Helen before the class! For visiting a Jewish concert again. He said things like, "Just remember everybody, what she did." She went to the concert with me. He said, remember what she did from first grade and each of her classmates started to tell different things. He said, we should discuss this in a class meeting. So I went to the school and said I would like to see this guy, in the presence of the director of the school. I said that it was not 1937, they told me that when I applied to leave Russia, it was a three hour meeting and they told me that if it was 1937, we would kill you.

I was quiet, when it comes to conferences, I speak softly. And they spoke loudly, and they said, you are like Sakharov, everybody around you is wrong but you are never wrong. They were pressuring Sakharov at this time, in all the papers. These people just spoke openly about how bad I am. They felt I was even worse than Sakharov. They felt that if it had been 1937, they would kill him too. I was sitting right there and there were about forty people in

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the room. They shouted at me, it was like a meeting of the Union committee. I was not a member of the party so it was like the meeting of a professional committee. So, I am a scientific engineer so they should discuss me. It was in an auditorium.

If you are not a member of a professional committee, they won't pay you for your service. So, I had to go to this meeting, if I didn't go, they would just throw me away. I was the only Jew on this committee. My wife was not working, because she had lost her job, and I have to keep my job, I have to feed my children, so I have to go to this meeting to keep my job. Of course, they shouted openly. But I just said that it was not 1937, which was the purges under Stalin. But I told them I was not going to cross the border like a spy. I told them openly that I would like to leave Russia. I did everything according to the law. So, I thought, if you talk like this, I will go to another place and ask if they will try to punish them, because it is not 1937.

There was a large round table, with people sitting around it and standing around. It made me feel horrible.

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I was sweating. I kept myself cool and collected, to be more wise than these people. Not to break, and to show that I am a strong man to conquer my feeling in this situations. It ended at the order of the director, that I had to leave my position. To go to a lower position. The director was not at this meeting but he made the ruling after the meeting, and before the meeting too, of course. So I left my position, I quit my job, and that's how this happened. It was terrible.

I tell you the truth, there was one guy in Russia who sort of befriended me. He was a drunk, and not a Jew, but he was an honest man. He liked to drink. His speech was not clear and he worked in one of the same rooms with me, but he called me Zakarich, (in Russia my name is like G. Zakarich) and he said, "They tried to ask me to tell something against you." So he had an honest, simple mind, but he didn't go to this meeting, and he told me about it. So some people are honest, even in Byelorussia. We worked together, we did the same kind of work, and sometimes we helped each other on job. He respected me and, even though he liked to drink, I respected him because he did a good job. I see that he is a good specialist and he probably

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had a good reason to drink. He lost his wife, she died, and he has two children and it is difficult without a wife. I just understood him, so I had some sympathy for him. I was not like all the other people around him. Some other people around me may have liked me, or my character, I felt this from a lot of people but no one ever said anything.

(How would you explain your job to a non-technical person like me?)

When I left, in the Institute of Heat and Mass Transfer, I was in very interesting research, in the aerodynamics field. After that I went into the very technical field of the drying of building materials: concrete, chalk, like kaolin, that was my field. You know, some bricks are made from powders. So my field was spray drying and drying of materials. Then I was into different kinds of kilns and furnaces, press equipment, pump systems, sprays, so it was with heavy-duty equipment. So it is definitely not scientific research in the field where I worked before. In my field I was very comfortable, but I worked in the other field and I did my job.

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I would have never had the opportunity to join the Communist Party, this never came up. There is no possibility of a Jew joining the Communist Party. First of all, you know that probably, in Russia they kept an eye on you all your life. From when you first go to school, everything goes on your record. The fact that I had stabbed another child with a pen was on my record. There was a characteristic on the record even of my son. Once when I read the records, I felt terrible. I saw, once upon a time, actually it is in the record of my daughter and this characteristic is written down. I felt that they kept this record year by year for you, so I never tried to join the Communist Party. I never even had even been in Komsomol. And this is probably one of the reasons why they didn't accept me in post-graduate course at the Institute, I guess. For me joining was not a question.

My children's records were made difficult because of what I had done as a child. And because they were Jews, too, they would be held back. This was in Minsk, and I felt that during the last year the anti-semitism in Minsk had gotten quite terrible. I feel it was much worse since 1964. I felt it at the technical school. And I told you

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that everybody has to work on the plan after technical school. They have like some government direction. So they send you and at this point, I heard this direction and I went to the plant and they would not accept me for three months, for just a simple job. So I went back to the Institute and told them that all my school mates are working but they would not accept me. They would not give me another direction to another job.

I met my wife in 1973. We met at a wedding of my friends. We went together for three months before we got married.

After 1979, we lived in Russia for ten years. We lived in the same apartment until 1984. We changed apartments for Michael's health. We collected some money from a private exchange in Russia. There were advertisements in the newspaper that someone would like to change their apartment. And we found one in which the man had lost his wife and he had two adult sons and since they had married and left his apartment he was alone so he decided to change his apartment. So we went to his apartment and we paid him money for it. At that time our



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friends had just gone to the United States, and they sent us some post bonds.

It was a slightly better apartment, about the same size as the other. I spent a lot of time with my son in a water pool and he started feeling better.

We had been refused with another family, our friends - they are now living in New Jersey - but when we moved to the states our guarantors were in Chicago and they were our cousins. But my wife just applied for here.

When I was in Russia, I went to OVIR, a police agency, the previous chief of OVIR died so we went a lot of times and we sent a lot of letters. It was like this. I went to chief of OVIR and he refused me to be a possibility. Two weeks later, my friend went; two weeks later, I went again, and we continued this way. It was like the spring of 1988, they said, well, things are changing maybe it will be possible to leave. We came in January 1989 to the United States so this was in Spring of 1988. Gorbachev started to open the door. (We left Russia in 1987, because we celebrated New Years in Italy, remember Dad?)

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Last year was 89, we left Russia in November of 1988. I remember exactly this date. We applied and we applied for tickets in Russia, you can apply for border tickets from Russia for jet, for train -- so we applied six different times. In the hopes that we will get permission and, as soon as possible, we will leave Russia. So we have this experience, for instance, so we got permission on the tenth of November, on the twenty-second we left Russia. We left furniture, everything, to my wife's sister, to relatives, friends, everything. We just left Russia. I knew exactly what we could take.

When the door opened, we just grabbed our children and left. And when we got to Vienna, we didn't even have our suitcases.

We had the tickets through from Moscow. We went by train to Moscow and from Moscow to Vienna by jet. So we wanted to leave as soon as possible. So we went through customs in the night. And when we arrived to Vienna, we didn't have our suitcases! We got them eventually. Actually, I didn't have anything of value, I am a simple

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engineer. We had six suitcases and fifty dollars for each person to be allowed to leave to Russia. Just now, I just remembered this, it is funny.

We had some grains, we had some rice, you don't know what the circumstances will be, some honey, some sugar, and they made a total mess of that in customs. They tried to find a second bottom in my shoes! They tore them apart. They checked for three hours on us, we were standing all the time. It is terrible in Russia. There is no separate room for these customs examinations. They have just one big room and a big table and everybody can see. It is a terrible feeling.

I am smiling now, but not then. I was not frightened, I was silent and I kept control of my feelings and I was just terrible cold. They broke apart all my chess pieces, even. The chess pieces! I was not able to pack everything but I was cool so that is probably why they broke everything. I decided, "do what you would like, general." And my parents came to Moscow to say Goodbye to us and they were really shocked about the treatment. My friends were in the airport, and when you go to the airport you have to

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stand in line. For instance, Michael and Helen stayed with my uncle, he took the children for this time and he took them to Moscow.

I went at eight o'clock and I spent the day. I stood in the line to pass through the customs at the airport until night. Of course, I had the tickets to Vienna. I gave, to put my name, and now that I am going to leave Russia, I am Jewish, and I put my name - P.

There is a mistake of all the Americans to feel that anything changed with Gorbachev. He is an anti-semitic guy, you know, in Russia you are not able to be in the government unless you are anti-semitic. Gorbachev is not so strong, how can I explain to you? Russia has a huge army, a huge police force, a huge KGB, let's say. And nothing has changed. They spend money so everybody stays, they are terrible, these guys, they treat you like dogs.

Let's say, when I applied, I tried to get them to give me some reason why I was refused. But they would not even speak with me. They said what they liked, "You will stay in Russia, that is it!" They just throw away your

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application and your requests. It is a huge room and there is no place for you to sit. They do not speak with you. I stood, my wife stood, - I said I would like to leave Russia because I have relatives in Israel. They keep asking why you want to leave Russia. You can only leave Russia if you have relatives in Israel. I was afraid to say anything else. You can be put in jail if they don't like what you say.

But, I wasn't careful, I told someone that it was a mistake when Russia put the troops in Afghanistan. And then they refused me. In Russia you never know what will be reported. I was just talking with a couple of guys around me. It was my mistake, I wasn't careful, I should never have spoken. No, I don't think Gorbachev is any different than any other party heads.

I failed myself. It was a serious mistake, a real mistake. I guess that, first of all, they have some power which they tried openly to stand against Gorbachev and I guess the army and the police and everything, they will be against Gorbachev, because they like to keep the strong order which was before. They have power, they want to keep

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it. Second of all, Gorbachev is afraid to make changes. Even if he would like to make changes, he is afraid to. You never can tell on which side changes will fall in Russia.

So they tried to organize some cooperatives and they put pressure on cooperatives at the same time. They will tell you that they don't spent money on the Army but, actually, they spend a lot of money on the army. I will tell you, before my departure, I visited the institute. And when I went through the Institute I could feel what was going on. From a scientific point of view they made a new system of lasers for aerodynamics lab. Like laser weapons. You know as a research engineer I have the scientific training and for me it's enough to look for a half an hour at what they are doing and then I can tell you what they are doing.

If you have air and you start to heat it the air will start to pass the optical, it will change optical axis. The optical beams will go another way. So by changing the thermal field, you can make the heat transfer even less. And then they can start experiments. I saw this when I

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went through. They started, and I could tell, that they could use this for war. I can say now, that half of the research institute is working on things for the army. Each place in Russia will work on weapons first of all, and they will never stop working on weapons.

So I don't think Gorbachev is the man who will stop this procedure or who will stop the development of weapons. He is just interested in getting money, let's say, from the West. The economy of the country is in a terrible situation. Simply in terrible shape, there is no technology, no food, so if they tell you that they spend one hundred thousand dollars to build such an installation, you know it was much more. Actually, they have to spend much more because they will really build three - and one of them will be good.

For the technology is not on such a high level. They will make two of them with back-up characteristics and the rest of them will suit for the army. That is exactly the way it is. So they are spending on the army - what they say openly in the press, you can actually multiply it by three to get close to the real cost. They can never be completely open on this sort of thing, even with *glasnost*.

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I can give you one example of what *glasnost* can mean. I read an interesting novel which was about Life and Destination, by Vasily Grossman. This history was not published for two years. It was about Jewish people in the War. About how Jewish scientific people were repressed in Stalin's time and confined in camps. And I went through this life and know that everything is real. When I read it and everybody told about it and there were some nice articles about the book, but there is no murder as a Jew. One man wrote to the magazine, "Dear Editor, Why don't you publish one part of this novel? Will you explain? If you don't have this part I will send it to you. But if you do have it, and did omit it purposely, then it is terrible. Because this part about anti-semitism in Russia is important." And they did publish his letter. I was very surprised.

This man wrote about anti-semitism in all countries from the time of Rome, and in Russia that this is a government anti-semitism. This is a policy of the government. Officially, it is not supposed to be but they turn their backs. They tell you that we are for friendship but I



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guess that, at the same time, all this national movement where people kill each other. I have a deep feeling in my soul that they made it purposely. Let's say, people don't think about their own plight, they think about something else. This is important in Russia.

I guess it is like this, even my mother. My mother told me that before the war, Leningrad had huge stocks of food, of clothes. And one day, all the stocks were burned. Huge stocks! She guessed it was done at Stalin's orders. Stalin hated Leningrad. Because Leningrad never supported Stalin; Kirov was from Leningrad. Leningrad is an intelligent city. Of course, Russia can make a mess. They sent in workers and like farmers into the city to live and work, and in a few years they could lower the cultural level of the city. Maybe it would take thirty years, even. To me it seemed that he had a plan to lower the cultural level of Leningrad. Actually, even now, the cultural level of Minsk, of Leningrad, of Moscow, is down from before the war.

The government placed people with low cultural levels into the cities. These people don't think, they just do

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what the party will tell them. And that is why it is good for this government to lower the cultural level, not to help intelligent people. Let's say - Sakharov - I heard about Sakharov occasionally when I was a student in my Institute, we had a good professor and he told us that there is such a man and he was not famous, Sakharov. That he made atomic bomb and hydrogen bomb and he told his stories that he discovered the hydrogen reaction and he wrote the notes and went to the director of the institute and told him that he had made a discovery. And the director of the institute pressed him to give him his notes and took the notes for himself. But Sakharov had a second set of notes, and he was a very intelligent man and he just - it was a blessing for Russia - Sakharov didn't think about why he owed allegiance to such a country.

They spend a lot of money on the army. And even if they will collect -- its not like there is one scientist, like a laureate or a Nobel Prize. By the way, my teacher, Aleksey Lykoff, he died at age sixty-three from a heart attack. He would have liked to be the president of the Byelorussian Academy of Scientists and actually, and he had to meet with the president. He was famous, he had medals,

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from the Paris Academy and the London Academy, and a lot of scientists, even in Chicago, they know Lykoff's name and work.

And they didn't give him this position. They gave it to someone nobody knew until he became the president. Like a communist who was put off his mark. And this man, he hated Lykoff, because Lykoff was really a scientist and an intelligent man. He told me, okay, you can do it. But even for discussing things with me, he should not have taken his time to do this. And each day after two o'clock we can discuss scientific problems and everything. So he invited me to discuss - this famous man, I was a nothing and Lykoff was a known academician. He really encouraged me.

And this new man - the new president of the Academy - hated Lykoff. Then Lykoff had two heart attacks and he could not get money for research and everything was pressured on him. When he died, his wife decided not to bury him in Minsk but in Moscow. And because he had been so great to me, I left and went to Moscow to his funeral, so we drove at night to get to Moscow for this.

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If he is my teacher, and I like him, I openly told them. I told them that I was always ready to help after his burial. His wife told me, "When you are in Moscow, come to my apartment at any time." They were good people.

To go back to our travels, we took a train from Minsk to Moscow, a plane from Moscow to Vienna, and a plane from Vienna to Rome. When we got to Vienna we were met by a representative from HIAS, I was surprised, I didn't expect anything. Our family and the family of our friends, we decided to be in one apartment. So we went together from Moscow.

My friends had the same sort of treatment from the customs in Moscow. I don't know, they were sent to one side and we were sent to another. But, on the second day, it was terrible for his daughter, she was about three or four. She put through customs a small ring and they cut her coat and the lining and they found a tiny ring, the kind young girls play with, probably worth all of about ten or twenty cents. Not a good ring. And they were pushed too.

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We went to Vienna and we stayed ten days and each day for seven days I went to Aeroflot to ask for my suitcases. I asked the people of the Austrian company to call Aeroflot and ask for me because they wouldn't talk with me. They knew I was emigrating from Russia and they treated me like they hated me. And when Austrian Airlines called to Aeroflot and made inquiries, then Aeroflot had to make answer to Austria. That is how they found the suitcases. My brother went from Minsk to Moscow to try to find them at that end. It was very upsetting.

I know that I will never go back to Russia. Not even for a visit. I feel like it is a country where I spent a lot of years but after that, you understand, I prefer this country.

In Russia, I guess our worst fears were that we would never be given the permission to leave. With all the applications that had to be made, you never knew how you would be treated. That was bad. You had to speak with these guys every six months, each time you applied, and

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they broke you into parts, you had to just take it. And then there was customs.

I was afraid for my children. I was afraid they might make up something about us and our life was in danger. After they refused us, I never felt safe in Russia. A couple of times there was a fire near our apartment and I was concerned for my family. They were like large fire-crackers but they did look like a fire and I didn't know if we were the target or not.