

Letters to the Maidenberg family in America from the family in Russia, 1956-1993

[Begun in 1956 by Joseph, these letters are the core documents of the Maidenberg family.]

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Victor Brener to his Aunt Sylvia: 18 07 1979.....213

Joseph Maidenberg breaks the silence of years, writing to his American relatives after somehow learning of the death of his brother David. Kishinev, Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, March 14, 1956.

My dear nephews and dear Rosa!

I'm writing this letter with great grief in my heart; I learned that there are three years already [David actually died in 1949] since my only dear brother David is dead. I wish to know in detail the circumstances, the cause, and the date of his death. I sit up often until far into the night and recall to mind our childhood and youth, the pogrom, and then his departure to America.

What an excellent boy my poor brother David was. How strong, nice-looking, kind-hearted, and brave he was then! And when I remember that he is dead already and we shall never meet again, I can't keep back my tears.

We must hope that if there will be a lasting peace between our countries it is possible that in place of us, our children will meet someday.

Write us, please, how goes the health of my sister-in-law and your mother Rosa. If she is still living, may God send her long life and good health.

As concerning me, I live in Kishinev with my old wife. I'm already 71 years old and "Old age is a heavy burden" does a proverb say. Till a few months ago I lived well materially and had plenty of everything, but during my absence a fire broke out in my flat and all the things I had burnt up.

Now I restore my housekeeping little by little. Finishing my letter I beg you very much to send us your photos and particularly one of the last photos of my poor brother.

It is not to the purpose, but if you have the possibility to send us some good woolen stuff or cloth for costumes and a winter overcoat (it is desirable as well one or two leathern sports blouses {of great size}) we shall be behindhand with you and very thankful to you.

We wish well to you all, good health and good luck.

Sincerely, your uncle and brother-in-law Joseph, his wife Sarah and children.

(Signed in Hebrew)

My address:

(In Russian)

Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic. Kishinev, Podolskaya Street #68

Maidenberg, Joseph Solomonovitch

P.S. We don't need common cloth for we have in our shops a lot of it and can buy it for a trifle. We need no money nor feeding products.

The second letter we have from Joseph is dated almost 9 years later. In it, Joseph writes that he has heard from his family, and has seen photographs. Kishinev, February 6, 1965.

Dear nephews Meyer, Milton, Frank, Ben, and sister-in-law Rosa,

I got two photos from my sister Esther; one is of you (4 brothers Maidenberg) and the other is of your mother Rosa with Ben. Besides I got a letter from Milt Maidenberg, so I take the occasion to renew our correspondence.

Eight years have flown by since I received your last letter, dear Meyer, but I am not offended of it because you apologized and acknowledged your guilt frankly like a gentleman that writing letters only once in a great while is one of your personal traits you are not particularly proud of. But none of my other nephews have written a word up to now.

Nevertheless I was pleasantly affected by seeing their pictures. They look brave and fine fellows. Frankly speaking, one cannot judge of someone's character by appearances, but it is said, "The apple does not fall far from the apple-tree", and that is why I hope they have something of my brother David's generosity and they'll prove it someday. . .

Looking at the pictures I was deeply upset the sad fact that your father had gone away from you so untimely. Poor David was 2 years elder than me. He was born in 1883 and I was in 1885. In March the 5th I'll have my 80th birthday. David would have been 82 this year. Every July 19th I pay honor to him by organizing commemoration prayers at the synagogue and by giving charities for the peace of his soul. I'd be very happy to a picture of his grave.

For the time being I am rather well and have an active life, though I went through 2 urinary bladder operations last year. I hope to reach the age of Sir W. Churchill, then I'll pray for some years more.

Dear Milton, in your letter, you asked about our relatives living in Moscow. Really one of my sisters Olya (Elka) lived there till last year, then she moved to Omsk where her daughters live. As to our relatives in Israel you have there a cousin Sam Balaban, a son of your eldest aunt Molka, killed by the fascists during World War II. Unfortunately, I do not know his address.

Dear sister-in-law Rosa, I'm very glad you look rather well and wish you to keep good health for many years. Love and best regards to all of you-Margaret, Lee, Vicki, little Jill and to my overbearing nephews Frank and Ben and their families.

Your uncle Joseph and family

Joseph gives a recounting of the Maidenberg family genealogy, in which he traces the family name to Magdeburg, Germany. Kishinev, March 8, 1965.

Dear Milton and brothers Maidenberg,

I was very glad to receive your letter and hurry to answer it with the greatest pleasure.

My handwriting may seem unusual to you because I'm accustomed to write Latin letters as people got used writing them here.

Now I shall try to give you some information about your family tree you are interested in:

Our family name shows that many years ago our grandfathers lived in the German town of Magdeburg (in some G. dialects-Meidenberg, which means Maiden or Girl's Town). Then driven by persecutions probably they came to settle themselves with masses of other wandering Jews in Ukraine.

Thus your grandfather Solomon, the grandson of a rabbi, and your grandmother Pearl found themselves in a little Ukrainian town of Dzigovka, where they spent all their life. They had a large family of 5 daughters and 2 sons and earned their life by dealing in tobacco before the revolution, then they got old-age pension from the state.

I keep the warmest memories of my childhood and father's house. The income was less than modest, the house crowded, none of us children ever went to health resorts, however we grew up robust and merry fellows and jolly girls. Your father David was not only particularly strong, but he was also energetic, efficient, and a very kind fellow.

Being in Odessa, he insisted on paying in tuition fees for me and my sister Olya (we were studying then), helped his eldest sister Molka to get married, etc.

Your grandparents were religious people, but the privat of their faith was not fanaticism. every unfortunate in the neighborhood knew that at the Maidenberg's he would always find a friendly support and a good advice.

Our father liked to tell us over and over again the Hebrew saying: Do never hesitate to throw one of your loaves of bread, even into the open sea. [Written also in Hebrew]

As to me, I'm not religious at all since the age of 16-17 when I have studied Spinoza, but I attend the synagogue from time to time because it is the only place I can honor solemnly the memory of my dead relatives. Unfortunately it is also the only way I can express my love and gratitude towards poor David.

By the way the Kishinev synagogue is always crowded, particularly with old and middle-aged people. Most of young people laugh at religion because they say it is in flagrant contradiction with science, but if some of them like it or want to listen to a good Khazn they may attend the synagogue any time and there is no restriction.

Now about your mother's family roots. (Rosa is 81 years now.) All I know about her family is that her parents lived in a Ukrainian village of the Vinitza district and were rather poor. So she went away to live with her brother in Odessa. There your father fell in love with her for she was a very good-looking girl. And after the Jewish pogrom in 1905 they left for America.

I have known your mother's cousin Zanel by name who was bestially killed by the fascists during World War II. Now there are a lot of Vinokurs here, but unfortunately they are only persons bearing the same surname.

I share your hopes, dear Milton that the future will bring increasingly better relations between our countries and peace will overcome war (both hot and cold)

Those were the answers to your questions and now a few words about myself.

On the 5th of March I had my 80th birthday. The day before it (very opportunately) I received a package from my sister Esther she sent it through the Central Parcel Service of Chicago and we were pleasantly affected by the presents.

I'm closing in 4 photos of myself for you and your brother, taken before my 80th birthday.

Love and best wishes to all of you and to the members of your families,

Your uncle Joseph S. Maidenberg

P.S. I was just going to post the letter (next day) when a great misfortune came about like a bolt from the blue.

My wife suddenly got a hemorrhage of the brain and died in 2 days. I know we are all mortal, but I cannot come to myself of the grief. She was a true friend and a very good-natured woman. We shared our sorrows and joys more than half a century.

Now some difficulties lie in wait for me. I want to put her up a real Jewish tombstone with Hebrew inscriptions on it. It was her last will and it's my wish too. But it can be done here only by private persons and they ask much money for it.

That is why I would very much appreciate your aid in this respect. The matter could be settled if you can organize only one parcel containing things of high quality, for instance men's nylon shirts and raincoats, some women's orlon or woolen jackets, cardigans, pullovers, kerchieves, scarfs-all of great sizes.

Please, be so kind as to talk about it with your brothers. I hope it will not be difficult for each of them to take part only once in a good thing for their unknown uncle. Remember your grandfather's motto: "Shlakh lakmekha al p'ney hamaim" [also penned in Hebrew]

Joseph writes to Milt about the derivation of family names, says he has received a warm letter from Toby, acknowledges that to his American relatives he is an enigmatic and distant figure. Kishinev, June 12, 1965.

Dear Milton,

I have received all your letters, Meyer's, and your kind daughter Toby's letters and am very glad that none of the family were hurt by the storm.

I'm infinitely grateful to you, dear Milton, for your concerns about me. "He who gives quickly, gives twice"--does an old proverb say. Many thanks to Meyer for the photos of the brother Dave's gravestone, to Toby for her kind letter and the photos she had enclosed. I've made sure that she is a very human and intelligent girl. You may be proud to have such a daughter.

I was slow in answering your letters first because I was thinking you were abroad for a vacation, and second it is because my doctor told me to avoid straining my eyes for a few weeks. He says it is a glaucoma symptom. So in the present letters I'll answer only one of your questions concerning your family background.

It is known that in the 15, 16, 17th (and even in the 18th) centuries a great number of family names were given to people by the names of the places they had come from. (Wells, Hollander, Luxemburg, Maidenberg {Magdeburg}, Buchwald, Kishinevski. . .) So you may be sure that on father's side you are of German ancestry.

Other family names were given by profession or trade (Taylor, Goldsmith, Carpenter, Merchant, Vinokur. . .) or by some physical or mental features (Longfellow, Whitebeard, Blinder, Witman. . .) or by someone's patronimic (Elison, Robinson, Williams. . .) or by nicknames (Pratt, Staples, Henpeck, Vaingold, Foster, Maydig. . .) etc.

I mentioned the surname Vinokur above (if I am not mistaken your mother Rosa's family name had been Vinokur before she married poor Dave). It is a Russian word which means a man who makes vodka (a Russian alcoholic drink), a distiller in English. So I am of the opinion that actually you're of both German-Russian ancestry if one can generally name ancestry or extraction temporary places where one's parents or grand-grand parents, driven by persecution, had to take shelter.

Although patriarchal life has fallen to pieces long ago, veneration of ancestors [also written in Hebrew] remains or has to remain one the most important principles of morality. Therefore I was very glad to satisfy your legitimate curiosity and desire to know your family background. I'm sure that you don't hold that German, Russian, English, French or other extraction can actually play any role in the moral make-up or cast of mind of posterity because it is a fact that not only in any nation but in almost every family people even of the same generation are often different physically, mentally, morally, or by temperament.

Dear Milton, in my answer to Toby's young and warm letter I have written about my occupation and about my family. So you may learn it from her because it is very tiresome for my eyes to write long letters now. I hope that soon it will be okay with my eyes again, and when I receive the package I shall let you know about it as soon as possible.

I appreciate very much your personal kind attention and troubles with the shipment of the parcel, dear Milt, and am very obliged to you personally for your sympathy and good nature because I doubt there was any necessity for all 4 nephews to pay in their shares of the arrangement. I suppose you told it only in order to underline that everyone of the Maidenbergs is always ready to “. . . throw one of his loaves of bread even in the open sea”, and even to their father's brother, an “enigmatic” and distant Uncle Joseph

Love and many thanks.

Remember me to everyone of the family.

Your uncle

Joseph writes of religion, describes the character of the Maidenbergs, and wonders about a possible meeting. Kishinev, Sept. 12, 1965.

Dear nephews Milton, Meyer, Frank, Ben, and dear relatives,

Finally my eyesight begins gradually to improve, and I'm very glad to resume our correspondence.

First of all I must tell you that I had to stay in the oculist clinic on the 19th of July and could not be present at the annual prayer to the memory of poor Dave.

It may appear strange to you that in spite of my negative attitude toward religion in general I'm almost superreligious in the question concerning the reverence of parents and near relatives. It is for me more than a simple depth to honor their memory. I suppose that the reason of such is a subconscious reminiscence of a very deep impression produced upon me by an old tractate entitled "Philosophy of the Cult of Ancestors" I had read about 50 years ago.

Now again I want to express [to] you, dear Milt, my thanks for your prompt support to purchase the preferred gravestone for my wife's last resting place.

The selection of the things in the package was rather good. Perhaps suggesting such a list of items the Central Parcel Service took in consideration your incontestate authority because as some old people who often receive things from their near relations in the U.S.A. say, the service has usually the habit to get rid of unmarketable and unpopular goods when it deals with common people.

For generations, the Maidenbergs have been persons of ready sympathy who backed words by things, and I'm very happy that you've inherited the noble traits of our family in despite of the fact that the rush of business, the crazy maelstrom of modern life with its extravagant ideas, deep contradictions and imaginary prestiges-are constantly dulling noble altruistic feelings of even delicate and kind characters.

Now you say you hope to be able to visit the U.S.S.R. within the next year or two and visit with me. I should be very happy to see you in person and shake hands with my beloved brother's son. If you really decide to do it, time your trip to summer season, when Moldavia is rather beautiful.

It would be preferable our meeting to take place in the time when the hotbeds of a new world fire are put out and a more durable peace, based on true mutual respect and confidence is established between our countries as well as among different nations and races. I realize that it is a very complicated problem, but as an optimist I hope we shall reach finally such a stage. In the era of nuclear physics and cosmic flights there is no other way to prevent an unprecedented autodestruction of mankind.

I congratulate Toby with her finishing the work for her master's degree and wish her a lot of joy and every success in her life. Now it is just the time for her to find a worthy husband.

Parents like nothing better than to see their children happy. Happiness is undoubtedly a rather relative concept. Old people guided by experience of life [and] reason usually [act] more sanely on the matter and are more practical, while young people dreaming of a happy future for themselves follow for the most part the blind call of the heart, and the result is often disillusion and suffering.

This is an eternal cause of dispute even between good parents and excellent children. But in the life kaleidoscope good fortune and happiness arrives unexpectedly, and I'm sure it will get into your house soon and bring joy to all of you. Such a lovely and intelligent girl as Toby is worthy to have a happy family life and she'll have it without fail. Please send her my best regards as well as my personal wishes and opinion.

Complying with your request to send you a few English written newspapers published in the U.S.S.R., I have taken out a gift "Moscow News" subscription for you.

The newspaper is published by the Union of Soviet Societies of Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, and you'll receive it 2 times a week beginning in October 1965 till you will suggest that I should stop the subscription. As to me I do not need any newspapers because we have here a lot of English newspapers published abroad.

I am deeply thrilled by your attention and highly appreciate your willingness to send more things if I let you know what I need. Although there is an old saying that "One shouldn't look a gift horse in the mouth", I must say that ladies woolen

sweaters and suits, men's nylon shirts (all of large size and good quality) as well as woolen suits for boys of 7-8 years of age would preferable.

At last you have convinced me that your gift was from all for of you and I'm very obliged for it.

I send you my love and I hope all of you are well. Remember me to your mother and to the other relatives.

Your Uncle Joseph and family

P.S. I have never known anybody of the Maidenbergs mentioned in the letter from Israel

In the sole letter from 1966, Joseph writes of his poor health. Kishinev, (Month omitted) 12, 1966.

Dear Nephew Milton,

I am very happy that all of you are well and everyone in the family is doing fine.

Your last package sent out several months ago with all the items requested came in well yesterday. Many, many thanks for your care, dear nephew.

You are really an embodiment of ready sympathy and efficiency when the question is to show your attention toward your father Dave's brother. It is a very noble fact.

I feel very apologetic for not writing to you [for] such a long time. It is because I had a bad winter; I caught a pneumonia, then a stemocardia, was in the hospital for six weeks, and then in a cardiological sanatorium for 48 days.

Now I am feeling all right again, but the doctors have forbidden me to smoke. It is a terrible ordeal for me because I have smoked more than 65 years. By the way I've just received an invitation from a friend of mine, a farmer, to go on a visit to him in the country and I'm sure that my favorite element, field air and the smell of horses and frothy fresh milk, will be a good elixir for my health. So I decided to go there for a couple of weeks.

Thank you very much again and apologize for not writing to you more often.

With fondest regards to you and all yours, Your Uncle Joseph.

I'm always eager to get good news about everyone of yours. So when you have really happy moments in your life, please let me know about it in order I can be able to share your happiness.

Joseph wishes Milt a Happy New Year and apologizes for not writing more frequently. He laments the wars of the 20th century. Kishinev, Nov. 9, 1967.

Dear Nephew Milton and dear relatives,

I was very glad and happy to receive your letter of congratulation on the Jewish New Year Rosh Hashana. Allow me to wish you the same in Hebrew with some delay.

[Two lines of Hebrew follow]

Please forgive me for not having written to you such a long time. First of all, I had to have a second eye operation not long ago, and before and after that my eyesight was not strong enough to enjoy writing or reading. The second reason of it is that I know you are very busy and I was afraid you may be bored with my oft-recurring letters.

I feel considerably better now, the family is well, and life goes on as usual. But in the 20th century, the century of Mars, with its wars that have taken away nearly 100 million of human lives every sensible and honest man is deeply concerned and upset about the shocking things that are going on in the world now.

Nevertheless, I don't want to become skeptical. I try to make no doubt that the future will bring to us the victory of justice, humanism, and genuine friendship between nations, a just and lasting peace in different parts of the world before more millions of needless lives are wasted by a nuclear war.

I am happy to learn that all of you are well and everyone in the family is doing fine.

Please, dear Milt, let me know how Toby is getting on. We all join in sending her and her husband our best wishes and fondest regards. Do they live in Marion or another town?

I appreciate your concern and am very grateful to you for your intention of ordering for us some gift items. I feel very inconvenient that in my turn I can send you nothing but the "Moscow News" gift subscription.

However, being sure that you do it from the bottom of your heart I'm enclosing a list of some articles mentioned in the catalog of the Central Parcel Service which would be preferable for us.

We send you all our love and fondest regards. Remember me to everyone in the family.

Your Uncle,

Joseph

Joseph worries about his old age and the health of his sisters Esther and Olya. He asks about Milt's trip to Israel. Kishinev, April 3, 1968

Dear nephew Milton:

First of all we are very thankful to you for your little message. Last time I had a presentiment that it is something wrong with my sister Esther and twice have sent her letters inquiring about her health but haven't got any answer. My sister Olya, 75, also has been ailing seriously since last year and my heart is very heavy. It is a great happiness to be healthy in old ages but unfortunately not all of us have such a good fortune. Couldn't you let me know at a greater length about Esther's illness? Is she able to read or to write? Where is her husband Morris? Is his address the old one?

I was pleased to hear that you are going to make such an interesting trip with your son Reed and intend to see your cousin S. Balaban. As far as I know he is the only near relative from your father's side living there. Remember me to him and his family and give them all our best wishes of good luck, strong health and courage to go through hard experience.

Thank you very much for your concern about the package sent from the Parcel Service. We haven't yet received it although it was ordered in December, 1967. As soon as we get it, we'll let you know immediately.

On the occasion of the coming Passover holidays, we wish to everyone of our family happiness, good health and glad news from each other.

Our best regards,

Uncle Joseph

P.S. As to Dr. Maidenberg you inquired I couldn't determine any possible relationship with our family.

Joseph tells the story of how David foiled the Odessa bandits. Kishinev, July 25, 1968.

Dear nephew Milton and dear relatives:

Your last letter came while I was away in the country for some weeks. As always I greatly enjoyed your mail and as always felt apologetic for not having answered it as quickly as possible.

On the 19th of July I attended the synagogue where I organized a commemoration prayer to pay due honor to Dave. I recalled him as a child of 8-10 when we learned and played pranks at the kheder (a Jewish religious primary school) then at the age of 19-20 when he worked in Odessa at a bakery business and took me and my sister Olya there to continue our studies. (In those times Odessa was not only a center of eminent thinkers, writers, artists, actors and musicians but also a well know center of gangsters, thieves and vagabonds.)

Strong, handsome, energetic and fearless, Dave had always a kind smile on his lips. His job was to deliver bread to different shops and to collect money for it. I remembered a true story which characterizes your father's nature when he was in Reed's age.

One night returning from school I met Dave on his way home after work, and he took me on his van. Suddenly when we turned up in a dark lane, four bandits stopped the horses, and threatening Dave with daggers and knives proposed him to give them up his day receipts. Dave pretended that we was ready to obey their order and calmly descended the carriage raising his hands up. A surprise kick followed. One of the bandits fell down and his dagger was in Dave's hand. Then another heavy blow-and another thief was knocked down. The gangsters ran away. Next day they came to Dave and invited him to a drinking bout. I was in terror when he told me about it, and I implored him to refuse their invitation. But Dave as usual smiled kindly and said that there is nothing to fear. And really the conquered bandits did him no harm and stood a treat to him for his courage, fearlessness and heavy blows. There are no more such humane bandits nowadays...

Like most of the Maidenbergs David was a very good hearted young man then and could not tolerate injustice. After the 1905 Jewish pogroms in Tzarist Russia he left for the USA together with your mother Rosa.

You asked me in your letter how was the Los Angeles tragedy received in the USSR. We saw the assassination of Robert Kennedy and the funeral on T.V. We were saddened by the foul crime and sympathized with his relatives.

Though I've sent 4 letters [to] my sister Esther at the address of the nursing home I haven't got any answer as yet. I don't know the reason of it and worry very much about her health. If you've heard something of her lately, please let me know. Did Shimon consent Esther to stay with him? What is the matter with Morris and what's his new address?

Looking forward to hearing of you again. We do hope all is well with you and yours and send everyone of our family warm and fondest regards.

Your Uncle Joseph

Joseph receives a parcel and writes that he has heard from Esther. Kishinev, March 7, 1969.

Dear nephews and dear relatives,

I didn't even expect such a prompt and complete satisfaction of my requests.

We've received your gift via air mail and are very pleased with the things which this time are by far better than those we've even got from the Parcel Service. A thousand of thanks to you, dear Milton, as well as to the other nephews who shared in the expenses.

Your grandfather Solomon used to say, "To be a true gentleman or simply an honest man is a most expensive pleasure, but it is an item that should take a place of honor in every wise man's budget."

The next day after receiving your present, I got beyond expectations a letter from the administration of the nursing home where my sister Esther is residing. She assures me that Esther looks marvelous, her husband Morris visits with her often and she seems to be quite happy there.

I'm sure I got this letter also thanks to your interference. I don't know why Esther bears me a grudge and has not answered to any of my letters but henceforth I shall worry less about it hoping she'll get on all right.

We made sure once more, dear Milton, that you are a true gentleman and I can never thank you enough for all you've done for me.

A Happy Passover to all of you, remember me to your mother and to everyone of your family, with love,

Your Uncle Joseph

[several lines of Hebrew follow]

Joseph sends condolences on the death of Rose, and advises Milt that a visit will not be possible due to “circumstances”. Kishinev, May 18, 1969.

Dear Milton, dear nephews and relatives,

We learned with great sorrow that your mother Rose, the life friend of my beloved brother Dave, has died, and present to all of you our profound condolences.

I remember Rose as a very handsome girl of about 20 your father fell in love with. Although Rose was from a very poor family, she was a willful nature in her own way, and only David with his steadiness, with his kind, golden, and tender heart could easily calm her temper. I'm sure that being his life satellite for about half a century she adopted at least half his virtues.

They came to the U.S. with nothing but their hands and restless hearts. Life was not a blazed trail to them. Rose did her best to help David to find a situation, lay up a fortune, to grow up four sons, and give them a start in life. Without doubt she had a fondness not only for herring and homemade soup, and disliked taking advice from “squirts” as she named 60-years-old-doctors, but she also was devoted heart and soul to her 11 grandchildren and two grand-grand-children, worried about their health, happiness, and future, worried about what is going on in the world, admired brave people, their deeds, and disliked unfairness, etc.

As an old man I hold with the old Latin saying, “De mortuis aut bene, aut nihil” (Speak either good about the deceased or not at all) On our Jewish burial rites and prayers there is the same tradition of speaking only about the moral and spiritual merits of the deceased. I make no doubt that my sister-in-law Rose had her merits in this respect. So I take the permission of saying some Hebrew words in her honor:

[Hebrew follows]

Now, dear Milton, about your wish to visit with us this summer. You can't imagine how eager I am to meet any of my nephews. Especially you who has shown such generous and delicate attitude toward us. But, dear Milt, you must understand that there are circumstances which do not depend of anybody's desire. I mean by this that there are some serious reasons which make me give you my advice and request not to do it this summer. It is not the right moment. I give you my word of an honest man that as soon as the circumstances change, I shall be very, very glad to invite you myself to call on us. But now it is impossible.

I know that you're not only a true friend, but also a comprehensive and well-wishing nephew. So I'm sure that you will not misunderstand my request and you'll postpone your trip for another time. I feel exceedingly sorry for your disappointment, but for the present you must excuse me my not being able to do anything against it.

Love and fond regards to all of you,

Your Uncle Joseph

Joseph writes of Olya's serious illness. He recalls how the Maidenberg family would celebrate Purim in Dzigovka, and reiterates some genealogical information. Kishinev, March 27, 1970.

Dear nephews Milton, Meyer, Frank, Ben, and dear relatives:

The whole month of February I and my wife were off in a health resort home for a cure. Then having received the sad news that my sister Olya got very ill, we went to the town where she lives in and stayed there also for almost a month. She has got a cerebral congestion and is getting now necessary treatment in a hospital, but the doctors say that there is little hope she'll recover from her paralysis. You can imagine how heavy my heart is. Olya is the only sister besides Esther still living. [For some reason, Joseph does not mention Malieh, the youngest sister, who resides in Odessa.] She was a very intelligent, cheerful, and good-natured woman. From her early childhood she was the pet of our family, and now her incurable disease is a great shock for us.

Not a trace is left of that distant sweet old day when two brothers and five sisters would get together in our native little home in the Ukrainian village Dzigovka on the occasion of some traditional holiday. Our favorite holiday was Purim because it was accompanied by an interesting home carnival. Purim is based on a naive but most optimistic legend-the beautiful Queen Esther, her brave brother Mordechai, and the heartless Amman. Mother would make up Olya as Queen Esther, David made up himself as Mordechai, myself as Amman and our elder sister Molka as the King Akhashverosh. Father would read the legend (megillah) and the performance began. We children tried to do our best to look like the real heroes of the beautiful legend. The distribution of Purim presents followed the performance. What fun there was! Both old and young took part in the revels. There was a peculiar and inimitable atmosphere in those distant patriarchic days. But long ago the birds had flown away, and their nests had fallen into pieces. .

Now enough of dreaming. Everything is flowing and changing---such is the law of life. . .

After returning home a fine Purim present awaited us: Two letters from you, dear Milt, and one from my sister Esther (the first after five years of silence). Now I hasten to reply. You have done your utmost to make Esther answer, and I can never thank you enough for your kindness and concern. In her short letter Esther writes that she is coming along relatively well, she apologizes to me for not having written such a long time, says that writing is a matter of great difficulty to her, but she is not

losing hope to recover some day. The manager of the nursing home where is living adds that Esther gets good care and necessary medical treatment, her husband and daughter come to see her often, but she turns very nervous and starts crying when one speaks about her family or near relatives. I think that the reason of passing by my letters to her in silence was to avoid supplementary attacks of nerves. The main thing is that at last Esther has given a sign of life and hasn't lost hope to recover. Hope helps to resist to the blows that a man's life is attended by. It goes without saying that I answered her letter at once. I enclose a copy of my reply. I'm sure that the address of the Sovereign Home I had is not wrong.

As you know, we were 7 children in our family: two brothers (your father David and I), and five sisters (Molka, Olya, Golda, Esther, and Malya). Only Esther and Olya are living. Molka, Shimon Balaban's mother, was bestially killed together with her family by the Nazis during World War II. Only one of her daughters lives with her son in Russia. She's a widow. We have no more relatives abroad except those you know in the USA, and Shimon Balaban. My son Amnon (Michael) who lives in Kishinev is 54. He has a married daughter and a son Edward (age 10). My daughter Dusya is 48, lives with her family not far from Kishinev. She is a teacher and has two daughters (one of them married). Your other cousins live with their families in different towns. There are doctors, engineers, etc. among them. From time to time we meet or correspond with each other and I remember you to them. That is all I may tell you about your relatives.

We are happy to learn that your children are fine and that Toby is going to have her first baby in June. We all join in wishing her good health, happiness, and an easy birth when the time comes.

Though I am 85 already, I hope to reach the time when the Great Powers will finally cease playing on the same strings of their fiddles and will start working together in best harmony to achieve a just and lasting peace in the world.

I also hope that someday in the near future we shall have the opportunity of inviting you and that our desire of seeing each other will come true before years go by.

Thank you ever so much for all you have done for us. We all join in sending you and your families our fond regards and best wishes on the occasion of the coming Passover holidays.

With love, your Uncle Joseph

P.S. We highly appreciate your noble generosity and are very grateful to you for your concern (You ask me in your last letter if we need anything you can send to us). But what worthy and pleasant gift can we send you in our turn? A subscription to the *Moscow News*? It is a great disproportion, isn't it? That is why I feel very inconvenient to ask you for some things we need. I may accept one more gift of things if only you can do it without any difficulties and all my nephews share the expenses. In such a case you may order through the Chicago Parcel Service the following items of U.S. sizes are mentioned:

- 5 men's banlon shirts (navy, blue, green, etc.)
- 2 men's nylon shirts (white)
- 2 suspenders (without buttonholes)
- 3 men's nylon raincoats
- 2 ladies' nylon raincoats
- 1 man's synthetic winter coat without fur collar
(or fall synthetic coat with warm lining) black, blue or grey
- 5 babushkas (wool)
- 2 shawls wool (price \$5.50)

If the total sum is too high, you may reduce the number of things mentioned in the list at your own discretion.

Joseph recalls how his father described Yom Kippur, and relates a favorite Talmudic verse of Solomon: Kishinev, October 24, 1970

Dear nephew Milton and family,

Having returned home from my trip to my sister Olya, where I spent all the autumn holidays, I was handed your gift package and your letter from October 2. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for the things and your kind letter we all enjoyed.

Our family was greatly impressed by the case of my nephew Shimon's son Uri and are happy of the lucky outcome of the incident.

In our family Autumn holidays, especially Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, were given a great importance, not only as a millennial tradition, but also as a very important psychological moment of moral self-education. From early childhood our parents tried to train us to self-discipline and self-control.

When we were little children, our father used to tell us the frightening legend of Yom Kippur when God, residing in his throne in heaven, is weighing on his balance of justice the actions of each person by throwing on one scale the good deeds and on the other the bad ones in order to see which weigh down and punish severely the evil-doers.

When we were teenagers, our parents did not pay particular attention to our religious beliefs, but they always suggested us to take from religion all that inspires human dignity, strength of mind and morality, good habits and noble actions.

Your grandfather Solomon often used to cite a quotation from the Talmud which he considered the corner-stone of morality: "Al shlosa dvarim olam omed-al thora, al-avodah vegmilath khasidim" which means that the world is based on three things: on knowledge, on labour, and on charity. I've made quite sure that you don't neglect this favorite quotation of your ancestors.

I continue to believe that perhaps the new year will bring us closer to world peace as you do. I also believe that the right time of inviting you to visit with us is not far distant.

We all join in sending you and everyone of our family our love, best wishes and fond regards (including little Johna)

Your Uncle Joseph

The street I live on was given a new name Iskra instead of Podolskaya

.

**In what appears to be Joseph's last letter, he discourses on anti-Semitism:
Kishinev, November 25, [1970]**

Dear Milton, nephews and relatives:

Your kind letter with the enclosed lists have just found me in bed because I had a bad influenza. Thank you ever so much for your trouble and care. I'm glad that you are all well and wish all your happy thoughts, good intentions, hopes for peace in the world to come true soon.

Sorry that there is little of much interest to you in the Moscow News, but unfortunately there is no other Soviet newspaper in English here. I fully agree with you in the question that to have such friends like those you mentioned in your letter is not very praiseworthy even if there important political reasons for it. Being under the impression of the commentaries about the self-murder of such a skunk like Dan Burros [?] I have read recently it seems to me that anti-Semitism in your country is not only a myth and I understand now the concern of conscientious Jews about it.

As to the Jews in the USSR I am sure that at least no harm is in store for them. All the accomplices of the Hitler regime have got their deserts. There is no trace of new fascist, anti-Semitic official or unofficial organizations or publications, there are no swastikas drawn on synagogues or Jewish cemeteries, day by day. At schools children are educated in the spirit of brotherhood toward all nations. Such a queer bird like Beria has been put to death for his provocations against Jewish doctors. There are neither Rockwells nor Sheltons, etc., no corporations like Technicolor, Great Foundries, Schick Safety Razors, and others which are supporting and financing those "supermen" and their stooges. Persons who try to stir up national or race hatred are punished by Soviet law in the most severe way.

[It is not signed at the bottom of the page, so perhaps there is another sheet that we do not have]

Anna, Joseph's second wife, writes in Russian of Joseph's death a year earlier, and describes her husband's character: Kishinev, May 5, 1972

[translated]

Dear Milton and brothers Maidenberg,

This is being written by the wife of your late uncle Joseph. With deep sorrow we are informing you for the second time that he passed away on the 30th day of January, 1971, at the age of 86.

He had a brain hemorrhage which caused a paralysis of the entire right side of his body. He was ill only six days. During the first three days he was conscious and able to speak and at this time he several times called your name and was blessing you and your entire family. He deeply regretted, even with tears in his eyes, that he did not succeed to answer your letter. Actually, in the evening before he became ill, he wrote your address on the envelope and placed ready on the table the Russian-English dictionary which he used writing letters to you. On the fourth day the illness became aggravated by a lung congestion and he lay unconscious. Your uncle was a very well educated man. He knew several languages, possessed vast knowledge in the fields of philosophy and religion, secular and modern literature, [and he] deeply loved nature and people. He was in every respect an outstanding man, but now more than one year has passed [that] he is not among us. We buried him in the Jewish cemetery next to his first wife. Lately he was deeply suffering from the tragedy of his sister (your aunt) Olga who was considered in the family to be the most noble, wise and good person. Regardless of her outstanding personality she was unhappy in her life, and Joseph called her "the great martyr." Already more than three years, she is being completely confined to her bed, paralyzed and helpless. In addition to that she became blind and is nothing but a living dead. He loved this sister very much, but could do nothing to help her. On the second day after the death of Joseph we wrote to you what happened. It appears that the men whom we asked to take the letter to the post office lost it and was ashamed to tell us. Otherwise we cannot explain the fact that you were not informed about the death.

Your uncle Joseph always mentioned with great respect you, Milton, your daughter Toby, sons and the entire family. He always said that your noble character resembles his late brother David. By the way, when Joseph, being ill was still conscious but felt the end was near, he admonished not to forget the 19th day of July--the date of the death of your father, so that his son, wherever he might be, on this day would say the prayer "Kaddish" for the repose of David's soul.

At the end of this letter, I wish to express my deepest gratitude for your letter written in Russian, because I do not know [the] English language. I wish you personally and your family a very good health, happiness and the best of everything.

Anna Marmor-Maidenberg

P.S. I saved the envelope, which your uncle wrote only seven days before his death. I am sending it to you as a memento.

Malieh (Manya), the sole surviving sibling, finds the address “by chance”, and writes her nephews in America. Odessa, Ukraine, March 15, 1979.

[translated]

My dear nephews Milton, Meyer, Ben and Frank:

It is your aunt from the Soviet Union who is writing to you, sister of your father, Malieh, daughter of Solomon Maidenberg.

Out of our large family there remains only I, the youngest. I do not know whether my sister Esther, who is also in America, is alive. By chance I learned of your address and decided to write to you, although we have never seen each other.

Our late brother Joseph once told me that your father, who is my brother David, told you before he died that he has a brother and two sisters in the Soviet Union, Joseph, Elkeh and Malieh. He told you this so that you would be aware that you have family and you would forget them. Now there is neither Elkeh nor Joseph. I am alone.

My husband and children and I live in Odessa and I would very much like to receive a letter from you to know how you live there. I am interested in your families, your children and all the rest.

I have a son and a daughter, two grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

My brother, your father, helped our parents very much. He never forgot them. I recall that at my wedding he sent my parents \$500. There are few people like that in the world.

For this first time I will limit myself to a short letter and when I get a response I will write at greater length.

I kiss you and embrace you. Best wishes to all.

Malieh Maidenberg Rosenberg
100 Metchnikoff St., Apt. 3
Odessa, USSR

A month later, Manya writes again. Odessa, April 4, 1979.

[translated]

My dear nephews Milton, Frank, Ben and Meyer:

This letter is written to you by the sister of your father, Malieh Maidenberg Rosenberg. I am writing to you already a second time since I have not received a response and evidently you have not received my first letter.

I am very anxious to know about your lives. Is my sister Esther living? How are her children? Where are they? I would be very happy to receive a letter from you. In my first letter I wrote in a little more detail about myself. I have a son and a daughter, two grandchildren and two great-grandchildren, a boy and a girl.

I am sending you my picture so that you have some idea about me. When I get your letter I will write again everything in detail. I have learned of your address by chance. My dears, I kiss you and embrace you. I am waiting with great impatience for a letter from you.

Malieh Maidenberg Rosenberg

Manya has received a letter from Sylvia, and replies. Odessa, July 1, 1979.

[translated]

My dear Sylvia and my dear children:

I have received your letter of June 15, 1979 and was very glad. While reading the letter I cried very much. While reading the letter I remembered everybody and my sister Esther and my brother-in-law, your mother and father and my brother David. Out of our large friendly family there is nobody except me alive. Many years have passed and all that remains is like a dream.

I have written Milton that I live in Odessa and will be very happy to receive your letters to which I will respond promptly. You can write in English, we have good friends who translate for us. Certainly send us your pictures. Please write in detail about your life.

I would like very much to see all of you but this is impossible. If you are in Chicago, please put flowers on the grave of my sister and brother-in-law, "Let the earth be down (goose) for them to rest upon".

Milton responds to my letters. My children, son, and daughter and my husband all work. All send their sincere greetings and best wishes.

I don't know English and so I am writing in Russian thinking that over there are people who will know Russian and will read this letter to you. The name of Feldman means nothing to me, I do not remember anyone of that name and do not know who they would be.

Please relate my best greetings to Milton and the rest of the nephews. Dear Sylvia, I embrace and kiss you warmly and wish you great happiness, good health and many happy years. Regards to all.

Manya Rosenberg

Manya writes of the photo taken of the Maidenberg girls, and describes her family. Odessa, August 18, 1979.

[translated]

My dear niece Sylvia, husband, and all the children:

I have received your letter and your photographs. I was very happy to see everybody and all of our lives went by me as in a dream before my eyes. I am so happy that we are establishing correspondence.

I have read your letter several times and the pictures you sent me we have already seen. The family Maidenberg girls was sent to us by Shimon Balaban. To the far left is your mother Esther, then Golda, Malkeh, my mother and father (your grandmother and grandfather) and then me who is the littlest, Malieh. To my great sorrow not one of them are now alive. I have also a picture of your family where is depicted your mother and father, yourself and two children and your mother is holding in her arms a boy.

I have already written you that we have a son and a daughter, 2 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren. My son and daughter are engineers. my son's name is David and he lives in the Latvian Soviet Republic. my daughter's name is Lidia and she lives in Odessa. My son-in-law is an engineer also and my daughter-in-law is a graduate of a conservatory of music and she teaches piano in a music conservatory. My oldest grandson Eugene is a railroad engineer, my second grandson by the name of Victor, is 25 years of age, and is a student at a naval engineering academy. My great-grandson is still a little boy and is called Stanislov, 1^{1/2} years of age, and his sister [?] is Natasha, one year old. This is all of our family.

My children would like very much to know you because you are the closest and dearest relatives to us. We would be so very, very happy if sometime my dreams would come to reality and we meet.

My husband Solomon is a subcolonel in the military, retired. He is still working and we receive a pension.

How are the rest of my nephews: Meyer, Ben and Frank. What do they do, where do they live, where are their children? Somehow no one writes anything about them.

All the details about us you can tell Shimon Balaban in Israel, he knows my husband well. my children would like to write to you.

Warm greeting to Milton and all the rest of my nephews, please send us a photograph of all the children, Jeff, Ellen, Donna, & Susan. When they get married, we will for sure come to the wedding!

We are sending you some photographs. We embrace you fondly, kiss you with great love and send greeting to all. Please come, we will be so happy.

Your aunt Malieh Rosenberg

Manya writes Milt, mentions relatives living in Kishinev, recalls a visit from Shimon Balaban. Odessa, August 19, 1979.

[translated]

Dear Nephew Milton:

We have your letter and photos a few days ago. We have written a letter to Sylvia and answered in detail the many questions about our family which would be of interest to you.

Sylvia has written that in October you will be at her place and you will find out everything there.

In Odessa live also your father's sister's daughter. Your Aunt Malkah is now not living but her daughter lives in Odessa. Her name is Frida and she is a sister to Shimon Balaban who is in Israel. Frida's son and family live here also. His name is Fima.

A few years back Shimon came to Odessa and saw us all. We are not against any visitors and we would like to see any one of you if you came to Odessa. Your Uncle Joseph's son Amnon and [daughter] Ida live in Kishinev and we see them often. Kishinev is not far from Odessa and if one of you comes here they will all come to Odessa to see you and meet you.

All of our children work and both son and daughter are engineers. The oldest grandchild has graduated from university and he has a job as a railroad engineer. His name is Eugene. Our second grandchild attends 3rd year of university and his name is Victor.

My husband is retired and gets a pension, but works also. We live well.

Please convey our warmest greetings to all of you. Kisses to all. I am sending you these photos. Wishes for good health and happiness.

Manya Rosenberg

**There are reasons, Manya says, why she did not write for such a long time.
Odessa, January 1, 1980.**

Dear nephew Milton:

We received yesterday your letter, a photograph and the declaration of forwarding us a parcel. We are very grateful for your thoughtfulness. We have not yet received the parcel. They take a long time to get here from the U.S.A. As soon as we get it, we shall let you know. Judging by the declaration, the things that you have sent are very good, and we thank you again. We hope very much that you will come here this summer, and we shall try to reciprocate your kindness.

You cannot imagine how much we want to see you all and have heart-to-heart talks. We are very much surprised that Shimon Balaban did not tell you anything about us. Please write to him, and he will tell you quite a lot about us. He visited us in Odessa, but did not tell us anything about you either.

There were good reasons why we did not write to you for such a long time. We are happy now that correspondence has been established between us.

We feel very badly regarding Frank's situation, the illness of his wife, and with all our soul and from our heart we wish for a favorable outcome. Of all our large family, I am left alone and do not feel well also. My legs refuse to serve me, but God grant that nothing worse befalls me. I have a very good family, a good husband, and he also is anxious to meet you all. When you get to Odessa, you will meet all the relatives. It seems to me that so much has accumulated during all these years that it would take more than one year to tell it all.

We are getting good letters from Sylvia, and we see from her letters that she is an excellent woman. May God give her much happiness, that her daughters have success in their lives, and we surely will come to their weddings.

Dear Milton, once again we wish to thank you for the parcel, and as they say "it is not the gift, but the thought". We are sending our greetings to all your family, and may they all be happy. Give my best and warmest greetings to all my nephews and their families.

Please write, we respond promptly to all the letters.

Kisses and embraces to all of you,

Your Aunt Manya

Manya writes Sylvia of the joy of receiving letters from America, and imagines a meeting in person. Odessa, January 16, 1980.

My closest and dearest relatives:

We have received your letter, Sylvia, dated Dec. 22, 1979. It is a great holiday for all of us to receive your letters; we read them with great emotions. While reading I recall all my sisters, including your mother Esther, and all this not without tears. We are glad and enormously happy that after a long interval correspondence has finally been established between us. We have also received a letter from Milton. It seems to me that we respond promptly to all your letters. We have not received the package yet, but whatever it might be, we are very grateful and wish to express to him our appreciation. We shall acknowledge its receipt immediately.

It is true that my legs ache, but I am still walking, take the necessary treatments and am trying not to lie down. Almost everyone of our family had leg aches – all this I got as an inheritance, but god grant that it does not get worse.

We all were very much upset by Milton's letter where he wrote that Frank's wife is dying. What a terrible grief has befallen to him.

Victor [Brenner] is very happy to get your letters. He is now impatiently awaiting a letter from Jeffrey. May they be happy, they are close to each other and it is good that they have established correspondence. It might happen that the time will come for them to meet. My dearest, I can imagine our meeting and the joy and the tears. May I live to see the day! We will be overjoyed by your coming.

Dear Sylvia, we have received the photographs. You all look very well. Your daughters are very attractive and beautiful. Everybody here liked them. May they be happy! Do not fail to give our salutations to Golda and all her family. We hope to have our pictures taken soon and shall send them to you. We live with the hope to meet you in the summer in Odessa. We liked all your family. It is very bad we do not speak English. We know also that it is not easy for you to translate, but it is fortunate that you have a friend who reads Russian. We are trying to write clearly to make it easy for her to read.

Many, many kisses and hugs and wishes of good health to all of you. My husband, children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren send their kisses and salutations.

Your aunt Manya

Manya asks about all the news, and reports she is feeling better. Odessa, February 11, 1980.

My dear and beloved nephews:

It has already been a long time since we got anything from you. We have sent our letters to you, also we have written to Milton, but we have not received a reply. We are concerned whether everything is all right with you? Milton has written to us that Frank's wife is very ill, what is his news - we are very interested.

We have not received yet the parcel sent by Milton. It takes a long time for them to arrive from America. You could not even imagine how much we want to see you all; what a joy would that be. It seems to me that even one year would not be enough to talk about everything. Come, we shall receive you with open arms. You will learn a lot. I shall tell you much about all your relatives. Really, Shimon Balaban knew that we live in Odessa, he visited us, and we simply cannot understand why he did not tell you anything about us. He knows my husband very well. Did he write you about us? We hope that this letter will be read by Milton too. Many thanks to him for the parcel. We shall write as soon as we get it. Our grandson Victor is thrilled to have correspondence with you.

Basically everything is normal in here. Glory be to God that I am on my feet. Our apartment is large. I have to clean it, although now it is not easy. My husband works; he and all our children are sending you our greetings and best wishes.

Dear Sylvia, we are very happy to receive your letters, please write more often. Our greetings also to all other relatives: Meyer, Frank, Ben, Golda and others. I have also written to Milton. Best wishes of happiness to all!

Dear Sylvia, do not suffer so much because your daughters are not married yet. Everything will turn out well. There is time for everything.

Many, many kisses to all of you,

Your Aunt Manya

P.S. Greetings from all of us and particularly from my husband Solomon.

Manya writes that she is “interested in everything”. Odessa, February 18, 1980.

Dear Niece Sylvia and Children!

We received your letter today and are responding immediately. We have also written a letter to Milton. We have not received the parcel yet. We shall respond immediately upon the receipt. Everything is all right with us. We are very happy to get your letters, although they travel a long time, more than a month. Please give our greeting to Golda and to her family. We yearn to receive a letter from her also. Please write, my beloved, about your life, we are interested in everything. Did Shimon Balaban write you about us?

All our family sends our best wishes to you with the hopes of sound health, happiness and prosperity. Please write more often, we respond very promptly to all your letters.

What is the news from Frank? How is his wife?

Kisses from all of us,

Your Aunt Manya

Manya thanks Milt for a parcel, and asks for more letters. Odessa, March 3, 1980.

Error! Bookmark not defined.My dear nephews and nieces:

Today, dear Milton, we received your parcel. We thank you heartily for your consideration and thoughtfulness. All the items you sent we liked very much. Everything is very nice and good. What is most important is that the sizes are correct. Thank you so very much. The parcel had been en route for 3 months. Everything you sent had been delivered. We mailed you three letters, but it has been a long time that we had no response from you. There are no changes in our life. We live with the hope to meet you soon in our city of Odessa. We shall be happy to see you. I would have written you more but, unfortunately, I do not know English. Part of the items we gave to our children. They are also thankful to you.

Dear Milton, why do you write us so seldom? We feel happy when we get your letters.

Best regards and kisses to your wife, children and grandchildren. My husband and our children send you their best regards. Come to see us by all means, we shall tell you of the life of my brother and your father and of the whole of our family. Unfortunately I am the only survivor of our big family. We will write also to Sylvia. Did Shimon Balaban tell you of us? He knows my husband well. They knew each other still before he went to Israel.

Best regards to all other nephews, their wives and children Frank, Ben, and Meyer. Their consideration is thrilling and we are glad that after a long break we began corresponding.

And here I finish. We kiss all of you many, many times.

Your Aunt Manya, my husband Solomon and children

Manya wonders about San Diego, tells Sylvia her husband has a kind face and her daughters are beautiful. Odessa, April 2, 1980.

My dearest and beloved:

Your letter, Sylvia, dated March 7, 1980, was received by us and it brought us joy. It was a long time that we did not have letters from you, and we already began to worry. We respond promptly to your every letter. We were very much troubled by the death of Frank's wife. We would have liked to send to him our condolences, but, regretfully, we do not know his address.

Dear Sylvia, I have asked you in my last letter to send me a couple of robes, but now I am sorry that I have written that, because I know that it is a difficult undertaking for you, especially because you have a job. Therefore, please do not trouble yourself.

Dearest, are you pleased with the new home that you have purchased and how is everything after you have settled? We have received your photo, and we all liked it very much. We are convinced from the photo that your husband and father is very good, he has a very kind face. May he have good health and have long, long years.

Did Milton and his wife come back from the trip? We have written to him too. Everything is without change in here, my legs ache, but I try not to lie down but to keep moving. Evidently it is hereditary in our family. All our children had leg aches. All my family is sending their best wishes to you. We do not lose hope that as long as we are living we shall all meet. You have written that Milton and his wife intend to come here in the summer. We shall be very happy to see them all.

Dear Sylvia, you have written that you have to send letters to San Rafael for the translation into English. How come there is nobody in San Diego who knows Russian? Do you have friends in the new city? And which children live with you? Your daughters are very beautiful, everybody liked them. If they were in USSR, they would have been married long ago. Sincere greetings from my husband, he also is anxious to meet you all. May you have good health!

Kisses to all,
Aunt Manya, Uncle Solomon and the Children

Manya says it will be a dream come true when she and her husband are able to meet Milton. Odessa, May 21, 1980.

Dear Milton and our relatives:

It is a very long time since we've had any of your letters, and we are worried about it. Is everything OK with you? Letters from Sylvia we receive frequently and answer them accurately. Sylvia wrote us that you, Milton, and your wife are planning to come. We shall be very happy to see you, please let us know of it before, we should come and meet you. My dear ones, we have written you before that we had received the parcel. Everything is in order and good for us, thank you. Sylvia wrote us that you had been traveling in Africa, tell us, did you like your voyage?

Everything would be well if it were not for the aching legs, but it is inherited in the family, my brothers and sisters would also suffer from pains in their legs.

We are very happy when we get your letters, it is a pity only that you don't know Russian, and we English. We just wonder why your papa didn't teach any of you the Russian language. He came from Russia and he knew the Russian language not so bad. We are aware that you are having difficulties with the translation of our letters into English, but can do nothing about it. It is also hard for us to make translation of your letters, but we are doing it. We have taken our photographs a few days ago and will send you our picture.

How are other nephews and nieces of ours getting along? My husband Solomon and our children want very much to meet you and we hope that some day our dream will come true.

Dear Milton, how are your children, do you live in one city, or your children are in other cities? Are you still working?

My husband is working and I am in the household. All our children are also working.

Write us, our dear ones, and we will accurately answer each of your letters.

And here I conclude my letter.

Regards and best wishes to all our relatives.

We kiss you,

Manya, Solomon, and the children

Manya writes Milton that she and Solomon have moved; she says she is often ill. Odessa, November 12, 1980.

Dear Milton!

It has been a long time since we got your last letter. However, we too are remiss lately in writing. There has been a great change in our lives. We have moved to a new flat in a building that has been recently built. The flat is good, and we are satisfied. Here is our new address:

Rosenberg, M.C.
General Petroff's Street
House No. 44, Flat 48
Odessa 270076

Dear Milton, please let Sylvia know our new address; she also lives now in a different place, and we do not know her new address. There are no changes here; it is not too good that I am ill so often. What news do you have? We are surprised that you stopped writing. Do you like the photo that we have sent you? We hope that you will come in the summer. We will be very happy to see you and to know more about each other. Now we are putting in order the new flat and are trying to make everything comfortable and cozy.

How are the rest of my nephews? Sylvia writes seldom. How is she?

Dear Milton, please do not get offended that we do not write often now. When we are finally settled, we shall write more often. Our children are all well, and all are working. I shall write a more detailed letter the next time. I am very busy with arranging the flat. I gave you our new address. I sincerely ask that you write.

Greetings from all of us!

Kisses to all,

Aunt Manya and Uncle Solomon

**Manya worries that the correspondence has ebbed. "Please do not forget us."
Odessa, December 25, 1980.**

Dear Milton and all other members of your family!

We are very surprised that there have been no letters from you for such a long time, and also from Sylvia we have not received anything. This worries us very much. We have already written to you that we have moved to a new place. We have already given you our new address.

We are sending you our greetings and best wishes for the new 1981, wishes of great happiness and, most important of all, health. There are no changes here. We are happy with our new place. Please write to us all your news in detail if possible. Here again is our new address. Please let Sylvia know it, also all the rest of our dear relatives.

We look forward with great anticipation to your letters. We corresponded so often previously, but now, we do not know why, the correspondence stopped. Please let us know if you got the photo that we have sent you. Your letters make us very happy. We hope to meet some day. Please do not forget us.

Greetings to all, all!

Our kisses and embraces,

Aunt Manya and Uncle Solomon

Manya continues to worry about the lack of correspondence; she writes that she has sent Milton the address of Joseph's son (Amnon). Odessa, February 2, 1981.

Dear Milton!

It has been a long time since we got anything from you. You have stopped entirely to write. This worries us very much. Is everything O.K. with you? Are you well? Sylvia writes very seldom, although she used to write often. According to your request, we have sent you the address of Joseph's son. That letter was sent to Sylvia's address, and we hope that she gave it to you. Everything here is as before. Although I cannot brag about my health, I thank God for what we have. You already know about the change of our address because we have received a letter from Sylvia directed to our new address.

We have learned that your daughter Toby is going to visit us. This is very good. We shall be very happy to have her here. We would like very much to meet you, all of you while we are still living. We are not young any more! I am left alone out of our family and am very sorry that although you are a close relative, I cannot see you---the distance separating us is very great.

Dear Milton, we are sending our best wishes to your wife and to all your children. However, we do not know your wife's name. Please send us some photos. Did you get our photo? We did not hear whether you got it.

My children also want very much to meet all of you, but it is very difficult to say when it might happen. It is even hard to believe that it might become a reality.

Milton, please write. Do not forget us. We do respond promptly.

Our heartfelt greetings and best wished to all the rest of the family.

Kisses and embraces,

Aunt Manya and Uncle Solomon

P.S. Sincere greetings from all our children!

Amnon, surprised to learn of the correspondence with Manya but pleased to have received a letter from Milton, writes his first letter to his American relatives. In it, he tells about his family and his life. He explains why Milt's visit to the relatives was canceled. Kishinev, March 15, 1981.

Dear Milton:

Returning from a trip to Middle Asia where I visited an old friend of mine I didn't even guess what a great joy was waiting me. It was your letter, dear cousin. That's very kind of you. A thousand thanks. I'm extremely glad that Aunt Manya has been writing to you but I am at a loss why neither she, nor anybody of her family has ever told me about it. I'm afraid that my letter will be too long, and if so, I must apologize.

First of all, a few words about my late father "the philosopher" whom you gave such an unselfishly assistance in his old age. One of his last regrets was, "It is a pity that I'm dying without having seen Milton and Toby." Yes, he was a philosopher and an erudite. Working as a teacher of Jewish history, and then when being a farmer, etc., his permanent hobby was reading and studying. He didn't drop it even when his eyesight became very weak. As a broad-minded man he was interested in all the events that have been taking place in our disturbing world and regarded them in a sober and sensible light. He was not religious, but knew the Bible and the history of the Jews by heart. Every man, he would often say, must know the literary moments and the history of his people.

Your Uncle Joseph was also a polyglot and knew Yiddish, Hebrew, Russian, Rumanian, Moldavian, Ukrainian, Polish, Latin, and Aramaic. In 1945 on his suggestion we decided to take up English together by means of different self-instructor manuals, and soon I realized that he succeeded more than me in it.

I remember how disappointed and grieved he was when after 2 or 3 years of studying English we were trying to read unadapted fiction (by Shakespeare, Dickens, M. Twain or by some modern authors) and hardly could understand the contents.

It was just he the actual writer of the letters. When he was writing them he surrounded himself by a heap of dictionaries. And so do I when writing this letter because really my knowledge of English is rather weak. It takes me much trouble to express my thoughts in English more or less correctly.

I doubt, dear Milton, whether Aunt Manya informed you of the fact that when her brother Joseph was alive and she found out about your intention of coming to visit with us, all of them rose in categorical objection against it. They were terribly frightened that your visit would damage them.

It was precisely this fact, their requests, that drove us in a corner and put your uncle in such a disparate awkward situation that he had to suspend temporarily your visit. Several years later he died without having seen you. It was also because of them that after my father's death I didn't write to you. At his funeral and many times after they would say to me: "If you are not our deadly enemy, you'll do your best to prevent our American relatives of coming on a visit to the USSR."

You can well understand that neither poor father nor I could tell you openly about all this.

That is why I was taken aback and perplexed of the news that just Aunt Manya Rosenberg has been writing to you. At the same time I'm extremely glad of being disburdened from the ban of the Rosenbergs and Brenners (her daughter's and grandson's family name) and at last will be happy to renew our contacts.

And now briefly about myself, my family and our relatives. As you noticed in the heading my first name is Amnon (my father found it probably in the bible). Amina is my nickname (it means faith, believe in Hebrew). They call me also Michael or Misha in Russian. I am 65. In the last 30 years I was working as a teacher of French and Moldavian. Three years ago I retired on a pension. My wife was a teacher of music. We have two children and a granddaughter. My son Edward is 21 and is not married yet. He is a painter. My daughter is 36. [? No record of her.] My sister Ida, her husband and her two daughters with their families are living in the town of Tiraspol (Moldavia). Shimon Balaban's sister (Frida), her son with his family live in Odessa. As you know, Aunt Manya, her daughter and grandson with their families also live there. Her son moved to Lithuania. Two daughters of our late Aunt Olga [Elkeh] live in other republics.

I'm certain, dear Milton, that you are (and so am I) for a real peace and for true friendship between countries and peoples. First of all for good relations between the USA and the Soviet Union. But unfortunately all this depends neither on you personally nor on me. Both of us can debate, argue, call out slogans (Mir y druzhba! as you did in your letter), but our personal wishes, opinions or good advices are not able to decide the come out of such complicated problems. The

only thing we can do is to hope, to hope for a better and more harmonious world where there wouldn't be any danger of a nuclear cataclysm, and strive for it if only for conscience sake.

Excuse my philosophizing. You know the old saying "like father like son". Now I would like to hear from you and from any other of your family. What your sons do and where they live. How is Toby, her husband, and little Johna. How is Meyer and his family getting on etc.

Hoping to see you some time in the near future.

I remain with kindest regards to all of you.

Yours affectionately,

Maidenberg

Maidenberg Amnon Josefovich
Lenin Street 62, flat 24
Kishinev, 277001. USSR

Amnon describes how he writes letters in English, and is able to signal to Milt that he understands the situation with Israel, using “cousin Shimon” as the code. Kishinev, May 18, 1981.

Dear Milton:

On May 9 I received and greatly enjoyed your kind letter. It was just the day when the anniversary of the victory over Hitlerism is observed in our country. We are very happy that you and Irma are in good health and can often travel. Try to keep it that way and be always healthy, cheerful and lucky. Some weeks ago I wrote Aunt Manya a postcard in which I mentioned your first letter to me, but haven't got any reply yet. She's probably ashamed for having made a secret of her correspondence with you.

And now I'll try to answer your questions, dear cousin. Your first question was whether I can speak English so well as I write in it. No wonder that my letter writing is tolerable. It's because I write my English letters in Russian at first, and then translate them with the help of dictionaries. As to my oral speech it is rather poor, if not abominable. It goes without saying that one cannot learn to speak English well merely by studying its grammar, by reading books and newspapers or by listening to broadcasts in English. The skill of colloquial English can be acquired only in an English speaking environment. Unfortunately, there are no English-speaking persons here to communicate.

Your second question is whether it would be permissible for you to visit with us. Of course, dear Milt. There can be no objections from our part (especially as the Rosenbergs have lifted their ban). You are welcome to do it at any time you wish. We would be very glad to see you in person some day. The best time for you to come would be summer or early fall, when the weather is fine here. I don't look at the dark side of things, and hope the relations between our countries to have been ameliorated by that time.

Now about your last question. whether I would be interested in some press-clippings. I'm most grateful to you but don't take the trouble to send us any. I can assure you that in the age of radio and TV, when all-around information is accessible, a sober-minded person can form a true picture of present day reality. I recollect your uncle Joseph's words: "There is a part of truth in every lie, and every truth has is a small part of lie. So we must eventually learn to judge for ourselves". Your letters confirm your ability of drawing right conclusions from the heaps of news and contradictory views which reach our ears and eyes daily.

You mentioned some cousins of yours in your letter. Are they on your father's or on your mother's side? I'd like to know whether Aunt Esther and her husband are still alive. Where do their daughters and son live? What do they do? I must say that your attitude concerning your cousin Shimon is most laudable. He has a lot of crafty foes, and your warm support has been helping him not to lose heart in our agitated world.

I hope to hear from you again, and in the meantime I and my family join in our warm and fond regards to you and yours.

A. Maidenberg

P.S. I'm enclosing a photo taken a year ago. It was two months after my wife had got for the second time a infarction of the myocard. I've changed a bit and am thinner now because of my diabetes and high blood pressure. Nevertheless we're of good cheer and keep an active life. Our son is a warm-hearted kind boy and works as an illustrator of books at a publishing house, but has no inclination for foreign languages. He speaks only Russian or Moldavian.

In what would be her last letter, Manya says her family has moved again. She says she is often ill. Odessa, May 20, 1981.

Beloved family:

Due to some circumstances we had to move again. Now our daughter and her family live in the same building. She is on the third floor, and we are on the first. This is very convenient as I am often ill, and my legs are bothering me. My daughter takes care of me.

We have received all your letters and the photos. We also received letters and photos from Sylvia. All of them were delightful. I wish I could last long enough to meet some of you. I am already 79 years old.

Here is our new address. Please give it to Sylvia too.

M.C. Rosenberg
4-G, Flat 18, Hvorostin Street
Odessa, 270091

Please write more often. It gives us great joy to get your letters. Best wishes and greetings from all of our children. Greetings to all of the nephews: Meyer, Ben, Frank, and to all of their families.

We have just moved and have not really settled yet.

Dear Milton, we have already mailed you the address of Amnon, son of Joseph, in Kishinev. You probably already have it.

Our wishes of happiness, health and well being to all.

Kisses from Aunt Manya and Uncle Solomon

Amnon writes Sylvia how he remembers carrying her on his shoulders when she was a child. At the end of the letter, he conveys the sudden news of the death of Manya. Kishinev, May 25, 1981.

Dear cousin Sylvia:

We received and greatly enjoyed your wonderful letter. We all were thrilled to get from you such a complete story of the situation of your family.

I remember you, dear Sylvia, as a child of 3 or 4. I was a youngster of about 13-14 then. Your parents had lived in our house in the town of Beltzy before they left for Canada. We used to call you Tzilya or Tzilyousa in Russian. I recall how one morning I took you to our vineyard which was situated out of town. As it was a tiring walk for you, I put you on my shoulders and sang a children's rhyme that began with the words "*a zackala mail, a sackala mail...*" ("a sack of flour" in Yiddish). Arriving there, I gave you some fresh goat's milk, a boublik, a big bunch of grapes, and you fell asleep in my arms. A few hours after we went home in a cart full of green fresh hay which I mowed down while you were sleeping under a tree. More than half a century has passed since. I also remember Aunt Etty [Esther] and Uncle Moishe [Morris] when they were 30 years old. A young, strong and energetic couple, they decided to try their fortune in America. My father received letters from them when they settled in Regina, Sask. (Canada), and afterwards from the USA. It's a great pity that they are no more alive.

I admire the way you and Milton share information about your relatives. You have been sending even copies of our letters to one another.

Unfortunately our Odessa relatives have been concealing from me their contacts with you and Milton. They have never told about it to Frida, Shimon Balaban's sister either. She lives in Odessa now, and knows from Shimon's letters that they have been corresponding with you. Such a stupid situation arose. But I'm not angry with them. I find it rather funny.

Your letter, dear Sylvia, awoke deep feelings in my heart. I'd like to meet you and yours in person some day. But actually it is impossible because of the state of our health, and there are still other problems. All of us were happy that we heard from you, and join in sending our love to you and to everyone of your family.

I look forwards to hearing from you again, and hope that things are going well with you.

Fond regards,

Your cousin Amnon

P.S. I was just about to enclose the letter and mail it when a telephone call from Odessa announced us a most grievous news: Aunt Manya died all of a sudden. Born in 1902 she was the youngest daughter of our grandparents Solomon and Pearl Maidenberg.

In an hour I'm leaving for Odessa. I'll let you know at greater length about everything next time.

Amnon writes about Frida's life and death. Kishinev, June 3, 1981.

My dear cousin Sylvia:

You know already that Aunt Manya died on May 24. With deep sorrow I must announce that six days after, on the 30th of May our cousin Frida, Shimon Balaban's sister, died.

It is an awful thing to lose two near relations so unexpectedly and in one week. Manya was the last representative of our parents' generation. The stars of her destiny were luckier than those of her sisters. She lived always in good circumstances, in tranquillity, and died without long suffering at her home, among her loving husband and children.

As you know, Aunt Malka, Shimon Balaban's mother, was bestially killed by the fascists during World War II. Aunt Goldie died from a difficult delivery in the prime of her life. Aunt Olya, a wise and generous woman, had been paralyzed and bedridden during 5 years before she died. Her husband Melech Perelroisen was your father's brother.

We were talking over all that with Frida at Aunt Manya's funeral and who could foreknow or foretell that in some days Frida would follow her? Frida was born in 1912. When her husband died she was only 27 and has remained a widow since then. Last year she moved from Baku (Azerbaijan) to Odessa and was very happy because she lived in the same town with her son Efim and her apartment was at a short distance from his. On the 30th day of May she bought a bunch of flowers and went towards her son's home. But on the way there she had a violent heart attack, fell on the sidewalk and died before the ambulance care came. It was fated that she had such an unusual and tragical death. We imagine what a hard blow the sad news will be to poor Shimon. Frida was his only sister, and they loved each other very much.

We send you our love and regards,

Your cousin Amnon

P.S. I've sent a similar letter to Milton so you needn't send him a copy. Have you received my first letter to you?

Amnon provides Sylvia a detailed description of Maidenberg family genealogy, saying the family came to Ukraine in the 18th century from Germany and Poland. He adds in a postscript that two cousins remain fearful of communicating with their American relatives. Kishinev, August 30, 1981.

Dear cousin Sylvia and dear relatives:

Time has flown by since we received your lovely letters and the enclosed photos which we enjoyed greatly. Unfortunately your last three letters found me at the hospital where I had no possibility to answer them. My wife and my son couldn't do it either because they know neither English nor written Yiddish. So I'm going to reply to all of them at once.

At first I'll try to carry out your request by filling in for Ellen and Jeffrey the record of the descendants of our grandparents Shlomo (Solomon) and Pearl-Deborah Maidenberg you've got partly from Shimon, and then we'll talk about other things.

I know from my father that the ancestors of the Maidenbergs came from the German town of Magdeburg via Poland and settled in Ukraine in the 18th century. Our grandparents spent all their lives in a little Ukrainian town called Dzigovka (Jampol district) where all their children were born (five daughters and two sons). They earned their living by dealing in tobacco. Grandfather Solomon was a connoisseur of the Bible and the Talmud, and Grandma Pearl was a very kind, clever and efficient woman. So they were treated with high respect, and people came to them for a good advice or a friendly support.

Now let's go on to the gaps in the columns of your record. The name of Aunt Malkeh's husband was Elly Balaban. They were Shimon's parents and both of them were bestially killed by the Nazis during World War II in Dzigovka. The surname of their daughter Frida was Rosenberg. Her husband died in 1938. Her son Efim and her grandson Dima Rosenberg (17 years old) live in Odessa. Efim is an engineer, his wife's name is Mara.

Aunt Goldie died from her first childbirth more than 70 years ago. Her son Golya was brought up by our grandparents. He wasn't married and lost his life in the war.

Aunt Olya (Elkeh) and Melech Perelroisen (he was your father's brother) died in the early 60's. Their daughters Fanya and Dora live in the Ukrainian town of Chernigov now. Both of them are widows. Fanya Perelroisen is a doctor. Her

daughter and son-in-law, Luda and Herman Khused have a girl Julia. Dora works as a librarian.

Aunt Manya and Solomon Rosenberg's daughter and their son-in-law, Lidia and Kostya Brenner live in Odessa. Aunt Manya's son Danya Rosenberg lives with his wife Rita and his son Eugen in Palarga (Lithuania). Eugen's wife's name is Katya.

The progeny of my parents Joseph and Sarah Maidenberg:

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| 1. Amnon and Sheiva (Shura) | 1. Edward (Edic) Maidenberg |
| 2. Ida and Sasha Dekhtyar
Voskoboinik | 2. Ludmilla (Mila) & Victor |
| Polina and Syoma Uchitel. | |

My son Edward is 21 and not yet married. He works as a painter for a fiction publishing house. Ida and her husband have retired. Their daughters are teachers. All of them live in the town of Tiraspol.

Now about the contents of the letter in Russian from Aunt Manya to Milton. It was written on May 20, five days before her death. The handwriting is her husband's, Solomon Rosenberg's. They let you know that they've received all your letters and photographs (both Milton's and yours) and liked them very much. Aunt Manya says that she's 79 and feels often unwell still she hopes to meet someone of you in the future, and in the meantime sends her best regards to all of you. Having moved by that time from their former lodging to another one that is nearer to the place where their daughter Lidia had been living, they send you their new address: M.S. Rosenberg, Khvorstina Street, house 4 r, flat 18, Odessa - 270091.

Note: Some days ago Solomon Rosenberg rang us up that he moved again to a new place where he'll live together with his daughter Lidia, and that he left to his grandson Victor Brenner the mentioned apartment in Khvorostina street. He also announced us that they've already bought a beautiful tombstone for Aunt Manya's grave, and it will be put up soon.

Thank you a lot, dear Sylvia, for your hearty letters and the enclosed photos. We were charmed by the visual image of your family and like you cherish the hope that in the near future your lovely daughters will find worthy mates and at last will regulate their personal life in the best way. In the photo Jeffrey bears a strong resemblance to your father when he was a young man. To my regret, I was myself a

bachelor until the age of 35. That is why I daresay that though it's no easy to throw away one's imaginable freedom, it is time for him also to screw up his courage and take leave of his unmarried life if only he finds a decent nice-looking girl who's able to be a devoted friend and good wife. Till we also try to take a family picture and send some copies to you, we enclose Edic's photo taken in 1980 and a snap taken in 1979 of myself, my wife and Solomon Rosenberg (from left to right in the 1st row) and our mutual cousins Fanya and Dora Perelroisen (in the 2nd row). We've also decided to enclose an old photo of Uncle Melech and his family.

We hope that Moses has completely recovered from his pneumonia and you and yours are all well. We'll be very glad to hear from you again, and don't be offended if for some reason our reply comes with delay as it has happened this time.

We congratulate you on the occasion of the autumn holy days, send you our love, fondest regards and wishes of a happy, healthy and peaceful year.

Yours affectionately,
Amnon, Shura, Edward

P.S. You must take into consideration that for some reasons of their own Dora and Fanya avoid to establish any contacts with their relatives abroad. Therefore they needn't know about this letter and the photos until they change their position on the matter as some other of our relatives have done

.

In a nearly identical letter to Milt, Amnon recites the family genealogy, this time recalling even more distant forebears who wrote religious melodies and practiced cabala. Kishinev, Sept. 24, 1981.

My dear cousin Milton:

More than six weeks have passed since we received your last letter. It found me in the hospital, and therefore I couldn't answer it on the spot. Only now I'm going to have the pleasure of doing it.

At first concerning your father's year of birth. I know for certain that your uncle Joseph was born in 1885, and he used to say that his brother David was his senior by two years. Hence it follows that your father was born in 1883.

Now I'll try to sketch out for you our grandparent's Shlomo (Solomon) and Pearl-Deborah Maidenberg's progeny. The maiden-name of our grandma was Rizher. I know from my father that he had come across some documents which proved that the Maidenbergs' ancestors came to live in Poland from the German town of Magdeburg. Then their progeny left that country and in the 18th century settled in Ukraine.

There were among our forefathers composers of religious melodies, eminent rabbis and even cabalists. I remember my father to mention his great-great grandfathers, Rabbi Ben-zion Maidenberg from Shorgorod, Rabbi Ehuda-Leib Riger from Jamashpol, etc.

Our grandparents Solomon and Pearl spent all their lives in a small Ukrainian town called Dzigovka (Jampol District) where all their seven children were born. They earned their living by dealing in tobacco, but were held in high respect by their fellow-townsmen who came to their house for an advice or a friendly support. Grandfather Solomon was a connoisseur of the holy books and their comments. I remember his marvelous calligraphic handwriting both in Yiddish and in Russian. Grandmother Pearl was a warm-hearted, generous and very efficient woman.

Their oldest daughter was Malkeh. Her husband's name was Elly Balaban. Both of them were bestially killed by the Nazis during World War II in their native town. You know that their son Shimon had a sister, Frida. She wore her husband's surname (Rosenberg) who died in 1938. Frida's son Efim and her grandson Dima live in Odessa. Efim Rosenberg is an engineer.

Melech was Moishe Rosen's (Sylvia's father's) brother. Their daughters Fanya and Dora live in the Ukrainian town of Chernigov now. Both of them are widows. Fanya Perelroisen is a doctor. Her daughter and son-in-law, Luda and Herman Khused have a girl Julia. Dora works as a librarian.

Aunt Goldie died from her first childbirth more than 70 years ago. Her son Golya was brought up by our grandparents. He wasn't married and lost his life in the war.

Aunt Manya and Solomon Rosenberg's daughter Lidia Brenner and their grandson Victor live in Odessa. Lidia's husband's name is Kostya, and Victor Brenner's wife's name is Talla. Aunt Manya's son Danya Rosenberg, his wife Rita and his son Eugen live in Palarga (Lituania).

Finally the descendants of Joseph and Sarah Maidenberg:

Son and daughter:

1. Amnon and Sheiva (Shura)
2. Ida and Sasha Dekhtyar

Grandchildren:

1. Edward (Edic) Maidenberg
2. Ludmilla & Victor Voskoboinik
Polina and Syoma Uehitel.

Great-grandchildren

Vadim, Alla, Rostislav, Sasha

My sister Ida and her husband have retired. Their daughters are teachers. All of them live in the town of Tiraspol.

I feel envious that you and Frank are going to visit Shimon Balaban. (My envy is a white one of course). Unfortunately we haven't got such a possibility now. If he knows about Frida's death, convey to him our deep condolences.

It's very nice of you to ask me what you could send us that might be useful or needed and we are very much obliged to you for your generosity. Truth to say, I could give you some suggestions of items we need. But it is impossible to send you something of equal worth in return.

We congratulate you on the occasion of the autumn holidays and send to all of you our love and wishes of a peaceful, healthy and happy year. Let our hopes of a genuine and lasting peace between our countries and all over the world come true.

With fondest regards,

Amnon Maidenberg

P.S. I got into the hospital unexpectedly. My doctor sent me there for a complex treatment having attributed the pain in my calves (when I was taking long walks) to an atherosclerosis of the lower extremities. I was a football player in my young years, when being a student, and till this year I never complained of my legs. The treatment lasted two months. It was intensive and on a high medical level, but they probably overheated me because I feel by far worse than before. Now I'd give anything in the world to be able to walk as well as I did three months ago. In October I must undergo another course of treatment (it's sooner a course of torture for me). I try to believe that there's a hope for me to recover, and when you come to visit us, things will have come right again.

Sylvia will send you the contents of Aunt Manya's last Russian letter with long delay. The fault is not ours of course, By the way, a beautiful tombstone for Aunt Manya was already ordered and paid. It will be ready soon.

Amnon asks Sylvia if Shimon has learned of his sister Frida's death, describes some of his health problems, and provides a translation of a letter from Lidia Brenner. Kishinev, December 12, 1981.

Dear Sylvia, Moishe and children:

I have received, my dear cousin, your letter of October 23 written in your usual impeccable manner which is always so beautiful to read. We learned from it about your trip to Canada, about the forthcoming visit of your daughters this month and your anxiety in connection with some important changes in their lives. We hope you'll let us know the details of the changes, and in the meantime from the bottom of our hearts we wish all your alarms and troubles to be finally crowned with the best success.

I suppose that our mutual cousins have already returned from their trip, but haven't got any letter from Milton yet. We would like to know how they enjoyed the trip, whether Shimon has known about Frida's death, about his health etc. I guess you know that Milton has the intention to visit also with us and our Odessa relatives this spring. Since you're concerned in my welfare, I'm glad to let you know that my health has improved. First of all, I'm happy to have avoided a surgical intervention and secondly because the pains in my foot subsisted considerably for some days past. I've even thrown away my crutch and am able to walk 100-200 meters without stopping. As my leg problem is of atherosclerotic provenance, the doctors warned me to be cautious with my exercises. On feeling pain in my toes I must stop and wait until it is over and then walk on. In February or March I'll undergo another course of treatment in the hospital and I hope my present state to improve still more.

This letter will probably reach you in the year 1982. So we all join in sending you and to all the family our love, kisses and wishes of the best of health, prosperity and good luck and peace between our countries in the New Year and the years to come.

Keep well, and please write us whenever you're in the mood for it.

Your affectionate cousin,

Amnon

Here is the translation of the letter from Odessa (It is not dated):

Dear relatives:

I am Manya's daughter. My name is Lidia. Our dear mother died in the month of May 1981 and was buried in the Jewish graveyard in Odessa. She kept me informed about you, your letters etc., and told me to continue her correspondence with you. She hoped to meet you some time but unfortunately she died.

Now my father Solomon Rosenberg lives together with my husband whose name is Constantin (Costya for short) Brenner. Our only son Victor lives with his family apart from us.

When you write us, address your letters to our new residence: Solomon E. Rosenberg, Khvorostina Street, 4 "r", flat 18, Odessa 270091, USSR.

P.S. I wonder why Lidia's message has neither a complimentary close nor signature. It was probably enclosed in another letter, wasn't it?

After Aunt Manya's death Solomon and Lidia exchanged their two individual flats for a three-roomed apartment and live together in it. The address mentioned above is Victor Brenner's and not theirs.

Amnon says the family is honored to learn that Michael's son Joseph is named for his father. In a short lesson in East European history, he tells how the Maidenberg family was separated for 20 years, how his father Joseph brought his mother Pearl to Moldova after the Soviets reacquired Bessarabia in 1940. Pearl died in 1941. Her grave and the Maidenberg home were destroyed in the fighting between the Germans and Soviets. Kishinev, January 12, 1982.

Dear Milton and dear relatives,

I didn't answer your letter of October, dear Milt, because I was waiting to hear from you again after having returned from your trip. At last I received your message of November 28 with the enclosed photos and am most grateful to you. We greatly enjoyed the group photograph of your family and looked at it over and over again. The fact that one of Michael's little sons bears the name Joseph was a revelation to us. It's one of the greatest honors that could ever have been paid to the memory of your father's brother. As to me, I'm pleasantly thrilled and much obliged to you all.

We are very glad that in November you met Shimon and saw his home again. It's just splendid that he has acquired the self-consciousness and the dignity of a man who knows what he is to do. He probably knows about our great grandparents more than I do because he's older than me and had more contacts with them. I saw our grandfather Solomon, for instance, only in the years of WW I, when I was a child of 3 or 4. And all I have recounted you about him and our ancestry I know from my father's stories and those of our grandmother Pearl.

A small digression into history is needed in order to introduce clarity in my words:

When the Great Socialist Revolution of 1917 took place in our country, my father (and his sister Esther) lived in the town of Beltsy situated in the Moldavian region called Bessarabia (between the rivers Dniester and Prut which belonged to Russia for centuries. Our grandparents and the Balabans lived in Ukraine, beyond the Dniester, in their little native town Dzigovka (Jampol district). Our aunts Olya (Elkeh) and Manya lived with their families in other towns of Soviet Ukraine.

It so happened that soon after the revolution royal Rumania managed to tear away Bessarabia from the Soviet Union. So the frontier was shut and for more than 20 years we lost completely touch with our relatives who were living over the Dniester in the USSR.

Only in 1940, when Bessarabia was liberated and rejoined Russia, we could meet and see each other again. Having learned that our grandfather Solomon had died several years ago, my father decided to take grandmother Pearl to our place in Beltsy, where she lived happily and was held in high respect and love. But her happiness didn't last long. In 1941, just before the beginning of WW II she suddenly died of a hemorrhage of the brain.

I remember Grandma Pearl as a very clever and kindhearted old woman. Unfortunately, I could come home and see her but twice as I studied in the Kishinev University in those days. Our talks were very warm, interesting and heart-to-heart ones. But they didn't touch upon our genealogy at great length because we hadn't such an express purpose then.

During the war the town Beltsy (like thousands of other towns and villages of the Soviet Union) was completely ruined by the fascist invaders. And when I came there after the victory, I couldn't either the place where our house stood or any sights of our grandmother's grave. So happened to other memorable spots connected with the history of our family where one could come and give up oneself to nostalgic reveries in moments when one needs or is in a mood for it.

I wonder, Milt, how you came to the conclusion that I would have been born about the time when your father left for the USA. In fact, I was born in 1913, and uncle David had gone to America many years before my birth. My father told me that it was in the years when Jewish pogroms broke out in Czarist Russia (about 1905 or so).

Now a few words concerning my welfare. The pains in my foot and toes have considerably decreased. I've thrown away my crutch and am able to walk little by little. It goes without saying that "agues come on horseback and go away on foot." But for the present I'm very happy to have avoided a surgical intervention and I hope and pray to do without it in the future as well. I've been looking for some foreign medicine (Swiss-made injections which had proved to be good for my leg problem). I hope to get them before March when I am to undergo another course of treatment in the hospital. Unfortunately these injections are not so easy to be found in our drug stores and are rather expensive. Anyway, I'll try to find a way out.

Now could you do a good deed and give me your assistance in one thing? But don't take it amiss, please, My son has been looking for a coat 50 or 52 size in

Russian measurement. His height is 175 centimeters. The question is about a kid-leather jacket or leather coat (without any fur collars) or a coat of tanned sheepskin. Persons who have received such coats from America say they're very good and not so dear as they are here. Would it be very tiresome for you to get and send us one? If so don't take the trouble and don't worry about it. We'll not be offended.

I hope you've not changed your decision of paying us a visit soon. For our part we'd be very happy to see you. Only let us know precisely the time you intend to come.

You asked me in your letter what the family would like for you to bring as useful gifts if you come. But I must try to make you understand that it would be impossible for you to collect and bring along with you so many things as to satisfy such a great number of your relatives in the USSR (28 grown up persons, besides children aged from 2 to 13). So you shouldn't bother about gifts. Next time I'll send you a diagram of our family tree and you'll make sure that I don't exaggerate.

And in the meantime we all join in sending you, your brothers and all the family our love and kindest regards as well as our wishes of the best of health prosperity and happiness.

Your cousin,

Amnon Maidenberg

P.S. I agree with you that our peoples do not ever again want a war having had the anguished experience of WW II. The victory of our allied forces over their common enemies was gained at the cost of incredible heavy sacrifices. Only in Russia the war took away 20 million lives and nearly 10,000 towns and villages were completely destroyed here. The number of 450 thousand of killed Americans wasn't small either. But now days there would be neither conquerors nor conquered in a world nuclear war. So there's no other than to put an end to the strained relation between our countries and to prevent a world cataclysm. The sooner our governments will find a common language between them the better for us and the succeeding generations. Let us be optimistic and hope our longing for a lasting peace in the world to come true.

Amnon sends condolences to Sylvia on the death of her brother, and wonders if Milton will visit in the spring. Kishinev, March 21, 1982.

My dear cousin Sylvia, Moishe and children:

We received your letter of January 11 telling us the sad news of the death of your brother David. We send you our deep condolence and sympathize you in the sorrow you feel for the wasted life he led and your impossibility to do anything about it.

Excuse me for my belated answer to your letter. In February I got a notice from the hospital to come there for another treatment and only yesterday I returned home. That was also the cause of not having replied to Ellen's kind letter such a long time.

In January Milton wrote me a letter and sent photos of their visit to Shimon, but this time he said nothing about his intention to visit with us this spring. I don't know for certain, but I suppose that perhaps he hesitates to make the voyage because of the strained political situation in the world. We are awaiting impatiently his next letter.

Hoping that you have settled yourselves comfortably in your new apartment. We send you our warmest wishes for good health and good luck in your new place. Let all your cherished dreams come true soon, including your hopes for a lasting peace and better relations between our countries.

Keep well and give our kind regards to all of your loved ones.

With love,

Your cousin Amnon

Amnon itemizes the descendants of Solomon and Pearl, noting that he and his son alone continue to bear the name of Maidenberg. Kishinev, March 21, 1982.

My dear cousin Milton,

In February I got a notice from the hospital to come there for another treatment and only yesterday returned home. I'm happy that I can walk now and perhaps will be able to meet you without any crutches.

Ourselves as well as our Odessa relatives are eager to know precisely the time when you intend to make your voyage and come to visit with us. We hope you've not changed your plans.

Don't think of collecting gifts for us, dear Milt. It would be a superfluous burden to you. Forgive me for having mentioned a leather coat in one of my letters. I did it rashly falling under the influence of outside suggestions. After that I have been suffering the pangs of remorse. Now according to your request I give you another list of the Maidenberg descendants who are living here in Russia (including their family trees):

My own family consists of 3 persons: myself; Shura (Sheiva), my wife; and Edward, my son.

My sister Ida's family has 6 adult members: herself and her husband Yasha Dekhtyar; her daughter Ludmilla is married to Victor Voskoboinik, and her daughter Polina is married to Syoma Uchitel. The daughters have 3 little sons (of 2, 7, 12).

Aunt Mania's family is of 9 adults: her husband Solomon Rosenberg: Lidia and Kostya Brenner (her daughter and son-in-law); Victor Brenner (her grandson) and his wife Talla. Victor and Talla have a little son of 5.

Aunt Manya's son Danya (Daniel) Rosenberg and his wife Rita live in Lithuania. They have a son Eugen and a daughter-in-law.

Our aunt Olya's daughter, Fanya Perelroisen, has a daughter Luda, married to Herman Khused and a granddaughter Julia. Fanya's sister, Dora Perelroisen, has a son and a daughter, Misha and Sveta.

Aunt Malka's grandson (Frida's son) Efim Rosenberg, his wife Mara and son Dima live in Odessa.

And so there are in all 28 adults and 4 children (from 2 to 12). Myself and my son are the only ones among them who bear the family name of Maidenberg. Looking forward to hearing from you we send you and to all your loved ones our fondest regards.

Your affectionate cousin,

Amnon

Amnon describes to Ellen how he writes his letters in English. He apologizes for being a tardy correspondent---he has had another brush with Soviet medicine. “So please don’t be angry with your old uncle, my efficient, warm-hearted and romantic niece.” Kishinev, March 24, 1982.

My dear niece Ellen:

I was deeply touched by your wonderful and very kind letter and feel very apologetic to be so late in responding.

Please believe me that it was not a selfish tendency to show interest only in persons that one know intimately. You are, dear Ellen, a most intimate and very dear person for us, since you’re one of my cousin Sylvia’s beloved daughters. We were very pleased to hear from her that all of you are a close family and always care for each other. Keep it that way, my dear. It’s a most valuable and praiseworthy trait in our inconstant and changeable world.

And now, feeling the pangs of remorse for such a long silence, I will try to put myself right with you.

First of all I’ll reveal the secret of my “ability to express myself in English.” You must know that my knowledge of English is really not so good as it may seem when reading my letters. I have indeed some elementary notions of English grammar, but my vocabulary is very limited. Therefore, I write my letters in Russian at first, and then translate them into English looking every now and again for the adequate word or expression in my dictionaries. It would certainly be a more pleasant and useful exercise if the state of my health were normal, but unfortunately it leaves much to be desired.

And so my lingering illness was the principal cause of my late replies. Over a long period of time I felt such terrible pains in my foot and often had such a high blood pressure that I couldn’t sleep nights long. And that made me to put off my reply to you from one day to another. Then I went to the hospital again for an extra course of treatment in February and March, and there was not certainly the place to surround myself by dictionaries. Now I feel much better, am happy to have avoided the amputation of my right leg and pray and hope to do without any surgical intervention in the time to come either.

Another reason that made me postpone my reply was a letter from your mother telling me that all her three daughters were in the throes of making some

career changes and changes of residence. So I thought that it would be better to wait until the period of transition is over. Recently she sent me her new address and promised to share any other news with me. That's how matters stood. So please don't be angry with your old uncle, my efficient, warm-hearted and romantic niece. Am I right that though efficient and adventurous you are something of a romantic nature?

Now we are extremely upset about the strained situation in the world and are longing to reach the time when a real and lasting peace is established between our countries.

Stay well, dear Ellen. We all join in sending you our love and wish you the best of health, good luck, every success and happiness.

Kind regards and best wishes to all your loved ones.

Yours very affectionately,

Uncle Amnon and family

Amnon sends Milt and Frank condolences on the death of Meyer, who Amnon recalls as the first to correspond with Joseph. Amnon philosophizes on death and the hereafter. He apologizes for having asked his relatives to send his son a leather coat. Kishinev, May 3, 1982.

My dear cousins Milton and Frank:

I received your letter of March 25 yesterday. The sad news of the death of Meyer Maidenberg, your elder brother, brought an ache of deep sorrow to my heart. My son, wife and sister are also grief-stricken and we all join in conveying our profound sympathy to you and to Meyer's family. I'll ring up today to our Odessa and other relatives and let them know the distressing news.

If I'm not mistaken Meyer was the first of uncle David's sons who started in writing to my father and then he handed the baton to you, dear Milt. My father used to say the Meyer was a most intelligent and generous man and that he inherited the best traits of our ancestry. I genuinely regret for having never kept in touch with him. I presumed he had a lot of commitments and interests that kept him busy all the time and didn't dare to trouble him with my letters.

Be so kind as to let me know in more detail about Meyer's illness and the date of his death. My father left me the dates of your parents' death telling me to kaddish on their anniversaries. Uncle Dave died on July 24, 1949 and Aunt Rosa on March 24, 1969. [Actually July 25 and March 18] Now unfortunately another Maidenberg has supplemented the lost. Gerontologists affirm that the normal length of a man's life is 100 years. Poor Meyer was only 75 and he passed away untimely for his loving ones.

Like flowers we all fade away and in a fatal moment disappear for ever from the face of the earth. It is the law of nature. But it's terrifying to think that so swiftly, before one can say "knife", life is over.

I recently was at the cemetery and saw an inscription in Russian on a tombstone, "You are still visitors, and I'm already at home". The text of the inscription was probably suggested by people who believe in life beyond the grave.

Considering the text I came to the conclusion that genuine religious persons as well as adepts of spiritualist theories who interpret in different manners (even "scientifically" for some time past) the reality of the world to come are happy people

in this respect. When the fatal time comes nearer, they are easy in their mind and haven't any fear of death.

As to me I think that if a man lives so as to feel no regrets for wasted years, if he leaves fond memories of himself for his good and wise actions, he can meet his end calmly and with a clear conscience.

Dear cousins, I feel very apologetic for causing you the trouble with the coat so inopportunately. Believe me that if I had known about Meyer's illness, I would have never mentioned questions of minor importance. I can't even find any words to express my excuses for having done so.

We are most grateful to you dear Milt and Frank, for your gift. As soon as we get it, I'll advise you. And in the meantime stay well. Give our fond regards to everyone of the family.

Your affectionately,

Amnon, Sheiva and Edward Maidenberg

P.S. Dear Milton, I got your family photo enclosed in one of your previous letters. Thanks a lot. Yesterday we received the photo of Toby with her new husband Dr. Bernard Levy. From the bottom of our hearts we wish them happiness, sincere love, the best of health, prosperity and a blue peaceful sky above. We greatly enjoyed the photo.

Amnon thanks his cousin for the coat. He tells Milt he has been looking at a map of America, and pondering how it is that the children now live so far from their parents. Kishinev, June 18, 1982.

Dear cousin Milton:

As soon as we received the leather coat (with all duties prepaid) I sent you and Frank letters of thanks and suppose you've already got them. We are most grateful to you but regret that we aren't successful in finding anything of use to you which could be sent in return for your gift.

Many thanks also for your letter of May 3 with details about Meyer's long and distressing illness which preceded his death. We imagine how much he had to suffer before leaving for his last resting place, poor fellow. It was a human tragedy indeed.

I'm looking now at the map of the United States as you told me, dear Milt, and see how far from you your sons Michael and Reed live. Only Richmond, the capital of Virginia where your daughter, Toby and her family will be living is located a bit nearer to Indiana. I know that Virginia is a state particularly proud of its role in American history because eight U.S. presidents were Virginians including George Washington (1st) who led the way to victory in the American Revolution and Thomas Jefferson (3rd), the statesman-philosopher and author of the Declaration of Independence. As regards North Dakota which borders on Canada I know that it is the most rural of states with more than 90 percent lands in farms. Do Michael and his family live in Bismarck or in any other town of the state? At last the third spot on the map I'm looking at is Northern California where Reed is living. So I ascertain the fact that your three children are settled in the extreme points of a triangle in the eastern, western and northern states of your vast country --- "*tzuzzeit und tzushpreit*" one would say in Yiddish.

It is a usual thing nowadays that children like birds fly away from their native nest as soon as they become self-dependent. In bygone times it was more an exception than the rule. There is even a request to God in the Hebrew prayer, "Ahl tishli'kherm bi'hezt'ziknah" which may be translated "Don't leave me alone when I am old". Luckily for us we live in the epoch when telephone and high-speed communications can assuage in some degree the bitterness of parting and shorten great distances. The main thing in our days is to hear good news from each other and our dreams of a lasting peace in the world without any danger of a nuclear catastrophe to come true.

Thank you very much for the photo of Shimon and family. We worry a lot about their health, but hope that in the end things will mend.

Please let me know whether you have received my letter of May 11 to you and Frank. And in the meantime we are sending our fond regards and best wishes to everyone of you as well as to all your loved ones.

Affectionately,

Amnon

Amnon refers to a possible visit by Milt, Toby and Reed. He speculates on old age, and mentions again the poor state of his own health. He expresses outrage over a terror attack against Israel. Kishinev, October 12, 1982.

My dear cousin Milton:

We received your very kind and welcome letter of August 10, but didn't hasten to respond on the spot as you advised me that in September and in October you will be visiting with Toby and her family as well as with your son Reed. I hope that you found your loved ones in good health and imagine how happy all of you were spending the time together, mainly Johna and Dave. How is Toby getting on in her new residence? Is her husband Bernard a doctor of medicine or of another branch of knowledge? Let them be always happy and prosperous.

We learned from your letter that you have celebrated your 70th birthday this summer, dear Milt. Though with some delay we congratulate you on the occasion, and with all our heart we wish you to be in the best of health and young in spirit until you reach the age of Irma's mother at least, then we'll pray for many other happy returns of the day. (By the way, when 20 years ago or so I was on a trip in Caucasus, a mountain region in Southern Russia which is famous for the longevity of its inhabitants, in some villages there I met several people who at the age of more than 100 ride horses, work in the fields and even make court to women. The daughter of one of them was 88 and his grandson 70 years old).

And for the time being let the years to come bring us a lasting peace in the world. Could you advise us about Shimon's and his family's health and whether his sons are at their homes? As you know we do not correspond with them. We were shaken by the senseless outburst of brutality against unarmed people which took place on Rosh Hashana holiday. I guess that so were you. It was the most dirty and abominable action that brought to a great loss of prestige. There is no doubt that the slaughter could be prevented and the indignation in all the world foreseen. There is an old saying in this connection. "When God wants to punish somebody, he makes him go out of his mind for some time".

I wonder why our cousin Sylvia suspended her correspondence with me. I received her last letter before she had visited with Shimon, and since that time she has been keeping silence.

Dear Milton, I tried to subscribe you to the magazine "Soviet Life" and to the newspaper "Moscow News Information" for the next year, but unfortunately without

success because gift subscriptions for foreign countries have been abolished since 1980.

New a few words about myself. During the Autumn holidays I was at the hospital. My health is gradually improving, but I have to stuff myself with different medicines, otherwise, the doctors say, my state can aggravate again. I must keep to a rigorous diet too. In other respects we do not complain of our destiny. My wife Shura went recently to a cardiological health resort. Our son Edward lives with us. He is a decent and gifted fellow, and is not keen on wine, smoking, etc., as I used to be when I was a young man.

Stay well, my dear. We look forward to hearing good news from you. Your thoughtful and very warm letters are always welcome. They express your ready sympathy, your efficiency and honesty which we appreciate highly. Fondest regards to Irma, your children, to your brothers and to everyone of your family. We wish you all a happy, healthy, fulfilling and peaceful New Year.

With love,

Amnon Maidenberg

In a letter to Ben which takes him five days to write, Amnon informs his relatives he suffered a stroke which has affected speech and writing. Kishinev, May 10-15, 1983.

My dear cousin Ben,

Thank you very much for your letter of January 5. From the following lines you will understand why I'm so late in responding and why my script is so unusual.

It so happened that on January 23 returning with my wife from a birthday party of a friend of mine I had a sudden disturbance of the blood circulation in my brain which affected the center of speech and I could scarcely mumble out a word. Besides for many weeks I lost the use of my fingers of my right hand, and then when I was able to stir them a little, my scrawls were impossible to understand. Now everything is coming gradually into shape, but I was warned to be careful with my hypertonia in order to prevent such surprises in the future---a strict diet, not a drop of wine and no superfluous emotions, no overstraining.

I've mentioned 'not a drop of wine.' You know perhaps that my father was a farmer and wine-grower for many years, and by tradition a bottle of natural wine was an integral part of our dinner, but we've never abused it.

Dear Ben, we are truly grieved about the fact that poor Jean has been paining with such a ruthless ailment as multiple sclerosis is and imagine what a severe ordeal you have been undergoing. The main thing is not to lose heart, to screw up your patience and to be hopeful that eventually the development of her disease will take a favorable turn.

Writing this short letter to you, I had to stop every moment because my fingers became stiff again and again. So I'm compelled to interrupt it for the time being. Remember me to your brothers.

Stay well and cheer up, my dear cousin.

Best regards to your folks.

Yours affectionately,

Amnon

P.S. Before mailing the letter I'll try to add some words more

May 11

We haven't been getting any letters from Milton since November 82 and it was you that advised me that he and Irma were on a trip to Mexico. I hope they had a good time there and all is well with them and their family. Please convey them our best feelings and fondest regards.

Milton is a most sensible fellow and a true friend. We will never forget his responsiveness and generosity. Please ask him to forgive me if I've blabbed out some unnecessary words in my response to his letter. I suppose I have committed such an error and would be very glad if I'm mistaken.

I've just measured my blood pressure. It has jumped. So I'll end my P.S. tomorrow.

May 12

I was going to write a letter to Milt this week as well as to our mutual cousin Sylvia from who we received a letter recently, but unfortunately I see that it would be beyond my strength and must put it off for another time. The difficulty of doing it now is still redoubled by my inability to write letters in a compressed style. I hope they will understand my awkward situation and helplessness and will forgive me.

May 14

Now, dear Ben, I have a great favour to ask you. Be so kind as to forward this letter to Milton, as I'm sure he will share it with Sylvia in his turn. You know perhaps that I have been corresponding with Sylvia thanks to Milt. Her letters to us are very warm and loving. I got also some letters from her daughter Ellen.

As far as I can judge, Sylvia's family is a close one. The devotion of parents and children to each other seems to be exemplary. Such a family trait is most praiseworthy. I would like very much their major problems to be settled and to hear some day that the greatest wishes of all of them have been fulfilled.

May 15

I trust you will comply with my request and also acknowledge the letter. That will help me to avoid repeating once again the unpleasant details of my story when I write to someone of you.

Warmest fraternal regards to all of you. My wife and son also wish you the best of everything.

Your cousin,

Amnon

Amnon describes his condition and his recovery. He tells Milt he is envious to see a photo of someone gardening. Kishinev, August 20-23, 1983.

Dear cousin Milton and dear relatives:

Unfortunately I had a hypertonic crisis in May which brought a relapse of my previous case. This time it affected the center of reading and my memory of names. For some weeks I couldn't remember even the names of my nearest ones. Only after a two months' course of reflexotherapeutics (needle pricking) and other treatment at a neurologic hospital the circulation in my brain became more or less normal.

That is why Shura (my wife) ventured to hand me your letters but yesterday. Excuse her please. After that what had happened she is frightened to get me excited even by positive emotions. Now I measure my blood pressure every day and carry out all the prescriptions of my doctor. He says that I have nine lives like a cat and his words give me great hopes of my full recovery someday.

Many thanks, dear Milt for your kind letters of April 22 and of June 5. As to your previous ones written after November 1982, I'm sure that they have been lost somewhere in the mail. I hope you will convey my gratitude also to Ben for his letter. I'm very glad that he and Jean visited with you in Marion. We are also extremely glad and happy to learn from Sylvia's letter of Ellen's forthcoming wedding on October 4. May that be a good start in her family. Ellen asked me to send her some nice words fitting to her wedding ceremony. On the occasion of such an important and unique event in her life I will try to grant her wish. Of course in my actual condition it is not an easy problem either.

Dear Milt, I'm not an envier by nature, but I must confess that I cannot help feeling envious when I see somebody pottering about in a nice garden near a one-storied house. Gardening is a hobby of mine inherited from my father. Now unfortunately we live in a five-storied building with a lot of lodgers and I'm devoid of such a pleasure. So I'm glad that at least you have the opportunity to experience it.

As to your question about sending us something I'm very grateful and much obliged to you, my dear, generous cousin. All I need actually is a bit of good health.

All of my family send you and your loved ones our best wishes and fond regards.

With love and profound respect,

Amnon Maidenberg

PS Excuse my abominable and clumsy script, please

Amnon says he is gradually improving. He has been expecting a visit from Steve Klain. Kishinev, November 18, 1983.

Dearest cousin Milton,

I hope you have received my letter of August 23 and know the reason of my not having written to you such a long time. You also know perhaps that I sent our cousin Sylvia a congratulation message on the occasion of her elder daughter Ellen's marriage. I was very glad to learn from their letters that it was most appropriate to be read at the wedding-dinner. I was also pleased to hear that the text of my message had been preliminarily approved by both the rabbi and the minister who conducted the religious part of the ceremony and that they even urged Ellen to ask her mom to read it aloud. I'm sure, dear Milt, that you'll share my contentment with Sylvia and will convey her entire family our best wishes for a happy, healthy and peaceful New Year and for another wedding of her next daughter.

Dear Milt, in your letter of August 27 you advised me that you are going to visit Toby, Michael, Reed and also Ben. That is why I didn't hasten with my answer, the more so as my fingers of the right hand are not yet able enough to hold a pen and to write normally.

Then, when I was about to write to you, I just received your letter of September 27 and I decided to put off my response until we have the pleasure to meet your late friend's son Stephen Klain. Unfortunately, up to now he hasn't made his appearance yet. Perhaps something unexpected has happened to him and he had to adjourn his trip for another time. Maybe he will still come before this letter reaches you.

I hope that you and all your loved ones are well. As to me, my health is gradually improving and I am hopeful that sometime I'll be able to write with more ease than I'm now, when my writing needs a lot of over straining. And for the time being I am confident that you and Ben as well as Sylvia and Ellen will forgive my being so slow in answering letters. We remain always grateful to you for your ready sympathy and generosity, dear Milt.

Time runs swiftly, and we are again on the eve of a New Year. May the coming year bring a lasting and durable peace in the world, and to you and all your loved ones the best of health, happiness, much joy, every success and prosperity.

Please convey our New Year greetings also to Ben and Frank.

We all send you and the entire family our fond regards.

Sincerely yours,

Amnon and family

There are no letters from 1984, and only one in 1985. In it, Amnon describes how it was that his father Joseph and uncle David went as young men to Odessa. He retells the story of how David vanquished the Odessa bandits, and recalls how David sent his brother the wherewithal to come to America, but Joseph could not bear to leave the vineyard he had planted with his own hands. Kishinev, December 21, 1985.

My dearest cousin Milton and dear relatives,

Please excuse the delay in answering your letter of October '85. In November Shura (my wife) had another heart infarction and for several weeks her life was hanging by a thread. Now at last she is better and in a few days she'll come back from the hospital. So I can take my dictionaries and respond to your kind message. (As you see I am able to write quite normally again).

We were simply perplexed learning the news of the terrible accident you were involved in a year ago and about which we had no idea such a long time. Thank God that in the meanwhile your health has been improved and you are 90% recovered now. I imagine what aches and incommodities you had to undergo after the accident and wish you a full 100% recovery.

The summit talks in Geneva stirred great hopes in our hearts. At the time when mankind faces a choice between survival and annihilation it was an indispensable and useful political event that can open ways for normalizing Soviet-American relations and permits us to look with more optimism than before into the future.

Now I would like to tell you and Ben some details of Uncle Dave's past that I heard more than once from my father.

Your father was born in 1883 as he was older than mine by two years. Our grandparents (Solomon and Pearl Maidenberg) wanted their two sons to become men of great erudition in the Bible and in the wisdom of the Talmud. But David was not very fond of staying long over the holy books. His way was a more dynamic activity. Growing up a well built, robust and handsome youngster, at the age of 16 he left his remote native small town Dzigovka and went to seek his luck in Odessa where life was in full swing. There at first he worked as a loader at the seaport, then at a greengrocery, and at last at a bakery enterprise where his job was to deliver bread, cakes and buns to different shops and collecting the money for it. Here he got higher wages and was appreciated for his efficiency and honesty.

In 1902 (the year Aunt Manya was born) my father also came to Odessa to study agronomy. He lived there with his brother and earned his life by giving Hebrew lessons to children of rich families. But David, “with his kind golden heart”, as your Uncle Joseph used to say, was paying in the tuition fees for my father’s studies as well as for those of his sister Olya’s who also came there to attend some courses of bookkeeping. And he was doing it in spite of their protests.

For a long time they didn’t know that David has fallen in love. He was keeping it for himself. That is why they were amazed when he told them that he has a bride Rosa by name. Next day he introduced her to them. She was a slender lovely girl and they liked her very much. Sometime later David took his bride to Dzigovka where his parents gave them their blessings. Soon after that when the Tzarist regime began inciting anti-Semitic excesses and Jewish pogroms, the young couple decided to emigrate to the U.S. and so they did. Unfortunately my father was not present at their departure because not long before that he was taken to serve in the army.

David was very strong and courageous when he was young and in this connection my father told me the following story:

One evening sitting side by side in the bread van the two brothers (your father and mine) were riding in the outskirts of the old Odessa and speaking peacefully. Suddenly a group of bandits appeared from a back street. Two of them stopped the horses while three others, taking out knives asked your father to give them the collected money. It seemed that there was no other way out than to obey their request. But Uncle Dave repelled the attack with such an incredible adroitness and courage that can be seen only in adventure films. Some days later he happened to meet the conquered bandits, but they didn’t try to do him any harm. On the contrary, they treated him to some glasses of beer and praised him for his courage.

Living in the U.S. your father has never forgotten his parents left in Dzigovka and until their last days helped them (by sending them money). And when your Uncle Joseph from 1917 to 1940 was living in the town of Beltsy, Bessarabia district (which was then under royal Rumania’s occupation), more than once you father invited him to come to live in the U.S. In 1925, he even sent him an official call (a ship card). But my father hesitated and at last decided to remain in his place because he felt that he couldn’t leave his beloved vineyard (which he had planted with his own hands) and venture to start a new life in a new world. Your father was angry with him after that.

I read your cousin's note to Ben, but some of its passages left a feeling of resentment in my heart. Phyllis is overemphasizing your mom's "bitter memories for her lost love" (with the young man whose "parents wanted him to study and become a famous doctor"). And further it comes out of her words that Rose married David for practical reasons. Frankly speaking, I took the prattle of the elderly woman as an injury of aunt Rose's right memory. Did you experience a similar feeling? Maybe I am wrong.

I was also amazed by Phyllis' "logical deduction". When describing young David's appearance she maintains: "Your father, being blue-eyed and truly handsome, looked more goyish than Jewish." A wise deduction, isn't it?

Dear Milt, if you still want and have the possibility to make a trip to the USSR, it would be preferable for you to come here in one of the months beginning with May until October or early November. In any case I trust you will announce of your coming beforehand.

You've asked me about our relatives in Odessa. They are all well. Solomon Rosenberg, late aunt Manya's husband, celebrated his 80th anniversary in September and I went there. He lives together with his daughter Lidia and his son-in-law now. They haven't seen me for about 3 years and wondered how much my appearance has changed since then.

As you know it has never been easy to me writing letters in English, and now all the more. When doing it I have to surround myself by dictionaries and to look every now and then for the adequate English word or phrase. At last when the letter has been composed, I start correcting the rough copy over and over again and each time find new errors and inappropriate phrases. Only after such a more or less successful correction I write the clean copy (you see how clean it turns out sometimes...) But the worst thing which frightens me most is that I cannot help smoking one cigarette after another when performing the above named procedures. Admit, dear Milt and dear relatives, that a person who is pained with half a dozen of maladies as I do can permit himself to practice such exercises but once in a great while. This is the chief reason of my delayed letters and that is why I cannot permit myself writing to each of you separately. I trust that Ben, Sylvia and the others will understand my position and will forgive me. Nevertheless, dear Milt, do keep on writing as time and mood permit, and through you I'll not lose touch with anybody of my American relatives. I always worry about Shimon's health as you do.

Stay well, my dear. All best wishes for a happy, healthy, fulfilling and peaceful new year to you and to all your loved ones.

Affectionately,

Your cousin Amnon

Amnon bemoans his heavy addiction to cigarettes, without which he is unable to write letters. Kishinev, May 12, 1986Error! Bookmark not defined..

My dear cousins Milton and Ben,

It has been a very, very long time since we corresponded. My latest letter to you was written on December 21. So I feel obligated to justify myself and apologize again.

I am always deeply indebted to you for the attention you have shown to us as well as for your very kind and thoughtful letters and am always awfully sorry for not writing to you so often as I would like.

You learned from my letter of last December about my lengthy exercise of composing a letter in English which is complicated by the fact that I'm not a good hand of making a long story short and cannot write you letters of only a few paragraphs.

You also know that there were periods when our correspondence was interrupted for a long time because of my staying in the hospital with my circulatory problems, then I had a stroke three years ago which took me a lot of time and trouble to recover, and at last because of my wife Shura's serious illness and our sojourn in a sanitarium after that.

To close my arguments I must emphasize the chief one. The question is of my abominable and unpardonable old habit of smoking incessantly when I'm routed to my chair for hours and am holding the pen in my hand (irrespective of the language in which I'm writing---in English or in any other one).

I have been a heavy smoker for about half a century, and when I was taken ill with my vascular diseases, more than once I made desperate attempts to quit the damned cigarettes once and for ever. But alas! The best I can do at present is to limit their number to 1-3 a day, and the doctors advise me to avoid writing as much as possible because (they say) it is a potent incentive to me to inhale an over-dose of nicotine.

But Shura says that I'm simply a weak-willed person who doesn't pity his bit of health and ruins it to the very end. I always consult her opinion and wishes, but to my great regret in this question her remarks and reproaches have little effect on me because in spite of all my efforts I'm not able to write a line without smoking.

It is such a situation that makes me put off my correspondence from one day to another, from one week to another etc....And that is why I have been writing to you only once in a great moon.

On February 20 I went with Shura to a cardiological sanitarium not very far from Odessa (for two months). We were taken good care and had a good treatment there. As spring came early this year and the weather was warm & fine we could spend much of the time outdoors and admire the reviving nature we love so much.

I am not a religious man. My father wasn't either. Nevertheless at least twice in a year he would go to the synagogue only to read 'kaddish' or other special prayers in the memory of his late relatives, and after his death I have been following this tradition.

March was a month when many relatives of ours died: my mother, your mother, Sylvia's mother, your brother Meyer; and some near relatives of my mother's side. So one March day, when the usual treatments in the sanitarium have been over, I made a trip to Odessa, went straight to the synagogue, gathered a 'minyan' of ten pious old men who performed the prayer for each separately, then according the custom I organized a light repast and gave them some money to the honour of the defuncts.

I wonder why nobody has advised us of the death of Moisheh Greenberg, our cousin Sylvia's husband. We learned with great regret of the sad news from the latest letter only in April (21 months after his death). So we had to convey Sylvia our sympathy with such a long retardment. It is a great pity that poor Moisheh was not lucky enough to give a glance at his first grandchild before the ruthless death had mowed him down.

Every year on May 9 we commemorate here the Great Victory over Hitler's Germany, the day when the odious swastika was thrown down from the dome of the Reichstag, and the allied forces of the antihitlerist coalition put an end to the Nazi monstrous bestialities which can and must never be forgotten.

Dear Milt, I hope that all has gone well with you and your family. Thank you ever so much for the beautiful photograph of you and Irma on the Hanukah card. You both looked fine and we wish you to enjoy many, many years more together with the best of health. I remain most grateful to you for your responsiveness,

frankness and kindness. Remember me to your brother Frank and do forgive me if there is something to forgive.

Dear Ben, I am very much obliged to you for your warm and kind letters and I do not know how to apologize for leaving your latest one without a direct response. I'm hopeful that in consideration of all my difficulties you will also forgive me for being such a bad correspondent. Believe me that while I was composing and writing this letter four packets of cigarettes have not been enough for me. Such a portion of inhaled nicotine could knock a bull down. So don't be angry with me, please.

All best wishes and fond regards to all of you and your loved ones.

Affectionately,

Your cousin Amnon Maidenberg

Excuse my insertions and amendments, please

**Amnon eulogizes Ben, with whom he had struck up a correspondence.
Kishinev, October 15, 1986.**

My dear cousin Milton and dear relatives:

First of all I must remark that I haven't received from you any newspaper with the story about your brother Ben's death. And when I got your letter of September 15 with the enclosed clipping written by your son Mike, I was simply stunned by the unexpected sad news. The image of a big tree falling (mentioned by Mike) has been haunting me every now and then.

It was in fall 1982 that you sent my address to Ben, and after his first letter we started a most friendly correspondence. So I am in the know of some details of his life and career as well as about his family. Ben wrote his last letter to me in June this year, and I got it in July, not long before his death. Could I suppose that my response in the next month wouldn't find him alive?

How pleased Ben was that his grandson, Gabriel, will have his Bar Mitzvah in August. And how sorry he was that he and his wife will not be able to get there to assist at the ceremony because of their infirmities. It so happened that in his declining years, after more than fifty years of tiresome activity, Ben's life was not a bed of roses. He wrote about a month before his passing:

"...We are still confined to the house due to our physical ailments, but so long as we can wake up and see a new day we are happy. Jeanne and I had been helped by a woman who came in several times a week and cooked a meal for us. Then the woman got ill. And when after my wife's stay at the hospital our daughter, Suzy, came from Florida where she now lives, and gave us a hand for a week, it was truly a blessing..."

I have never had the occasion of reading Ben's articles. But as far as I can judge by his letters to me, he was not of those people who hold their heads in the air. On the contrary, he proved to be a very polite, modest and kind-hearted man with a subtle intellect and a character of ready sympathy. He dreamed of reaching the time when good relations are established between our countries and of peace among nations. I am sure that Ben Maidenburg's light memory will never fade in the hearts of his relatives and good friends.

I wonder, dear Milt, how your letter with Ben's obituary has been lost. It's a pity that I haven't read it.

With sincere affection,

Your cousin Amnon

P.S. I hope that as soon as you decided some day to arrange plans for visiting the USSR, you will let us know the time and the chosen itinerary beforehand.

Please give my thanks to our cousin Sylvia for the kind letter of June and the enclosed photos of herself, Jeff and her first grandson. She must have been a granny twice in the meantime. If so, we all join in sending her and Ellen our warmest Mazel Tov. Sylvia understands fully my difficulty in writing and my bad habit of smoking without a break while doing it. So I hope that she will forgive my corresponding so seldom with her. I trust you will either, dear Milt.

Several weeks ago we had a scare because of a strong earthquake here in Moldavia. Fortunately we got nothing worse than a few cracks in the walls of our rooms, and some china and a radio transistor broken.

You advised that aunt Manya's grandson, Victor Brenner, had asked to have letters from you in Russian, and you haven't found anyone as yet to do so. I think I could help you in this respect by telling Victor in full interpretation the content of your English letters over the telephone and by sending him back the originals after that. If it suits you, that wouldn't be a hard task for me. Excuse my errors, please.

Amnon comments on recent family events in America. Kishinev, March 9, 1987.

My dear cousin Milton,

Shura (my wife) handed me your letter of Jan. 13 on March 5 when I returned from a sanatorium in Matzesta (Caucasus). I applied for accommodation in that nursing home last summer but there were no vacant places, and I had to go there only in February. Unfortunately I couldn't go through a complete course of treatment because I caught a cold and had a raised temperature for almost two weeks. My going there in winter time was a rash action by no means.

Reading Ben's obit enclosed in your letter, I felt what a great loss his death is to his family and to all his relatives and good friends. The author's words, that Ben was not only a distinguished newspaperman, but also a humanitarian who crusaded against bigotry, made a deep impression on me.

Ben's letters to me were always frank, warm and very amical, but speaking of his personality and his merits was not in his habit. Only in one of them he wrote that he had been an editor in Akron, Chicago, Miami, Detroit, and that the owner of all those papers (who died in 1981) was a very dear friend to him. I trust, dear Milt, that after your return from Florida you will let me know how does Jeanne feel there.

We've had a cold winter this year, especially in January. Even in Moldavia (the Republic we live in), where it's always warmer than in central Russia or in the northern regions of the USSR, the temperature of the air fell down to 25-28 degrees below zero. But all the time we were keeping warm staying at home.

I would like very much my health to be really fairly good (as you trust) and to reach the time when our hopes of a safer world are materialized. I would also like to be in a better shape than I'm now when you come to visit with us sometime.

We're very glad, dear Milt, that you attended your grandson David's Bar Mitzvah. After the Judaic law the age of 13 is the year of a boy's transition from childhood to the period of maturity. Johna is also a grown-up girl of about 17 if I'm not mistaken. So we all join in wishing dear Toby as well as you and Irma to have 'nakhes' in them. This Jewish phrase means - to be lucky seeing them decent, good, successful and happy people.

How is Sylvia getting on? I haven't heard from her of late. In her last letter she sent us pictures of Jeff and his wife as well as of herself with her first grandson in her arms. It may be that in the meanwhile there has been another addition to her family. She wrote that her sister Goldie was making a wedding for her youngest daughter in June 29, in Chicago and that you and Irma, Frank and Joyce (whom she hadn't seen in many years) would also be there. So she was very excited looking forward to the eventuality of meeting all of you. Did you attend the wedding? Sylvia understands fully my difficulty in writing and smoking, nevertheless I plead guilty and am very apologetic for my being so late in responding her very kind and warm letters. I trust that you will convey her love and fond regards.

May all be well with you and yours.

I remain, with all our love,

Your cousin Amnon

P.S. Now, Dear Milt, I comply with your request.

Victor Brenner is late aunt Manya Rosenberg's grandson (the son of her daughter - Lidia Brener of Odessa).

Mara C. Rosenberg is the second wife of Efim Rosenberg (who is the son of our late cousin Frida Rosenberg - Shimon Balaban's sister) His first wife died several years ago. As far as I can judge Mara C. is of those wives about whom one can say 'The hen overcrows the cock'. Efim Rosenberg's family and the Brennens have always been in bad terms but I never could find out the reason of their disagreement.

I imagine what kind of letters you have been receiving from Victor Brenner and the new-made relative Mara Rosenberg if they hadn't even explained how they are related to you. Could you send me a copy of one their letters (of course if there isn't any secret that must be kept to oneself)?

You must have noticed that the family name of aunt Manya and the surname of Shimon's sister, Frida are alike. It is because their husbands were brothers. By the way, Solomon Rosenberg, Manya's widower, got married last year and he lives in his new wife's apartment now

Amnon writes that his health has returned to near normal, despite some distressing effects of the strokes. Kishinev, April 21, 1988.

My dearest cousins Milton and Sylvia,

I thank you so much, dear Milt, for your kind letter of March that I got a week ago. It is always a great pleasure to hear from you that you and yours are all up and around and in the best of shape. Excuse my addressing this letter to both of you at the same time. It is because composing and writing letters in English remains a hard task for me.

I presume that you, dear Milt and Irma, enjoyed your spending Passover with Toby and your grandchildren. I didn't know that they had moved to Boston. Maybe there is any change in Toby's family state? In any case with all my heart I would like her and her children to be really happy.

I cherish similar sentiments and hopes also with respect to your children, my dear cousin Sylvia. Some Yiddish words for you: Doo solst hobn feel nakhes in dina liebe kinder oond eyniklekh. Heet op dine gezind, mine liebe, goote, kleege oond sheyne koozeene tzivya. Zai mir moykhlvos ikh shridederz azoy zeltn. Es is meer zeir sheir zikh tzu ontzustreyngen.

I worry very much about the sharp aggravation of Shimon's health. Unfortunately all I am able to do is to hope and pray that he resists the dangerous disease and overcomes it at last.

There is not much to tell you about our own lives. Shura feels better. Our son lives with us. He is 28, but doesn't hasten to marry. As to me, I am happy that, be praise, I've not remained cripple for ever after the second small stroke; that I can enjoy reading, watching T.V., listening to broadcasts and take a sensible view of things. I try to do my best to maintain my health on the achieved level and not to get into a desperate situation again. I keep a strict diet (anti-sclerotic and anti-diabetic), every day spend more than an hour on respiratory gymnastics and self-massage, take all the necessary medicine prescribed by the doctors some of which are critical and rather expensive etc.

Nevertheless some very unpleasant after-effects of the stroke still persist. One of them is the invincible need to take a nap after every meal. A cup of strong coffee would disperse my drowsiness, but I have to omit it because of my hypertonia.

The second and the most unpleasant thing is that my memory lets me down every now and then. I often forget the names of persons whom I know. Sometimes other words slip out of my head while I'm speaking. It happens that hearing an interesting funny story, I cannot recollect it in any way the next day. Such a forgetfulness hurts me very much because I had always had a splendid memory and a ready tongue. But since the defect cannot be cured it must be endured.

I am sorry to have taken so long to write to you and trust that understanding my situation, you will forgive me as you always great-heartedly do.

We send you and everyone of yours our fond regards and good wishes for the best of health, good fortune and a peaceful world.

Affectionately,

Your cousin Amnon

Victor Brenner, grandson of Manya, declares that he wants to emigrate to America, and asks Milt for help. Odessa, June 8, 1988.

My dear uncle Milton!

I am the grandson of your sister [Aunt] Manya Maidenberg. My name is Victor Brenner. Our correspondence stopped many years ago, unfortunately for me. Now, many people in the USSR are emigrating to your places. We (I and my family) took the decision to emigrate too in the USA. I want you to help us with an advice how to do it. Somebody must call us to the USA. I am waiting from your news. How are you all? How can you help us with the call to the USA?

Sincerely yours,

Victor

Amnon thanks Sylvia for some recent photos. Kishinev, June 30, 1988.

Dearest cousin Sylvia and family,

I was glad to receive your kind and informative reply to my letter which I had written to you and to Milton at the same time.

Thank you ever so much for the fine family photos of all of you, including Ellen, Donna and their lovely kiddies who flew from far away into their mother's nest to celebrate her birthday.

We are happy that you all look so fine, that Jeff and Pam managed to realize their plan in the best way possible and that consequently you were presented with two brave grandsons. I think that Michael and David will be good friends as the difference in their ages is but two years.

Now we hope and pray to hear from you some day in the near future that your youngest daughter has also found a decent mate and is happy. There is an old saying, "A shoo can brengen mehr vee a yourr". So, dear Susan, be sure that such a lucky hour will come into your life too. It will come without fail sooner or later.

As you celebrated your birthday in the last month, dear Tzivieh, we all join in wishing you many happy returns of the day. The very best of health and good fortune to you and to all your loved ones.

I remain, with all our love and fond regards,

Your cousin Amnon Maidenberg

P.S. Almost four years have passed since your husband Moishe died, may his memory live long. It is really a great pity that he was not fated to see his grandchildren.

I apologize again, dear Tzilya for not writing to you so often as I would like and thank you for meeting always a full understanding from your part in this respect.

Stay well and take care of your health

.

Victor explains why his family does not want to emigrate to Israel, and asks Milt for the necessary support. Odessa, July 25, 1988.

Dear uncle Milton!

Many thanks for your letter, we are very happy to receive it. My grandmother always told me that the time would come when you wanted help me in my affair. The time is coming. Why I don't want to go to Israel? There are many reasons. At first we know USA as high developed, cultural, individual country, with high level living standard, without national prejudices. The second is that my wife is a Russian woman, who wants live in the USA. We have a son and we want him to grow in your country.

I am 33 years old, an engineer. I graduate from the Institute of Naval Marine. My wife is a model and painter of street clothes. My son is a school boy. My wife's parents want to go with us, they are 63 and 71. The emigrants go after Israel call. The way is Moscow-Vienna-Rome-New York. But now the difficulty is Rumania is becoming the mediator between the USSR and Israel. The Israel call with route through Bucharest is not desirable. We are frightened of that call. It must be without it. We want Holland embassy be the mediator. Holland embassy is in Moscow. Then in Vienna or in Rome we need to have the guarantee from you or somebody in the USA. And we need you help for to come in the USA. The other way to leave.

The direct call from the USA, but it will be difficult to you, it is connected with expenses from your part till we find the job. Dear uncle! We hope on your good nature. So, we are 5 to come to the USA.

Sincerely yours,

Victor and the family

Try to help us, we shall very thankful for your care.

I send our details in Russian

[He writes the five names in Russian, along with the addresses.]

Amnon philosophizes on self-respect and fanaticism; he is proud to be a Jew, but worried about neo-Nazi movements. He says he would like to do more traveling, but must watch expenses. While “perestroika” seems to be affecting the economy, he and his wife live plainly but comfortably on their pension. Kishinev, August 3, 1988.

My dearest cousin Milton and dear relatives,

Your kind letter of June 22 was most welcome and appreciated. Thank you so much for the enclosed photo of the family and your skillfully drawn scheme that helped us to ascertain who is who without any difficulty. It is most obliging to you, dear Milt.

In one of his letters to me late Ben, may his memory live long, had told me about that family reunion. “Last weekend my wife and I as well as Susie and her family drove to Marion, Indiana and spent several days with Milt and my younger brother Frank. There seemed to be dozens of Maidenbergs and we had a wonderful time.” On July 27 I lighted a candle, put some flowers beside it and read the prayer “kaddish” to the peace of his soul.

Thank you so very much for Ted’s typewritten list of your Hebrew names and patronymics. Do you know their meanings or origin? Melech is the Hebrew for King; Ephraim was the name of one of the twelve Israeli clans mentioned in the Bible; David was the well known king of Israel who reigned there many years B.C.; Shmuel means “Listen to God”; I would translate the name Michael “who is like God?” but I am not quite sure that my interpretation is correct; ben (or bar) means “the son of” - I didn’t know Mike and Kitty have been bringing up their children to hold Judaic traditions in respect. I also consider that young people must know their roots and the old customs of their ancestors. Loving the traditions and the customs of his own people, a person who is not infected by the virus of fanaticism esteems those of other peoples too (provided they are not brutal and do not generate feelings of groundless hate). In this connection I’d like to touch upon the subject of national self-respect and my attitude towards it.

August 9

Of course I am proud that I’m a Jew and belong to a people which in spite of having endured so many ordeals in its millenials old history (humiliations, persecutions, mass-slaughters) managed to survive and to make a great contribution to human civilization. At the same time I esteem the national self-

respect of any honest person of good will regardless of nationality and creed. If I reasoned in a different way, it would mean that my national self-respect and pride has developed into national arrogance or chauvinism which I dislike most of all.

The word chauvinism comes from a corporal of Napoleon's army whose name was Chauvinet. He sustained that only the French are good people while all the others are bad ones. We know well to what detestable consequences was the Hitler regime and the Holocaust. Within four years the Nazis exterminated six million European innocent Jews and a great number of honest non-Jews.

That is why I feel very sad hearing about facts (reported from time to time in the press) which testify that pro-nazi groups are still up and doing now in one country now in another. I'm also distressed to hear of Shimon's illness that seems to become chronic. Still I have great trust in his will-power as well as in his good friends (like you and yours) who really want him to recover and to be out of danger. I do not believe that anybody else would sincerely like it. When you meet Shimon, give him my kind regards and best wishes for good health and peace. I have never written to him. Let him not take it amiss, please.

August 15

I wish I could take trips abroad as you often do, dear Milt. But I cannot do it for some reasons. The first and the main one is that I am in precarious health. So I have to resign to the fate and follow the old English saying, "East or West, home is best."

I am very glad that David is studying Russian and wish him to achieve good successes in it and in other school subjects. It is very useful to master foreign languages. Edward (my son) is a clever boy but unfortunately he is not good at them. He speaks only Russian and a bit of Moldavian.

About a month ago I received Sylvia's response to my letter that I had written to both of you. Thank you a lot for having sent her the copy so quickly.

You write the words "Mir e druzhba" correctly, dear Milt. I am also for peace and friendship between such Great Powers as the Soviet Union and the United States are and on which the preservation of life and civilization on our planet depends. I am pleased that concrete and important steps have been taken in this direction and hope they will multiply. By the way, we enjoy watching over T.V. some peculiarities of the electoral campaign in your country.

August 18

I am also pleased that the policy of perestroika (reorientation, reorganization) and glasnost (openness, publicity) enjoy the warm support of all the honest people in our country. The perestroika has for an object the further democratization of our system, the uplifting of living standards and morals of the Soviet people as well as the eradication of all the negative occurrences and tendencies that impede progress. It goes without saying that all these complex problems cannot be solved in two or five years. That is why our standard of life is not yet at the peak. There are still some difficulties in getting up-to-date footwear and fashionable cloths of high quality that are in great demand here though their prices are far of being cheap. Public services and catering aren't either up to the mark. I and my wife spend a good deal of our pension on all sorts of medicines that keep up our health and so have to reduce our expenses on other things. But we do not complain of all that as we manage to make both end meet and hope that sooner or a bit later things will adjust themselves. We thank God that we have such a devoted son who is helping us in everything.

On the occasion of the forthcoming great holidays Rosh Hashana and Yom-Kippur we all join in sending you and everyone of the family our best wishes for a happy, fulfilling, healthy and peaceful new year. May all your dreams come true.

With affection and regards.

Your cousin Amnon Maidenberg and family

P.S. I had to interrupt this letter several times because I felt rather out of sorts and couldn't venture to overstrain myself

.

Amnon thanks Milt for sending the family photo, showing the descendants of David and Rose, which is in the archives at the Statue of Liberty. He tells Milt that another emigration has begun, with Victor Brenner soon to leave, and asks Milt to help Victor when he arrives. Kishinev, December 21, 1988. [In a copy to Sylvia, Milt writes, "Sylvia---looks like they are coming. What can we do to help?"]

Dear cousin Milton and dear relatives,

I was in hospital more than a month because of my blood pressure that had reached the top mark and it couldn't be lowered in any way. Now, praise be, I feel much better and am happy to find myself at home again.

So permit me to send you and yours love and our best wishes for a happy, healthy and peaceful New Year. May all your cherished dreams come true.

In your very kind letter of June 22 you enclosed a family photo of 20 persons and told me that at the exhibit of the Statue of Liberty there is a photo of the family just like this, stating that the grandparents of the photographed young people, Dave and Rose, came to New York through Ellis Island in 1906. It is really a nice bit of history. Just like in the early years of our century one can observe nowadays that a considerable number of people (mainly Jews) also make arrangements to leave Russia for the USA. Among them is Victor Brenner, a progeny of the Maidenbergs, and his family. They came yesterday from Odessa to visit with us and to let us know that they decided to emigrate to the USA in Summer 1989. (In spring they will go through the necessary formalities in Vienna, then in Rome as all similar emigrants do.)

Victor is the grandson of our late Aunt Manya Rosenberg who was the youngest sister of David and Joseph Maidenberg. His mother, Lidia Brenner, is our cousin. Victor is 35 years old and has been working as an engineer in a housebuilding enterprise. He is decent and energetic young man and so is his wife, Talla. They have a son of 12. Victor says that in the USA he'll be ready to do any work until he learns the language and the specificity of housebuilding there.

As they guess that they will receive the permission to settle in New York (the absorption of immigrants is not so limited on N.Y. as in other states), we have a favour to ask of you.

May be you or someone of yours have there a relative, a good friend or acquaintance who in the first time after Victor arriving could give him some practical advice and a moral support. I think that he will need such an aid and encouragement in the period of adaptation to a new life in a new land.

In any case be so kind as to think over it and to respond him (you may do it in English). He looks forward to your reply with much anticipation.

His address is:
Victor Brenner
Khvorostin Street 4 "r",
Flat 18
Odessa 270091, U.S.S.R.

With affection and fond regards,

Amnon Maidenberg

P.S. In August I sent you a response to your letter of June but I haven't got any reply yet. This makes me suppose that you took offense at me. If I was tactless, excuse me please. I hope that all of you are well and in good shape.

Amnon writes a nearly identical letter to Sylvia, introducing the Brenners and asking for support and advice. Kishinev, January 12, 1989.

My dear cousin Sylvia and family,

We have not heard from you for some months and haven't got any letter from Milton either since June last year. We hope that all is well with you and yours and that soon we'll hear from you some good news again.

In this letter I'd like to tell you about our relative Victor Brenner from Odessa with whom you have had some correspondence. (I suppose you know that he is the grandson of our late Aunt Manya and that his mother---Lidia Brenner---is our cousin). The fact is that Victor and his family decided firmly to emigrate from Russia to the USA and in this connection they have been making the necessary arrangements. They plan to leave Odessa in spring. After that they will have to go through some formalities in Vienna (Austria), and then go to Rome (Italy) where they hope to receive at the American consulate the permission to settle in New York (they say that the absorption of immigrants in this state is not so limited as in other ones). So they guess to arrive in New York in summer.

Victor is 35 years old and has been working as an engineer in a housebuilding enterprise. He is decent and energetic young man and so is his wife, Talla. She works as a patternmaker in a fashion house. They have a son of 12. Stanislav by name. Victor says that he'll be ready to do any work until he learns the language and the specificity of housebuilding in the USA.

May be you or someone of yours has in New York a good friend or acquaintance who in the first time after Victor arriving could give him some practical advices and a moral support. I think that he will need such an aid and encouragement in the period of adaptation to a new life in a new land.

In any case be so kind as to think over it and to respond him (you may do it in English). He looks forward to your reply with much anticipation.

As we entered the first month of 1989, we join in sending you and all your loved ones our best wishes for a happy, healthy, fulfilling and peaceful New Year.

With fond regards,

Your loving cousin Amnon and family

Amnon sends Milt and Irma a blessing on the occasion of their 50th wedding anniversary. He reflects on what perestroika means in practical terms, and cautions that much time will be needed for true economic reform. Kishinev, January 27, 1989.

My dearest cousin Milton,

I was very happy to receive your letter of January 5 which proves that you are not angry with me. I'm also glad that my blood pressure is not so high as it was two days ago and I can permit myself to start writing you and answer on the spot.

First of all on the occasion of your 50th wedding anniversary in this February we all join in sending Irma and you our warmest congratulations and best wishes. This is really a very great event in the conjugal life of people who half a century ago linked their destinies in an everlasting union. The celebration of such an even is called 'Goldene Khasene' in Yiddish.

Dear Irma and Milton, let your life be light and serene, filled with harmony, happiness, cheerfulness. May your mutual affection and mutual understanding, your care for each other be preserved for many forthcoming years to the joy of your wonderful children and greatchildren as well as of your loving relatives and true friends. The best of health and good fortune to all of you!

As regards Victor Brenner, dear Milt, I sent you a detailed letter several weeks ago. Victor and his wife asked me to write a similar letter to Sylvia. I hope that both of you have received them. Five persons are preparing to come to the U.S.: Victor, his wife (Talla by name), their son of 12 (Stanislav) as well as Talla's parents who are rather decent people. None of them is in need of any material aid but only of encouraging, sensible and friendly advices.

They hope to come to New York not sooner than in this summer. Victor's parents are not giving to leave Odessa at least in the next few years.

Dear cousin Milton, I know that you are an old supporter of "Mir e Druzhba" because peace and friendship between our countries are the best guarantee against a world catastrophe. Like all honest people you also welcomed the perestroika and glasnost that have for purpose to renew the Soviet society and to make it more democratic, more humane, more open. The first steps have been made in this respect and they are multiplying. This brings more trust and raises more hopes in the hearts of people.

You know from the newspapers that the perestroika has many most complicated problems to solve in the material and economic spheres: to satisfy the vital requirements of the Soviet people by solving the acute food problem and housing shortage; to modernize the light industry and to supply people with clothing, footwear, etc. of high demand and quality, and in this way to put an end to the exhausting queues in the shops when such goods appear on sale; to bring order into the services industry, to regulate the price policy, to force the bureaucrats to surrender and so on and so forth.

It is clear that time will be needed to solve all these questions. I hope that they will be solved in the years to come, and life will become better and easier.

I am very pleased of the gradual improving attitude toward Jews and Jewish culture in the years of the perestroika. There are also signs that show some changings in the attitude of our country toward Israel. Let us be hopeful that normal and good relation will be established some day, will they?

Dear Milt, take care of your health. Try to stint yourself in fat animal food and in other products that contain much cholesterine which is dangerous for people of our age.

Excuse my insertions, please. It was beyond my strength to recopy the letter.

With affection and kind regards to all of you

Amnon Maidenberg

Amnon sends a list of clothing that he needs, both to wear and to help offset the cost of medicines. Kishinev, January 30, 1989.

Dear cousin:

According to your suggestion I send you again the list and the sizes of the clothing we need and beg you to excuse us generously for causing you such a trouble and expenses.

1. A man's winter jacket of wool or part wool with warm lining.
Preferable colors: brown of any shade, brick (black and dark blue are not wanted)
Size: The height of the man is 178 cm. chest in circumference - 97-98. (Russian size - 52, height - 4)
2. Two man's sport suits wool knit or part wool
Preferable colors: dark blue, light gray, wine.
Size - the same as above in #1
3. Two man's shirts part cotton with pockets and short sleeves
Preferable color - white. (One of them may be wine)
American size: 18 - 18.5 (the height of the man is 175 cm.)
4. Two part wool or synthetic knit pullovers without collar or with a cut.
Preferable color - light gray (one of them may be wine) Size. The height of the man is 170 cm., chest in circumference - 114 cm. (Russian size - 56, height - 3)
5. One man's raincoat for spring and fall of plain part wool material.
Preferable colours: brown, dark blue/white and gray aren't wanted). Size - the same as above in #4 (Russian size -56, height -3)

We would be very happy to hear from you that all the things mentioned in the list have been mailed. A part of them is for us, and the other will help us to discharge our debts. I and my wife spend a lot of money to buy all sorts of medicines that keep up our health. So don't be angry with me, please.

Your loving cousin,

Amnon Josifovich Maidenberg

P.S. By addressing the parcel do not omit my patronymic (my middle name) Josifovich. Excuse my errors, please

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The pace of emigration from the Soviet Union quickens. Efim (Fima) Rosenberg, writes Milt to ask for assistance in the emigration of his son Vadim, pregnant wife Svetlana, and Svetlana's parents. Odessa, undated, probably April, 1989.

Dear Mr. Milton!

It is the son of a sister of Shimon Balaban writing to you. Perhaps you have heard something about my existence. It's a pity I haven't had such information about you till now.

Having had a many year correspondence and private acquaintance with, I've turned to Uncle Shimon asking him for help in connection with the emigration of my son and his family to the USA.

Some days ago I phoned him and he answered that you had been so kind as to agree (through his son Uri, the pilot) to help my son and his wife in getting the guarantees necessary for entering the USA, and that we were to report to you all the information necessary for this.

We haven't full information here about the procedure and conditions of moving into your country. We use old and scanty information and nonexamined rumors. Therefore we cannot know which policy, which steps are to be undertaken first of all, which documents to have for making if only elementary conditions for relatively normal life in the country, frankly speaking, being know to us not very well for today.

We wouldn't be afraid for the future so sharp if the circumstances weren't complicated by the fact that the wife of my son is waiting for a child. It may to be born soon after their arrival. Therefore we are in a hurry.

Taking into consideration the terms of the official registration of the visas, we suppose our children to be in Italy not later than July. The letter reaches the USA from the USSR is 20-22 days (and the same back).

We'll be very much obliged to you for sending an answer to this letter as soon as it is possible and convenient to you and telling us the following:

Do you find it possible to offer the guarantees for the children and is it necessary?

Whom is it to be from - from you (or your children) or, from the Jew community of your state?

You are the native of the USA, and nobody but you can advise the most optimal and prospective variant!

Having sat at the new place of living, the children would compensate you for all your expenditures, no speaking about our true gratitude.

But as we don't know the situation, please do not undertake anything now. The children will ask you for this in case of need. It may happen to be even from Italy, and therefore we'd like to know your telephone number. Now it's very important for them to know if they can expect to receive the guarantees from you.

According to Uncle Shimon I've understood that you have agreed to give our children such document if it is needed.

By the way, we would be very much obliged to you if you let us know your opinion about the parents of my son's wife, who are going together with them.

We cannot expect getting guarantees for them too because, as I know, it involves some pecuniary expenditures.

But it would be desirable for all of them to live in one and the same town for them to be able to help the young parents with their little child. May be it will be possible to get the guarantees for the 4 people from the town's Jew community.

We'll be very grateful for any help and support rendered to us.

With hope for a kindly answer,

Yours truly, Fima Rosenberg-Balaban

P.S. This letter is translated by my son, as my English is not well enough.

The data of the children:

Tsargorodsky Vadim Efimovich, 1964, an engineer on electricity, electronics, knowing programming on computers

His wife Tsargorodskaya Svetlana Michailovna, 1968, the student of the 4th course on mechanics of robots (robototechnics)

The data of the parents of Svetlana:

Tsargorodsky, Michael Semionovich, 1938, an engineer on mechanics

Vachnianskaya, Olga Alexandrovna, 1944, an engineer on constructing buildings

We send you the wedding photo (1987) of our children for the first acquaintance.

Fima writes Sylvia about the emigration of his son, saying his dream is for them to be able to meet their relatives from the other side of the earth. Odessa, probably April, 1989.

Dear aunt Sylvia!

We were very glad to know that on the other side of the earth there turned out to be intimate relatives having common roots with us.

The detailed information about this was given to us by Uncle Shimon (the brother of my mother) from Israel, and some time before we'd got some data from Amnon (the son of Joseph) who lives in Kishinev.

To make it clear I've drawn the scheme of the family tree:

[Fima sketched a tree showing his, Milton's, Amnon's and Sylvia's descents]

Unfortunately for the reasons which don't depend on us we've not been acquainted with you before.

But today the situation is such that we are likely to meet and make the acquaintance of you. In any case we have the great wish, all the more our son and his family is going to move into your country soon for a residence.

We don't know today how the life of our children will turn out to be, which state they'll get it, but we're dreaming for them to meet all their relatives by mail or personally and to be friends.

It's very important because they'll feel lonely for the first time with our following them being a long prospect.

As soon as our children arrive at your country they're sure to write to you or try to see you if possible in case you will wish it too.

Amnon showed us your photos and your children's and grandchildren's, so we are acquainted with you by correspondence. Our children are married for a year and a half only, so we're sending you their wedding photo.

Yours truly,

Fima and Mara Rosenberg

We're waiting for an answer at our address. Please write in English, but legibly.

Fima writes Milt that the situation has grown urgent. His son and wife have departed for Vienna ahead of her parents, and Fima asks for the documents to be sent there. He explains why his son chose emigration to America rather than Israel. Odessa, May 5, 1989.

Dear Milton!

I am sorry, but the circumstances have changed and make me address you again before receiving an answer to my previous letter.

The matter is that the children are leaving at the beginning of June and only two of them without her parents. The state of my son's wife doesn't allow any delay of departure and the parents will go later.

Therefore, if you haven't changed your mind up to send a guaranty (for 2 persons now - Vadim and Svetlana Tsargorodsky (Rosenberg) - you have got the data, it should be made already now and sent in the accepted order. It seems to be sent directly to Vienna, where the children will arrive in a month and have to meet USA consul (such is the usual procedure). It's advisable to have a guaranty by that time.

Dear Milton. In that letter I didn't tell you why we had chosen for our son not Israel but the USA to live in.

There are two reasons for that: first, a hot climate is harmful to his state of health; the second one is: I have the only son and you understand how dear he is to me. And our once a big family has had bitter experience in the last war, those who have remained alive are full to the throat. Many of our common relatives with you were killed in that war. And of the closest you know, the sister of your father Molka was shot and her husband died in the concentration camp.

It is not quiet in Israel now and to be quite sincere with you I am afraid to send the children there in their state and to make it more clear I can tell you that if it were we (my wife and I) to make a choice we would choose Israel.

I ask you and other people close to us to help the children rendering them assistance and attention you can afford in their first steps on your land and in the future. I am sure they will be able to stand on their own.

And God bless you in this noble deed.

Fima

If you happen to find time to write me, here is my address:

USSR
Odessa 270001
Martinovsky Square 1
flat 7
Rosenberg Fima.

Amnon offers an explanation why young Jews from the Soviet Union choose to emigrate to America rather than Israel. Kishinev, May 30, 1989.

My dear cousin and dear relatives,

Thank you ever so much for your kind letter of April 15, dear Milt. I'm very thankful to you also, dear Sylvia, for the group photo of Milton, yourself and Frank that was taken at the goldeneh khaseneh and which I received not long before Milton's letter. We are very happy that, praise be, all of you look so well.

In my turn I'm sending you and Milt four photos of myself. By comparing them you can see how my appearance has changed owing to my long ailing. (That is why I avoid photographers in the last years).

Dear Milt, you say that it is difficult for you to understand why most of the Jews who leave the USSR don't want to go to Israel. So I'll try to answer your questions in a few words.

To my mind the chief reason is that they are lacking in genuine national feelings and in national pride. This is a most regrettable fact, but a very long time assimilatory tendencies were in vogue here and young people had no favorable conditions to develop such feelings. It is not their fault that there were not any cultural or educational institutions where they could get true information on the history of their people or to learn their language, that broadcasts from abroad on Jewish topics were jammed, that even the single well known Moscow Yiddish theater was closed down more than 80 years ago, etc.

As a result their national self-consciousness became dull and the only object they pursue is to live in a free, democratic country where the standard of life is high, where there are more opportunities to find a well paid job and where military service is not compulsory. They usually say that they aren't psychologically ready to expose themselves or their children to danger in the unceasing conflict with the Palestinian fanatics who are supported by all the Moslem countries and unfortunately not only by them.

As to me and my family if we had the intention to leave the Soviet Union we would prefer the land of our ancestors to other countries.

Some words about our Odessa relatives:

Victor Brenner and his family are in Rome (Italy) now waiting for the permission to go to New York. Dima Rosenberg, the grandson of Shimon Balaban's late sister (Frida), and his wife hope to be also in Rome in June or July. that is all I know about them.

I hope this finds you and yours in good health and in good spirits.

With best wishes and fond regards.

Affectionately,

Amnon Maidenberg

Sylvia writes Fima and family that Milt sent immigration papers for Vadim to Shimon Balaban in Israel. She notes that Milt had also assisted Victor Brenner. San Diego, June 8 and 9, 1989.

Dear Fima, Mara, Vadim, Svetlana and other family members:

I was delighted to receive your letter. Only last week I had receive a copy of a letter that was sent to Milton Maidenberg which was written by Vadim as well. Milton sent me the letter in the hope that I could help him find out from the immigration how to apply for applications to sponsor immigrants from the Soviet Union to the United States.

Your family tree indicates that Frida was Shimon's sister and that Fima is Frida's son and Vadim is Fima's son. Is this correct? In addition there were two more Maidenberg sisters, Goldeh and Manya. I (Sylvia) was corresponding with Aunt Manya for a short time before Manya died. Is not Victor Brenner Manya's son? Victor and his family are also immigrating to the United States and Milton was involved with their plans through letters written on Victor's behalf by Amnon Maidenberg in Kishinev.

June 9, 1989

I called Milton Maidenberg in Marion, Indiana last night. He told me that he sent a document signed by him stating his sponsorship of the children to immigrate to the United States. He sent the document to Shimon Balaban in Israel. I tried all morning to call Shimon in Avihail, Israel.

I do not want Shimon to worry about the letter he asked Milton to send. The letter is now on the way. I wonder if it would not be a good idea to give Milton your address in Italy or at least a number where you can be reached. I will tell you more about myself and my family in my next letter. I am now anxious to get this mailed to you as soon as possible.

With love to all of you,

Aunt Sylvia

Shimon Balaban asks Sylvia to help convey thanks to Milton for filling out the needed immigration papers for Fima's son. He adds that Fima plans to visit Israel, and may decide to remain there. Avihail, Israel, June 15, 1989.

Dear Sylvia, Shalom,

I am writing you a letter and not waiting for an answer for the letter I wrote you express mail. I have a request please.

I want to write a thank you letter to Milton. I want to thank him for the papers he sent for the family in Odessa. A few days ago I received from Milton a letter regarding the children of my sister's son. But he should have sent the papers to the family in Odessa and not to me. He writes me he is not able to decipher the names of the family. I immediately sent the papers to Odessa and spoke with them over the telephone. The children are already en route and are waiting for the papers. I believe the parents of the children will know where to send the papers. I hope all will go well.

Dear Sylvia, I am writing a letter to Milton in Yiddish, and beg you to translate it into English and send it to Milton. I will thank you for doing that.

What is happening in your life? How are the children and grandchildren?

In the month of September I expect guests from Odessa to visit us, my sister's son and his wife for a few months. It is possible they may remain in Israel if they can find work in their field. He is an engineer of ships. Milton had written me that it may be a possibility that he will be in Israel in September. I hope that will happen, in that way he will meet new relatives of the Maidenberg/Balaban family. Sylvia, maybe you can also arrange to be in Israel at that time. Stay well and we wish you the best of everything.

The Balaban family

Dear Sylvia, excuse me that I am creating a problem for you to interpret the letter to Milton.

In his letter to Milton, translated by Sylvia, Shimon thanks Milt, and tells him he “did a great thing” to help bring his relatives to America. Shimon adds that he does not know the Brenner family. Avihail, Israel, June 18, 1989.

Dear Milton, Shalom:

A few days ago I received from you the papers for the children in Odessa. I wondered why you didn't send it direct to the American ambassador in ??? (cannot read the word), because the children are already in ??? ??? (two words I don't recognize), however it is too late now. I sent the papers ahead by express mail to the parents of the children who left for ??? and I believe they will understand and send the papers to Vienna and everything will be in order.

Dear Milton, I thank you very much in their name and also in our name for the trouble we caused you. You did a great thing. They are your blood cousins. Your father David's sister Malkeh's grandchildren. Thank you and thank you again and again.

My sister's son and his wife are coming to be our guests in Israel in September. If I remember correctly, did you not say that you would also be coming to Israel at that time? You would then meet them at our house.

Milton, you ask me if I know the family Victor Brenner from Odessa. I do not know them and do not know who they are. I have not heard anything from them.

Stay well with your wife and children.

And again, my deepest heartfelt thanks.

With love,

Family Balaban

Arrived in America, Victor writes a letter of thanks to Milton. He mentions he has a photo of the grave of Pearl Maidenberg. New York, August 21, 1989.

Dear uncle Milton,

I received your letter today and also check for my name.

I didn't suppose to have this gift. Thank you! These money will spend for our English lessons. We'll be happy to see you in October or November in New York. I'll tell to you (if I can and you understand me) about my life and our relationship.

I have very old photo of Perlia Maidenberg's grave. She was buried in 1940 (Moldavia).

She was my great grandmother and your?

I know Fima Rosenberg but he isn't relative for Maidenberg's family. He is relative for Rosenberg's. The Center for Russian Immigrants is helpful for us.

I'll write Amnon Maidenberg and give him kind regards from you. We look forward to meeting you too.

Yours truly

Victor

Amnon restates who among the relatives is going to America, and where they fit in the family tree. He says his own family has chosen not to exchange one diaspora for another. He says perestroika has brought some relief to Jews, but he is worried about the economy. Kishinev, October 15, 1989.

Shalom dear Milton and dear relatives,

I received your letter of September 9, dear Milt, and enjoyed greatly hearing from you again. First of all I'll answer your inquiry:

Victor Brenner is the grandson of late Manya Rosenberg - the youngest of your father's sisters. (She was a child of two years when your parents went to America).

I learned about Victor's decision to go to the U.S. only some days before he left the USSR when he, his wife and his father visited me and begged me to write to you and to Sylvia a sort of recommendation letter and to ask you for some moral support and practical advices when they come to New York and are still green.

I didn't suppose, dear Milt, that they would bother you so often with their importunities as if you urged upon them to come and promised them the moon in the USA. Forgive me for not having foreseen it, please.

Fima Rosenberg is a son of Shimon Balaban's late sister, Frida Rosenberg who lived in the Soviet Union. (Frida and Manya shared the same family name - Rosenberg - because their husbands were brothers). And so Fima's grandmother (Malka Balaban) was also a sister of your father - the oldest one. In 1941 she was bestially killed by Nazi monsters in her native village (Dzigovka, Ukraine).

Mara Rosenberg is Fima's wife. Their son Dima Rosenberg and his wife also left the USSR in July, and as far as I know they are waiting for an entrance visa to the USA. Dima is a young electronical engineer and knows English quite well.

Until this October Soviet Jews who received calls from Israel but wanted to emigrate to the US had to go to Rome (Italy) and wait for entrance visas there. Now they have to deal only with the US embassy in Moscow where their cases are to be examined and decided.

That is why hundreds of Jews are assaulting the embassy to get questionnaires that they must complete.

As to me and my family, we would never think of exchanging one galut (diaspora) for another one. (It is not a secret that even in the US society anti-Semitic occurrences are not simply a fiction but also a reality).

You know from papers what great difficulties the perestroika has been meeting on the road of building a new and better life. But in spite of all that the overwhelming majority of people trust that sooner or later the way out of the critical situation will be found and things will go swimming.

And for the time being we are very glad of the new attitude of the Soviet authorities towards the Jews who now can enjoy full liberty in developing their national culture and national self consciousness which for many years were in decay here. I hope this finds you and your family well and cheerful.

We wish you and all your loved ones the best of health, good fortune and peace in the new year and many more.

With fond regards,

Amnon Maidenberg

Amnon writes that he has heard from Michael, who has met with Victor Brenner, and who has many questions about the family. Kishinev, January 30, 1990.

My dear cousin Milton and dear relatives,

We received your very welcome letter of Dec. 12, 1989 and are very glad that praise be all of you are up and around. My health impaired in December and I was more than a month in the hospital. I feel better now, but am still confined to the house.

We were much surprised and glad to receive a letter from your son Michael in which he described his meeting with V. Brenner, his wife and son. He sent us a copy of the "Maidenberg family tree" he had worked out and asked me to let him know whether there are names I could fill in or dates of birth and death, etc.

He also sent along a map in which I had to mark the "family birthplace of Dzigovka" and to return it. Unfortunately the map does not contain the area in Ukraine where Dzigovka is located. As it is impossible to find here any maps written in English, I got a Russian map and now think how to act that Michael or others could orientate themselves and know the whereabouts of the small village.

Michael writes that he has many questions to ask me, but since he doesn't want to burden me with all of them in one time, he mentions only a few of them: What happened during the Great War? How did some of our family survive? How many were murdered by the Nazis? What were the circumstances? As soon as possible I will try to comply with Michael's request.

Dear Milt, you say that you worry when reading in the U.S. press about the inter-ethnic conflicts and enmity that from the last year have been breaking out in our country now here, now there.

Of course, there are most serious reasons to worry about it. But we do not lose hope that our government and the progressive forces in the country will do their best to extinguish the breeding grounds of hatred before needless lives are wasted. We are sure that in spite of the complicated situation the noble objects of the perestroika will be achieved.

I am also hopeful, dear Milt, that maybe you will visit the USSR someday and with good luck we'll meet in auspicious conditions.

I haven't heard from Sylvia of late. I hope that all is well with her and hers and that she is no angry with me. As you admonished I send you back the letter of the bank's parcel service with my comments. Be so kind as to acknowledge the receipt (I don't know whether you received my letter with some photos of myself last summer). I apologize for causing you so much trouble with all that.

From the bottom of my heart we wish you and everyone of our large family to be blessed with good health, good fortune and peace.

With fond regards,

Amnon Maidenberg

Amnon responds to Michael with a detailed letter in which he provides many answers, the most poignant of which recounts the brutal murder of Malkeh by Nazi soldiers in 1942. He notes the bitter irony of how Dzigovka became a kind of prison ghetto. Kishinev, February, 1990.

My dear nephew Michael and dear relatives,

Your welcome letter has come as a pleasant surprise to me since I have been corresponding only with your father and Sylvia. I feel very apologetic for being so late in responding it, and I hope you will forgive me.

In December last year my health impaired and I was in hospital until mid-January because of my hypertony that reached a critical point and couldn't be dropped. The doctors forbade me even to read newspapers or to watch T.V. Now, since I feel better, I can allow myself to comply with your request.

First of all I must say that the "family tree" you worked out is excellent. Only the maiden surname of your grand-grandmother has to be corrected (Pearl Rizher instead of Risher). The name of our "family birthplace" must also be spelt differently (Dzigovka instead of Zhigivka). Unfortunately, the map you sent me and I had to return does not contain the village Dzigovka that is located northwards, in Ukraine, not far from the town Jampol. Since it is impossible to get here any maps with place-names printed in English, I send you a Russian one. I did my best that you may find on it Dzigovka and the other places mentioned in this letter. I'll mail it separately together with the "family tree" by book-post.

Now I will try to answer your questions:

What was the birth order of the children of Pearl and Solomon Maidenberg?

As far as I know it was the following: Malkeh, Goldie, Elkeh (B. 1881), David (b. 1883), Joseph (b. 1885), Esther (b.), Manya (b. 1903). I guess that David Maidenberg was born in 1883 since my father told me that his brother was two years senior to him.

What happened during the Great War?

The horrors of WWII have been described by hundreds of authors, nevertheless the subject remains inexhaustible.

Only in the Soviet Union nearly 10 thousand of towns and villages were completely destroyed. From the 22nd of June 1941 (the day when the Nazi hordes began their “blitzkrieg” against the USSR) until May 9, 1945 (the day of the Great victory over Nazi Germany) more than 20 million Soviet people were killed. The number of 450 thousand of killed Americans was not small either.

How did some of our family survive?

They survived thanks to their happy stars probably. Like many other civilian people some of our family had the time to retire in the rear regions of the vast territory of the USSR and they continued working there until the war was over. So did Elkeh and Melech Perelroisen and their daughters; Manya Rosenberg and her children; Frieda Rosenberg (Shimon Balaban’s sister).

Four persons of our family (all of them were officers) took part in the war. Golya (Goldie’s son) fell in action in one of the first battles. The others survived and were rewarded with orders and many medals.

Solomon Rosenberg (Manya’s husband) participated in the war from 1941 till 1945, Fanya Perelroisen (Elkeh’s elder daughter) from 1941 to 1943 and myself - only in the last two years of the war.

Now I will tell you about those of our family who had remained in the territory that soon was occupied by the Nazi invaders and their Rumanian allies.

When the war broke out and for many years before that, Joseph Maidenberg (my father) and his family lived in Moldavia in the town Beltsy. But during the gloomy years of the occupation they all (except me) lived in Dzigovka that from mid-July, 1941 to April, 1944 has been a Jewish ghetto under the administration of fascist Rumania. The Balabans were also there. In 1942 Malkeh was murdered near the ghetto, and her husband Elly died of spotted fever (typhus) in the next year. The others survived.

How did my father and the others come to be in Dzigovka?

In one of the first days of the war during a mass air attack of the German bombardment Beltsy was reduced to ruins and our house was also razed to the ground. Luckily, when the raid took place my parents and my sister were out of town in their vineyard. I lived in Kishinev then and was mobilized for defensive work.

So in the next day my father harnessed his horse, and the small family went towards east. Three day later, as soon as they reached the river Dniester, they suddenly heard the specific drone of German bombing aircraft that became louder and louder. They hid under a big branchy tree and in a few moments they saw the bridge over the river blowing up. At last a great distance away from that place they crossed the river on a military ferry-boat and continued their route.

Unfortunately my mother got a sun-stroke on the way and my father decided to go towards Dzigovka and to wait there until she recovers. In Dzigovka they met the Balabans who had come there from Jampol that is located on the left bank of the Dniester. But soon Jampol, Dzigovka and many other localities of that region were occupied by Nazi forces. Since Dzigovka was a village of no strategic importance only a dozen of Rumanian soldiers and their commanding officer were sent there to establish the “new order”.

So our family birthplace became a ghetto with all its restrictions and severe rules that the Jews had to follow. Some of them died of dystrophy owing to malnutrition, others for lack of medical aid and medicaments. But no one was murdered there by the Rumanians because the commanding officer proved to be not so cruel as others were (in other Jewish ghettos of Ukraine).

The circumstances of Malkeh’s murder.

Malkeh wasn’t murdered within the bounds of the ghetto but outside it. This is how it happened:

In one summer morning of 1942 Malkeh and two of her friends disguised as peasant women ventured to go out of the ghetto and to make their way towards Jampol in order to get some of their clothes and other things they had left there in the previous year, and then to change them for some food-stuffs.

But they had scarcely walked a few kilometers away from Dzigovka when several Nazi soldiers on motor-cycles appeared on the crossroad. Catching sight of the women, they stopped and using foul language made them signs to come nearer. The frightened women started scattering, and the Nazis that dashed after them managed to catch only Malkeh and another woman. The third one hid in the deep ditch overgrown with shrubs.

The laughter and the cries of the Nazis “Youdehkaput!” [Jude kaput, finish the Jews] reached her ears, and when she heard the horrific shrieks of their victims, the woman fainted. When some time later she came to herself and climbed out of the ditch she found the dead bodies of her unfortunate companions on the side of the road. Their faces were mutilated and blood-stained, their skulls were fractured. The monsters of cruelty spared even two of their bullets to kill the Jewish women and murdered them with the butts of their guns.

When the woman who had survived brought the grievous news to Dzigovka, Elly Balaban tore his hair and sobbed for sorrow without pause. The day before the terrible tragedy took place Elly and my father had forewarned Malkeh about the danger. They implored her to put out of her head her intention of going to Jampol. But unfortunately, she was fated to stand on her ground.

I was told the tragic story by my parents when I met them soon after their liberation from the ghetto in April, 1944. Some months later the Soviet forces drove the Nazi occupants out from Moldavia, too and my military unit was transferred to Kishinev. So my father and the others decided to move to this town.

In the meantime we got to know that no one of our 26 relatives from mother's side had survived. I can't help telling you in what a barbarous and sadistic way some of them were murdered.

In the first days of the Nazi invasion one of my mother's sisters and her large family together with other Jews were driven in to an old synagogue. Then the synagogue was set on fire, and all who were inside burned alive.

The Nazi monsters caught two of my cousins and their wives, tied them one to another with a rope and threw them into a deep lake.

Such atrocities and other innumerable heinous crimes that cannibals of the 20th century committed during the holocaust must never be forgotten and never be repeated. Unfortunately, all sorts of neo-Nazis are raising their hideous heads now here now there. Let us hope that their activity will be stopped in time.

Excuse my errors and corrections, please. Although I have rewritten this letter once, it looks like a rough copy. I feel that it is beyond my strength to rewrite it again.

Dear Michael, I thank you very much that you took into consideration my ill-health and didn't burden me with more questions you want to ask me. Writing long letters in English is really a most laborious work for a man in my condition since I cannot express my thoughts correctly without looking every now and then into my dictionaries. Unfortunately, I do not always succeed in finding the right English word or phrase as many of them have different (even contrary) meanings, and it takes me a lot of time to get out of the tangle.

By the way, the spelling and the idioms are British (and not American) in the dictionaries I have been using. Couldn't you advise me whether Russian-American English dictionaries are available in US bookstores? If they are I would ask Victor Brenner to send me one. I have got a letter from him. He writes that all of you made the best impression on them.

I hope to hear from you soon. Please acknowledge the receipt of my letter, and of the other materials concerning the Maidenberg family that I'm sending you separately by book-post.

We all join in sending you and yours our best wishes.

With fond regards,

Amnon Maidenberg

P.S. The book (in Moldavian) I am sending you was illustrated by my son Edward who is a painter. Do you like his pictures? The story is about a little violinist (Musya Pinkenson) from Beltsy who in 1942 was shot by the Nazis in a Cossack village. His father and mine were good friends. He was a doctor by profession.

Amnon gives Michael a detailed history of the region in which the Maidenbergs lived, and answers many questions about the family, including why Joseph never emigrated. He provides a sketch of his own life. He sends blessings to the entire “clan” in America. Kishinev, June, 1990.

My dear nephew and dear relatives,

I apologize for the delay in answering your questions, dear Mike, and I hope you will forgive me.

In order to answer some of your questions and to make myself understood, I must touch upon the history of the territory between the rivers Prut and Dniester that was called Bessarabia and where my parents came to live in 1908. They lived there together with their children in the town of Beltsy until the beginning of World War II.

During all that time our other relatives were living over the Dniester, in Ukraine. (Solomon and Pearl in Dzigovka, and their daughters and families in other places of the region).

Before the Socialist Revolution of 1917 Bessarabia as well as the Ukraine were under the domination of Tzarist Russia, and the inhabitants of both these regions could communicate and meet freely with each other.

But soon after the revolution Bessarabia joined the Royal Rumania, and its borders with the Soviet Ukraine were closed up (I was 5 years old then). So my father couldn't even correspond with his relatives from over the Dniester since that was strictly forbidden. (The ban lasted more than 22 years). Only in June, 1940, when Bessarabia joined the USSR, people of both sides of the Dniester could meet again. After a year (in June 22, 1941) Hitler violated the non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union and the Great war began.

Memories about Pearl Maidenberg

As soon as the borders between Bessarabia and the Ukraine opened, in 1940 our “matriarch” Pearl left Dzigovka for Beltsy. I studied in Kishinev then, and every time when I came to visit with her, she hugged me and would say how happy she was living together with her son Joseph and his family.

She liked to go with me to the vineyard where my father was working. She called it “Garden of Eden” and often remembered her late husband Solomon who spent all his years in Dzigovka and wasn’t lucky enough to see such a beauty created by his son Josele (Joseph). Before going home she always filled two baskets of fine grapes and fruit to serve them out to children of poor families in Beltsy. Pearl was a wise woman and won the respect of all. Even the elite of the town---doctors, lawyers, teachers, etc. came to our house and listened to her stories about the life in the Soviet Union which was unknown to them. From her plots, allegories, proverbs and sayings they could understand how it really was. She was a clever skillful storyteller and knew how to avoid the danger of being charged with the ‘grave crime’ of “anti-Soviet propaganda” under the Stalin regime.

I cannot have any personal memories of our “patriarch” Solomon since he died in 1930 from diabetes. I know from his wife Pearl and my father that he was a good and unselfish man. He had a very good handwriting and knew Russian well. So people of Dzigovka and of the neighboring villages were for the most part poor men and women often asked him to write for them some petitions or complaints to one or another instance. He always complied with their request but has never accepted any fee from their part. Everybody in the district knew that Solomon Maidenberg doesn’t help indigent people for the sake of money.

Before the revolution Solomon and Pearl earned their living by dealing in tobacco. After that they worked as sellers in a cooperative shop several years. Then they were getting a small pension from the state. From time to time their daughters helped them with some money. David also managed to send them some aid from America.

When did they leave Germany?

There is some misunderstanding in this question. I know from my father’s story that we are of German extraction. But this doesn’t mean that Solomon Maidenberg himself came to the Ukraine from Germany. That happened to our ancestors centuries ago.

My father learned from his father that when he (Solomon) was a young man, his great-grandfather told him that his parents (the parents of Solomon’s great-grandfather) had lived in the town of Magdeburg (Germany). But driven by persecutions or hardship they had to leave the country that had been the home of many generations of Maidenbergs.

That could take place at the end of the 16th or at the beginning of the 17th century. I cannot give you more details or precisions on the matter since my father didn't know them either.

About Goldie's husband

After Goldie's death he left Dzigovka and got married to another woman. I do not remember his name. Golya (his son) was brought up by Pearl and Solomon.

About Shimon Balaban

In the early 20th century there was a very short period of time when people could emigrate from the Soviet Union. Shimon was a young man then, and since he cherished the dream of going to the Holy Land of our ancestors, he left the Ukraine for Palestine.

Shimon was one of those pioneers (Khalootsim) who began to cultivate with picks and crowbars the old neglected rocky soil of the Promised Land.

Those young men and women were real heroes. In spite of thirst and hunger, of malarial mosquitos, of the hostile Arab tribes that every now and then attacked them and provoked massacres, the Khalootsim transformed step by step wilderness into flowering gardens and fertile fields.

By the way, soon after Shimon's departure, Sylvia's parents, Esther and Moses Perelroisen (Rosen) also managed to leave the Soviet Ukraine and they came to Beltsy. But in a year (or two) they went to America. Sylvia was a little girl of about two or three years then.

Why didn't Joseph join his brother David in America?

You know perhaps that my father worked as a teacher of Hebrew and history in a Jewish gymnasium (secondary school). But he always dreamt of devoting himself to farming and of working in the open air, close to nature. So when he managed to buy 15 acres of fertile soil near Beltsy, he planted there (mostly with his own hands) a vineyard and different kinds of fruit-trees. He put very much effort and energy in that affair. He even had to leave his initial profession and got into debts but he was happy that at last his dream has come true. After some years Joseph gathered the first heavy crop of wonderful grapes and fruit. Just in that time David

sent him a formal call (invitation) and other documents which gave him the right to emigrate to the USA.

My father held in high respect his elder brother and from childhood loved him very much. But, unfortunately, he could not decide to leave his “creation (the vineyard and orchard) and to start a new life abroad.

In 1940 when the Soviet power was established in Bessarabia, his plot and all that was growing on it were seized by the State, and my father as a specialist in vine growing and gardening was appointed a team-leader there (a sort of manager). In the next summer the war broke out.

Some words about myself and my small family

After leaving the secondary school and till 1940 I was working in our vineyard. Then I entered the Pedagogical Institute of Kishinev, and also attended courses of law.

During the Great war (in 1941-43) I continued my studies in “deep” Russia, in the town of Chkalov (now Orenburg) and combined them with work at a military plant. In the last two years of the war I was in the army. After the war I worked some time as a lawyer and from 1949 as a teacher of French and of Moldavian language and literature. In 1954 I got married to Shura (Sheba) who was a divorced woman and younger than me by eight years. She worked as a history teacher and singing mistress in a middle school. Now both of us are retired and get an old-age pension. By the way, this year Shura has had two serious attacks of stenocardia and was in hospital twice.

Edward is the single among our relatives in the Soviet Union who bears the family name Maidenberg. He is 30 years old and is a good fellow. Of course, we would like him to marry and have his children. Unfortunately, for the time being he doesn't succeed in finding a decent girl or woman to his liking and who could be a true friend to him.

At the age of 18 Edward graduated from a school of arts and competent people say that he is a talented painter. I chose four of the smallest books he had illustrated and sent them to you in February. Have you received them? If so, let me know, please. Tell me also your opinion of the pictures. May be the ties between our countries will reach such a level that Edward could perform orders of some American publisher of fiction. Do you think it possible?

My sister Ida lives in the town of Tiraspol which is located on the left bank of the Dniester. Her two daughters, Ludmila and Polina and their families live also there. Not long ago they called on us and enjoyed “the family tree” you had worked out. They asked me to give them your address and I hope they will let you know in more detail about each of them. Unfortunately, the situation on the both sides of the Dniester is not so calm as we would like and is fraught with unforeseen events.

After your older sons, Joseph and Theodore, Daniel has also crossed the threshold between childhood and adolescence. Toby’s Johna and David are grown-up children too. We pray and trust that each of them (as well as all the young generation of the Maidenberg “clan”) are in good health and have good fortune. As an old man and former teacher, I would like to give them some pieces of good advice:

Dear children, try to be diligent in your study and work. Be active and learn life but follow only the examples of good and honest people. Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today and try not to waste your time in vain. Use it rather for your self-perfection and don’t forget that every man is the architect of his own fortune. Appearances are very often deceitful. So don’t judge people by appearance since they may be fair outside and false inside. Esteem your parents (and grandparents) and do not cause them pain. In the Hebrew moral code this sacred duty of children (and grown-ups) towards their parents is named “*Keebood av vaem*” (in Hebrew).

Thank you for your nice photo, dear Mike. Tell me more about yourself, your wife and sons. What news of Toby and her children? How are your parents? I haven’t heard of them of late. Has Reed received my answer? He is a talented musician and his music is fascinating. As soon as Sylvia got the copy of my letter to you, she advised us. It is very good that you share letters with each other. We had a strong earthquake in May. Fortunately, there were no victims in the house we live in.

Please convey greetings to all in the Maidenberg “clan” including Victor and Dima and their families. May all of you and yours be blessed with good health, good luck and peace.

With fond regards,

Amnon Maidenberg and family

P.S. Excuse my errors and insertions, please. I would like to recopy the letter but I feel it to be too taxing for me.

Fima and Mara write Sylvia of their struggle to arrange emigration to America, where they will join their son Dima. Odessa, October 21, 1990.

Our dear Silvia!

We have received your letter and now thanks to it and photos as well we have got a possibility to get more acquainted with you and your family. Now some more details about ourselves:

Fima - 60 years of age, parents - died (father in 1940, mother - in 1981)

Molka - your mother's sister and Elya - killed by fascists in 1941, were not able to leave in time. I am an engineer - shipbuilder.

Mara - 50 years of age, whose parents and a sister with a daughter of 16 live in our city, but in the nearest months are leaving in Israel. Unfortunately we are to apart and live with a hope that the situation in the world will change and we shall be able to meet.

Mara is a specialist in medical gymnastics. And our only and beloved son Dima, with whom you got acquainted (maybe even have see each other) the hope to be together with him is the main aim of our life.

Unfortunately to get to him now is more difficult than before. A year has already passed since we sent the necessary documents to your country but it takes a very long time for them to be checked up and maybe only in a year our problem will be solved and we shall be able to come. Of course, it is very difficult to find ourselves in such situation, when the whole family have gone to different parts of the world.

But we try not to be upset and hope for well being in the future. The main thing's everybody's health and peace all over the world.

The situation in our country is very difficult and complicated, you must know about it.

We are writing in short and only the main things as we don't know English well enough to tell you as a native about our life past and present more detailed.

Hope for meeting. All the best for you!

With many kisses, yours faithfully,

Fima and Mara

March 31, 1991

Our dear Sylvia!

We received your letter one month ago, but didn't answer you, because we were awaiting the answer from American Embassy about our luck. We had been invited there on the 7th of March and came from Moscow two weeks ago. We hurry to write you now, that we got permission to go to live in America. It is a great joy for us! We thank God very much! Now we want only health and peace in all the world, because it must help us to come to your country quickly. It is necessary for us to do many things, but it is already nice for us. When we come to your country, we shall tell you about our life in more detailed way.

If everything is all right, we plan to come to America in six or seven months. We already want to meet our dear son and his family, finally. It is our main goal!

Hope for meeting! All the best to you!

With many kisses

Yours faithfully

Fima and Mara

Amnon writes of the difficult situation in the Soviet Union, and speaks of his anguish over the prospect of emigration, for himself or his son. Kishinev, April 21-27, 1991.

My dear cousin and old friend Milton and dear relatives,

I understand, dear Milt that the ailing of your mother-in-law and your preoccupation with other problems were not quite favorable for letter-writing. Believe me that the reasons of my long silence have also been valid ones.

Permit me to convey Irma our tardy but sincere sympathy over her mother's death. People seldom reach such an old age, but even when an old-liver dies, it is a grief for the family. [Hebrew letters] (Aleya hashalom!)- May the peace of God be with her!

I am chagrined that I haven't responded Michael's letter as yet. I will write to him and also to Sylvia in the next month. I would be most grateful to you if in the meanwhile you will send them copies of this letter. And if it is too taxing for you to do it now, please send to one of them the original.

You know that because of the distressful situation in the Soviet Union the consequences of which nobody can foretell, a great many of Jewish families have moved and still more are going to move abroad.

Most of them went to Israel (184,493 persons only in the last year) and to America, others emigrated to Australia, South Africa and even to Germany. In my opinion to move to Germany is an outrage upon the memory of so many victims of the holocaust. One should not forget that Hitler and the Nazis came to power there as a result of free elections.

Reading your letter I was rather surprised at the news you had heard from Victor, that I and my family were going to Israel. I have never told to anybody of our relatives from Odessa that we have decided to do so. I can not understand what was their reason of sending to Victor the misinformation.

Lidia and Kostya Brener have advised us that they were going to fly to New York on the 3rd of May. Unfortunately, we do not know the date of departure of Dima's parents. In March and April I tried to phone them many times but nobody replied. I do not think they have gone away without saying us good-bye at least over the telephone.

You may ask me, “If so many families have been going to Israel, why don’t you follow their example?”

First of all it is because Shura (my wife) is categorically against it. She says there will never be peace between Arabs and Jews, and since we have only son, she will never agree to our moving there.

Reliable information we have been receiving from different sources also keep us from going to Israel.

Very good friends of mine who emigrated there some years ago wrote us about the painful experiences they and their children went through in order to rent a lodging or to find some work.

In such a small land as Israel is, there are now over 200 thousand of unemployed. The construction of dwelling houses for the new olim advances at a very slow pace. Landlords inflate prices and forewarn the tenants that flats are let only for one year. The subsidies for social needs are steadily cut down. The majority of olim (immigrants) repent that they have moved to Israel instead of going to some other country.

I have probably written to you that Shura has a daughter (from her first husband) with whom I am in best mutual relations. More than a year has passed since she, her husband and her daughter’s family live in Netanya (Israel). They also warn us against our moving to Israel for the same reasons.

As to Shimon Balaban, we have never corresponded with each other (to the shame of both of us). Now I feel uncomfortable to start writing to him since it would look as if I did it only because we found ourselves in severe conditions. Besides, as things now stand in Israel, I doubt that he could give us a piece of good advice.

We have been going through a very hard time here and we do not know what the future may hold in store for us. Most of all I pity my son Edward who could like many others move to the USA in time and regulate his life, but his good nature did not permit him to leave us alone even for a year or two.

Days and nights I keep thinking about all that, and fall into despair. The state of depression left me and I was besides myself with joy only when I heard about the

Great Victory of the heroic American army (and its allies) in the Persian Gulf War. Hitler-Saddam Hussein was defeated. But, unfortunately, he is still alive and hasn't yet been put on trial as a war criminal.

am enclosing a copy of a very old photo of our grandparents Pearl and Solomon Maidenberg and their five daughters. (Taken in 1905 or 1906). Fanya Perelroisen (late Olya's daughter) has by chance found the photo in an old book and sent it to us for a time. I will send similar copies to Sylvia and to Michael.

With affection and fond regards to all,

Amnon Maidenberg

Amnon asks Sylvia for help in immigrating to America. The conditions in newly independent Moldova have worsened. Kishinev, August 6, 1991.

My dearest cousin and friend and dear family,

I feel very chagrined and ashamed at the fact that more than a year has flown by since I wrote to you. I hope you understand the desperate condition we are in and will excuse me.

We have been going through a hard time of adversaries and privations and nobody knows if the abominable situation improves within the next few years.

Food stuffs, clothes etc. have risen in price 3-10 times as much, and the cost of living is continuing to go up. Many consumer goods are not to be found in the stores even electric bulbs and matches are among many other critical commodities in our country. Inundations and hail have destroyed many areas under grain crop, fruit trees and vegetables in our republic, and this will aggravate still more the food problems.

I guess you have received from Milton a copy of my reply letter to him dated April 27. So you know why we do not go to Israel. The year's quota for emigration of Soviet Jews to the US is 50 thousand. Of course, we would like to have the good fortune of moving there and be living the rest of our days in normal conditions. As to Edward, I'm sure that he would earn his living, and none of us will be a burden to our relatives.

I heard that seniors (old aged immigrants who receive the status of refugees) get gov. pensions in the USA: in San Francisco \$630 per month and some coupons for using a taxi, and in New York \$400 plus \$100 for food. They have other advantages too: the right of free medical aid, to rent a municipal lodging at a discount of 70%.

I and my wife get together a pension of 400 rubles per month here. Edward's earnings are approximately the same. So the monthly income of my family is roughly 800 rubles that according to the present rate of exchange amount to 29 dollars. (Two years ago the exchange value of an American dollar was less than one ruble in the Soviet Union while now it is 27 rubles + 60 kopecks, and in the black market twice as much.) Thank goodness that at least the pay for our municipal lodging remained "symbolic" for the time being - 25 rubles per month including gas,

light and central heating. But people are convinced that this cheapness will not last long.

I know, dear Sylvia, that you are very busy with your work and your family. Nevertheless I wait impatiently for a response from you attesting the receipt of this one without long delay. I'm also confident that you will try to make copies of this letter for the other relatives so that each of them might know the how and why of things. We would be very much obliged and grateful to you if you did it at the proper time.

Now permit me to acquaint you with the rules that were established in 1990 for those who seek to emigrate from the USSR to the United States. First of all be so kind as to read attentively the enclosed instruction of the State Department of the USA "About immigration for permanent residence in the United States" as well as the affidavit of relationship form which must be completed by the nearest relative in the USA and certified by a notary. (Please do not lose the instructions since I have no other English copy to send.)

Note: From May 1991 only the applications of Soviet citizens who have relatives of first or second degree in the USA are being put into the computer of the Washington Application Center, while applications without affidavits of relationship are simply set aside and there is no hope that they would ever be examined. Affidavits of relatives of 3rd degree are not considered either.

Relatives of first degree are: spouses, brothers, sisters, parents, grandparents, children and grandchildren.

Relatives of second degree are: cousins, uncles, aunts, nephews and nieces.

After receiving from a nearest relative in the US the notarized affidavit of relationship at my home address, I will have to attach it to the completed questionnaires (I have got forms of such questionnaires for myself, Shura and Edward) and mail all these documents to the Washington Application Center located at 111 North 19th Street, Suite Arlington, Virginia 232209. Phone: (703)525-4275.

If it is determined that we will be invited for an interview to the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, we will be informed of this by a letter from the Washington Application Center and will receive notification of the next steps to be taken. The normal processing time of all this is nearly two years. 6-8 months will pass till the documents are put into the computer in Washington. After that people wait their

turn 6-8 months for an interview to the American Embassy. At last if they are lucky enough to receive there the status of refugees, other 6-8 months pass till they leave the Soviet Union for the United States.

I didn't want to bother you, dear Sylvia, but since there is not time to be lost, I have a great favor to ask of you. Please complete the enclosed document to me so that I may attach it to the questionnaires and mail them as soon as possible to Washington. I do not request Milton to draw up the affidavit because he is 79 years of age, and I'm not sure he would do it in a brief space of time.

A representative of the local agency whom I suppose to be closely connected with the Jewish community should assist you in preparation of the affidavit and can sign it. If you are asked why we want to emigrate to America lay special stress on the fact that most of our family live in the USA, and not on our material difficulties in the Soviet Union. Maybe it is reasonable to show them some of my letters to you or to Michael.

I am enclosing two affidavit forms (one of them is for reserve). In the 3rd form I completed section I with necessary information about me and my family. Please pay attention to sections III and VI. If you have forgotten the exact date of birth of your parents, indicate an approximate one in the affidavit. But write down these dates for yourself so as you could recall them when necessary.

I am also enclosing two copies of an old photo I mentioned in my letter to Milton which shows our grandparents Pearl and Solomon Maidenberg and their five daughters. Look from right to left.

First row(sitting): Solomon and his youngest daughter Manya on his knee, Pearl, Malkeh

Second row: Olya (Elkeh), Goldie, your mother Esther.

The photo was taken in Dzigovka and I don't know for certain in what year it was. But since our aunt Manya was born in 1903 and on the photo she looks to be a child of 3 or 4 one may assume that it was in 1906 or 1907. so I think that your mother who looked then a girl of 13-14 was born in 1893 or 1894 and by no means in 1900.

As to your year of birth. I think that 1923 seems to be the right one, since in 1926 when I carried you on my shoulders to the vineyard you were a child of less than four but older than two.

I concern myself about “owing” a letter to Ellen who sent us photographs of her two lovely daughters. Convey to Ellen and her family our love and blessings and that I’ll write her sooner or later. What can I do if I am in such a state of frustration that composing letters even in Russian has become a great tax for me.

I will mail a copy of the Dzigovka photo to Michael too when I send him a response to his letter he has written to me after his returning from Israel. I hope to hear from you soon that this letter was received and its copy was sent to him.

Keep well and do forgive me for troubling you with the affidavit. We believe in your responsiveness and count only upon you.

In the occasion of the coming High Holy Days - Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur - we join in wishing you and all of your loved ones a healthy, happy and peaceful New Year. May your greatest wishes be fulfilled!

Your loving cousin,

Amnon Maidenberg and family

P.S. Pay attention to our address. The street we live in has been given a new name:
Bvd Stefan cel Mare

Amnon speculates on how Michael might help him after emigration. He answers more family questions, recalling that Solomon had a brother who went to France. Amnon explains why he never practiced law in the Soviet Union. Kishinev, October 12, 1991.

Dear nephew Michael and dear relatives,

Thank you very much, dear Mike, for the letter you sent us after your sojourn in Israel. We are very pleased that you and your family enjoyed the trip and had the occasion to see the remarkable places of interest of our historical Fatherland.

I imagine how thrilling the trip was for a man like you who is interested in the history of the Middle East and particularly in the history of the Jews. The ancient Israelite period described basically in the Bible has been a source of inspiration to famous thinkers, writers, sculptors, painters, composers, etc., and their works will remain forever in the treasury of human civilization.

We are glad that all of you are doing well and face the future with confidence. May your greatest wishes be fulfilled!

Excuse me that I do not dwell upon the events which are going on in our country. I know you follow the news with keen interest and can appraise the situation.

I hope you have already received a copy of my letter to Sylvia in which I asked her to complete an enclosed affidavit of relationship and have it certified by a notary. When we receive from her the document we'll have to attach it to the completed preliminary questionnaires (the forms of which we have gotten) and mail them for the consideration to the Washington Processing Center (WPC).

These are the basic documents which may result in our invitations to the US Embassy in Moscow and in receiving the status of immigrants. If the WPC determines that we will be called for such and interview we will be informed of this by a letter at our home address directly from Washington notifying us of the next steps to be taken. In view of the large number of applications processing time is lengthy and lasts approximately two years. But while there is life there is hope.

We appreciate, dear Michael, your willingness of trying to help us to come to America and I am curious about your plans in this respect.

Permit me to explain how I conceive your assistance.

When our papers (the questionnaires and the affidavit) are received by the WPC, they wait their turn to be introduced into the computing system at least half a year.

As soon as they get into the system, you will be allowed to apply for information to the WPC about the stage our case is in and ask the number of our personal file which will lighten further inquiries if necessary. Phone: 703/525-4275. (When I mail the papers to Washington, I will advise you the date of this forwarding).

If the consideration of our file ends in our favor, the biographical data of my family will be sent to the New York central agency involved in the distribution of emigrants to different towns of the USA, where there are Jewish communities that agree to receive newcomers.

Excuse my crossing the bridges before coming to them, please. But I hope you know how important it would be for my family to be placed in a town where Edward could find a situation according to his profession of a painter and book graphic artist.

In this connection, I think that your assistance would consist in trying to find and previously to get in touch with a reliable influential person (or persons) who would say a good word for us in case of need or could give us through you a good advice when necessary.

Almost all big Jewish communities of your country there are local representatives who maintain close contacts with the central agency and some of them have "good friends at court". So talk over the things with our relatives, please. May be, if you put your heads together, you will succeed in finding such a person of influence.

And now I will answer your questions

It is quite impossible to restore the distant history of our family. There are not any archives which could help us in this matter. The generation of Solomon's age died long ago and his daughters and sons, who might clarify some details, also left this world. So we must content ourselves with the information I occasionally got from my father when he was alive.

I have no idea when Solomon settled Dzigovka.

2. When I was quite young I heard that Solomon had a brother whose name I cannot recall, to my shame. Prior to 1900 he left the Ukraine for France and a year or two after he went to another country. From that time his tracks have been lost and attempts of Solomon and my father to find out where he lived were not crowned with success.

3. It may well be that one of the Maidenbergs you came across was some distant relative of ours. But how can one ascertain who of them is? I also happened to meet several Maidenbergs in Bucharest (Rumania) and in Odessa, but they proved to be no more than namesakes. Even the oldest of them had never heard of any relatives of theirs who formerly lived in Dzigovka.

4. Since the family names of many people derive from the name of the place their forefathers came from, you are right to assume that our last name, Maidenberg, derives from Magdeburg in Germany. Note: Magdeburg means *maiden's castle or maiden's fortress* in German and Maidenberg - *maiden's hill* (the hill of maidens). In medieval German the words *Magde* (plural of Magd) and Maiden were synonymic, they had the same meaning. (In modern German, Magd is used in the sense of *maidservant*). The word Burg (/according to the German spelling all the substantives (including common nouns) must be written with a capital letter) taken separately means *a castle or a fortress* and *Berg* is a *hill or a height* in German. Since in former times castles and fortresses were usually built on a hill, the people who settled around it might name the place of their habitation at will - with the ending *burg* or *berg*. Hence it follows that Magdeburg and Maidenberg mean on and the same place.

5. I have never heard of any estrangement for a period of years after Joseph declined David's offer. I know that they corresponded with each other in Yiddish. Unfortunately, David's letters to Joseph have also been lost. We have only a photo of him which he sent us after the war. Other photos we had received from him prior to 1941 burnt when our house in Beltsy was reduced to ashes in the first days of the war.

6. The profession of a lawyer did not satisfy me because "freedom of speech" and other "freedoms" were proclaimed in the Soviet Constitution just for form's sake and in order to deceive gullible people. Practicing law in the Soviet Union was

not a job for honest men whose moral principles and convictions differed from the false concepts imposed by the region.

7. I will write you about my sister and her daughters as well as of the other branches of our clan in another time.

If I do not err, I have written to someone of you that last year Herman Khused, the son-in-law of my cousin Fanya Perelroisen, suddenly died at the age of 45 from an infarction. He was a very intelligent and good man.

I thank Milton for the press-cutting I have just received from him. It is a selection of small articles under the heading "From Russia with hope". The largest of them and the photographs are about a young family from Kishinev who arrived in Indianapolis in June. They feel happy to start a new life after having fled the Soviet Union. By the way, when reading the article, I came across the abbreviation JFCS. I suppose that it means the name of an American Jewish Philanthropic Society. Please let me know the meaning of the abbreviation in full.

I hope you will also convey warm greetings from us to the "old" and new émigrés of our clan when eventually you contact with them. How is Reed getting on? Have you any good news from him? I know you share my letters with him too.

We hope that this will find you and all your loved ones in good health and happy.

With best wishes and fond regards to all,

Amnon Maidenberg and family

P.S. I am enclosing three photographs. Two of them are for the archive of our clan you have been working out with such diligence. I do not know exactly the year when Pearl and Solomon and their daughters had their group photo taken since I find difficulty in estimating the age of Manya who is sitting on Solomon's knee in the photo (she was born in 1903).

Amnon reports on the dire economic situation in which he finds himself. He does not want to emigrate to Israel, yet understands the long odds of obtaining entry to the U.S. He sends a detailed list of basic goods needed by his family. Kishinev, April 1-12, 1992.

My dear cousins and dear relatives,

I was very glad to receive your letter of February 3, dear Milt. We got it only on the 30th of March because it wasn't properly addressed. Usually we get your letters in 3 or 4 weeks. The name of the street we live in is Bulevard Stefan cel Mare and not "Cel de mare street" as it was written on the envelope. (The word *bulevard* means *avenue* in Rumanian and the abbreviated form it is *Bul.* Or Bvd.)

The enclosed press clippings you selected for me show that you are well informed about the situation in Moldova and in other republics of the former USSR which are sovereign states now. Of course, their declaration of independence as well as their becoming members of the UNO were most important political events. We are very pleased that friendly relations have been established between Moldova and Israel; that there is no more discrimination against Jews who now can openly observe their traditions and celebrations, that they can learn Hebrew and the history of their peoples; that Moldova signed the final act of human rights in Helsinki; that a U.S. Embassy has recently been opened in Kishinev, etc. But in spite of all this, life became harder and more disturbing than it was a year ago.

The clash with the separatists from the part of Moldova which is situated on the left side of the river Dniester has taken a dangerous turn that can develop into a real civil war. There are already tens of killed and hundreds of wounded in the skirmishes. We watch the events over the radio since as ill luck would have it, our T.V. set stopped working and cannot be repaired.

As a result of the lifting of state control on prices in January, the cost of food and other necessities has increased 10-30 times as much. In this connection wages and old-age pensions have also been increased but only 2-3 times as much.

Last summer when the inflation began galloping and the exchange rate of one dollar raised to 27 rubles 60 kopecks, my pension and my wife's together with Edward's monthly earnings amounted to 800 rubles which were estimated at \$24. This year we get 1500 rubles per month, but at the present rate of exchange they value only \$15.

In the last months because of the sky-high cost of living we have been cutting down more than by half our expenses on food, medicine etc. but still cannot make ends meet. Most of the people are in a similar condition here, except those who have superfluous things they can sell or those who from time to time are sent material support by their relatives or good friends who live abroad. There is also a small number of nouveaux riches who are not affected by the exorbitant inflation and shortages and can afford any high prices. They are mainly among the stock jobbers, profiteers, black marketers, bribe takers and among other swindlers who catch big fish in the troubled water.

I am most thankful to you, dear Milt, for your sincere intention to lend us a hand in order that we could survive in the very hard period of transition. Unfortunately, we have not received from you any letter with an enclosed \$20 bill for which we could get 2 thousand rubles now. In January the black marketers offered 150 rubles for one dollar, and in March only 100 rubles. I don't know whether you enclosed the bill in a registered letter (with statement of value) or not. In any case it is clear that it was confiscated or simply stolen. So I think you shouldn't make more attempts to help us in such a way.

Some Americans sent funds to their relatives in Moldova with trustworthy persons who were on a visit to the U.S. or with those who were going to visit Kishinev for one or another purpose. I understand that such persons can be met only by a lucky accident, and I tell you this just in case.

When reading your letter I concluded from your words "We will help you if we can. Tell us how and your needs..." that some others of our folks in America share your noble intentions and would like to participate in their realization. Please convey them my sincere thanks. It seems to me that if each of you did his bit in sending us some gift items he/she can afford, this would be the best way of helping us in the very hard time we have been having.

I am enclosing a list of items that would be of great use for us and which you may choose at your own discretion and taste. By the way, custom duties for gift items who arrive from the U.S. have been canceled in Moldova. I also enclose the addresses and telephones of some American offices through which people receive gift parcels in the last year. It is most likely that in the meantime some other offices of this kind (including philanthropic) have been set up in your country. So when you get in touch with one of them it would be appropriate to inquire: a) to what weight are individual parcels limited, b) if it is allowed to send food and clothing in the same parcel, c) if only new items may be sent.

Now I will answer your question *whether we still want to leave, and if so, where.*

I hope you do not blame me for not wishing to emigrate to Israel. Besides my previous motivations there is another reason that keeps us from going to Eretz: the Israeli climate proves to be fatal to those of the old-aged olim who are ailing with cardio-vascular diseases...

As to our wish to leave for the United States, in all probability it will remain but one of our infeasible dreams. Permit me to explain you at greater length why I think so. We have never thought and would never agree to come to the U.S. without receiving beforehand the *status of refugees* since only in this way we wouldn't be a burden to any of our relatives even for a short time. Any other status which doesn't guarantee the newcomers old-age pension, free medical aid etc. is unacceptable for us.

I know that those who wished to permanently move from the USSR to the United States had to complete questionnaires (applications), to enclose a notarized affidavit of relationship from a close relative in the US and to mail all these documents to the Washington Processing Center for consideration. (Close relatives are spouses, children, parents, brothers or sisters.)

Practically all the Jewish families who did so sooner or later were given the status of refugees at the US Embassy in Moscow, but last summer I met a former teacher who told me that although he had attached to his application an affidavit of relationship from his cousin who lived in New York, he and his wife received such a status and were going to leave in some weeks. He also told me that during the short interview at the US Embassy they were asked but one question: why they wanted to leave the USSR.

Knowing that economic difficulties are not taken into account when the question is about the concession of the status of refugees they answered that it was because of Soviet anti-Semitism and cited some examples showing that they in person were objects to discrimination. As things now stand it would be a sin to allege that Jews are persecuted in Moldova.

It was this story that urged me to ask Sylvia for sending me an affidavit of relationship. In her very warm reply letter of last September she promised me to comply with my request as soon as possible and even enclosed a form of an affidavit

she had partly completed in order that I could look over what she did. But since then I heard nothing from her. Of course, we were most concerned about her silence but didn't want to bother her.

Dear Sylvia, only after reading the letter we have recently received from the Brenners I understood that you lapsed into silence because you didn't want to grieve us.

I got to know from them a very important detail about which nobody told me before: If the sender of the affidavit of relationship is a naturalized as a US citizen, the recipient has no other hope than to get the so called status "parole" which does not give the immigrants (in the first three years after their arrival) any of the privileges mentioned above. Three years aren't three days. Only lunatics or super impertinent people could think of living such a long time in full dependence of their relatives who are far of being millionaires. So, my dear cousin, forgive me for the trouble I've given to you with the blessed affidavit.

The Brenners also advised that they were feeling and doing well and would like us to join them in their "wonderful new motherland". So they decided that Lidia (Victor's mother) who isn't yet a U.S. citizen would send us an affidavit attesting she is my cousin.

Unfortunately, in the next day when Konstantin Brener (Lidia's husband) consulted the "HIAS" apropos of this, he was told that the number of applications from those who have direct (close) relatives in the U.S. has raised to 500 thousand. So there is no hope that the applications of persons who have only cousins in America will be considered in the next 8-10 years. May be their figures are exaggerated but all the same I see that we will not be able to realize our wish to migrate to the U.S.

Note: They call HIAS (in Russian letters XUAC) the American central agency in New York which is involved in the placement of Jewish emigres and give them every possible support. I do not know the right name of this agency in English. I can only tell you one of its telephone numbers which I was given by a person who before his departure received from this agency prepaid tickets for him and the members of his family: 212/674-6800.

Our health (mine and my wife's) is not good but we are happy that it is not critical now.

So dear Milt, I answered in full all your questions. I trust that you and yours are well and in good mood. I hope that this long letter will be shared as soon as possible with all our relatives in America who are good friends to me.

If you feel that making copies of such a long letter would tax your powers, please charge somebody to do it for you.

Remember me to Frank and his family with whom I have never had any direct contact, to my shame.

I hope to be hearing from you soon. Don't forget to write us how Toby and her children are getting on as well as about Reed.

Our best wished for good health, good luck and peace to all of you.

With fond regards,

Amnon and family

P.S. It would be desirable that somebody of you sends copies of this letter also to the Rosenbergs and the Brenners.

Please acknowledge the receipt of the letter and of the enclosed list.

Excuse my errors, please. Believe me that I was not able to rewrite the letter again.

The list of articles we need. (They may be sent in 2-3 stages.)

I. Food products (not hermetically sealed)

Egg powder	- 5 lb
Dried milk	- 5 lb
Olives	- 5 lb
Dried apricots	- 10 lb
Shelled walnuts	- 5 lb
Shelled peanuts	- 5 lb
Instant coffee	- 600 gr
Cocoa	- 400 gr
Citric Acid	- 200 gr

Polyvitamins - 10-15 pack

note: fish or meat products (including smoke-dried) are not allowed to be sent without a certificate from a local veterinary inspector.

Notions, haberdashery, medical instruments

A set of sewing needles	1
White and black thread	
if not in big spools	10
Some other small spools may be added (of different colors)	
Elastic	15 meters
Suspenders	1-2 pairs
Razor blades (10 per packet)	10-15 packets
Cheap cigarette lighters	3-5 pc.
A flashlight with batteries	1
A stethoscope (medical instrument for auscultation)	1

Electrical appliances

- Electric bulbs of 40-60 candlepower, voltage 220 -20-30
- Electric shaver (which can shave wiry hair)
- One electric hairclipper or two hand hairclippers of different sizes
- A portable TV set (it maybe not new but in good condition)

Footwear, socks, stockings tights

Man's shoes (leather soles)	
US size 11	1-2 prs
Men's shoes (leather soles)	
US size - 12	1-2 prs
Ladies shoes (leather soles)	
US size - 6	1-2 prs
According to these sizes:	
Warm socks (wool or part wool)	2 prs
Socks (part cotton)	6 prs
Stockings (stretch nylon)	3 prs
Tights	6 prs

V. Other articles

A tablecloth (patterned)	1	
A bedspread		1

Clothing

For me (My height is 170 cm, width of shoulders - 50 cm. Waist 107)

A men's raincoat with warm lining

A men's sweater-jacket (or a light jacket of non-knitted material)

Pajama pants (cotton or part cotton) 2 pr

For Edward (his height is 178 cm. Width of shoulders 50 cm, waist 80 cm)

One pair of jeans and one sport suit of durable material.

If possible, one electric hairdryer.

Amnon expresses thanks to Sylvia, Ellen and Jeffrey for a food parcel. He has also received a mysterious \$120, and wonders who might have sent it. Kishinev, July 3, 1992.

My very dear Sylvia, Ellen and Jeffrey,

This morning we received the prepackaged food parcel you had ordered for us and I cannot find words to express our gratitude to you all.

In the same day, my dearest Ellen, we also received your letter of June 4 and I felt pride for having a niece who possesses such a noble, sensitive and good heart.

May all of you and your dear ones be blessed with good health and good fortune.

All our love and fond regards

P.S. About a month ago I was given 120 US dollars by an unknown young woman from Odessa. She told me that her name was Galya Podolskaya and that in September she would emigrate to San Francisco, California, where her father-in-law Alexander Milgrom lives (I don't know him either).

It was this Milgrom who had sent her our home address and asked her to hand the money to Amnon Maidenberg in person. I suppose he did it on the request of someone (or some ones) of our relatives in America and I was waiting for a letter announcing me who the real sender was, but I haven't received any as yet. Can you help me to guess the riddle? I'm going to write a letter to Milt and will ask him also if he can.

Since Galya Podolskaya had told me that I could use the money at my own discretion, I spent it in the meantime. We paid off our debts and bought some things we urgently needed.

I hope you know about the civil war which broke out in Moldova. If it drags on for a long time that would be a great tragedy.

Amnon describes the civil war taking place in the region called Transnistria. It is further disrupting life and generating refugees. The mystery of the \$120 gift is solved. Kishinev, July 4-6, 1992.

My dear cousin and friend Milton,

I received your reply to my April letter on the 4th of July. I am most grateful to you for having sent copies of such a long letter to all the family. Thanks to you, I've heard from some other relatives in the meantime.

In June I received for the first time a letter from David (Frank's son) and I hope he will send you a copy of my response to him.

On July 3 I received from Sylvia's daughter, Ellen, a prepacked food parcel and a letter which I am enclosing. The food stuffs are delicious and we will try to use them as sparingly as possible. The address of the Relief agency that ships prepacked food parcels to Moldova is:

TORGSYN, Head Office
291 Geary Str. Suite 511
San Francisco, Ca 94102
Tel. (415) 781-6655
Fax (415) 781-6134

Dear Milt, maybe you can help me to clear up the following question. Some weeks ago I was given 120 US dollars by an unknown young woman (Galya Podolskaya) who lives in Odessa and is going to the US in August or September.

She told me that her father-in-law, Alexander Milgrom, who lives in San Francisco (and whom I don't know either) had sent her own home address and asked her to deliver the dollars to me in person. I guess that Milgrom had done it on the request of some one of our relatives in America and I have been waiting for a letter from the sender (or senders) but as yet I haven't received any. So if you know who they are, please advise me. In the meantime, the circumstances compelled me to spend the money. I spent it on paying off our debts, \$20 on medicine, \$20, on flour, grain and groats, and luckily I bought an electric cooker for \$10. I say "luckily" since now electric cookers cannot be bought here even at speculative prices, and the town-dwellers can cook nothing without them. We found ourselves in such a condition because the separatists from Transnistria [over the Dniester] had cut off

the pipe which provides with gas the population of Kishinev and the other towns and settlements situated on the right side of the river Dniester.

I hope that none of you will blame me for having bought also a TV set. I cannot do without it in our turbulent times when every hour brings important news which we can't help watching. I paid 55 dollars for it. (The cost of a new one is \$150 new.)

Note: Transnistria is the part of Moldova's territory situated on the left side of the river Dneister. (Prior to 1979 this territory belonged to the USSR while territory on the right side of the river belonged to royal Rumania.)

Under the pretense that sooner or later Moldova will join Rumania, the separatists from over the Dniester recognize neither the constitutional authorities of Moldova nor Rumanian as the state language in Transnistria.

Since the extremists of the popular Front Party in their articles and speeches have been carrying on propaganda for a sooner reunion with Rumania, the Transnistrians (who for many reasons are categorically against such a union) proclaimed their separate "Moldovian Republic."

You, Michael and the others who also follow the events in the former USSR probably read about the horrors of the civil war in our part of the world which resulted from the situation mentioned above. Most of the people hate this fratricidal war and they stand for a peaceful and diplomatic solution of the conflict. That is why I am hopeful that common sense will prevail and the belligerents will come to an understanding by making mutual concessions.

We send you and yours best wishes and fond regards,

Amnon Maidenberg and family

Please excuse my errors

P.S. Some minutes ago I was called to the telephone and was surprised hearing Fima Rosenberg's voice.

He asked me whether I had received 120 dollars, \$20 from him and \$100 from Sylvia. He also told me to go within this month to Odessa where Galya Podolskaya or her mother, Bella Vladimirovna, will give me some more money, 300 dollars.

Then the audibility became poor, and I failed to make out who the senders were. I believed he promised to write me a detailed letter.

Odessa is about three hours away from Kishinev. But now, when the bridges across the Dniester are blockaded one must make a long way round and change trains in order to reach Odessa.

Since the train cars are jam-packed with people (mainly with refugees) I will send Edward (my son) to receive the money.

**Amnon has received money from Michael. He is concerned over a food parcel Milt attempted to send. The harvest has failed, and prices are soaring.
Kishinev, September 12-15, 1992**

My dear cousins and dear nephews,

I hope, dear Milt, you have received my July letter in which I told you about the events that took place in June and in the first days of July. Now permit me to let you know the further developments.

In August I received three letters from the U.S. Edward (my son) brought them to the hospital where I have been undergoing a course of treatment since my health seriously impaired in the last months. Now I feel much better.

Fortunately, medical care in Moldova continues to be free of cost despite the catastrophic state of economy etc. but there is a great shortage of medicaments, and when a patient needs some medicine which are critical, he has to buy them at the black marketers who now charge dollars for them.

The first of the letters mentioned above was from Fima Rosenberg who told me that the \$300 were sent by Michael (you know from my previous letter that when Fima phoned me from San Francisco, I couldn't make out who their sender was because the audibility became very poor).

I am confident, dear Milt, you will advise Michael that the money was duly received and that his fraternal aid was a life-saving action. I hope I'll be discharged from hospital within a week or two and will write him personally.

The second letter, dated July 7, was from TORGSYN.

This is what they wrote me in Russian:

“In June we received a letter from your relative in the USA, Milton Maidenberg, who wants to send you a package. Unfortunately, he didn't know the variety of goods and services we can offer. Besides, he couldn't understand most of the items you are requesting. So we sent him our catalogues and order forms printed both in English and in Russian which can clarify all the questions in this respect. The item numbers of both variants are the same ones (similar).

“Now we are enclosing such catalogues for you too. Please look through them and send your relative the list of the items you need (total price is less than \$79).

“If our prepackaged food selections do not suit you for one reason or another, Torgsyn offers you a wide choice of individual items from which you may create your own package.

“When we receive from your relative the completed order form (the list of requested items) as well as his check or money order, your package will be sent promptly to you.”

The third letter (dated July 28) was from Sylvia and her daughter Ellen. They write that they will happy to send another food package for me and my family. Of course, it is very nice of them and we appreciate their sincere concern about us.

You are probably in the know that besides the civil war in Moldova, we had also an unprecedented dry and hot summer which destroyed almost all the crops in the fields and the grass in the pastures. As a result, many hard months of starvation are awaiting most of the population in our republic.

That is why I am going to ask Sylvia and Ellen for sending us some basic food which will last us a longer time, such as powdered milk, powdered eggs and mazola oil as well as Surf (soap) powder. These items are available at the Torgsyn and the total weight of the package is almost 73 kg.

We met with great joy the cease-fire in Moldova and we would like it to be a lasting one.

Unfortunately, the discords and political ambitions still persist, and if the peacemaking troops (sent by Russia and Ukraine with the consent of the belligerents) are recalled for some reason, the hostilities may break out over again.

Shana Tova! A happy, healthy and fulfilling New Year to all of you and to all your loved ones.

With fondest regards,

Amnon Maidenberg and family

Amnon describes his hospitalization and medical care. He apologizes that he has spent most of the money sent to him for black market medicine, and for a television to watch the news. Kishinev, October 5, 1992.

My dear cousin Sylvia,

We were very glad and moved receiving your and Ellen's letters of July 28, 29. Excuse me that I was not able to respond them immediately, please. Edward brought me the letters to the hospital where I have been undergoing a course of treatment. My health seriously impaired in the last months, but at present, thank God, I feel much better and hope to return home before the High Holy Days begin.

We appreciate highly your understanding and good nature and are most grateful to you for being the first to lend us a helping hand after you had received from Milt a copy of my April letter to all the family.

Just when the civil war has begun in Moldova, our TV set became unfit for use and it couldn't be repaired. It was an ordeal for me to be deprived of the possibility to watch tragic events that were going on and other most important news which were televised three times a day. So I hope you will not blame me for having spent \$55 of the "mystery" money that we had received from Galya Podolskaya on a TV set. It is not a new one but it's in a good state and works well. Now we would have to pay for such a TV no less than \$200.

The rest of the money was spent on different food stuffs, medicine, etc. Your prepackaged food parcel came also very opportunely and we tried to use everything as sparingly as possible.

Now permit me to tell you what happened in July, August and this month. Some days before I went to hospital I was called to the telephone and was most surprised hearing Fima Rosenberg's voice. First of all he unveiled the mystery of the 120 dollars (that \$100 are from you, dear Sylvia, and \$20 from him), then he told me that either I or Edward must go in Odessa without delay, where the same young woman (Galya Podolskaya) will give us 300 dollars more. But just when I asked him who sent us funds this time, the audibility has become so weak that it was impossible to make out his reply. I sent Edward to Odessa. He received the money and brought it home safely. After some time we received a letter from Fima telling us that the \$300 dollars were sent by Michael but they might be from other Maidenbergs too.

Fima wrote that he and all of his family were happy of having left the former USSR in proper time and had emigrated to the USA that all the American relatives whom they have met are kind and most agreeable people, that his and Mara's problem is mastering English, that they have already bought a car and so on. In my response letter I asked Fima to advise Michael that the money he had sent us was duly received and that I will write him after my discharging from hospital.

Medical care in Moldova remained free of cost for the time being. But since there is a great shortage of medicaments, when a patient needs some medicines which are critical, he can find them only at the black marketers who now charge dollars for them.

After a thorough check-up that lasted nearly two weeks the hospital doctors came to the conclusion that in my case the most effective treatment would be interarterial injections in the upper part of my legs (in the groins) and they told me that I and my family must do all we can to get somewhere the medicine for the injections (Solcoceryl, Trental and Timol). So we were compelled to buy all these medicaments in the black market and to pay \$180 for them.

You know that Shura (Sheiva) is a heart sufferer and when she went together with Edward to purchase the medicines for me, a speculator offered her some packets of critical cardiac pills (nitrong, cardofen and carinfor) which she needed but couldn't find them anywhere and she bought them for \$50.

So we spent in the total 230 dollars of the money that Michael had sent us on medicine. Although we did it because of absolute necessity, we are shamed of having spent so much money in such a short time.

Interarterial injection in the groin is given only in hospitals and by experienced surgeons. My surgeon told me one day that he would rather perform ten operations of appendicitis than to find with the suture needle the artery in my groin. This morning I was given the last injection of the sort and now the tortures are already behind. I'm happy that the treatment helped me to restore my health. The racking cramps in my legs which in the last months were awaking me nearly every night have completely disappeared. On a level road I can walk again normally 100-120 meters without stopping. My high blood pressure also dropped and it is almost normal now.

We met with great joy the cease-fire in Moldova and we pray and would like it to be a lasting one. Unfortunately, the discords between the former belligerents

and political ambitions still persist, and nobody can be sure that the hostilities will not break out again sooner or later.

You possibly heard that besides the civil war in Moldova, we had also and unprecedented dry and hot summer that brought to a bad harvest in the fields. So the coming winter and spring promise to be seasons of starvation for most of the population in our republic.

Food-stuffs and other top priorities have risen hundred fold in price. But now because of the crop failure they become still more and more expensive. Most people are filled with indignation that in addition to all this the new-made businessmen charge hard currency (US dollars) for their goods and services.

Ellen's letter and yours, dear Sylvia, arrived in the same day and we were deeply moved that you are so thoughtful of us. We are most thankful to Goldie and Susan for their willingness to join your "first-aid team" and to send us the next parcel.

I hope that you all understand how ashamed we are to give you so much trouble and to put you to such expenses and that we would never do it if we weren't in such a desperate situation.

I looked through the catalogue sent by Torgsyn and was surprised noticing that the prices on food and on other items they offer are rather high. (I was surprised since many of these items which are available in the black market can be bought here at lower prices when one has US dollars to pay for them.)

So I am enclosing a list of only most essential items that would last us a longer time and help us to withstand the months of famine. I chose them in the catalogue mentioned above and I guess that Ellen was also sent a similar one.

Note: Torgsyn is the office where Ellen ordered the first food parcel for us and we received it within several days. The address of the office is:

Torgsyn
5542 Geary Boulevard
San Francisco, CA 94121
Tel: (415) 752-5546
or (415) 752-0158

By the way, Milton also wanted to send us a parcel and I sent him a list of some necessary items which differ from these ones. But we haven't heard from him yet. Did he write to you after he had sent you a copy of my April letter?

Forgive us again for giving you so much trouble and don't take it amiss, please.

L'Shana Tova! A Happy New year to you all and to your loved ones. Be blessed with good health, good fortune and peace. May your best dreams come true.

With much love and best regards to all,

Amnon, Shura, Edward

P.S. It so happened that I started writing this letter in hospital and ended it at home on October 5.

Your handwriting is very nice and legible, my dear Tsivyehleh. Nevertheless I feel that I will also miss (and even now am missing) the computer which helped you to type your letters. I hope you will find a way to share this letter at least with Ellen who has also been waiting for my response. I also hope that in your next letter you will let us know about your life after retiring from NCR. How is Susan getting on, about your other children and their children and spouses as well as about Goldie and her family.

We never forget you, including your little ones, and in my hour of meditation I pray for all of you. We hope you are now well and in a good shape and send you again our love and best wishes.

Amnon and family

Michael Perov, grandson of Elkeh, faxes a letter of introduction to Mike soon after a phone conversation with him. He made the call one day after he learned, for the first time, that he has American relatives. Moscow, November 13, 1992.

Dear Michael,

It was really nice talking to you by phone, because I was told about your existence only the day before. However strange it could seem to you, but I had no idea about any of my relatives living in the USA except of those who moved there recently. I mean Fima and Dima (as far as I am informed they live somewhere in L.A.) and Brenner family, whom I've seen last year already in New York. This situation can be partly explained by the difficulties of Soviet life, when it was at least not popular to mention your Jewish relatives, especially abroad. This is why, for instance, in my passport it is written that I am Russian, though my mother is Jewish.

As I already told you I am a son of Dora (Dvoira to be precise) Perelroisen, who was one of two daughters of Olga (Elkeh) Maidenberg. I hope that Amina gave you complete information about my mother and her sister Fanya's families, so I will briefly tell you about myself.

My name is Michael as well and I was born on July 16, 1956. In 1978 I graduated from the economic cybernetics faculty of the Moscow Institute of National Economy. Since that time I worked in the Institute for systems Studies of the Academy of Sciences, specializing in the field of management sciences. Last three years I have been deputy head of foreign relations department of the institute and have worked with the scientists and businessmen from many countries. At the same time I used to work as a consultant for some western companies, and now became a representative of the Austrian firm AMP, which actually is a daughter company of the American company AMP, Inc. This firm is producing various types of connectors, and my task is to promote its business in the CIS countries.

I have married in 1988 and spent my honeymoon in the USA (but without my wife). It so happened that my first trip to USA have been delayed several times and finally I went there in the January 19, 1989 just in time to attend inauguration of George Bush (and I really did it). My first trip have been very remarkable, because within a three weeks I've been in Washington D.C., Arizona, California, and Wisconsin. Since that time I have been three times more in the USA (twice on

vacation with my wife). I hope that next year I will go there once more and if it happen, I will definitely let you know.

It is not so easy to present everything in one page form, so if you will give me your address, I will send you a more detailed letter with some pictures of my family. I would like also to know something about your life and of course I would like to see the genealogical tree.

My home address is: Russia, 107589, Moscow, Khabarorskaya ul.22, corpus 2 kv. 241. Phone: 007 095 469 61 23. You can use also my office phone: 938 28 46 and fax: 938 28 05.

Looking forward for hearing from you.

Sincerely yours,

Michael Perov

Amnon has met with Miriam Weiner, the genealogical researcher with whom Mike has been working. He sends news about his sister, her family, and a number of other family members. Kishinev, October 24, 1992.

My dear nephew Michael,

First of all, permit me to express my deep gratitude to you for both presents. The first one helped Shura and Edward to buy for me some medicine that when I was in hospital the doctors told them to find at all costs. The medicaments were available only at the black market but they proved to be life-saving remedies in my case.

The second present will help me and my family to withstand the coming winter and spring which promise to be seasons of starvation mainly because of the unprecedented crop failure this year in our Republic.

I was glad to meet Miriam Weiner. I answered all the questions she asked me and which I was able to answer. Miriam came to us on the day after Yom Kippur. By the way, I was at the same synagogue where she attended the services on that day, but we haven't known each other yet. During her first visit, we had a detailed talk concerning the history of our family and about everything you had asked of her to do. Before leaving she took videos and photos of me and my family and told me that she would come to see us again on October 20 (or so) when she returns to Kishinev.

I was hopeful that at the Vinnitsa archives she would find some traces of Solomon and Pearl, of their parents or of Solomon's brother. But no traces of any of them could be found there.

So we have to content ourselves with the fact that in Dzigovka, Miriam succeeded in finding the house where Solomon and Pearl had lived and she visited the cemetery where they were buried, that she took videos and photos of the ancestral village and of everything she considered necessary. Unfortunately, Miriam couldn't find the tombstone over Solomon's last resting place and take a photo of it since all the old tombs in the cemetery are covered with thick bushes.

I was told about all this by Miriam yesterday, when she paid us the second visit. She took some other videos and photos of me and my family and promised me that in December when she returns to Kishinev from America she would show us the film and give us the copies of the photos she has taken.

Dear Mike, you have never asked me about Pearl's brothers or sisters. I know that she had a brother, Hersh Rizher who lived in Dzigovka and died soon after the end of WW II in Odessa. His wife Chavah died two years earlier. They had no children. Now I have learned from your "Brief History" that Pearl had also a sister, Haika Feldman and you called her "Tante Haika" ("Tante" means aunt in French and in German).

By the way, Miriam asked me about the provenance of the name Maidenberg and I told her the meaning of it. Did you receive my letter in which I told you also what the family names Maidenberg and Maidenburg mean?

You asked me, dear Mike, to verify the accuracy of the Brief History and also the genealogy you sent me along with Miriam.

It seems to me that Sylvia's parents emigrated to Canada not earlier than in 1926. I think so because when Esther and Moses (Mosheh) came from the Soviet Ukraine and lived in my father's house in Beltsy nearly a year I was 13 or 14 years old (the year of my birth is 1913) and Sylvia was a child of 3 years or so.

You will have to correct also Esther's year of birth in the genealogy.

Please take the photo that shows Solomon and Pearl and their five daughters. Find Manya (she's sitting on Solomon's knee) and Esther who is standing in the left edge of the second row. The age of Manya on the photo is no more than 5 and Esther's is 13-14. Since we know precisely that Manya was born in 1903 we can conclude that Esther's year of birth is 1895 or 1894 and by no means 1901.

Elkeh's daughter, Fanya Perelroisen, advised me that her granddaughter, Julia Khused who is a post-graduate student in the Moscow University married in October to a Russian young man whose name is Maxim (I couldn't make out his last name). He is older than Julia by one year and is a lecturer in Physics in the same university where Julia studies.

Fanya is a doctor and a good woman. She lives in Chernigov, Ukraine. Her daughter, Luda works as a teacher of piano in the same town.

I think you should put the abbreviation div. under the name Sasha Shamachmudov "Fanya's husband" since for 45 years he doesn't live with Fanya. He has another family in Middle Asia (a wife and many children).

Yasha Dektyar is not divorced.

The younger daughter of Elkeh, Dora, went to Moscow when she married to Alexei Perov who was a widower. Alexei's first wife died from cancer and she left him two daughters, Svyeta and Katya.

Dora gave birth to Misha when she was married to Alexei Perov. After Alexei's death (he also died from cancer), Dora worked as a librarian. Now she is retired.

Fima Rosenberg asked me in his letter which was sent along with Miriam whether the first wife of Perov was Dora's relative and what was her name. The name of Perov's first wife was Many (her maiden name Perelroisen). Her father (Meyer Perelroisen) and Dora's father (Melech Perelrosen) were brothers. By the way, Moses Rosen [Sylvia's father] was a brother of Meyer and Melech Perelrosen.

I do hope, dear Mike, that you have a full information about me, my wife and my son. I must only add that Shura's daughter from her first marriage, Ludmila (Mila) Galanter was born in 1946. She worked as a chief educator in a big kindergarten, and in 1989 she emigrated to Israel together with her husband Gena Peschiamsky, daughter Alla and son-in-law Volodya Bushoy.

My sister Ida and her husband Yasha Dekhtyar live in the town of Tiraspol. Their daughters Ludmila and Polina and their families live also here. My sister and Yasha are retired. Ludmila is working as a head of studies in a high school, her husband Victor Voscoboinik is a programmer and also a referee in table tennis. Their son Vadim is a fourth year student in the institute of medical electronics.

Polina is a pianist and a teacher of music. Her husband Syoma Uchitel works in a factory as an adjuster. Their son Sasha entered this fall the Tiraspol University. They have your address but none of them can write English. They always convey to you greetings and wish you all the best.

My dear I finish this letter since Miriam rang me that within an hour she leaves Kishinev.

Excuse me that there was no time to make a fair copy of the letter and the addresses.

If you could send along with Miriam half a dozen of simple ball pens and some packets of razor-blades we would be most indebted to you.

We were glad to see your sons on the photo, your parents and all of you.

We'd like to welcome you in Kishinev some day.

With fond regards to all,

Amnon and family

Amnon provides a thorough revision of the family genealogy. At his wife's urging, he provides details of his mastery of languages. He is fluent in 10. Kishinev, December 6-11, 1992.

My dear nephew Michael,

I apologize for the delay with making the necessary corrections in the new genealogy chart and in the other wonderful materials you have been working out. I understood very well that the matter was pressing. And if I haven't done it urgently, believe me that it was because of serious reasons. I was in such a state that I had no other way than to follow my doctor's advice. "Better some days later than never."

You cannot imagine how chagrined I was learning about two weeks ago that the year of birth of Elkeh (Olya) was 1892, and not 1881 as I advised you in 1990. I had been told this and other erroneous dates by some of our relatives whom I had the naiveté to trust without verifying their affirmation.

In this connection the birth order of the children of Solomon and Pearl must be changed in the first paragraph of the "Brief History." Elkeh (1892-1973) was their fifth child, and not the third one. (1. Malkeh 2. Goldie 3. David 4. Joseph 5. Elkeh 6. Esther 7. Manya)

Every time when looking at the photo which shows Solomon and Pearl with their five daughters, I cannot agree that Esther was born in 1901 and that she was only by two years older than Manya (b. 1903). Since their disparity in age seems to be 7-8 years, the probability that Esther's year of birth was 1895 or 1896 is by more nearer to the truth.

I have advised you that I doubt whether Sylvia's parents emigrated to Canada in 1924 because when they came from the Ukraine and lived in Beltsy in my father's house for a year or so Sylvia was a child of about three years old. So if Sylvia was really born in 1923, then no one of them left Beltsy for Canada prior to 1926.

In the new genealogic chart the year of Manya's death is not correct. I wonder who urged you to change it. Manya died on May 24, 1981. In the next day I assisted at her funeral and within six days, on May 30, 1981 Frida, Efim Rosenberg's mother died.

Almost all the dates in the genealogic branch of Elkeh proved to be erroneous. So they must be corrected or retyped in accordance with the following list which is thoroughly verified.

Elkeh (Olya)
(1892-1973)
Melech Perelroisen
(1892-1948)

Fanya (b. 1920)
Sasha Shamachmudov
in 1945) (d. 1975)
Evgeny Sutillin
(div.)

_____/_____

Dora (b. 1924)
m. Alexei Perov
(b. 1948)

_____/_____

Dora's stepdaughter
Svetlana Perova

Luda (b. 1944)
Herman Khused

_____/_____

Mikhail (b. 1956)
m. Elena (b. 1959)

_____/_____

Julia (b. 1968)

Nicolai (b. 1977)

Maxim Gorbunov (b. 1967)

Note: Dora has two stepdaughters, Svetlana and Katya, who live in Moscow. They are from A. Perov's first wife, Manya Perelroisen, who, before her death, asked him to marry, after her passing, one of the two cousins on her father's side, Fanya or Dora.

Dora abstained from giving me the address and other information about Katya, her husband and children. I hope that this information will be available from Dora's son, Mikhail Perov. By the way, did Victor Brenner tell you that Mikhail had visited with him in Brooklyn? None of them advised us of this, and we learned about it just by chance.

Some corrections and additions to Joseph's branch

Hannah Marmor, Joseph's second wife (d. 1989)

His daughter Ida was born in 1921 (as it was shown in the first genealogic chart.)
She is not divorced from Yasha Dekhtyar.

Amnon has a stepdaughter, Ludmilla. Her maiden name is Galanter. She is a natural daughter of Amnon's wife, Shura. In 1989 Ludmilla emigrated to Israel with her husband Gennady Peschionski (b. 1946) and her daughter Alla (b.1970) who is married to Vladimir Bushoi (1966). In Israel Alla gave birth to a daughter Yaella (b. 1990).

Note concerning the name of Manya's son "Danya"

It is well known that this first name is the Russian diminutive of Daniel. (Like Dan in English). But not long ago I learned that according to his documents "Danya" Rosenberg's first name is David and not Daniel. After the end of WW II David ("Danya") graduated from a military school and until his retiring he served as an officer in the Soviet Army.

Shura, my wife, is indignant at my modesty

About two weeks ago she told me reprovingly that because of my modesty which exceeds all bounds (?) my relatives have such scant idea of my personality and they know only that I am a retired school teacher. She asked me in this connection whether I think that one can often meet a teacher or another educated person who is a polyglot and knows ten languages like I do. Then she proposed me to name at least one teacher in our republic, except Amnon Maidenberg, who had been entrusted with the translation of selected works of classical literature from Russian, French and other languages into Moldovian. Shura concluded her harangue saying that 10-15 years ago she didn't think me to become a forgetful old man who would read his oration, using a crib. This was a allusion to the video that Miriam had taken of me. I replied her, "No man is handsome or wise at all times."

I have never told you, dear Mike, that I'm a polyglot or of my bygone activity in the field of literary translation for the simple reason that from my very childhood I can't stand self-praising and hate boasters. If you are curious about the ten languages that Shura mentioned, I will try to enumerate them and at the same time I'll control whether they are really so many.

Here is the list: Yiddish, Russian, Rumanian, Moldavian, French, German, Spanish, Ladino, English, Hebrew. Besides, I speak rather fluently Ukrainian since in Beltsy our neighbors and many of my schoolmates were Ukrainians. So we spoke to each other chiefly in their language or in Yiddish. Don't wonder at it. At that time there were non-Jews who lived or worked amongst Jews a long time and spoke Yiddish very well. I understand also some other languages. (Italian, Bulgarian, etc.) whose vocabulary has much in common with the other Romanic or Slavonic languages which I know well.

The knowledge of languages stood me in good stead during WW II when I was some time a military interpreter and then legal investigator. I held this post also after the war and was happy that I could continue to avenge on the accomplices of the Nazis for the atrocities they had committed during the Fascist occupation. In 1947 I was discharged from office on grounds of staff reduction and transferred to the reserve. But there is no doubt that in fact I was dismissed because of my origin.

When I informed you that I had been a lawyer, I meant by this that I had practiced a legal profession. My fault is that I haven't named directly my former job. I attended the bar in 1948, but practiced the profession of barrister only for seven months. I gave it up for the reasons I have told you in one of my letters.

Enclosed are supplementary family address and date lists.

Dear Mike, I can't compose myself thinking of your intention to get out to our relatives copies of the "revised" family history and genealogy by the end of the year. This means that you would have done it before you can introduce into the copies most important corrections and some additions I have pointed out in this letter. That is why I sent you a telegram warning you against doing it now.

If our relatives receive from you copies of the revised again and authentic genealogic material in January, they will understand that the delay is not through your fault and that the noble work you have been doing is incompatible with impatience and haste.

I am most awfully sorry for having been unable to write this letter in proper time just when the matter brooded no delay. I hope you understand that it didn't depend on my good will and you'll forgive me if there is anything to forgive.

I also hope and pray my health and Shura's to be normal when we and Edward welcome you to Kishinev in the next summer or fall.

We received recently two food parcels and a letter from Ellen Kern telling me that Sylvia, Jeff, Donna, Susan and Goldie (Sylvia's sister) had also contributed money toward these parcels the total weight of which is about 16 kg (egg and milk powder - 4 kg; flour and corn meal - 4 kg; rice, buckwheat and rolled oats - 3 kg; sugar, Mazola oil - 2 kg; Surf powder - 8 lb).

As soon as I mail this letter to you, I will write them all a letter of thanks (through Ellen) for their ready sympathy and succor. It was Ellen who found the Torgsyn and the single among our relatives who has been ordering through this firm in San Francisco food parcels for us.

Permit me, dear nephew, to express again our deep gratitude to you and to all of our relatives who joined in sending us the money gift which you named so tactfully "an early Hanukah present." In the situation when day after day the economic crisis is becoming more and more acute and the purchasing power of the ruble has dropped to a catastrophic low level, your present is really a life-buoy for us.

Dear Michael, you advised me that the dollars were from the entire Maidenberg family. Please tell me whether you meant by this that they were from all the adult descendants of David Maidenberg's branch. And if someone of another branch of our family had contributed money towards the present, be so kind as to let me know who had. I hope you will not fail to comply with my request when you acknowledge the receipt of this letter.

We were happy to learn from your address list of the Maidenberg family that Joseph, your older son, and Toby's children, Johna and David, are sophomores. We hope you'll let us know what each of them is studying and in what direction may lay their work on completing their studies. We also trust that you will advise us when Ted and Dan enter in their turn some university.

And in the meantime we join in wishing them all, their parents and grandparents, all our dear American relatives a Happy New Year.

Be blessed with strong health, good luck and peace.

With fond regards,

Amnon and family

Excuse my blots, please.

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Amnon tells Sylvia and her family how crucial the food shipments have been to his family. Kishinev, December 25, 1992.

My dear cousins Sylvia and Goldie, dear Ellen, Jeff, Donna and Susan:

I hope you know from my telegram of December 19 that both parcels arrived safely and from the following story you will learn why I advised you about this with such a delay.

One of the parcels was received in November 24 and the other on the 1st of December. On the 2nd of December I wrote Ellen a letter in which I acknowledged the receipt of the parcels and sent you all our thanks and warm New Year greetings. I promised you that within a couple of weeks I'll write you a more detailed letter.

Now you can imagine my disappointment and indignation when 17 days later Shura took out from our mail-box the very letter of December 2 with an annotation that it was returned because of the new prices on post services.

One can quite often encounter here such irresponsible practices and careless work. People complain that in the last months even registered letters (sent via Moscow) do not always reach their relatives or friends abroad. Luckily, no one of my letters have been lost as yet. I hope and pray that you receive also my telegram and this registered letter.

Now permit me and my family to thank you again from the bottom of our heart for your being so kind to us and for your succor. You are the only ones who have sent us food-stuffs through the Torgsyn firm when there is such a food shortage here and such hard months ahead.

This is what both parcels contain: egg powder - 5 lb, milk powder - 5 lb, flour 3 kg mazola oil - 2 lb., corn meal - 1 kg; buckwheat - 1 kg., rice - 1 kg. Pasta, oatflakes, yeast - 1.5 kg each item; sugar, 1 kg. Surf detergent - 8 lb.

We are most grateful to Michael and to all the Maidenbergs who understand that now the major problem for us is to survive the hard time and sent us in October along with Miriam Weiner an early Hanukah present of \$500.

In November the volume of wages and old age pensions were doubled but at the same time the prices on the most necessary foodstuffs (including bread), on medicine etc., etc. increased fivefold (and still more) against the previous months.

We expect another rise in prices in January absolutely on everything including gas, electricity, heating and all sorts of services. So the funds we have received from the Maidenbergs as well as your food parcels are simply a salvation for us.

Dear Sylvia, don't mean we have forgotten that, after my letter to Milton of April 1992 you were the first to help us with some money - with the "mystery" \$100. Every time when I switch on my TV set, I remember that it is a present from you. I am also very grateful to you for sharing my letters to you, to Milt and Michael with your children and Goldie. I am hopeful you will convey all of them and their families our love and best wishes for a happy and peaceful life. May their cherished dreams come true.

Take care of your health, *mine trereh Tsiviehleh. Solst hoobn feel nakhes in dineh kinder und in dineh leebch einiclekh. Zite alleh gezund und gliklekh. Amen!*

My dear niece Ellen, you know very well how we appreciate your virtuous and kind nature and your efficiency. Now we are very much obliged to you also for finding time to share my letters with your mom and with some other relatives who are interested in them.

Warm greetings and best wishes to George and to all his dear ones. Please don't fail to convey again our most delicate and loving kisses to Rebecca and little Anna. I'm very glad that you enjoy this expression of mine dedicated to your "young ladies."

I couldn't find some other phrase which would fit Michael, David and Lindsey since they are boys. But I hope that Jeff, Pam and Donna understand that we experience most loving feelings for their "young men" as well.

When I was reading your letters of last October and November, dear Ellen, I was moved to such a degree that my eyes became clouded with tears. Most of all we were touched by the story telling us why you had invited the family of Russian émigrés in Knoxville to keep your company at your Rosh Hashanah dinner. I and my family would also wish, like you do, to have the a happy occasion to sit with you and yours at one table someday.

We hope this finds you and the entire family well and I pray God to bless you all with good health, happiness and peace.

Fond regards and all the best,

Your loving Amnon, Shura, Edward

Michael Perov has shown Mike's genealogy to his mother. He supplies revisions and additional family history. Moscow, January 18, 1993.

Dear Michael,

Thank you very much for very interesting mail, which I received surprisingly soon, in 8 days. I do apologize for the delay with my reply letter. I've been in Austria for 10 days, then all the pre-Christmas duties, etc., etc.

I have translated your letter to my mother and she did make a number of corrections regarding the dates. First of all, she said that our great-grandfather, Solomon Maidenberg, died in 1940, and she is absolutely sure about that. She's also in doubt whether he was born in 1850 because he was hardly 90 years old when he died. His wife died next year. When Moldavia (Bessarabia) was joined to the Soviet Union she moved to her son Joseph, whom she hasn't seen for years, because he lived abroad.

From the next generation, Goldeh actually died in 1918, giving birth to Golya. His father moved to Odessa and married again. Golya remained in Maidenberg's family, lived in grandmother's house, then with Manya and few years with Elkeh in Chernigov. In 1938-39 he moved to Odessa to his father. Later he joined the Red Army and have been sent to the Baltic Republics. Since 1941 no letter came from him and he is supposed to be "missed in action."

Some other date corrections: Manya was born in 1902, her husband Solomon in 1905.

Eugene moved to Israel in 1990.

You should check with Fima, but my mother thinks that Frida was born in 1910 and she knows that Frida had a sister, Rachel (born in 1924?) who died with Eliyahu.

My grandmother Elkeh (1892 - 1973) married Melech Perelroisen (1892 - 1948), brother of Morris Perelroisen, husband of Esther. So we have double relationship with this family. (I mean Esther's.)

Until approximately 1929 they lived in Dzigovka, where two daughters have been born: Fanya (1920, July 5th) and Dora (Dvoira), July 6, 1924. Then the family

moved to the city Monastyrishche (not far from Kiev), and in 1932 to Chernigov, another city in Ukraine, where my aunt Fanya still lives, and where both Elkeh and Melech are buried. Fanya is a psychoneurologist and works in the hospital. During the WWII she was in the army as a medical officer and finished it in the rank of captain. During the war she met Sasha Shamachmudov and gave birth to Ludmila (or Luda) on 3.08.1944. After the war Sasha returned to Uzbekistan and she raised her daughter alone, with her parents. My mother lived with them, and during the war they have been evacuated to Kirgizia, because Chernigov was occupied by German troops. With the beginning of the war (in 1941), Manya joined Elkeh's family with the kids, while Solomon went to the front. Manya and Elkeh evacuated together to Kirgizia and have been there until the liberation of the Chernigov city.

My mother married my father in 1951. Alexei Perov (1919-1975) was a professional military officer and died from cancer in 1975, one year after his retirement as a colonel of Soviet Army. In 1939 he joined the Army and have served in Dzigovka, where he married Manya Perelroisen (1914 - 1951). They've been in the Army together during the whole war in Stalingrad and other battles. After the war two daughters have been born: Ekatherine (1946) and Svetlana (1948). But in 1951 Manya has died and Alexei married my mother, who was a cousin of Manya. She adopted my two sisters and gave birth to me in 1956.

December 24, 1988 I married Elena Alexandrova (born July 6, 1959) - now Perova. Both of my sisters also live in Moscow.

Going back to Chernigov: Luda married Herman Knused (1936 - 1990) and has one daughter, Julia (born 3.07.1968). She graduated from the Moscow State University (chemical faculty) where she met her husband Maxim Gorbunov. They get married on October 3, 1992 and Julia became a Muscovite.

Luda and Fanya live in Chernigov, where Luda teaches piano in a musical school.

Here are the milestones of my family history. I hope you can find some new details to a Maidenberg history.

I do hope that I could come this year to the USA and we find ways to see each other.

With best regards to you and your family,

Michael Perov

Amnon has seen the video taken at Thanksgiving, 1992. He thanks his relatives for their gifts and support. Kishinev, January 24-27, 1993.

Dear cousins Milton and Frank and dear relatives,

First of all permit me to express my gratitude to Michael for his initiative of showing you at the family Thanksgiving gathering not only the video of the ancestral village of Dzigovka, Ukraine, but also the video of me, Shura and Edward which Miriam Weiner brought you from Kishinev, Moldova.

I am very pleased that he sent a copy of the films to Sylvia and to her daughter Ellen who in their turn will show them to the other relatives of Esther's branch. Many thanks also for the video of all of you taken in Marion that we received via Miriam.

Though the video player which Edward found didn't work quite well, you cannot imagine how happy we were seeing you and for the first time hearing your voices. We could identify most of you at first sight since we knew you from the photos that from time to time Milton, Mike and Reed had enclosed in their letters to me.

I must confess that I wasn't able to catch and translate every phrase when you were speaking rapidly or when the video player manifested its caprices. I hope Edward will manage to find another place with a normal video player where we might enjoy reviewing the film more than once.

Seeing the video of you we were deeply moved by the warmth of your hearts, by your sincerity and modesty, by your admirable feeling for the family. These noble traits, so characteristic of all of you (without any exception) made themselves felt along the whole length of the film.

It was wonderful that all of the woman folk who assisted at the Thanksgiving gathering took the floor and so eloquently delivered their speeches.

It was very nice of you, my dear cousins-in-law Irma and Joyce and of you, my dear nieces Jill and Suzy. May all of you and all of your dear ones be blessed with good health, good fortune and peace.

We are most grateful to you, dear Milt and Frank, for the \$200 and the winter gloves. "Friends in need are friends indeed." You looked fine on the video. Take care of your health, my dear cousins.

Many thanks also to you, dear nephew Mike, for the things you sent us via Miriam (the scarf for Shura, the shirt for Edward and the sweater for me) as well as for having given us the chance of sightseeing Marion and hearing your interesting commentaries. I was deeply moved seeing the house where my uncle Dave and aunt Rose had lived and the grave stones over their last resting place. As soon as we received the gifts I sent you a telegram acknowledging receipt. I hope it has reached you.

Unfortunately, after Miriam's return from the USA I failed to see her or speak with her over the telephone since she is always away on business. Your gifts were handed to us by her interpreter. I suppose Miriam to avoid personal contact with us and that it is because she is ashamed for not having kept her word.

In October of last year we parted good friends with Miriam and she assured us that on her returning in Kishinev she would show us the video of Dzigovka and would bring us a copy of the video and copies of the photos she had taken of us in our home.

By the way, Miriam wanted to have her old advertisement portrait renewed, and Edward painted for her a splendid new one decorated with tracteries of Judaic symbolism. She was very pleased with Ed's present.

We were very glad to hear from Michael that he and his son Joseph would pay us a visit in May. I hope and pray all will be well with them, and they find me and Shura up and about when they come.

In the near future we would be very happy to welcome to Kishinev also you, dear Milt, and any of our relatives in America who want to accompany you.

Now the main thing is that health permits you to go for the trip without running any risks. I hope all will be well with you in the meantime take care of yourself, please.

We join in sending you our love and warm wishes for a good and peaceful year.

Amnon and family

P.S. My sight failed of late because of the cataract on my left eye. There is no other way out than to have it operated. The operation will be made by a good specialist in eye surgery and it is arranged for February 5. Since I was warned against straining my sight for at least two months after the operation, please don't be angry with me if in this space of time I am not able to respond your letters. I would be most thankful to you, dear Michael, if you were so kind as to let know of all this Sylvia or Ellen Kern when you receive a copy from your father. Luckily, the law of free medical care has not been abrogated yet. But it is annoying that remedies, even the most required, have become so expensive this year (now they are 40-150 times dearer than they were in the last year). Not only medicine, foodstuffs and all the other consumer goods have so abruptly gone up in price. It applies equally to the fees for all kinds of transport, to all sort of repairs and services including postage, telephone etc., etc.

If I'm not mistaken, I told you in one of my letters that in the CIS like in the former USSR, more than 80 percent of townspeople have been living in apartments which belong to the state, and the rent (that includes the pay for gas, electricity, central heating, etc.) was rather small. Now the tenants will have to pay for all this such a large sum which most of them will not be able to afford. In other republics of the CIS which have their own natural resources (coal, oil, gas) the situation in this respect is better by far.

I am telling you all this in order you might realize how opportunely the funds you had sent us came. At the same time I take occasion to express once more our profound gratitude for all you have been doing for us.

Again with best wishes and fond regards to all.

Amnon

By the way, dear Mike, please correct my telephone number in the address list. It is now 26-40-46

Amnon wonders whether his letters have reached America. He notes he has had difficulty with his apartment. Kishinev, May 20, 1993.

My dear relatives,

We are worried about your long silence. Please let us know whether my letter to all of you of January 27 was received. I mailed it to the address of Milton.

I heard some people complaining that not all their letters reach their addressees. Luckily, I found a rough copy of that letter and am sending it to you in case the original was lost in the mail.

Reading the copy and the letter which I'm going to write now to Michael, you will understand why I couldn't write to you such a long time. As soon as we received everything you had sent us via Miriam I sent you a telegram. Unfortunately, some serious problems (including a serious problem concerning the apartment we live in) sapped my energy, and I was able to write you only at the end of January. So excuse me for the delay, please.

Amnon

Amnon remembers Shimon Bar-Lev as a true Zionist, and recalls the oppression of Zionism and Judaism during the Communist era. He provides a detailed political analysis of the separatist movement. He hopes Mike will soon visit. Kishinev, May 20-24, 1993.

Dear nephew Mike and dear relatives,

After reading the copy of my letter the original of which was mailed to Milton's address on January 27 you can understand why I am so distressed for not having received any response to it such a long time.

I hope and pray that this one will reach you and find all of the family well. I am also hopeful you'll acknowledge the receipt of this letter and will let us know your news, including the approximate date of your visit with us.

The operation went off well, but there were some complications after it due to my diabetes. So the surgeon did not permit me to strain my right eye either. I consulted him once a week in the meantime, and carried out his prescriptions. At the end of April he told me that all has turned for the better, canceled all the eye remedies he had prescribed me, except multi-vitaminized eye-drops, and promised me to lift his ban off by mid May.

On May 19, after a thorough examination, he said that my sight was out of danger and I may resume writing and reading. You can imagine how happy I was hearing his words. He also gave me some good advice: to read or write only by daylight and to do it with short intervals in order not to overtire my eyes; to keep to my diet and to test the blood for glucose (sugar) no less than once a month; to practice special gym exercises for eyes, etc.

Many thanks, dear Mike, for your kind letter of January 10 which we received on February 6.

Unfortunately, it was darkened by the sad news of Shimon Bar-Lev's death in December last year. None of the Rosenbergs has advised me of his passing up till now. Shimon was a good man and a true Zionist. His bright memory will live forever in the hearts of his family and of his good friends. May he rest in peace!

I was told by my father and by some other relatives of ours who knew Shimon when he was young that from his very youth he dreamt of going to the Promised land in order he might contribute there to its revival "with his own blood and sweat."

In the early twenties Shimon joined a Zionist underground organization in Soviet Ukraine that helped him to realize his cherished dream.

You probably know that if in the years of Communist dictatorship somebody dared to express openly his feelings of sympathy to Zionism or to the policy of the State of Israel he was accused of anti-Soviet propaganda which inflicted severe punishment. That is why in my letters of that time to Milt I mentioned sometimes Shimon's name in a metaphorical (figurative) sense. For instance, reading the phrase "Shimon has crafty foes here", your father and others understood that I meant by that "The USSR is a sworn enemy of the State of Israel". When the intifada was at its height, I wrote to Milt, "We are most concerned about the aggravation of Shimon's ailment."

In such sentences like, "You are true friends to Shimon" or "your all round support has been helping Shimon not to lose heart and to face the future with confidence", "You" and "Your" meant the USA.

I am citing these extracts from memory. So they may not coincide word for word with the one's of my letters, but I'm sure they are similar in contents.

Nowadays, praise be, there is no need of such a camouflage. Moldova has established good relations with Israel and the US, Zionist and other Jewish organizations may act openly and freely.

By the way, two monuments have been recently erected not far from the center of our town. One to the memory of the martyrs of the first Jewish pogrom in Kishinev (in 1903), and the second to the victims of the Holocaust in the Kishinev ghetto (1943). Some years ago the authorities wouldn't have permitted it under different false pretexts.

I followed with keen interest over the radio the events in the Federal Republic of Russia and was pleased when Boris Yeltsin obtained the majority of votes at the referendum. I think him to be a man of decision who will take all possible measures in order to secure peace and stability in his country. If there is no stability and peace in such a large federation as Russia, it would be neither in the CIS nor in other parts of the world. A civil war in Russia would turn into a world cataclysm.

We have had a mild winter and a warm spring this year. The weather is fine. The trees and the lilac bushes are in blossom. But all this is clouded by the new

inflated prices introduced in April and by the increasing unemployment. The economic and financial crisis in Moldova continues to aggravate. The national income cannot defray the expenses which are growing day after day. The period of economic, social and political reforms is accompanied by hardship, frustration and anxiety about the future. The guns keep silent now in Moldova, but nobody can know full surely that they will not open up again as soon as the peacemaking forces are recalled.

In order to settle in a peaceful way the differences that last year brought to a fratricide war, representatives of Moldova's government are carrying negotiations with the leaders of the so called "Dniestrian Moldovian Republic", the capital of which is Tiraspol (where, by the way, my sister Ida and her daughters Ludmila and Polina live with their families.) Another delegation from Moldova negotiates with the leaders of Gagaoz nationality. (They are a small Turkic ethnic group whose language is similar to Turkish.) The separatists recognize neither Rumanian as the state language of their "republic" nor the new national flag of Moldova named "Tricolor" which is similar to the Rumanian one.

The new national anthem which begins with the words "Wake up Rumanian people" and which is broadcast from Kishinev every morning doesn't suit them either. You know probably from my letters that the territory on the left bank of the river Dniester where the DMR is situated now, was under Rumanian administration only during WWII when Rumania was Hitler's ally (in 1941-1944). Although Moldova is ready to make some concessions, I doubt whether the negotiations will end successfully.

It is because the leaders of the separatists declare that the DMR could "join" Moldova only on a federative or confederative basis as a self-governing and free republic with its own legislature and executive organs.

Furthermore, the Tiraspol leaders and those of Gagoozia insist on guarantees against the reunion of their republics with Rumania if some day Moldova decides to reunite.

They consider that they'll have such a guarantee if the right of their republics to leave the Federation (in that case) is reflected in the new Constitution the elaboration of which is now under debate at the session of the parliament in Kishinev.

It goes without saying that neither the parliament nor the president of Moldova will admit any Federation of Confederation within the bounds of this country and will not accept any other terms of the separatists which run counter to Moldova's sovereignty and integrity. That is why I guess the negotiations will reach a deadlock, and only time will show how it will all end. Such is the actual situation in Moldova.

Many thanks, dear Mike, for the ample information about your sons and Toby's children. We wish them all to make good progress in their studies as well as good luck and happiness. Please convey to Joseph my thanks for his speech at Thanksgiving. We send also our warmest greetings and fond regards to Kitty and Toby.

I am very upset by the fact that through some unforeseen circumstances our correspondence was interrupted so inopportune and for such a long time. In my January letter to Milt I couldn't guess in advance the two-month ban on my writing and reading would be prolonged until May 9.

I hope that in the meanwhile you have completed your work of drawing up the family tree and now can decide the time of your visit. August, September and October are good months for traveling. I think you will have time to get ready for the trip and to give us an advance notice. I hope Joe will accompany you.

We would be most obliged if you could take along with you copies of the photos and a copy of the videos that Miriam promised us and, if possible, a light video player in order that we might view the films and show them to other relatives who remain in the CIS.

By the way, we received a food package from Ellen Kern in April. Like the preceding three parcels, this one was also sent in behalf of Sylvia, all her children and her sister Goldie Meyer.

Ellen has been taking the lead in it. We sent her a telegram acknowledging the receipt of the package, but I haven't answered yet her very warm letter for the mentioned above reason.

I hope you have also received my telegram telling you that we have mailed this letter since I knew nearly a month would pass till it reaches you.

I heard from Danya (David) Rosenberg that he and his wife Rita are going to emigrate to the U.S. So there is no point to send him a genealogy in Lithuania.

I end this letter in the hope you will share it (and the enclosed copy) with Milt and Sylvia who in their turn will share them with the others.

With all our love and best wishes to all,

Amnon and family

Date unknown - 1993

Dear Aunt Sylvia!

It was such a nice surprise to receive your call the other day!

It was only few months ago, when I got to know about my relatives in USA. Of course, I knew my relatives from Odessa, who emigrated to the States in the end of eighties, but they never told me about any other relatives in the USA. Even my mother never touches this theme, though she knew, that her uncle and aunt had emigrated. To some extent I can explain it by the general feelings and common position toward relatives abroad which existed in our society, but anyway it is a real pity, because, for instance in 1989 I have been in 5 hours drive from you.

Last October my mother got a call from Amnon Maidenberg from Kishinev (Moldavia), checking some dates from our family history. He said that one lady from USA is doing investigation on the request of Michael Maidenberg from the USA. I immediately asked for his phone number and gave him a call and faxed a letter. Michael replied with a complete genealogic tree, where I got information about you too. As you could see from the Tree we are linked twice, since my grandfather and grandmother have been your parent's brother and sister, accordingly.

As you already know, my grandmother Elkeh had two daughters: fanya (Faina) born in 1920, and Dvoira (not - Dora) born in 1924. In the mid-thirties their family moved from Dzigovka to Tchernigov (spending couple of years in Monastyrishche - small city not far from Kiev). Tchernigov is one of the oldest Russian cities, 140 kilometers from Kiev. Both my grandparents are buried there, my aunt Fanya and her daughter Luda are still living there.

My mother, Dora, married my father - Alexei Perov in 1951 and had adopted two daughters: my elder sisters Katya (Catherine) and svetlana. My father started military service not far from Dzigovka, and his first wife was also Perelroisen - Manya, a cousin of my mother and yours as well, I suppose.

They both have been in the army during WWII, but in 1950 she died. During WWII my grandfather, grandmother and mother have been evacuated to Kirgizia, while Fanya, as a doctor, have been in the army too.

My grandfather - Melech Perelroisen, worked in the State Saving bank, as a head of its regional department in different cities until his death in 1947. My grandmother died in 1973.

I was born July 16, 1956 in Moscow, where I am still living. I graduated from the Economic Cybernetics Faculty of the Moscow Institute of National Economy in 1978. Since that time I used to work in the Institute for Systems Studies of the Academy of Sciences. Since last year I work for the Austrian company, actually - Austrian branch of US company AMP, Inc., as a representative of the company in Russia.

In 1989, for the first time I happened to be in the USA, and since that time I'm really fond of this country. My first trip was so exciting!! Within three week I managed to travel from coast to coast, starting January 20, 1989 from attending the inauguration of George Bush on the Capitol Hill . I have been in Arizona (Litchfield Park, not far from Phoenix [spelled Fenix]) - few hours drive from you, then in Aptos, CA - Monroe, WI and back to Washington. Since that time I have been 3 times more in USA (twice with my wife - Helen). Last time we have been there in the August of 1991 - just during the Coup in Russia. All of our friends asked us to stay, but since the Coup failed, and we had tickets for the next day of this failure - we decided to return. There were only 15 passengers on board, but even in this case we found that our luggage have been robbed upon arrival to Moscow in the airport!

I was ready to return immediately, but it was too late . . .

I could write hundreds of pages, having too much to say, but I don't want to overwork you with my bad handwriting.

This year we plan to be in the USA in August, to visit our friends in Wisconsin. I would try to borrow a car to visit Michael Maidenberg in Grand Forks and would like to see you as well. I don't know how to organize it. We will fly by Aeroflot (this is Russian Air company) to Chicago, where our friends from Wisconsin will pick us up. If we could, for instance, to take Greyhound from Wisconsin (or Dakota) to California, we would be glad to see you.

May be, since you quit work, you are going to travel, we could meet somewhere in the USA, or if you would like to visit Russia, I would be glad to arrange it for you. Anyway, I hope to see you this year. My address is

107589, Russia, Moscow

Khabarovskaya ul. 22 corpus 2
kv. 241
Michael Perov

If it is difficult to write for you, you can clip it off, make a copy and put it on the envelope.

My phones in Moscow:

469-61-23 home

938-28-46 office

938-28-05 phone/fax

You should dial 7 for Russia, then 095 for Moscow.

Look forward for hearing from you,

With best regards from my wife - Helen and from your cousin - my mother, Dora Perelroisen,

I remain,

Mike Perov

Victor Brener to his Aunt Sylvia: Error! Bookmark not defined. 18 07 1979

Dear Aunt Sylvia:

I am the grandson of your aunt Manya Maydenberg and son of your sister Ledy - Victor Brener. I am 25 years old. I finished junior college and working an engineer - hydrotecnic, contining study at the Odessa Marine Institute. I have the wife and little son. He is two in May.

I am know english language, but not very well. I translated your letter and letter of Milton Maydenberg. I pleasantly surprise what I have relations in the USA. I would like to know about you in detail. I and my wife will glad have acquaintance with your children. I will glad have receive a letter from your son Jeffrey. We get possible know friend each other through us dioide (?) a distance.

Write me

Good-bye

Victor Brener

P.S. My address:

USSR Odessa Xvorostin-street

4^G flat 28

Brener Victor in to Russian: [Russian Address]Manya Rozenberg to Sylvia and Manya's children.