

Esiah Kleiman

Esiah Kleiman

Chernovtsy

Ukraine

Interviewer: Ella Levitskaya

Date of interview: February 2002



Esiah Kleiman and his wife, Fenia Kleiman, live in a spacious apartment in a building that was constructed in the center of Chernovtsy in the 1920s. Their apartment is comfortable and cozy. They have a big collection of books in Russian, Yiddish and Hebrew. Esiah is a tall big man with a loud voice. He is full of energy. People come to ask Esiah's advice in case they have problems or just need to talk about everyday issues. During the interview Esiah recited prayers in Hebrew, which he has known since his childhood. Esiah and Fenia have no children, but they have many friends. One can tell that they care about one another a lot.

[My family background](#)

[Growing up](#)

[During the War](#)

[After the War](#)

[Glossary](#)

My family background

My father's parents lived in the town of Vad-Rashkov, Tzaruk district, Bessarabia [1](#). Bessarabia belonged to Russia before 1918 and was then given to Romania. The majority of the population of Vad-Rashkov was Jewish. Jewish families resided in the center of Vad-Rashkov. Streets in the town were named after professions, like Tailor, Locksmith or Shoemaker Street. The Jews were craftsmen and merchants for the most part. There were also some involved in farming but not very many. There were a few wealthy families and a number of poor Jews. Married women were housewives. Besides the Jewish population there were also Russian, Moldavian and Ukrainian inhabitants. There were no conflicts between members of different nationalities. The atmosphere in town was friendly.

There was a big Jewish community in Vad-Rashkov. Wealthier Jews made donations to support sick and poor Jews. There were also volunteers, mainly middle-aged men, who brought food and clothing to poor families. The community funded a Jewish hospital, a Jewish elementary school and a Jewish library. All subjects in the school were taught in Yiddish. Besides general subjects schoolchildren studied Hebrew, Jewish literature, history and religion. It was a small school and there weren't many pupils. This had to do with children's further education. After finishing this school they had to continue their education in a Romanian school anyway. Therefore, many Jewish families wanted their children to go to a Romanian elementary school to avoid the problem of language barriers. After finishing the Jewish elementary school children had to improve their Romanian, which took some time.

There was a small library at school with religious and secular books in Yiddish and Hebrew. Children could borrow books to read them at home. There was also a box with a Star of David for donations for Palestine in every house. [The interviewee is probably referring to the so-called blue boxes of the Keren Kayemet Leisrael.] [2](#) Several times a year members of the organization collected these donations. I don't know how many employees they had. One and the same man came to our home to collect our donations each year. Every family gave donations depending on their income. I don't know how much money my parents put into that box or how often they did it. The collector opened the lid of the box and took the money out without counting it. I guess they counted it afterwards.

The association also sold plots of land in Palestine, and my father had a stamped certificate which was a confirmation of his ownership of a plot of land in Palestine. My father took the whole thing with humor and jokingly said that he would become the master of an estate in Palestine soon. I don't think that any of the owners of certificates took it seriously. I believe the collectors of the donations were just stimulating people to donate more that way.

There were four big two-storied Orthodox synagogues in the center of town and several smaller, one-storied ones for poorer Jews on the outskirts of town. Those smaller synagogues were called after the professional groups that attended them: tailors, shoemakers, roofers, etc. There was a rabbi at each synagogue. There was also a big house in the center of town, where rabbis and their families lived. Before World War I there were no conflicts between the different nationalities or pogroms in Vad-Rashkov. It was a quiet town.

My paternal grandfather, Shaya Kleiman, was born in Vad-Rashkov in 1857. He finished cheder. He came from a poor family with many children. I don't know how my grandfather earned his living in his younger years, but in his thirties he was the manager of a few haberdashery stores in Vad-Rashkov, which belonged to a wealthy Jew. My grandfather was married twice. He had five children in his first marriage. They were my father's stepbrothers and stepsister.

The oldest son, Pinia, whose common name [3](#) was Filip emigrated to America in the 1900s, where he graduated from university and got married. Pinia owned a network of pharmacies. He died in 1940 when he was in his fifties. Another son named Leepei also died young. I have no information about him. The third child in the family was my father's stepsister Esther, born in 1885. She married and became a housewife. I don't remember her husband. She died in 1916 after her daughter was born. Esther's child was raised by her husband's relatives.

Mordekhai, whose common name was Mark, was born in 1890. He studied in Russia and stayed in the USSR after 1918 since he couldn't come back to Bessarabia because it belonged to Romania then. He was married and had two sons. Mordekhai died in evacuation in Kazan, the capital of Tatarstan, in 1943. One of his sons lives in Tula, Russia, and the other one emigrated to Germany in the late 1980s.

Nahman, the youngest of my father's stepbrothers, was a very rich man. After Bessarabia joined the USSR in 1940 the Soviet authorities nationalized his property. To avoid arrest he escaped to Kishinev where he hoped to be able to hide, but living in constant fear was too stressful for him, and he died of an infarction in 1940. Nahman's wife, Taibl, and their four children - Ida, born in 1918, Rachel, born in 1920, Leo, born in 1925 and David, born in 1927 - stayed in Vad-Rashkov. At the beginning of the war they didn't evacuate and were killed by the Germans in Kodyma village in 1941.

The story of my grandfather's second marriage is very interesting. My grandfather had a brother whose name I don't remember. He was a Hasid [4](#). After he got married he lived in the house of his in-laws. My grandfather's brother and his wife had several children. One of them was my future grandmother, Beila Kleiman, born in 1877. Once my grandfather's brother and his father-in-law argued about some religious issue. I don't know any details, but as a result my grandfather's brother had to leave his in-laws' house. My grandfather's brother moved to Palestine and his ex-wife remarried shortly afterwards. I don't know why she didn't want to keep her children, perhaps, her husband was against it. All I know is that her children were raised by relatives. My grandfather and his wife adopted one of the girls. That was how my future grandmother Beila happened to live with the family of my grandfather Shaya from the age of 7. When my grandfather's wife died - he was in his forties then - he married his niece Beila, who was 18. She was younger than his children, but they got along well and had a loving relationship. They had three children. The oldest was my father David, born in 1896. The next one was Maika, born in 1898, and the youngest, Solomon, was born in 1900.

I have dim memories of my grandparents' home. I only remember that it was a pretty big stone house. My grandfather provided well for the family, and my grandmother was a housewife. I'm sure that their family was religious because my father was raised religiously and kept his faith until the end of his life. Besides all Jewish families were religious at that time. They observed Jewish traditions and attended the synagogue.

My father and his brother studied in cheder and at the Jewish secondary school. Maika was educated at home. She had classes with a teacher every day. He taught her to write and read in Yiddish and Hebrew, prayers, the Torah, history and about the religion of the Jewish people. They spoke Yiddish in the family, but they were also fluent in Russian and Romanian.

My grandparents died before I was born. Grandfather Shaya died in 1927 at the age of 70, and Grandmother Beila died in 1928. I don't know why she died. My mother told me that she missed my grandfather a lot. They were buried according to Jewish traditions in the Jewish cemetery in Vad-Rashkov.

Maika married a local Jewish man called Iosif Nusimovich one year before my grandfather died. They had four children: Moisey, born in 1927, Beila, who was named after my grandmother, born in 1929, Khaim Shaya, born in 1933 and Noah, born in 1939. The whole family perished during the Great Patriotic War [5](#). Maika's husband and her son Moisey were shot by the Germans in Kodyma village. Maika and her other three children perished on the way to the ghetto near Kodyma village.

My father's younger brother, Solomon, emigrated to America in 1921 where he got married. He died a few years ago. His four children live in the USA. They are doing very well there. My father corresponded with his brother before 1940. When the Soviet power was established in Bessarabia they stopped corresponding. It wasn't safe for Soviet people to keep in touch with their relatives abroad [6](#) or receive parcels from them. Only in the middle of the 1980s, when perestroika began, did we manage to find our relatives. Since then we've kept in touch with my uncle and cousins.

My mother's family lived in the town of Chinisheutsi, Rezin district [30 km from Vad-Rashkov]. Now Chinisheutsi cannot be found on any map any more, just like so many small towns. The city of Rezin was under construction after the war, and many small villages around it became part of the city. My grandfather, Teviye Uchitel, was born in Chinisheutsi in the 1870s, and so was my

grandmother Sarah-Khona.

I remember very little about the town. I only visited my grandparents on vacations. My mother told me that there were many Jewish families in town. Like in all other small towns Jews were involved in crafts and trade for the most part. There were only a few wealthier families; the majority was poor. There was a synagogue and a cheder in Chinisheutsi. There was no Jewish elementary school. My grandparent's house was surrounded by hills. There were four houses in that spot: my grandparents' house and the houses of their sons and their families. I remember my grandparents' house because my sister and I used to spend our summer vacation there. It was a big stone house with several rooms. There was heavy solid oak furniture, carpets and pictures. There were also guest rooms, which were used when children and grandchildren were visiting. There were bookcases stuffed with books in the living room. There was no running water in the house. Water was fetched from a well in the yard. There were stoves stoked with wood and used for heating and cooking.

There were five children in the family. My mother Golda, born in 1898, was the oldest. The next one was her sister Mariam, born in 1899, Genia followed in 1902, Aron in 1905 and the youngest son, Meyer, in 1908.

Grandfather Teviye owned a big timber storehouse. He provided well for the family. My grandmother was a housewife. She was a short, plump woman. She always had her hair neatly done and wore elegant secular clothes. My grandmother didn't wear traditional long and dark clothes. I never saw her wearing a kerchief either. My grandfather wore elegant suits, light shirts and ties and casual hats. He didn't cover his head at home but put on his hat when going out. He had a small well-groomed beard. They spoke Yiddish in the house but were also fluent in Russian and Romanian. They observed Jewish traditions, but to a smaller extent than my father's family. My father felt the need to observe all religious traditions while in my mother's family religiosity was a mere tribute to traditions. They just observed traditions so they wouldn't be different from their surrounding.

Grandfather Teviye went to a nearby synagogue on Saturday and on holidays. I don't remember if my grandmother went to the synagogue. Since I only visited them in the summer I don't know how they celebrated Jewish holidays. I don't know what kind of education my grandparents had, but they were fairly intelligent people. They had a collection of books in Hebrew, Yiddish and Russian. There were religious books in Hebrew, and the rest of them were secular books. They paid much attention to providing education for their children. All children studied Hebrew, Jewish culture and history. Their teachers taught them at home. My mother and her sisters and brothers also finished a grammar school. My mother studied at the Russian grammar school in the town of Orgeyev, Bessarabia. It was easier to enter grammar school in Orgeyev. It was tsarist Russia. My mother spoke fluent Russian.

Grandfather Teviye died in 1937. He was buried in accordance with the Jewish traditions in the Jewish cemetery in Chinisheutsi. Grandmother Sarah- Khona lived the rest of her life alone in their house. She, her brothers and their families decided to stay there. Local bandits killed them in 1941 before the Germans arrived in Chinisheutsi.

Mariam finished school with a silver medal. There was a standard rate for medals: one golden and one silver medal per class. A priest's daughter was awarded the golden medal and Mariam received

the silver one. She spoke fluent French. Mariam was fond of biology. She had a collection of dried butterflies in her room. From what I remember she always had a net to catch insects that she used to dissect. After finishing grammar school Mariam entered the Faculty of Biology of Odessa University. She came home for vacations after her first year. In summer 1918 Bessarabia became a part of Romania. Romanian troops came into the town and Mariam couldn't go back to Odessa. Her parents hired a Romanian officer to teach her Romanian. She picked up the language easily and continued her studies at the university in Iasi, Romania. Upon graduation from university, she got a job at a Romanian grammar school in Iasi. She earned good money. She didn't get married. She was devoted to entomology.

In the mid-1930s the pro-fascist Iron Guard [7](#), the Cuzists [8](#) and other movements appeared. Jews were forbidden to work in state institutions. Mariam lost her job and got a new one in a private grammar school in Bolgrad, Ukraine, where she worked until the Soviet power was established in 1940. Since Mariam had a good conduct of Russian she was offered a position as a Russian teacher in a higher secondary school in Orgeyev. She was a very accurate and disciplined employee and was doing very well at her new job. She didn't observe Jewish traditions.

My mother's second sister, Genia, also finished a Russian grammar school and married a Jewish man from Chinisheutsi. Genia didn't observe Jewish traditions and distanced herself from her Jewish identity. She was a housewife. During the war her husband was on the front, and Genia and her daughter were in evacuation in Middle Asia. Genia's husband returned from the front, and they settled down in Chernovtsy. Genia died of cancer in 1961. Her daughter moved to Israel in the 1970s. She has passed away by now, too.

Aron, my mother's brother, studied with a melamed at home. He studied a lot more than other children. He was a convinced Jew, the only one of all the children, and spent a lot of time studying religion, reading the Torah and Talmud. He spoke Yiddish for the most part and Russian with an accent. When Mariam came on vacation from Iasi she told my grandparents that this might spoil his career unless he was going to become a rabbi. After that my grandfather hired a private teacher who corrected Aron's pronunciation in Russian. My grandfather wanted to send Aron to a Russian grammar school, too, but he was too old to go to the 1st grade. So my grandfather hired a teacher to prepare him for the exam that would enable him to attend the class that corresponded to his age. Aron passed the exam and was admitted. After finishing grammar school Aron went to Bucharest and entered the Pharmaceutical Faculty at Bucharest University.

After Bessarabia came under Romanian rule anti-Semitism could be felt. In Romania anti-Semitism was initiated by the intelligentsia, poets and artists, while common people were quite loyal to Jews. Aron was at the university at that time. My mother told me about an incident showing how objective lecturers were to Jewish students during the period of state anti-Semitism. There was a National [9](#) Democratic Party lead by Cuza. Either his son or his son-in-law, an adamant anti-Semite, lectured pharmacology at the university. He happened to be Aron's examiner. Aron had a typical Jewish appearance and last name, but he nevertheless got the highest grade at the exam. This shows that those lecturers valued truth more than their personal ambitions and convictions. Aron graduated from the university with honors and got married. His wife was the daughter of a Moldavian Zionist called Baltsan. Perhaps it was under his influence that Aron and his wife decided to move to Palestine, where Aron opened a pharmacy. His name is still on the sign of this pharmacy in Haifa. Aron passed away a long time ago, and so did his wife. His son is a professor in

America.

My mother's youngest brother, Meyer, finished grammar school and took over the timber storehouse from his father, which he owned until 1940 when the Soviet power was established. Meyer married a Jewish girl. They had a traditional Jewish wedding. They had a child. Meyer and his family moved to Tyrnovo, a Moldavian village, in 1940. In 1941, after the Great Patriotic War began, the three of them were sent to Transnistria [10](#), to the ghetto in Obodovka village, Vinnitsa region, where they starved to death in 1942.

I don't know how my parents met. It might well be that they were introduced to each other by matchmakers, which was common in Jewish communities at that time. They got married after the mourning period over my father's parents was over in 1930. They had a traditional Jewish wedding with a chuppah in my mother's house in Chinisheutsi. My parents lived in my father's home in Vad-Rashkov in the beginning. My father was a very intelligent and smart man. At 30 he had a house and owned a grocery store, which was located in his house. We lived there before the war. Like all other houses in this town their house was narrow. The biggest room in the house was for the grocery store. My father worked in the store, and my mother helped him, when there were more customers in the store. There were five other rooms in the house: two rooms for the children, my parents' bedroom and a dining room. There was big kitchen with a Russian stove [11](#) that served for cooking and heating the house. There was a front and a back door to the house. There was a big flower garden and an orchard in the back. My mother did all the housekeeping herself.

Growing up

I was born in 1931. I was named after my deceased grandfather Shaya. My sister Beila was born in 1933. She was named after my father's mother.

I guess the store was quite profitable since we were a wealthy family. My parents were moderately religious. They wore worldly clothes. My mother and father liked fashionable clothes. My father never wore anything specifically traditional Jewish. My mother always had her hair neatly done. She didn't wear a wig; she only wore a shawl or a kerchief when she went to the synagogue. My father was more religious than my mother. On holidays they went to the synagogue together and on Saturdays my father went alone. He took me with him when I grew older. He had a prayer book, tallit and tefillin and prayed at home every day.

On Fridays my mother made food for two days. She kept Jewish meat stewed with tomato paste and jam, and cholent in pots in the oven. We bought challah for Sabbath at a Jewish bakery. On Friday evenings my mother lit the candles and said a prayer, and my father said a blessing for the house and the children. After the prayer we had a festive dinner. My parents didn't work on Saturday, but I don't remember if they followed all rules so strictly as to not turn on lights or stoke a stove. Sometimes my parents' friends came to see them, and then my father read a part from the Torah to them.

I remember Pesach best of all. There were preparations in the house beforehand. No bread or even breadcrumbs were allowed to be in the house. We bought enough matzah for the eight days of the holiday. Every Jewish family had special fancy utensils and dishes for Pesach that were passed from one generation to the next. On the eve of Pesach these utensils were taken down from the attic. If there weren't enough utensils, everyday dishes were treated in such a manner as to be ready for

use on Pesach. They were to be washed with floating water, scrubbed with sand and boiled in the water with small stones before they could be used on Pesach.

My mother made traditional food: chicken broth, gefilte fish, chicken necks stuffed with fried onions and giblets, puddings from matzah and eggs. She also made strudels with nuts and raisins, honey cakes and a special Star of David or Magen David shaped cookies. In the evening my father conducted the seder. After he said a prayer I posed the traditional 'four questions' [the mah nishtanah] to him in Hebrew. My father sang beautifully. He taught my sister and me Hatikvah, and we sang it together. At dinner one had to drink four glasses of wine. My father and mother drank wine, and my sister and I had water with a few drops of wine. During dinner the family had to keep the front door open for Elijah the Prophet to come in. An extra glass of wine was poured for him. My father said a prayer, and my sister and I were looking at the door to see if Elijah would come in. Sometimes Romanians or Moldavians, who wanted to play a joke, waited until the doors opened and let a cat or a dog in. Anyway, they weren't wicked jokes. We sang lots of beautiful Jewish songs until morning.

We also celebrated Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. My parents fasted on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, but they didn't force us to fast. On these holidays my parents spent a whole day at the synagogue. We sat down for dinner after they returned. On Purim my mother made hamantaschen. On this holiday Jewish traditions required to bring shelakhmones to one's relatives and friends, and there were many Jewish children taking trays with sweets from one house to another on this day. For Sukkot my father made a big sukkah in the yard of our house and we decorated it with green branches and color ribbons. We had meals in it for a whole week. Chanukkah was a joyful holiday. Children were given some money and spinning tops [dreidel]. At home candles were lit in a chanukkiyah every day.

On the eve of religious holidays rabbis invited Jewish families to a festive meal in their house. My father was a respectable man and always got an invitation. I went with him. It was a common Jewish belief that if a rabbi took a piece from a dish, the rest of the food would heal those that ate it. And the moment a rabbi took a piece other Jews pounced upon the rest of food. I remember my father giving me a piece of something saying, 'Take this, it's sacred'.

Yiddish is my mother tongue. I spoke my first words in Yiddish. When I turned 4 my father insisted that I studied Hebrew. My sister didn't study Hebrew. I had a teacher of Hebrew at home. He was a teacher from cheder. When I misbehaved he complained to my father about it. I studied the grammar and pronunciation of Hebrew as it's spoken in Israel. At 5 I began to study the Torah with my teacher. I didn't go to cheder.

At 6 I was to go to a Romanian elementary school. My father believed that after finishing a Romanian school I would have no problems entering a university. However, I wasn't admitted to a Romanian school because I hadn't reached the age of 8 yet. My father sent me to the 1st grade of a Jewish school. We studied all subjects in Romanian and had classes of Yiddish and Hebrew. After the 1st grade I passed exams for the Romanian school and was admitted to the 2nd grade. When I went to the Romanian school my Hebrew teacher gave me classes at home in the afternoon. We studied Hebrew, Jewish history and the Torah. In the evening my father tested me. He never punished me for making mistakes, but he made me learn until I knew the subject to his satisfaction. My teacher stopped giving me classes when I turned 9. I still remember everything I

learned, but my vocabulary is rather poor now due to lack of practice.

There were many Jewish children in the Romanian school. I studied successfully and had no problems at school. There was no anti-Semitism. Sometimes other children jokingly touched the lips of a Jewish child with a slice of pork fat because they knew that Jews didn't eat pork, but these were just harmless shenanigans. I had Romanian and Jewish friends at school. We didn't care about nationality then. After school I used to play with Jewish children who lived in my neighborhood. We visited one another and did our homework together.

My mother took me and my sister to our grandparents' for our summer vacations. We went there in a horse-driven coach. My father stayed in Vad-Rashkov because he couldn't leave his store. My mother stayed with her parents a few days and left for home afterwards. My sister and I sometimes spent the whole summer with our grandparents. There was a forest near their house. We went there with our local friends. We also went to swim in the river and played games.

There was a very poor family in our neighborhood. My sister ate very little, and my mother often invited children from this family to keep my sister company at meals. My parents always tried to help less fortunate families.

In 1940 the Soviet Union declared an ultimatum to Romania demanding that Moldavia and Bessarabia be returned to the Soviet Union. Our town was located at the border of Romania with the USSR. We were separated by the Dneestr River. The majority of the population spoke good Russian since it was only 22 years before when this area belonged to Russia. They remembered the language well. People believed the Soviet propaganda and thought that the USSR was the country where people were equal, regardless of their nationality, and that there was no anti-Semitism. Even wealthier people thought that life would be good once the Soviet regime was established. My parents also believed it.

We used to swim in the river on our side of the border while there was restricted access to the riverbank on the Soviet side. There was a frontier line with military posts. Nobody ever approached the border on the opposite bank of the river, but there were electric lights and music there in the evening. Loudspeakers broadcast programs in Russian and Romanian: concerts and news and other propaganda programs - as I understand now - could be heard on our side of the border. Sometimes people wanted to cross the border and swam across the river - the Romanian side of the border was guarded poorly. As soon as such turncoats reached the Soviet territory they were arrested and sent to exile in Siberia. I got to know about it after the war. People who were in exile in Siberia told me about it.

On 28th June 1940 Soviet troops entered Bessarabia. People came into the streets to greet them. Many went to the bank of the river. Many of them had relatives in the Soviet Union they hadn't seen for 22 years. People on the opposite bank were shouting and asking for clothes, shoes and fabrics. We couldn't understand what it might mean, but when we saw the poverty of the Soviet reality we understood. How ignorant we were thinking that justice ruled the Soviet country!

The wealthiest families were arrested on the first days of the Soviet regime. My great-uncle Mayer Uchitel, who lived in Chinisheutsi, was a very wealthy man. He was deprived of his property and sent into exile in Siberia for six years. His wife and son, who was an engineer, stayed in Chinisheutsi. His daughter lived in Kishinev. Regretfully, I don't remember their names. She

managed to evacuate at the beginning of the war, but Mayer's wife and son were killed by the Germans at the very beginning of the war. My grandmother's brother was a skilled businessman and even in exile he was responsible for accounting in prison. He returned after his term of exile was over.

My father wasn't considered rich. He didn't have any employees in his store, but did all work himself and the Soviet authorities didn't consider him an 'exploiter'. Rich people owned a lot more than my father, who just worked to provide for his family. The exchange rate was 1 ruble for 40 lei. The income of locals dropped dramatically, but the newcomers bought everything they saw in stores. We were surprised when they asked, 'Have you got more of it?' We couldn't understand. My parents were surprised that goods that hadn't been in demand in the past couple of years were sold out in an instant. Within two weeks the store and the storehouses were empty. My father used to purchase goods in Budapest and Bucharest, but he didn't have this opportunity any longer. My father and many other owners of stores went bankrupt. Every now and then the military announced a training alarm including the evacuation of the public. They took away goods from stores and never returned them. There were lines in stores - something that we had never seen before.

I finished the 3rd grade in 1940, but in September of the same year I had to go to the 3rd grade of a Russian school. That was a new order established by the Soviet power. My sister went to the 1st grade.

During the War

On 22nd June 1941 the Great Patriotic War began. My sister Beila, who had finished the 1st grade, was spending her vacation with Grandmother Sarah- Khona in Chinisheutsi. Aunt Mariam also went there on vacation. We didn't have any information about the situation in Europe. Very few people had radios, and newspapers published false information for the most part. During the first days of the war newspapers wrote that the Soviet troops had advanced as far as Bucharest. We believed that the Soviet army was undefeatable, and it never occurred to us that they would be leaving town after town with little resistance. We also heard the sounds of bombardment and explosions.

Mariam came to see us in July 1941 and told us that we had to leave as soon as possible. She suggested that she would take Beila and that we should all meet in Odessa where she had acquaintances. The official information claimed that the situation was stable and that the Soviet troops were advancing to the West. We believed it. Mariam and my sister left. They got to Rostov, where Mariam got a job in a school and Beila went to the 2nd grade. We heard about their fate after the war from survivors. They told us that Mariam wanted to leave when the Germans approached Rostov in 1942, but the school management told her that she had no right to leave the school until the official evacuation was announced. The management left, and she stayed behind. She and my sister were captured by the Germans. That's all we know. They must have been shot along with many other Jews in Rostov.

Air raids began in our town at the end of July, although there were no military faculties in town. We heard the roar of the approaching frontline. Evacuation began. A ferry, pulled by a motorboat, came to the bank of the Dnestr at night. People boarded it to be taken to the opposite bank to Rashkov village. We evacuated as well: my father, my mother and I, my father's sister Maika and her four children and Taibl, the wife of my father's stepbrother, and her four children. From Rashkov we headed to Kodyma, Odessa region, where we hoped to catch a train. My father went

back to Vad-Rashkov to pick up our belongings. We were to wait for him in Kodyma. When we arrived in Kodyma the railway station was on fire, and there were no trains. We got accommodation in the house of a local woman. On the next day the Germans arrived in the village.

On the first days of the war the Germans ordered to keep houses unlocked. They robbed people who came to the houses at any time of the day. They only took valuables. They took away my father's gold watch and his raccoon fur coat. Jews were ordered to have a Star of David attached to their chest and back. Later they were ordered to replace them with yellow stars.

After a few days a unit of German militaries in black uniforms broke into the Jewish neighborhood. They ordered men and 14-15 year-old boys to come out of their houses. They took them to the vicinity of Kodyma. My father was still in Vad-Rashkov, and his absence saved his life. On that day more than a hundred men were shot. Maika's husband, Iosif Naumovich, her son Moisey and Taibl's sons, Leo and David, were among them. The rest of the men were kept hostages. The Germans tortured them for a few days before they shot them, too.

An acquaintance of my parents' was rescued by a German officer. When the hostages were taken into the street before their execution the German officer gave this man a bucket and ordered him to fetch some water. When he returned with the water the German yelled at him, turned over the bucket with water and told him to go fetch some water again. When the scene repeated itself the man understood that the German gave him a chance to escape. He hid in the forest. Later he stayed with a Ukrainian family. He told us his story after the war.

After her sons were shot Aunt Taibl decided to get out of Kodyma with her daughters and went to a village on the bank of the river where she had an acquaintance. She did so, but soon afterwards we heard that the locals drowned all Jews of the village in the river. I don't remember the name of this village. Shortly afterwards my father came to Kodyma.

The Germans issued an order for all evacuated Jews to return to their homes at the end of August 1941. We headed in the direction of Rashkov, but we weren't allowed to cross the river to Vad-Rashkov. Instead, we were taken to Kamenka town, Vinnitsa region, about 200 kilometers from home. We were accommodated in the house of a local Jewish family. We were guarded by Romanian gendarmes and local policemen. We stayed there for two months until the end of November 1941. The situation was really scary: people were beaten, robbed and shot. It happened several times that Jews were taken to work and drowned in the Dnestr River at the end of the day.

On 7th November all Jews in Kamenka were ordered to leave their houses and taken in the direction of Rashkov. They were convoyed by gendarmes, who shot those that couldn't catch up with the others. Later this road was called death march. We walked in the daytime and stayed wherever we were during the night. We passed Kodyma, Sloboda, Abomelnikov and Borschi. On the way we were joined by other Jews from the locations we passed, but there were fewer and fewer of us and dead bodies were left on the road. One day Aunt Maika and her two daughters perished. Our convoy kept it no secret that we were being taken away to be shot.

Once we stayed in a cowshed in Gvozdovka village overnight, which was full of dead bodies from a previous death march. Policemen told us that we were going to be shot in the village of Kriva, which we reached at the end of December. My parents, another family of four people and two men decided to escape. We managed to escape when the policemen weren't around and headed to a

village across a forest. The winter of 1942 was very cold. We stayed close to villages and went to houses begging for something to eat. It also happened that people invited us to come into their houses for a rest. Many people let us into their houses, gave us food and let us stay until we got warm. We stayed overnight in fields, haystacks or half-ruined houses. Once we stayed in an abandoned house with broken windows and doors in the vicinity of Kruchinov village. Villagers brought us food and fixed the windows and doors. They offered us that we could stay there and brought us food and wood for a month.

In February 1942 policemen found us. We were beaten and thrown into the street. One man was killed. We got on our way again, and again, kind people helped us to survive. Some advised us to go to Babka-Diva village, where Adventists resided. These people were hiding us in the building of the village executive office and provided us with food. They never turned us in to the police. They went around the nearby ghettos to look for a better place for us because it was dangerous for them to hide us. They advised us to go to the ghetto in Peschana village, Odessa region, where the situation was not as tense as in other ghettos. When it got warmer in spring they wrapped us in winter coats and took us to Peschana on a coach.

We stayed in the ghetto several days and then we got into a group of Jews that were to be taken to Dzhurin village. Fortunately we were taken back to Peschana. There were no mass shootings in Peschana, and locals were sympathetic. We were also given food. We settled down in an abandoned shed. The inmates of the ghetto were taken to work, but we were given meals, which was different from other ghettos. My mother and father did miscellaneous work, helped local people in their kitchen gardens or did housework. They got food for their work. We weren't starving, but of course the inmates of the ghetto suffered from hunger, diseases and unsanitary conditions. But at least there were no mass shootings in this ghetto in Peschana. My father observed Jewish traditions in the ghetto. He prayed every day. My parents celebrated Pesach even then. There was no food, but my father conducted the seder according to the rules.

In the middle of 1943 we heard rumors that some ghetto had been liquidated. This meant that its inmates had been exterminated. These rumors almost always turned out to be true, and we began to prepare for the worst. Then we heard rumors that the war had come to its turning point and that the Soviet troops were advancing. In March 1944 Soviet tanks came to the territory of the ghetto in Peschana. The Gendarmes and the policemen had run away the day before. We were free! We hugged and kissed our rescuers. Of all the 14 people of our family, who had left Vad-Rashkov for Kodyma in July 1941, only three of us survived: my parents and I. We decided to go home. We were actually following the frontline. We walked and sometimes villagers gave us a lift on their coaches. When we reached Vad-Rashkov we didn't recognize it. In 1941 Romanians, Soviets and locals had burned down our neighborhood. We couldn't even find the location where our house used to be. Grandfather Shaya's house had also been burned down. The locals told us that the Germans had killed all rabbis.

After the War

We stayed with our acquaintance in Vad-Rashkov until my parents received a letter from Aunt Genia, who settled down in Chernovtsy after the war. She wrote to our old address hoping that we were back. Genia wrote that apartments were available in Chernovtsy and that the town hadn't been destroyed during the war. We moved to Chernovtsy and got a two-bedroom apartment after a

little while. There were many vacant apartments in Chernovtsy from the locals who had left for Romania. I went to school, my father worked in a store and my mother was a housewife.

We felt at home in Chernovtsy. Before the war Jews constituted 60% of its population. After the war the number dropped dramatically, but one could still hear Yiddish in the streets. There was a Jewish school, a Jewish theater and synagogues in town. Of course, there were no charity organizations during the Soviet period. Jews knew and supported each other. If somebody was having a difficult time people collected money and helped their neighbors as much as they could. Local people told us that there were demonstrations of anti-Semitism after the war that hadn't been there before the war. A person could be abused or humiliated just because he was a Jew. To be frank, this was mostly done by those who came to Chernovtsy from the USSR. But I think that in a way anti-Semitism has always existed. State anti-Semitism started with the campaign against 'cosmopolitans' [12](#) in 1948.

There were at least five synagogues in Chernovtsy before 1948. My father was very happy about it. He prayed at home every day and went to the synagogue after work on Saturdays. My mother joined him on Jewish holidays. We celebrated all Jewish holidays but my father didn't make a sukkah in the yard of our crowded house. On Purim my mother made hamantashen and sent shelakhmones to our relatives and acquaintances. My parents fasted on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and celebrated Pesach. My father conducted the seder according to all rules. My parents and I liked going to the Jewish theater. When I was 13 I had my bar mitzvah.

Matzah was sold in bakeries and synagogues before 1948, but then the Jewish school and theater were closed. There was only one synagogue left, and it became difficult to get matzah. I remember that there was an underground bakery. If the Soviet authorities had found it, they would have closed it for sure. My parents picked up matzah at night as well. We always had matzah on Pesach and ate no bread. My mother was ill in the last years of her life and couldn't eat matzah - she had mamaliga instead.

I went to the 6th grade in Chernovtsy, although I had only studied three years before the war, but pupils were admitted to the classes that corresponded to their age. There were many Jewish children at school and in my class. There were also Jewish teachers. I was fond of physics and mathematics. I became a pioneer and took an active part in pioneer activities: I was the pioneer leader of a group of Young Octobrists [13](#) and took part in the collection of scrap. In the 8th grade I became a Komsomol [14](#) member.

I was in the 10th grade in 1948, during the period of the campaign against cosmopolitans. Actually it was a veiled struggle against Jews and people realized it. Newspaper publications blamed 'rootless cosmopolitans' and disclosed the Jewish names of scientists and art activists that had taken on Russian pseudonyms [in fact common names]. Many Jewish artists and poets took Russian names as pseudonyms because those who had Jewish names had fewer chances to become known: Jewish actors didn't get parts in theater productions, writers didn't get their work published. They didn't change their actual name; it was still used in their passports.

State anti-Semitism was openly expressed. My family didn't face any anti-Semitism, but we heard stories from our friends and acquaintances. I drew back from religion. I was a pioneer and a Komsomol member and used to a somewhat critical attitude towards God. My parents observed traditions and nothing changed at home. I was with my family during all activities, but I didn't tell

my friends about it. I finished school in 1949. I knew there were restrictions for the admission of Jews to higher educational institutions, but I submitted my documents to the Faculty of Physics and Mathematics at Chernovtsy University anyway, passed my entrance exams and was admitted. I was lucky, though. My future wife, Fenia Trachtenbroit, also took exams at Chernovtsy University. She passed them with the highest grades. Yet she was not admitted, just like so many other Jews. If any of them went to complain that Ukrainian nationals were admitted even though they only had satisfactory grades, they were offered to attend lectures as candidates to students - with the possibility to be enrolled if another student was expelled. This was no guarantee of admission, but it was a chance. My future wife became a student even before the first term was over. Fenia and I were successful students and lecturers treated us well.

Fenia was born in the Bessarabian town of Brinceni in 1931. She was the only child in a religious Jewish family. Her father, Aron Trachtenbroit, was an accountant and her mother, Mina Trachtenbroit [nee Zilberman], a housewife. Fenia had a happy childhood until the Germans occupied Brinceni at the beginning of the war. All Jews of the town were taken to Transnistria. Fenia and her parents stayed in the ghetto of Kopaigorod, Vinnitsa region, until 1944. It was a miracle that they survived. They had typhoid in the ghetto. They lost about 15 close relatives to the war. After they were liberated in March 1944, Fenia and her parents returned to Brinceni where Fenia finished a secondary school. We met at the entrance exams for Chernovtsy University and have been together ever since.

In January 1953 the Doctors' Plot [15](#) began. Students at the Faculty of Mathematics didn't believe the official explanation, which was that Jewish doctors intended to poison comrade Stalin. We didn't share our thoughts though because there was a KGB informer in each group. We knew who it was in our group, and he knew that we knew. This student was involved with the KGB somehow, but we knew that he didn't report on us because he understood it was dirty business. I don't remember how we found out that he was working for the KGB; students just told each other to be quiet in his presence. We treated him loyally. The Doctors' Plot had no impact on my family. There were rumors that all Jews were to be deported to Birobidzhan [16](#). It might have happened, if Stalin hadn't died in 1953. He was announced to be ill on 1st March and died on 5th March. Jews used to say, 'See, it's God's will that he died on that day'. I was one of the few who were glad that he passed away.

We got married in 1954 when we were in our final year at university. We had a civil ceremony in the district registry office. We didn't have a Jewish wedding because it was a hard and complicated time and authorities might have punished us if we had had a Jewish religious ceremony. My mother cooked a wedding dinner for members of the family and our closest friends. Upon graduation my wife and I got mandatory job assignments [17](#) and went to a small village in Chernovtsy region to work as teachers of mathematics.

After the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party [18](#), where Khrushchev [19](#) made a speech denouncing the cult of Stalin, I was full of hope about a happier life. I believed that the truth had finally won and that we would have a decent life, but things continued like before.

Two years later, when our assignment was over, we decided to return to Chernovtsy, but we couldn't find any vacancies at schools. There were vacancies for teachers of physics and mathematics in a Moldavian school on the outskirts of Chernovtsy. My wife and I spoke fluent

Moldavian and got employed at that school. It took us several years to find a job in Chernovtsy. I finally got a job at a secondary school in Chernovtsy in 1971 and worked there until I retired in 1992.

I didn't face any anti-Semitism at work. I still keep in touch with my former colleagues, Jewish and non-Jewish. I value people for their human qualities. I did suffer from state anti-Semitism. When I was awarded a title for my achievements in education, my documents were submitted to the Ministry of Education four times before they gave their approval. At school I was head of the school trade union committee for 24 years and people brought their issues and problems forward to me.

My wife and I spoke Yiddish at home. We didn't celebrate holidays at home because teachers were referred to as 'ideological workers'. We weren't allowed to discuss religious issues with our pupils, or be religious ourselves. The practice of religion was outlawed in the USSR. However, we visited my parents to celebrate with them. We always took part when my father conducted the seder on Pesach. The only thing my wife and I could observe was fasting. We celebrated Soviet holidays at work - teachers and pupils just had to take part in the parades, and then there were concerts at school where schoolchildren performed. Afterwards teachers got together at a table to celebrate.

We lived in a room in a communal apartment [20](#) with a number of other tenants. Despite all discomforts we often had guests: our former fellow students, classmates and colleagues. Most of them were Jews, but not all of them. Our childhood friends were all Jews. My wife and I had long summer vacations, which lasted for two months. We usually visited our parents. Sometimes we spent our vacations elsewhere; at the seashore or traveling to other towns. We visited Moscow, Kiev and Leningrad.

We were very concerned about the wars in Israel in 1967 [the Six-Day-War] [21](#) and 1973 [the Yom Kippur War] [22](#). Of course, we all hoped that Israel would win. We were distressed about the violation of diplomatic relations between the USSR and Israel, but we weren't surprised. This was the typical policy of the USSR - the violation of relations with disobedient parties, that is, with those who didn't follow the communist way of progress.

My wife and I sympathized with the Jews that moved to Israel in the 1970s. We couldn't move there. My parents and my wife's parents weren't well. They couldn't move and didn't want to. Then we grew older. If we had children we would move to give them an opportunity to have a decent life, but we have no children, due to the hard years in the ghetto, and we are afraid to start a new life at our age.

My father died in 1975. We buried him in accordance with Jewish traditions in the Jewish cemetery. There were two rabbis at his funeral - I invited one, and the other one came when he heard about my father's death. My father was buried wrapped in a shroud. I recited the required prayers [the Kaddish]. He was a respected man among Jews in Chernovtsy and many of them came to his funeral. After the funeral my wife and I couldn't observe all Jewish traditions: we worked and couldn't even leave work for a week. My mother died in 1983. Since I had worked at school for a long time my colleagues were supposed to come to the funeral. It wasn't safe to have a traditional religious funeral with teachers involved because they were responsible for the education of the young generation. There were no colleagues and pupils of ours at my father's funeral, but they came to my mother's funeral. A religious teacher would have lost his job in an instant. The funeral was to be in the afternoon, and we had a religious ritual completed in the morning. We buried her

without a prayer, but in a shroud as required, in the Jewish cemetery beside my father's grave.

I was rather skeptical about perestroika, which began in 1986. I thought it was another 'activity' of the Communist Party. After some time I saw that things began to change for the better. Newspapers became more interesting, and books, which had been banned in the past, were published. The first steps of the restoration of the Jewish spirituality and culture were made at that time, and I became actively involved in this movement. I was chairman of the Jewish charity committee that was established during the Soviet regime in 1988. Many problems that had made our life difficult before perestroika were eliminated. Religion, although it wasn't officially acknowledged by the state, wasn't forbidden any more. The attitude towards Jews changed for the better. Jewish writers began to have their books published, which hadn't happened before. A Jewish association of culture and a public cultural fund were established in that period. I participated in both organizations. Jewish life began to revive even before Ukraine declared its independence in 1991. Jewish organizations, theaters and art collectives were established. People visited Jewish exhibitions. A Jewish library and school were opened in Chernovtsy.

When Hesed was established in independent Ukraine I became chairman of the Board of Hesed. This organization supports older people and helps them to communicate and satisfy their spiritual needs. I'm the chief editor of Hesed News, the newspaper published by Hesed. I do this work for free. My wife and I receive a pension given to former inmates of ghettos. We can manage with what we receive, and when somebody needs help we are always happy to provide assistance. I go to the synagogue on Jewish holidays and on the death anniversaries [Jahrzeit] of members of my family. My wife and I celebrate Jewish holidays and Sabbath at home. We have lived a difficult, but interesting life. I'm grateful that we've found each other in this big world.

Glossary

1 Bessarabia

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

2 Keren Kayemet Leisrael (K

K.L.): Jewish National Fund (JNF) founded in 1901 at the Fifth Zionist Congress in Basel. From its inception, the JNF was charged with the task of fundraising in Jewish communities for the purpose of purchasing land in the Land of Israel to create a homeland for the Jewish people. After 1948 the fund was used to improve and afforest the territories gained. Every Jewish family that wished to help the cause had a JNF money box, called the 'blue box'. They threw in at least one lei each day, and on Sabbath and high holidays they threw in as many lei as candles they lit for that holiday. This is how they partly used to collect the necessary funds. Now these boxes are known worldwide as a symbol of Zionism.

3 Common name

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

4 Hasid

The follower of the Hasidic movement, a Jewish mystic movement founded in the 18th century that reacted against Talmudic learning and maintained that God's presence was in all of one's surroundings and that one should serve God in one's every deed and word. The movement provided spiritual hope and uplifted the common people. There were large branches of Hasidic movements and schools throughout Eastern Europe before World War II, each following the teachings of famous scholars and thinkers. Most had their own customs, rituals and life styles. Today there are substantial Hasidic communities in New York, London, Israel and Antwerp.

5 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.

6 Keep in touch with relatives abroad

The authorities could arrest an individual corresponding with his/her relatives abroad and charge him/her with espionage, send them to concentration camp or even sentence them to death.

7 Iron Guard

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

8 Cuzist

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

9 National Democratic Party (Romania)

Party formed in 1910 by nationalist and anti-Semitic leader Alexandru Cuza. The NDP was a fascist political party, based on Christian national ideas, which propagated the removal of Jews from their professions and the army as well as a ban on their settlement in villages.

10 Transnistria

Area between the Dnestr and Bug Rivers and the Black Sea. The word Transnistria derived from the Romanian name of the Dnestr River - Nistru. The territory was controlled by Gheorghe Alexianu, governor appointed by Ion Antonescu. Several labor camps were established on this territory, onto which Romanian Jews were deported from Bessarabia and Bukovina in 1941-1942. The most feared camps were Vapniarka, Ribnita, Berezovka, Tulcin and Iampol. Most of the Jews died between 1941-1943 because of horrible living conditions, diseases, and lack of food.

11 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.

12 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'.

13 Young Octobrist

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

14 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.

15 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.

16 Birobidzhan

Formed in 1928 to give Soviet Jews a home territory and to increase settlement along the vulnerable borders of the Soviet Far East, the area was raised to the status of an autonomous region in 1934. Influenced by an effective propaganda campaign, and starvation in the east, 41,000 Soviet Jews relocated to the area between the late 1920s and early 1930s. But, by 1938 28,000 of them had fled the regions harsh conditions, There were Jewish schools and synagogues up until the 1940s, when there was a resurgence of religious repression after World War II. The Soviet government wanted the forced deportation of all Jews to Birobidzhan to be completed by the middle of the 1950s. But in 1953 Stalin died and the deportation was cancelled. Despite some remaining Yiddish influences - including a Yiddish newspaper - Jewish cultural activity in the region has declined enormously since Stalin's anti-cosmopolitanism campaigns and since the liberalization of Jewish emigration in the 1970s. Jews now make up less than 2% of the region's population.

17 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.

18 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.

19 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.

20 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.

21 Six-Day-War

The first strikes of the Six-Day-War happened on 5th June 1967 by the Israeli Air Force. The entire war only lasted 132 hours and 30 minutes. The fighting on the Egyptian side only lasted four days, while fighting on the Jordanian side lasted three. Despite the short length of the war, this was one of the most dramatic and devastating wars ever fought between Israel and all of the Arab nations. This war resulted in a depression that lasted for many years after it ended. The Six-Day-War increased tension between the Arab nations and the Western World because of the change in mentalities and political orientations of the Arab nations.

22 Yom Kippur War

The Arab-Israeli War of 1973, also known as the Yom Kippur War or the Ramadan War, was a war between Israel on one side and Egypt and Syria on the other side. It was the fourth major military confrontation between Israel and the Arab states. The war lasted for three weeks: it started on 6th October 1973 and ended on 22nd October on the Syrian front and on 26th October on the Egyptian front.