

Sophia Abidor

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Uzhgorod

Ukraine

Interviewer: Ella Levitskaya

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Sophia Abidor and her husband Grigori live in a standard two-bedroom apartment in a new district in Uzhgorod. It's a small apartment, but very clean and bright. The furniture was bought in the middle of the 1970s, but it's still in good condition. There are photographs of Sophia's relatives on the walls. Sophia has been confined to bed for over six months now due to a fractured neck of femur. She has gone through a lot of pain and suffering, but she stoically bears the hardships of her life. Regardless of her age and illness Sophia is still a beautiful woman. She has long black hair without a single gray hair. The interview was a tiring process for her and we had to make a break every now and then for her to rest. During those breaks her husband Grigori talked about their family. One can tell they have deep affection for each other from their smiles when their glances meet, from the way they touch one another and from how they talk to each other. One cannot help admiring this couple that has never had an argument in 60 years. Grigori takes care of his wife in a very touching way.



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My family background

My parents' families lived in Odessa. Odessa is my favorite town, the place where I spent my childhood and youth. Odessa is a big port on the Black Sea in the south of Ukraine. Odessa was founded in the 18th century on the grounds of the Tatar settlement of Khadzhi-Bei. [Editor's note: In the 14th century, the site where Odessa is today became a Crimean Tatar fortress and trade center called Khadzhi-Bei. In 1764 it passed to the Turks, who built a fortress to protect the harbor. It was taken by the Russians in 1789.] In the 19th century Odessa became the second biggest port in Russia after Saint-Petersburg and a big resort town. Its population constituted over 400,000 people. Odessa was also a cultural center in tsarist Russia. Novorossiysk University, one of the first universities in the south of Russia, opened in Odessa. The building of the Odessa Opera Theater is still one of the most beautiful in Europe. There were Russians, Ukrainians, Greeks, Turks, Bulgarians, Italians and people of other nations in Odessa. Jews constituted a large part of the

population. The Jewish community in Odessa was the second biggest community in tsarist Russia. Most of the merchants of Guild I & II [1](#) lived in Odessa, probably due to the fact that Odessa was a port town. Jews owned big stores, factories and shops. There were Jewish doctors, lawyers and musicians. However, as in any other town, the majority of Jews were poor people. Richer Jews lived in big houses in the town center. Poorer Jews settled down in Moldavanka [2](#) and Peresyp [3](#), and near Privoz, the biggest market in Odessa. Jews worked as cab and cargo drivers that were called bindyuzhniki. [Editor's note: Bindyuzhniki is a Russian jargon word, derived from the word 'bindyug', which was used in Odessa for cargo cab drivers. Currently it is a slang word describing excessively strong and rough people. It is a word only used in Odessa, in all other areas people of this profession were called cargo cab drivers.] They were mainly big and strong men on horse-driven carts. Sons took over this profession from their fathers. The writer Isaac Babel [4](#) magnificently described Jewish life in Odessa.

The different nationalities living in Odessa had no conflicts throughout the ages. Cultures and languages were mixed. Even today Odessa residents have a very specific dialect containing Russian, Ukrainian and Jewish words and accents. In any other place one would recognize someone from Odessa.

There were seven big synagogues and about 50 prayer houses and smaller synagogues in Odessa. There were several cheders in town. During the Soviet rule, when the authorities waged a struggle against religion [5](#), the synagogues were closed or destroyed. The same happened to the numerous churches, cathedrals and temples in Odessa.

After World War I the Black Hundred [6](#), raging anti-Semites that arranged Jewish pogroms [7](#), came to town. They didn't start pogroms in the town center because they were afraid of the police so they went to the overpopulated outskirts of Odessa. They robbed and killed residents. Fortunately, our family didn't suffer from pogroms. After the Revolution of 1917 [8](#) the pogroms ended. After that there was no anti-Semitism in the USSR until the Great Patriotic War [9](#).

I know very little about my father's family. I never met any of his relatives. They weren't mentioned in our family for some reason. My paternal grandfather's name was Chaim Burda. I have no information about my grandmother. My father, Semyon Burda, never told me what my grandfather did for a living, but I know that his family was very poor. They lived in Odessa, but I don't know if they came from Odessa originally. All their children were born in Odessa. I don't know the date of birth of my father's brothers and sister. Simkha was the oldest followed by Yakov. My father was born in 1898. Riva, his sister, was the youngest. My father was religious and knew all prayers by heart. I don't know if my father or his brothers studied at cheder. When my father turned 10 he became an apprentice to a tailor. Later he worked as a tailor.

My father and his sister Riva stayed in Odessa when they grew up. Their brothers moved to other places and disappeared. Riva got married and had a daughter. I only have bits and pieces of information about Riva's family. Riva and her family were in evacuation in Tashkent [Uzbekistan] and stayed there after the war. I don't know when she died because we didn't keep in touch with her. My father's older brother Simkha went to Tashkent in the 1920s. He was single. He worked as a clerk in an office. Simkha died in 1946. Yakov worked in an office. He had a son, who became a military doctor, and a daughter, whom I have no information about. Yakov died in Mariupol in 1949. I don't know whether any of them was buried in a Jewish cemetery.

My mother's parents came from Odessa. My grandfather Abram Magner was born in Odessa in 1864 and my grandmother Sima Magner in 1868. I don't know my grandmother's maiden name and never met any of my grandparents' relatives. My grandfather was a joiner. He had his own shop before the Revolution. It was expropriated by the Soviet authorities [nationalization] [10](#) and my grandfather continued working there as an employee. My grandmother was a housewife.

My grandfather and grandmother were very religious. I remember my grandfather praying at home every day wearing his tallit and tefillin. He never replied if someone addressed him during a prayer. My grandparents went to the synagogue. They went there on Jewish holidays, arm in arm and dressed up. My grandfather was a slim man of average height. He had a small gray beard, but no payes. He always wore a kippah and a hat outside. He wore casual clothes that were no different from anybody else's outfits. My grandmother was a big woman of average height. She was very beautiful, even in her old age. She always wore a kerchief and casual clothes.

My mother's parents spoke Yiddish at home. They spoke Yiddish with their children and Russian with a Jewish accent with their grandchildren.

There were five children in the family: Marcus, Leiba, Dora, Keilia and Isaac. I only know the birth date of my mother. As for the rest of the children, I only know their names and who was younger or older than my mother. Marcus was the oldest child. Then came Leiba, who was called Leonid in the family. My mother Dora was born in 1900. Her Jewish name was Dvoira. The fourth child in the family was Keilia, who was called Ekaterina in Russian manner. Isaac was the youngest child.

My mother didn't get any education. She was the older daughter and therefore had to help her mother about the house and with raising the younger children. Her father believed that education was of no use to girls. They had to learn how to be good housewives. My mother was illiterate. After the Revolution of 1917 she finished a likbez. [11.] My mother never told me whether they were raised religious.

My mother's brothers and sister got education, and they probably studied after the Revolution like my mother. Only Marcus, the oldest, was religious. The rest of them were atheists. Marcus was a handsome man with slender features. He had a small beard, but no payes. Marcus wore dark suits and a dark hat. He had a beautiful voice and sang very well. He liked singing Jewish folk songs and Russian ballads. Marcus was married and had a daughter called Rosa. His wife Maria came from a merchant's family and finished the Russian grammar school in Odessa. She often helped me to do my homework when I was in my senior classes. I was surprised that she remembered so much. Marcus and his wife perished in Odessa in 1941 when Germans occupied the town. There were shootings of Jews that lasted several days at that time. Marcus' daughter survived. Marcus had an acquaintance who was a Christian priest. He issued a certificate of baptism to Rosa and took her to a village. Rosa lived with the family of a villager and worked in the field during the war. I don't know anything about Rosa's life after the war.

My mother's brother Leonid finished the Higher Party School in Odessa. [Editors note: Party schools were established after the Revolution of 1917. Major subjects were social, economic and political disciplines. Those schools trained party activists from agitators and propagandists to party leadership] After finishing school Leonid got an assignment to work with the railroad. He was a party organizer at Odessa railroad until he retired in 1963. Leonid married a Jewish woman called Anna, but they had no traditional wedding. They just had a civil ceremony in a registry office.

Leonid's wife was a doctor. They had two children: a daughter called Anna and a son called Michael. Leonid died in Odessa in 1965.

My mother's older sister Ekaterina also studied somewhere. She worked as a clerk at the railroad department in Odessa. Ekaterina got married in her 40s but had no children. I didn't know her husband. Ekaterina died in Odessa in 1950.

Isaac moved to Moscow in the 1920s. He was a clerk in an office. He was single. Isaac was at the front during the Great Patriotic War and returned to Moscow after the war. He was wounded at the front and maybe that's why he came to an untimely end in Moscow in 1950.

My parents lived in neighboring houses and had known each other since their childhood. They got married in 1920. My father was religious. My parents had a traditional Jewish wedding with a chuppah. A rabbi conducted the wedding ceremony. My mother didn't tell me any details about their wedding. After the wedding my parents lived in my mother's room. My father worked as a tailor and my mother was a housewife.

Growing up

Our family rented an apartment in a three-storied house in the center of Odessa. The owner of the house leased apartments before the Revolution of 1917. There were four big apartments on each floor. After the Revolution the house became the property of the state and the big apartments were turned into communal apartments [12](#) with a large number of tenants. The entrance door of each apartment led into a long hallway with about 20 doors to rooms. My mother's brothers and sisters lived separately from their parents at the time. My grandparents lived in one room and my mother and our family lived in another room. There were no comforts in this house. We fetched water from the pump in the yard. The toilet was in the next yard and there were always people standing in line there. There were many small tables in the kitchen with a primus stove on each table. The room was heated with a Russian stove [13](#). Wood was bought at the market. There was a long shed with many doors in the yard. Each family had a shed where they stored wood.

I was born in 1922. I was named Sophia and that name is written in all my documents. My sister Zina followed in 1925. My parents divorced six months after my sister was born; I don't know why. We stayed with my mother and my father left us. He had a room in a communal apartment in the same street where we lived. He gave my mother some money to support his children, but it wasn't enough. My mother had to go to work to support us. She went to work at the confectionery factory. She was a smart woman. Of course she would have had a different life if she had had an opportunity to get education, but since she had no education she had to work as a laborer all her life. She worked very hard and got tired. My mother was a beautiful woman, but she always had this tired expression that made her look older. I don't think she ever had enough sleep or rest. She came home late from work and had to do the housework such as cooking and washing. Early in the morning she ran to buy food at the market. She didn't spend much time with us. Sometimes our grandmother looked after us and sometimes we went to our father's place. We always kept in touch with our father. Most of the time my sister and I played in the yard or in the street and went home to have a snack. We learned to take care of ourselves at an early age.

We lived in a 50 square meter room. There was a wardrobe with a curtain next to the door to the hallway. This created a small hallway in our room; the rest of the room was our dwelling. There was

a sofa that served as a bed for my mother, two small iron beds, a table and four chairs in the center of the room where we had meals and where I did my homework. My mother's parents had a similar room, only that it was furnished better because her parents had some old pieces of furniture.

Before my parents' divorce we celebrated Jewish holidays at home. My mother was an atheist, but my father was religious and observed all traditions. I was 4 when they got divorced, but I remember a little how my father conducted the seder on Pesach. I can't remember preparations for Pesach, but I remember the seder. My father sat at the head of the table wearing a white shirt and his tallit. We moved the table to the sofa and sat on the sofa. There was delicious food on the table. My father said a prayer. Adults had some wine, which was poured into silver cups. My sister and I had water mixed with a little bit of wine. There was a glass of wine in the middle of the table that wasn't meant for anyone. My father told me that it was for Elijah the Prophet [14](#), who came to every Jewish house to bless the family on Pesach. My father said a prayer, helped me to say my words and then spoke himself. I didn't understand a word since he spoke Yiddish and we only spoke Russian at home. That's all I remember.

After their divorce my mother didn't celebrate any Jewish holidays. My grandparents, however, observed all traditions strictly. They always celebrated Sabbath and Jewish holidays. My grandmother followed the kashrut. She had special utensils and crockery for meat and dairy products. She also had special crockery and utensils that she only used for Pesach. It was stored in a big wooden box in the hallway for the rest of the year. Those were hard years, but my grandmother always tried to cook plenty of delicious food on holidays. They always had matzah and no bread on Pesach. On Jewish holidays the whole family got together at our grandparents'. Isaac, who lived in Moscow, didn't come, but all other children and their families, who lived in Odessa, came to celebrate holidays at my grandparents'. My mother and we [children] went there as well. On Pesach my grandfather conducted the first seder for the whole family. I don't remember any details, though.

I didn't know Yiddish. Adults switched to Yiddish when they didn't want me to understand the subject of their discussion. I went to the 1st grade of a Ukrainian secondary school in our neighborhood in 1929. My sister Zina went to the same school two years later. There were many Jewish children in my class and school. It seems to me that the majority of my schoolmates were Jews. There were also Jewish teachers, but nobody cared the least bit about nationality at that time.

History and literature were my favorite subjects at school. All teachers believed I would continue to study humanities. I became a Young Octobrist [15](#), a pioneer and a Komsomol [16](#) member at school. I wasn't too fond of any public activities. I liked to read. All those pioneer and, later, Komsomol meetings were a sheer waste of time for me. At such meetings we were usually told about the scheming of the world bourgeoisie against the Soviet regime. Those meetings were dull and boring. I preferred to skip them whenever I could and read a book instead. However, I understood that I had to attend them to avoid a prejudiced opinion towards me. I read all kinds of books, but my favorite books were Russian classics. Later I began to read books by Jewish writers in Russian translation and foreign authors. We didn't have any books at home. My mother couldn't afford to spend money on books. I borrowed books from the library at school and, later, from a district town library. I studied well at school.

1932-33 was a period of famine in Ukraine [17](#). The official press declared it was due to bad harvests. Today we know that it was a planned action in order to suppress villagers that were against the policy of forced collectivization [18](#). At that time we believed the official propaganda, of course. Our family didn't suffer from the famine. The situation in towns wasn't as bad as in villages. Our family was poor, and we were used to living from hand-to-mouth. In 1933 my mother's parents died: my grandfather first and my grandmother shortly afterwards. They were old and sickly and didn't have enough food. They were buried in the Jewish cemetery in Odessa according to all Jewish traditions. Although all their children except for Marcus were atheists, they weren't against a Jewish funeral. Marcus recited the Kaddish over their graves.

In 1936 arrests began [during the so-called Great Terror] [19](#) and lasted until the Great Patriotic War. I knew that many people were arrested. Once my favorite teacher, our history teacher, didn't come to class. We were told that he had been arrested. I noticed that too many 'enemies of the people' were arrested, but we were blind back then and believed the propaganda. We didn't give much thought to what was happening around us. People did their own things. I thought about my studies. The parents of some of my classmates were arrested, but we treated them like before. We understood that they were our friends and weren't to blame for anything. We never had any pioneer or Komsomol meetings where we discussed children of 'enemies of the people' or expelled them from pioneer or Komsomol organizations. I think it gave credit to our teachers, who didn't contract a feeling of fear that suppressed people's will. Our family didn't suffer during that period. I didn't face any anti-Semitism because there wasn't any before the war. We didn't even think about the nationality of our friends.

We didn't celebrate any holidays at home. Apart from being short of money our mother neither had the time nor the means to arrange for celebrations. Even on Sundays she tried to do overtime or replace other employees at work to make some extra money. We celebrated Soviet holidays at school. We usually came to school in the morning and went to a parade with slogans and flags. Then we returned to school and had a meeting and a concert at which schoolchildren performed. Sometimes we went to the seashore or to a park on 1st May. This was called 'mayovka'. [Editors note: This word is derived from the name of the month May when people organized picnics with friends and families. Schoolchildren, students and adults used to arrange such outings enjoying the food and drinks.] We took some food from home and arranged a picnic. We had a meal and played hide-and-seek or ball, and we sang songs. We enjoyed ourselves; it was a lot of fun.

I finished school in 1939. My father insisted that I studied at a Medical University and promised to support me. There was a great competition: ten applicants for one position. Odessa Medical University was very popular in the former USSR. Many outstanding professors lectured there, and there were many applicants from other towns or other republics eager to enter this university. There were eleven entrance exams. I passed all exams successfully and was admitted to the General Faculty of Odessa Medical University. There were quite a few Jewish students from Odessa and other towns in my group. There were also many Jewish lecturers. I had Jewish and non-Jewish friends - it didn't matter to me. I studied well at university.

My future husband, Grigori Abidor, was a 2nd-year student of the Heat Engineering Faculty at Odessa Industrial College. Grigori had come to Odessa from Khmelnytskyi [a district town in Vinnitsa region, 300 km from Kiev]. Grigori and two other students rented a room from a janitor on the 1st floor in our house. We met by chance and began to see each other. Less than a year later

Grigori proposed to me and I agreed to be his wife. I got married in 1940 after finishing my 1st year at Odessa Medical University. We didn't have a wedding party. We just had a civil ceremony at a registry office.

Grigori was born in Goloskovo in 1919. His Jewish name was Gersh. His father Moisey Abidor, born in 1890, was a joiner. His mother Maria Abidor, nee Golovanevskaya, born in 1894, was a dressmaker and worked at home. Her father Mendel Golovanevski was a blacksmith and my mother-in-law worked at her father's forge before she got married. Maria was a tall and very strong woman. My husband's family wasn't religious. Apart from Grigori, they also had two daughters. Golda, the older one, was born in 1917 and Beba, the younger one, in 1926. In the 1930s their family moved to Khmel'nitskiy. Grigori finished secondary school there and left to study in Odessa.

My husband and I shared our room with my mother and sister. We partitioned off a corner of the room with a curtain and that was our first dwelling. We were poor, but we were used to it. My husband and I received a stipend that we shared with my mother and sister. My father sent me monthly allowances keeping his promise to support me while I studied at the Medical University. Grigori had additional earnings by unloading railcars at the railway station at night. Many students made extra money with that kind of work.

During the war

I remember 22nd June 1941, the first day of the war. At noon I went to the post office to send a parcel with fabric and laces to my mother-in-law. She was planning to sew everything necessary for our future baby. There was a big black radio in every street. All of a sudden I heard an announcement on the street radio, 'This is an urgent announcement. The war began.' My husband was at the library preparing for his exams. He was finishing his 3rd and I was finishing my 2nd year. On the next day an air raid began when we walked in the street. My husband and I stood in the street and watched bombs falling on people's houses destroying the town and people's lives. This was how the war began for us. On the first days of the war Grigori volunteered to enter artillery school. The cadets left Odessa on foot. They went as far as Nikolaev [150 km from Odessa] where they boarded a train to go to where they were to take accelerated training. We stayed in Odessa.

Our son Iziaslav was born in Odessa during the war. I went to a maternity hospital during an air raid on 9th July 1941. My mother and friends came to pick me up from hospital. My husband was in the army. My father was recruited to the army at the end of July. For the first time in my life I got the feeling that Jews were differentiated from other people. My co-student told me that my family had to evacuate as soon as possible. I asked him why he didn't hurry in evacuation, and he replied that he was Russian and that Germans weren't after him, but he didn't tell me any details. We didn't know anything about the extermination of millions of Jews in German-occupied areas.

Evacuation from Odessa began at the beginning of the war, but when I started to think about it after my son was born, it was difficult to arrange for it. Germans were firing at the town, killing people in the streets. I evacuated at the end of August or beginning of September when Germans surrounded Odessa and cut off the water supply. People fetched water from a stream. We were hiding in bomb shelters most of the time. It was impossible to leave Odessa by train. I went to the regional party committee to ask them for a ticket to leave Odessa. The regional party secretary saw me holding a baby and asked, 'Kid, what do you want?' I told him that my husband was at the

front and that I didn't know what to do. He gave me boat tickets for myself, my son, my mother and my sister. We managed to board the last boat to Sevastopol [a big port in the Crimea, 250 km from Odessa]. I took some children's clothes and food with me.

Germans occupied Odessa on 10th October 1941. [Editor's note: Odessa fell on 16th October after a 2-month siege.] On the way to Sevastopol the boat was attacked by a German plane that dropped a firebomb. The boat caught fire, but, fortunately, its crew managed to put it out. When we arrived in Sevastopol the Germans were very close and we couldn't stay there. The boat headed on to Kerch [about 270 km from Sevastopol], but the situation there was the same. There was nowhere we could get to by boat. We were taken to the railway station where we took a train to Rostov-on-Don [about 400 km from Kerch]. I was approached by a young man at the railway station in Rostov-on-the-Don. I don't know how he recognized me, but he asked me if I was the wife of Grigori Abidor. I said that I was, and he told me that Grigori was missing. The train with cadets, my husband among them, had been bombed at Marganets station. Today there's a monument honoring cadets that died in this train at Marganets station. I had no hope that my husband had survived. Later it turned out that only two railcars had been hit by bombs and that the rest of the train had remained intact.

I decided to go to Buturlinovka village, Voronezh region, in Russia [about 800 km from Rostov-on-Don and about 500 km south-west of Moscow]. My husband's older sister Golda had graduated from Odessa Pharmaceutical Institute before the war and got a job assignment in this village. When we came to Golda's house my husband's parents were already there. They had received a letter from Grigori and told me that he was all right. We lived there for half a year until Germans began to attack Voronezh. In spring 1942 my husband's parents, Golda and her family, my mother, my sister and I moved to Tashkent, Uzbekistan [about 3,000 km from Voronezh].

Evacuated people were accommodated in the houses of local people, Uzbeks. They were waiting for trains at railway stations. An Uzbek woman took us to her home. They had a big yard and a house divided into two parts: one for men and one for women. My mother, my sister, my son and I were accommodated in a room in the women's part of the house. We were glad to have a roof over our head. There was no electricity in the house so we made and used an oil lamp. I became a 3rd-year student at Tashkent Medical University. My sister passed the entrance exams to Tashkent Credit Economy College and was admitted to the Faculty of Industrial Economy. My mother went to work as a laborer at a tank plant. I had classes in the morning, and my sister started at 3 in the afternoon. We took turns looking after the child. In the evening our mother looked after the boy, and we could do our homework.

We didn't have enough food. My sister received dependant's coupons for 400 grams of bread per day and my mother received a workers' coupon for 600 grams of bread. When my husband got to know our address he sent us his officer's certificate, which enabled us to receive some additional food. Our co-students helped and supported us. They gave us their coupons for a meal at the students' canteen even though they didn't have enough food themselves. Sometimes we sold bread at the market to buy corn, which was cheaper than bread, and boiled it. I remember my three-year old son when he came home and told me that he had seen a boy eating bread and butter. This was an inaccessible delicacy for my son. I consoled him saying that we would be able to eat bread and butter when his father returned from the front. I finished my 3rd and 4th year at Tashkent Medical College. Most of the students were Uzbek. There were many evacuated students

and Jews among them. I didn't face any anti-Semitism during my evacuation. Local people sympathized with us and tried to help where they could. They understood how hard it was to be a refugee forced to leave everything behind.

Tashkent was a beautiful and very special town. I had never been in Middle Asia before and everything was unusual for me. There were mostly one- storied buildings; only in the center were there a few four and five- storied houses. There was high clay fencing, separating houses from streets. There were orchards close to the houses. Only a few streets in the center had cobblestone pavements while the rest were mud roads. There were a few trees in the streets. There were aryks - irrigation channels - alongside the streets. When the heat was unbearable in summer, children used to bathe in them. Uzbek families had many children. Uzbek people were friendly to us. During the whole period of our stay in this town I never faced any hostility.

I corresponded with my husband. In December 1941 he finished artillery school. There were 40 of his former fellow students in this school. Two months before their graduation an order by Stalin was issued. It stated that all students that had finished three years of studies at higher educational institutions were to be sent back to college in order to finish their studies. None of those 40 students returned from the front. They believed it was their duty to defend their motherland. After finishing artillery school my husband was sent to a military unit. During his time in the army my husband became a member of the Communist Party. He was wounded for the first time in 1943. I got to know that he was in hospital in Kislovodsk [3,000 km from Tashkent] and went to see him there. I wanted it to be a surprise and didn't notify him. When I came I was told that he had been released a day before and left for his military unit. It was sad to go back to Tashkent without having seeing him.

On 10th April 1944 we heard that the Soviet army liberated Odessa. It was such good news! I was waiting for my husband to contact me via a letter, but I didn't hear from him. One day I met him in the street. He had distinguished himself in combat action and his commandment offered him a choice between receiving an order or a month's vacation. Of course, Grigori preferred a month's vacation. He got it along with some money and a travel pass and came to Tashkent. He stayed with us for a month. He finally met his son and often visited his parents. Then he had to return to the front. In summer 1944, after Khmel'nitskiy was liberated, Grigori's parents went home. I stayed in Tashkent to graduate from college.

In November 1944 Grigori was wounded for the second time in battles near Koenigsburg. He had multiple missile wounds on his head, eye and left arm. He stayed in a field hospital near Koenigsburg. He had a bullet removed from his arm, but the wound developed into gas gangrene. He had to have his arm amputated. He was put into a tent with 21 other patients with gas gangrene. He was the only survivor. He was sent to a hospital in Smolensk, Russia [300 km from Moscow] where he had a splinter removed from his head. Another splinter was removed from his eye in Kiev Regional Hospital in 1948. My husband finished the war with the rank of Captain of Artillery, an invalid of grade 1. After he was released from hospital in Smolensk he went to his parents in Khmel'nitskiy. My son and I went there, too. My mother and sister stayed in Tashkent. My sister was a student, and my mother didn't want to leave her alone. We stayed with my husband's parents. This was in 1945.

I remember 9th May 1945, Victory Day [20](#). My husband met his childhood friend and we were having a chat with him when, all of a sudden, we heard shooting. My husband and his friend ran outside telling me to stay inside. It turned out that there was an announcement on the radio about the victory over Germany and everyone demobilized from the army came into the streets and were shooting into the air. We were overwhelmed with joy. People came into the streets crying, singing and hugging one another. We couldn't believe that everything horrible was in the past.

Post-war

My father demobilized in 1945 and returned to Odessa. He didn't remarry. He worked as a tailor in a shop. We corresponded with him. Sometimes we went to Odessa on vacation with children. He loved his grandchildren and they responded to his affection. My father died in Odessa in 1982 at the age of 84. He was buried in the town cemetery since there was no functioning Jewish cemetery in Odessa. We buried my father according to Jewish tradition as he had wished. A rabbi conducted the funeral. My husband and I and my sister Zina and her husband were at the funeral. Zina's husband recited the Kaddish.

My sister Zina graduated from Tashkent Credit Economy College and got a job assignment as an economist at a mine in Pavlograd, Donetsk Basin [about 400 km from Kiev]. When she went to Pavlograd, my mother decided to return to Odessa. She died of a heart attack on the train near Odessa in 1952. My husband and I went to Odessa. We buried my mother in the town cemetery. She was an atheist and had an ordinary funeral.

My sister made a career and was promoted to head of the planning department. She married a nice Jewish man. I don't remember his first name, but his last name was Ermann. They had two children: a son called Evgeniy, born in 1952, and a daughter called Svetlana, born in 1956. My sister and I corresponded with each other. Sometimes she came with her family to spend her summer vacation with us. We enjoyed these reunions. Sometimes Zina and I chatted all night long. Our husbands and children were also friends. In 1992 Zina's husband died. She suffered a lot from losing her husband. When her children and their families decided to move to Israel in 1995 my sister chose to go with them. She lives in Israel now. In her letters she writes that she likes Israel and that it has become her second home. She is very content with her life.

I finished four years at the Medical College in Tashkent, but I left in a hurry and didn't take any documents from there with me. It took me two years to have my documents sent to Ukraine from Uzbekistan. It was a very complicated process. I had to repeat the 4th year. Life in Khmelnytskyi was hard. My husband's parents' house was small and several families lived in it. The houses of their friends and relatives had been destroyed and many of them stayed in Grigori's parents' house after they returned from evacuation. There wasn't enough food and we starved. We couldn't decide what to do next. At that time one of Grigori's fellow soldiers came to see him. He settled down in Uzhgorod after his demobilization. This was in the center of the Subcarpathian region. Before 1918 Subcarpathia [21](#) belonged to Austro-Hungary and then it became part of the Czech Republic. In 1939 Subcarpathia was occupied by Hungarians again. After the war, in 1945, it joined the USSR. Grigori's friend told us that it was a magnificent town and that life was good there. Grigori obtained a work permit from the military registration office and we went to Uzhgorod.

We have lived here since 1946. I liked Uzhgorod immediately and felt at home here. It's a beautiful and cozy town. Before the war the borderline of the town was the Uzh River. After the war the town

expanded and now the Uzh River divides it into two parts: the old town and the new town. There were many Jews in Uzhgorod after the war. They were the local population and some came from the USSR - they were called 'Eastern people'. The older generations were religious and observed all Jewish traditions. There was a synagogue and a Jewish school in town. We grew up during the Soviet regime and seeing people going to the synagogue on Saturdays and Jewish holidays was new to us. However, men didn't have payes and men and women were casually dressed. The prevailing language spoken in the streets was Hungarian. In addition to Jews there were Ukrainians, Hungarians and Czechs in Uzhgorod. People of various nationalities came from the USSR to live in the town. Even after the war there was no anti-Semitism among the local population. Anti-Semitism was brought to the area by residents of the USSR.

I became a 5th-year student at the Medical Faculty of Uzhgorod University. My husband was appointed to work at the Voentorg [Editor's note: An exclusive co-operative organisation which runs shops, restaurants, laundries, and tailoring and boot-making establishments for officers.] Although my husband was an invalid, received his pension and was allowed to stay at home, he preferred to go to work.

Our daughter Zhanna was born in 1946. We lived in Uzhgorod, but I went to my husband's parents in Khmel'nitskiy to have the baby. My husband worked a lot and could be of no help to me. I took our son with me. My husband's parents were very happy to see their grandchildren. I returned to Uzhgorod after a few months. Grigori received a two-bedroom apartment in Uzhgorod shortly after we moved there. We lived in that apartment for almost 40 years.

In 1948 the campaign against 'cosmopolitans' [22](#) began in the USSR. Neither my husband nor I suffered from it, but it still affected our lives. A course of genetics was a subject in the last year of my studies at university. This course was cancelled in 1948. Mass media and radio called genetics a 'venal wench of imperialism'. It wasn't acknowledged as science until the 1960s, and there was a statement that the author of this theory was a Jew. Soviet scientists proposed a theory that there was no heredity and that nothing but environment had its effects on the development of a living being. There was so much nonsense spread at that time!

In my last year at the Medical Faculty I specialized in venereal and skin diseases. Upon graduation I got a mandatory job assignment [23](#) in a small town called Perechin, 40 km from Uzhgorod. This wasn't that far and I could travel to work and back home on the bus. I worked there for four years before I returned to Uzhgorod. I got a job at the regional clinic of venereal and skin diseases, and I was the director of the polyclinic at this clinic for 25 years.

I faced anti-Semitism in Perechin once during the time of the Doctors' Plot [24](#) in 1953. My colleague, a doctor at the Perechin clinic, said in my presence that she couldn't understand patients that came to seek treatment from me, a Jewish woman. I got so mad that I almost threw an inkpot at her. My colleagues prevented me from doing it. From that moment on I never greeted her again. This was the only case of anti-Semitism that I faced. As for others, I witnessed several cases, especially during the period of the Doctors' Plot. Once a patient complained to me that he didn't want a Jewish nurse to give him injections because he had heard that Jewish doctors were killing their patients. I replied that I was a Jew, but he didn't refuse to be my patient. He just didn't reply. Perhaps, there were discussions of this kind elsewhere, but never again in my presence. The director of the clinic in Perechin, a Hungarian man, was a very nice person. He didn't fire any Jewish

doctors and didn't conduct any meetings to abuse Jews. I heard about these kind of meetings taking place in other hospitals. My family and I didn't suffer from anti-Semitism.

On 5th March 1953 Stalin died. I remember that I cried a lot. We had a normal life and Stalin did nothing bad to our family. I couldn't imagine how the Soviet Union could exist without Stalin. It was scary and the uncertainty of the situation was painful. Later, when Stalin's villainy became publicly known, life seemed even scarier. When Nikita Khrushchev [25](#) spoke about Stalin's crimes at the Twentieth Party Congress [26](#) I believed at once that what he said was true. Somewhere, deep in my mind, I remembered the arrests of 1936 and the following years. I recalled my history teacher at school. I had only tried to hide these thoughts throughout all those years just like the majority of the Soviet people. We were like an ostrich hiding its head in the sand, but in our memories we preserved such things and they confirmed that what Khrushchev said was true.

My daughter got married and soon we had two granddaughters, Marina and Ludmila. There were too many of us in our two-bedroom apartment. In 1986 my husband and I received a two-bedroom apartment in a new district of Uzhgorod and moved there. My daughter and her family stayed in our old apartment.

My husband became the director of the Uzhgorod Brick Plant. Later he was appointed deputy chief engineer of the Regional Industrial Union. Grigori was a front man, a war veteran and communist and that helped him to make a career. I insisted that he completed his education. Grigori entered the Mechanic Extramural Department of Lvov Forestry Technical College. Although he had finished three years of his studies before the war, he had to start anew because he had forgotten a lot. Grigori graduated from college with honors in 1963. He went to work at Uzhgorod Pribor Plant [an instrument manufacturing plant] where he was the superintendent of the repair shop. He worked there for 27 years. My husband retired in 1991 at the age of 72. As a pensioner he was invited by the plant to train workers.

My husband and I had many acquaintances. It happened that our friends were Jewish. We didn't consciously make friends with Jews, but we were probably subconsciously drawn to them. We often got together with our friends. We celebrated Soviet holidays: 1st May, 7th November [October Revolution Day] [27](#), Victory Day, birthdays and New Year's. We also took advantage of any other occasion to have a gathering. I made dinner and we bought good wine for our guests. We listened to music, danced and sang. For me, 9th May, Victory Day, was the most important holiday. We had all survived and my husband and father returned from the front - I was so happy about it. On Victory Day war veterans met in the Central Park in Uzhgorod. They wore their war awards and town people came to greet them and give them flowers. My husband and I went there as well. We didn't celebrate Jewish holidays. First because we grew up in atheist families and second because my husband was a member of the Party and we couldn't take the risk to celebrate Jewish holidays because it might have jeopardized his career.

Our children grew up to become nice and kind people. I remembered my hungry childhood days and did my best for my children to have a happy childhood. My husband and I spent a lot of time with them. They were the most important part of our life. They studied well at school. I believe that my children didn't face any anti-Semitism. At least they never told us that anything of this kind happened to them, and we always had open discussions with them. Our children weren't religious and didn't observe Jewish traditions. However, they always identified themselves as Jews and never

concealed the fact of their Jewish origin. In the evenings we got together to share the news or events of the day. Even when our children grew up we continued this tradition. We liked to go to a park or the bank of the river at weekends in summer and went skiing in the outskirts of Uzhgorod in winter. When my father was still alive we went to visit him in Odessa in summer. After my father passed away we spent our summer vacation in a village in Subcarpathia. It's a picturesque area with woods and mountains. We either rented an apartment from local residents or stayed in a recreation center.

After finishing school our son Iziaslav decided to continue his education in Moscow. My husband and I were sad about his departure, but we understood that it was better for him. He was very fond of physics and took part in many contests and Olympiads. He entered the Faculty of Physics and Chemistry of Moscow Chemistry College and graduated with honors. When biophysics, a new branch of science began to develop in the USSR, he decided to explore that field. He worked at the Oncology Scientific Research Institute in Moscow. He defended his post graduate and, later, his doctor's thesis. He became a professor. Iziaslav attended and held a speech at an international seminar and had a job offer by the US Academy of Sciences. In the late 1980s he moved to America with his family.

He was very happy in his personal life, too. He married Valentina, a Russian girl, before he turned 30. We saw that they loved each other and didn't talk him out of marriage. My husband and I love our daughter-in-law. She's the best in the world! Their daughter Elena was born in 1968. Valentina finished her postgraduate studies and defended her candidate thesis. She is a candidate of physical science. My son and his wife had a very good life. Everything was fine until some medical examination determined that he had cancer of the stomach. He worked at the Institute of Oncology in the USA and had surgery there. The doctors said that the surgery was successful. A year later he had metastasis. In his last letter our son wrote, 'You've founded a good family and gave your children everything possible and even more'. Our son died in 1992.

His wife and daughter returned to Moscow. Our daughter-in-law is an external trade manager. Valentina calls me at least twice a week. She always sends us money and medication. She has become my daughter. Our granddaughter is also a candidate of science. She defended her thesis in America. She got married in America and returned to Moscow with her husband. Her last name in marriage is Hernandez-Chimenez. In Moscow she began to work at a scientific research institute, but the salary she got was just enough to pay for commuting to work and kindergarten for her daughter. She quit and began to publish the Cosmetic and Medicine journal. She was awarded a 'Golden Badge' for it.

Our daughter Zhanna entered the Mechanic Faculty of Uzhgorod University after finishing school. When I heard that my daughter was seeing a Russian man I got concerned. I don't know why because my son's marriage didn't worry me. Perhaps, it was because my son didn't get married for a long time or, probably, I was just more worried about my daughter than my son. However, my husband and I didn't stop Zhanna from her plan. Her boyfriend's parents were eager to see them getting married. My husband and I remembered a sad experience of a family we knew. The parents didn't allow their daughter to marry a Russian man and she remained single. I told my daughter that I didn't want her to marry that man, but if she insisted she should do as she wished. After a few years I understood that my negative attitude towards him was unjustified. My daughter's husband is a very nice man. He's very supportive and helps her with everything.

When my daughter finished her 2nd year at university her husband graduated from college and got a job assignment in the Ural. She followed him there and graduated from the Polytechnic College in the Ural. She is a mechanic engineer. Zhanna's last name in marriage is Ivanova. She has two daughters: Marina, born in 1972, and Ludmila, born in 1977. After her younger daughter was born Zhanna and her family returned to Uzhgorod.

Marina graduated from Kharkov Credit and Economy Academy and worked as chief accountant at a company in Kharkov. Marina married an Arab man. I don't remember his last name because it was difficult to pronounce. He studied in the Faculty of Aviation Medicine of Kharkov Aviation College and finished his studies with honors. Marina's husband has a Russian citizenship. They met when they were students in Kharkov and got married. Some people say Arabs are no good, but I like this man. He's nice and caring. When Marina got pregnant she quit her job in Kharkov and came to Uzhgorod. They have a nice boy, my great-grandson Misha [Mikhail]. Marina's husband signed an employment agreement for a job in Saudi Arabia. The baby couldn't get adjusted to the climate there, so Marina and her baby returned to Uzhgorod. Her husband sends her money every month and writes her e-mails every day.

Ludmila moved to Israel after finishing school. She graduated from a college there and works as a mathematician and programmer. The company she works for has affiliates in many countries all over the world. Ludmila travels to England, Austria and other countries. Right now she's on a business trip in Brazil. She's very happy and has all she wants. She doesn't want to return to Ukraine.

Of course, we didn't blame our friends and acquaintances who were moving to Israel. We wished them a happy life. We decided to move to Israel when a close friend came to visit us from Israel. He told us many wonderful things and my husband and I plunged ourselves into preparations for our departure. We obtained all the necessary documents and found a buyer for our apartment. We also went for a medical check. The doctor diagnosed that my husband had cancer of the stomach. I thought, 'My God, why would I go to Israel? To be alone? No. I shall stay here'. Then the doctor diagnosed that I had breast cancer. They recommended us to stay because of the climate. Our doctor told us that we could do without a surgery saying that when it comes to old people a tumor took a long time to develop. We started a course of chemotherapy and took medication for five years and the medical examination after five years showed that we had no tumors. We were happy to be alive and had no thoughts about moving to Israel any more.

In the late 1980s perestroika began in the USSR. I was far from politics and skeptical in the beginning. However, some time later I realized that it was something more important than any another propaganda campaign. The slogans of perestroika, 'liberty and glasnost', became true. Books were published and mass media became more open. Of course, the changes were evident. In addition to positive developments there were also problems. The standards of living became very low for many people. Prices went up and salaries didn't keep pace with the prices. It all ended with the fall of the USSR. Our great country turned into a bunch of small and miserable countries, however independent they proclaimed themselves to be. If the USSR had remained, the USA wouldn't behave like a 'world gendarme' today: they would have stayed away from Yugoslavia and Iraq.

When Ukraine became independent, Jewish life began to revive. Many of our acquaintances and friends turned to Jewish religion and began to go to the synagogue. My husband and I didn't have a real urge to do so and didn't want to be hypocrites. We were happy about the rebirth of Jewish culture, which had been suppressed throughout all the years of the Soviet regime. We are also happy that not only older but also young people take part in it. Probably young people are even more willing to lead a Jewish way of life.

In 1999 Hesed opened in Uzhgorod. There are Yiddish, Ivrit and many other clubs for people. We celebrate Sabbath and Jewish holidays with Hesed. These celebrations are always very interesting. My husband and I have lived a long and happy life. We've been together for 63 years. We never had any arguments or even raised our voices. My husband is the person closest to me. He's having a hard time now. A year ago I fell and had a fractured neck of femur. I cannot have a surgery, but without a surgery I'll never be able to walk again. Since that time I've been confined to bed and my husband does everything about the house. However, the Lord sent me a nice visiting nurse from Hesed in addition to a good husband. She cleans, does the laundry and ironing, goes to the market and does many other things. My husband and I like her a lot. Regardless of my suffering, I'm grateful for what I've been given in life.

[Glossary](#)

[1](#) Guild I

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

[2](#) Moldavanka

Poor Jewish neighborhood on the outskirts of Odessa.

[3](#) Peresyp

An industrial neighborhood in the outskirts of Odessa.

[4](#) Babel, Isaac Emmanuilovich (1894-1940)

Russian author. Born in Odessa, he received a traditional religious as well as a secular education. During the Russian Civil War, he was political commissar of the First Cavalry Army and he fought for the Bolsheviks. From 1923 Babel devoted himself to writing plays, film scripts and narrative works. He drew on his experiences in the Russian cavalry and in Jewish life in Odessa. After 1929, he fell foul of the Russian literary establishment and published little. He was arrested by the Russian secret police in 1939 and completely vanished. His works were 'rehabilitated' after Stalin's death.

[5](#) Struggle against religion

The 1930s was a time of anti-religion struggle in the USSR. In those years it was not safe to go to synagogue or to church. Places of worship, statues of saints, etc. were removed; rabbis, Orthodox

and Roman Catholic priests disappeared behind KGB walls.

6 Black Hundred

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

7 Pogroms in Ukraine

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

8 Russian Revolution of 1917

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

9 Great Patriotic War

On 22nd June 1941 at 5 o'clock in the morning Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union without declaring war. This was the beginning of the so-called Great Patriotic War. The German blitzkrieg, known as Operation Barbarossa, nearly succeeded in breaking the Soviet Union in the months that followed. Caught unprepared, the Soviet forces lost whole armies and vast quantities of equipment to the German onslaught in the first weeks of the war. By November 1941 the German army had seized the Ukrainian Republic, besieged Leningrad, the Soviet Union's second largest city, and threatened Moscow itself. The war ended for the Soviet Union on 9th May 1945.

10 Nationalization in Russia

Private businesses and property were confiscated by the state after the Revolution of 1917.

11 Likbez

'Likbez' is derived from the Russian term for 'eradication of illiteracy'. The program, in the framework of which courses were organized for illiterate adults to learn to read and write, was launched in the 1920s. The students had classes in the evening several times a week for a year.

12 Communal apartment

The Soviet power wanted to improve housing conditions by requisitioning 'excess' living space of

wealthy families after the Revolution of 1917. Apartments were shared by several families with each family occupying one room and sharing the kitchen, toilet and bathroom with other tenants. Because of the chronic shortage of dwelling space in towns shared apartments continued to exist for decades. Despite state programs for the construction of more houses and the liquidation of shared apartments, which began in the 1960s, shared apartments still exist today.

13 Russian stove

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

14 Elijah, the Prophet

According to Jewish legend the prophet Elijah visits every home on the first day of Pesach and drinks from the cup that has been poured for him. He is invisible but he can see everything in the house. The door is kept open for the prophet to come in and honor the holiday with his presence.

15 Young Octobrist

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

16 Komsomol

Communist youth political organization created in 1918. The task of the Komsomol was to spread of the ideas of communism and involve the worker and peasant youth in building the Soviet Union. The Komsomol also aimed at giving a communist upbringing by involving the worker youth in the political struggle, supplemented by theoretical education. The Komsomol was more popular than the Communist Party because with its aim of education people could accept uninitiated young proletarians, whereas party members had to have at least a minimal political qualification.

17 Famine in Ukraine

In 1920 a deliberate famine was introduced in the Ukraine causing the death of millions of people. It was arranged in order to suppress those protesting peasants who did not want to join the collective farms. There was another dreadful deliberate famine in 1930-1934 in the Ukraine. The authorities took away the last food products from the peasants. People were dying in the streets, whole villages became deserted. The authorities arranged this specifically to suppress the rebellious peasants who did not want to accept Soviet power and join collective farms.

18 Collectivization in the USSR

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

19 Great Terror (1934-1938)

During the Great Terror, or Great Purges, which included the notorious show trials of Stalin's former Bolshevik opponents in 1936-1938 and reached its peak in 1937 and 1938, millions of innocent Soviet citizens were sent off to labor camps or killed in prison. The major targets of the Great Terror were communists. Over half of the people who were arrested were members of the party at the time of their arrest. The armed forces, the Communist Party, and the government in general were purged of all allegedly dissident persons; the victims were generally sentenced to death or to long terms of hard labor. Much of the purge was carried out in secret, and only a few cases were tried in public 'show trials'. By the time the terror subsided in 1939, Stalin had managed to bring both the party and the public to a state of complete submission to his rule. Soviet society was so atomized and the people so fearful of reprisals that mass arrests were no longer necessary. Stalin ruled as absolute dictator of the Soviet Union until his death in March 1953. [20](#) Victory Day in Russia: National holiday to commemorate the defeat of Nazi Germany and the end of World War II and honor the Soviets who died in the war. [21](#) Subcarpathia (also known as Ruthenia, Russian and Ukrainian name Zakarpacie): Region situated on the border of the Carpathian Mountains with the Middle Danube lowland. The regional capitals are Uzhhorod, Berehovo, Mukachevo, Khust. It belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy until World War I; and the Saint-Germain convention declared its annexation to Czechoslovakia in 1919. It is impossible to give exact historical statistics of the language and ethnic groups living in this geographical unit: the largest groups in the interwar period were Hungarians, Rusyns, Russians, Ukrainians, Czech and Slovaks. In addition there was also a considerable Jewish and Gypsy population. In accordance with the first Vienna Decision of 1938, the area of Subcarpathia mainly inhabited by Hungarians was ceded to Hungary. The rest of the region, was proclaimed a new state called Carpathian Ukraine in 1939, with Khust as its capital, but it only existed for four and a half months, and was occupied by Hungary in March 1939. Subcarpathia was taken over by Soviet troops and local guerrillas in 1944. In 1945, Czechoslovakia ceded the area to the USSR and it gained the name Carpatho-Ukraine. The region became part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1945. When Ukraine became independent in 1991, the region became an administrative region under the name of Transcarpathia. [22](#) Campaign against 'cosmopolitans': The campaign against 'cosmopolitans', i.e. Jews, was initiated in articles in the central organs of the Communist Party in 1949. The campaign was directed primarily at the Jewish intelligentsia and it was the first public attack on Soviet Jews as Jews. 'Cosmopolitans' writers were accused of hating the Russian people, of supporting Zionism, etc. Many Yiddish writers as well as the leaders of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee were arrested in November 1948 on charges that they maintained ties with Zionism and with American 'imperialism'. They were executed secretly in 1952. The antisemitic Doctors' Plot was launched in January 1953. A wave of anti-Semitism spread through the USSR. Jews were removed from their positions, and rumors of an imminent mass deportation of Jews to the eastern part of the USSR began to spread. Stalin's death in March 1953 put an end to the campaign against 'cosmopolitans'.

23 Mandatory job assignment in the USSR

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

24 Doctors' Plot

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

25 Khrushchev, Nikita (1894-1971)

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

26 Twentieth Party Congress

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

27 October Revolution Day

October 25 (according to the old calendar), 1917 went down in history as victory day for the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia. This day is the most significant date in the history of the USSR. Today the anniversary is celebrated as 'Day of Accord and Reconciliation' on November 7.