# Semyon Nezhynski

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Kiev
Ukraine
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My father's family lived in Lokhvitsa Poltava province. My grandfather, Morduch Nezhynski, was born in Nezhin, Chernigov province [present-day Kiev region] in 1852. He moved to Lokhvitsa when he was around 20. Our last name, Nezhynskiye, is derived from the name of my grandfather's native town. I never heard anything about my grandfather Morduch's family. All I know is that Morduch was the younger son in a large family. My grandfather studied in cheder in Nezhyn. All I know about my paternal grandmother is that she died in 1900. My grandfather and his first wife had twelve children. After my grandmother passed away my grandfather remarried. I don't remember his second wife. She died long before grandfather Morduch. They had six children in their marriage.

Lokhvitsa was a district town in Poltava province. After the Russian Revolution of 1917 1 it became a district town in Poltava region. The Jewish population constituted 2,400 out of a total of 5,000 people living in the town. The townspeople were Ukrainian, Russian and Polish. There was a long building housing Jewish stores in the center of town. Merchants purchased or rented facilities for their shops. There was a market where villagers sold their products near this building. There was also a church in the main square. There was a two-storied hotel with ten rooms near the market square. The town stood on the Lokhvitsa River. Our family lived on the right bank of the river. There was a big church on the hill near our house. There were two synagogues in Lokhvitsa: one on the right bank of the river and the other on the left. They were two-storied synagogues with balconies for women. There was a cheder and a Jewish school in the town before the Soviet regime. The cheder and the school closed in the 1930s.

Jews lived in the central part of the town for the most part. Their neighbors were Ukrainians. There was no anti-Semitism, however. Jews and Ukrainians got along very well. Jews were tailors, shoemakers and barbers. There was a leather shop in Lokhvitsa. Most of its employees were Jews. There were other Jewish shops that made soda water and ice cream. Jews sold manufactured goods, garments and other products. There were some wealthy Jewish families, but just a few. Most of the Jewish families lived from hand to mouth. Jews didn't do any farming. Land in the center of the town was expensive and there were just small plots of land near their houses. There was a big Jewish community in Lokhvitsa before the Revolution. The community supported old miserable Jews and needy families. They delivered matzah to them at Pesach, provided meals on Sabbath and Jewish holidays. In 1932 a sugar factory opened in Lokhvitsa. There was a Ukrainian higher

secondary school and several lower secondary schools in Lokhvitsa. There was also a pedagogical college.

My grandfather Morduch and his companion owned a small food store. I was too small to remember my grandfather's house or store. During the Revolution of 1917 my grandfather and his companion didn't suffer from expropriation. Soviet authorities were interested in bigger owners. My grandmother was a housewife like most married Jewish women. I only knew a few of their twelve children.

My father's brother Shleime-Leib was the oldest. He was much older than my father. In 1886 Israel Nezhynski was born and my father Moisey Nezhynski followed in 1888. His sister Fania was born in 1889 and their brother Iosif in 1890. My father had two younger sisters: Lisa and Rachil, but I don't remember anything about them. My father's other sisters and brothers moved to other parts of the world. As for my grandfather's children in his second marriage I knew the youngest: Boris, or Boruch as was his Jewish name. He was born in 1913.

My parents told me that before the Revolution of 1917 and the Civil War 2 that followed there were no Jewish pogroms 3 in Lokhvitsa. During the Civil War Petliura 4 and Denikin 5 troops robbed Jewish homes, beat and killed Jews. Jews took shelter in the woods or in the houses of their neighbors. They knew about approaching gangs in advance due to the 'Jewish telegraph'. Villagers notified their acquaintances and relatives from surrounding villages about the threat of a pogrom. Our family didn't suffer from pogroms.

My father's family was religious. My grandfather went to the synagogue on Sabbath and Jewish holidays. On weekdays he prayed at home in the morning and in the evening. He had a tallit, tefillin and prayer books. My father's parents always celebrated Sabbath and Jewish holidays. All sons had their brit milah. My grandmother and grandfather observed Jewish traditions. All boys had their bar mitzvah at the age of 13. My father and his brothers studied in cheder where they received a traditional Jewish education. My father knew Yiddish and Hebrew.

My father's oldest brother, Shleime-Leib, was married. I don't remember his wife's name. Uncle Shleime-Leib worked in a shop with my father. His son, Michael Nezhynski, was several years older than I. After World War II Uncle Shleime-Leib moved to Leningrad where his brothers and sister lived. He worked in a household appliances repair shop like my father's other brothers that lived in Leningrad. He died in Leningrad in 1972. Michael finished Medical College in Kiev. During World War II he was a captain of medical services in a front hospital. After the war Michael lived in Leningrad. He was married. He worked in a military hospital. He died in the late 1990s.

My father's brother Israel married my mother's older sister Hana. My parents and they were close friends. They had two daughters and a son. Their daughter Riva was born in 1913, their second daughter, Sophia, in 1916 and their son, Anatoli, in 1920. Uncle Israel died of stomach cancer in 1937. He was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Lokhvitsa. Riva married Semyon Turevski, a local Jew. They had a daughter. During World War II Semyon went to the front and perished in 1943. Riva and her daughter were in evacuation in the Ural. After World War II they moved to Leningrad. Riva died in the 1980s. Sophia moved to Kiev. She married Abram Odesski and in 1936 their daughter Inna was born. Inna was an accountant in a household appliances repair shop. I shall tell her story later. After Israel died Hana and her son moved to Leningrad. She died in Leningrad in 1962. Her son Anatoli was married and had two sons. He named his older son Israel after his father.

His younger son's name is Gennadi. Anatoli died in the 1990s. He was buried near his mother's grave.

My father's sister Fania was my favorite aunt. She was holding me during the brit and treated me like her son ever since. Fania married Kundik, a local Jew. They had two sons: Naum, born in 1915, and Efim, born in 1919. We were friends. In the 1930s Fania and her family moved to Leningrad. Her sons were doctors. During World War II Fania was in evacuation in Tashkent [today Uzbekistan]. After World War II she returned to Leningrad where she lived with Efim's family. Fania died in Leningrad in 1962.

My father's brother Iosif and his family moved to Leningrad in 1934. He repaired household appliances. He had two sons and a daughter. Iosif was a cheerful and friendly man. My wife and I visited him after World War II and he was a very hospitable host. Uncle Iosif died in Leningrad in 1959. His son Anatoli lives in Israel. I don't have any information about him. All other members of Iosif's family passed away.

My father's sister Lisa lived with her family in the village of Beryozovka, Odessa region. I have no more information about her. There was another sister, Rachil, but all I know about her is her name.

Of all my father's stepbrothers or sisters I only knew Boris, the youngest. He lived in our family and we were friends. In the 1930s Boris moved to Leningrad. He worked in the same shop where his brothers were working. He was married and had a son named Mark. In the 1980s Boris and his family moved to the USA. He died in San Francisco in 2003 at the age of 90. His son and I correspond.

My father's brothers and sister Fania were religious. They couldn't follow the kashrut after World War II, but other than that they observed all the traditions and celebrated the holidays. I have no information about Lisa or Rachil in this regard. As for Boris, he was an atheist.

After finishing cheder my father studied four years in a Jewish school. After finishing his studies he went to work as an assistant clerk in a store. Soon he became a clerk himself and his master gave him a rise in salary. In 1911 my father was recruited to the tsarist army. In 1913 he was released from the army and had a 'white card', probably due to some illness. [Editor's note: the 'white card' was a release from service in the tsarist army before the Revolution of 1917, issued by a medical commission, that determined whether a young man was fit for military service.] My father got married shortly afterward.

My mother's father, Shleime Lantsman, was a rabbi in a synagogue in Lokhvitsa. My grandfather died in 1917, long before I was born. I don't have any information about my maternal grandmother. As far as I know she died before my grandfather passed away.

I don't know exactly how many children they had. I know that my mother's older brother, Ilia, moved to the USA in 1919. The family didn't have any contact with him. My mother missed him a lot. I vaguely knew my mother's older brother Zakhar. His Jewish name was Skharia. My mother's sister Hana was born in 1897. My mother's family was religious. All children got a traditional Jewish education.

I have little information about my mother's brother Zakhar. He lived in Lokhvitsa before World War II. Then I lost contact with him. His son, Michael Lantsman, was my mother's favorite nephew.

Michael lived in Kiev. He was much older than I. He was at the front during the war and after the war he served in railroad troops in Kiev. Later he was transferred to railroad troops in Leningrad. He reached the rank of lieutenant colonel. He died in Leningrad in 1976.

My mother Vera was born in Lokhvitsa in 1890. Her Jewish name was Dveira. My mother could read and write in Yiddish and Hebrew. I don't know whether she studied with a private teacher, or whether it was her father who taught her. Besides, my mother finished a four-year Jewish school.

My father and mother had been acquainted since they were children. My parents got married in 1913. They had a traditional Jewish wedding. This was the only way they could have it since it was a rabbi's daughter getting married! Besides, their families were wealthy and this was a quiet and peaceful period before the Revolution and the Civil War. They had a chuppah and there were many guests and musicians. After their wedding my parents rented an apartment from Michael Tischenko and his wife Anna, a Ukrainian family. This was half of the house and in the other half their landlords lived.

There was another house in the yard owned by Tischenko. They leased it to three other Jewish families. Our parents had two rooms and a kitchen. One room was our parents' bedroom and the other was the children's room. There was a bed and a wardrobe in my parents' room, and in our room we had sofas and couches where we slept, a table and stools. There was a Russian stove 6 in the kitchen. My mother cooked on it and it was also used to heat the rooms. It was stoked with wood, straw and rush. We made stocks of those in summer and fall and stored them in a shed. There was a well in the yard, and a small kitchen garden that belonged to the landlady.

Our father was the only breadwinner in the family. After the Revolution of 1917 the Soviet authorities expropriated the store where my father was working from its owner. My father lost his job. During the NEP 7 he and his Jewish friends opened a soda water shop. After the NEP this shop was closed and they opened a metal scrap shop and later switched to household appliances repair. There were only Jewish employees in this shop and it was closed on Saturday.

Our mother was a housewife. There were three children in the family. My older sister Anna was born in 1914. Her Jewish name was Hana. My brother Arkadi was born in 1916. His Jewish name was Abram. I was born on 29th January 1923. I was named Semyon after my maternal grandfather Shleime. My father took his youngest stepbrother Boris to live with our family. When Boris was born my grandfather and his second wife were older people. Their elder children moved out of their parents' home. Of course, it wasn't easy for them to raise a son. He was only one year older than my older sister Anna. My father loved Boris dearly. He took him into his family raising him as if he was his own child. Boris and I became lifelong friends.

We only spoke Yiddish in the family. When I started playing with the children of our Ukrainian neighbors I picked up some Ukrainian. My parents spoke fluent Ukrainian, but they were never hesitant to speak Yiddish even in front of Ukrainians. My father wrote to his sister Fania, who lived in Leningrad, in Yiddish.

My father and mother were religious. My father went to the synagogue on Sabbath and Jewish holidays. On weekday mornings my father's brothers, Shleime-Leib and Israel, came to our home before work. The three of them put on their tallit and tefillin to pray. My father also prayed in the evening. My mother went to the synagogue on Jewish holidays.

My father wore a beard before World War II. He didn't wear payes. After World War II he didn't wear a beard. He was clean shaved. At home my father wore a kippah and when going out he put on a cap. He wore common clothes. My mother wore a wig after she got married. She sometimes wore a kerchief. She wore long skirts and long-sleeved jackets like any other woman in Lokhvitsa. After World War II I often visited my parents and brought them gifts. I brought my mother bright-colored, flower-patterned dresses that she enjoyed wearing. My mother didn't wear a wig after she returned from evacuation. It's a really interesting topic why people gave up tradition to some extent after the war. It's hard to say why it happened so often: perhaps, it was due to all hardships of life during and after the war. They had too many problems to face and go through.

We celebrated Sabbath at home. There was a Jewish bakery in Lokhvitsa that made challah for Sabbath. On Friday morning my mother began preparations for Sabbath. She cooked food for two days since no work was allowed after lighting candles on Sabbath. She left the food in the oven to keep it warm for Saturday. In the evening the family got together and my mother lit candles. She said a prayer over the candles and my father blessed a meal. We had dinner together. On Saturday my father didn't go to work. In the morning he went to the synagogue and then he read us the Torah and told us about the exodus of Jews from Egypt and the granting of the Torah to Moses.

My favorite holiday was Pesach. There was a big celebration. My mother saved money for Pesach. The Jewish bakery sold matzah for Pesach, but my mother often made it herself. She rolled the dough and then made little holes with a cogwheel. My mother also made lokshen, noodles for chicken broth. My parents bought chickens at the market and then father took them to a shochet. Mother boiled a chicken, made gefilte fish, tsymes, strudels from matzah flour and cookies. Those were rare delicacies for us. My mother cleaned the house thoroughly, swept out and burned all breadcrumbs. On the first morning at Pesach my parents went to the synagogue. When they returned my mother served a festive meal. It always started with a prayer. In the evening my father conducted the seder. During seder everyone was supposed to drink four glasses of special red wine. Adults dipped matzah into the wine and ate it. There was an extra glass for Elijah 8 the Prophet. The back door was kept open for him to come into the house. My brother asked our father the four traditional questions [the mah nishtanah]. Then our parents prayed and we sang traditional songs. There was no bread allowed in the house during Pesach. On the second day we visited our relatives and had guests at home.

I also liked Purim and Chanukkah. My father told me the story of Purim. He read out the Book of Esther to us. At Purim we delivered treats - shelakhmones - to our relatives and friends. Children always looked forward to Purim since we got so many sweets then. At Chanukkah we were given some change - Chanukkah gelt. Every day my mother lit another candle in the big Chanukkah stand.

We celebrated Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. We had delicious food on this day. At Yom Kippur our parents fasted. We, children, didn't fast on this day. We began to fast at the age of seven or eight. I believe, there were other holidays, but the above are the ones that I remember.

My brother Arkadi and my sister Anna studied in a lower secondary Jewish school. This was an ordinary school. The only difference was that we studied in Yiddish. After finishing school my sister entered a pedagogical school and my brother became an apprentice at a construction site. After finishing school in 1934 my sister married Lipavski, a Jewish man from Kiev. He was a communist

and, of course, a Jewish wedding was out of the question. My sister had a civil ceremony and in the evening the newly-weds had a small wedding dinner for the family and friends. After the wedding my sister moved to Kiev with her husband. Anna became an accountant assistant first and then began to work as an accountant. Her son Zakhar was born in 1936.

My brother also moved to Kiev shortly afterwards. He began to work as a builder there. Arkadi got married in Kiev. His wife, Claudia Nezhynskaya, nee Skitetskaya, wasn't Jewish. My parents did not approve of this marriage, but what could they do... My brother and his wife had three children: in 1937 their daughter Nelly was born, in 1938 their son Anatoli and, shortly before World War II, in 1941 their younger daughter Raisa.

I went to a Jewish school in 1930. After my first year of studies this Jewish school was closed and I continued my studies at the Ukrainian school near our house. I didn't have any problems with Ukrainian. I studied well. There were Jewish and non-Jewish children in our school. All children got along well. We never cared about each other's nationality. I became a young Octobrist 9 in the 2nd grade. Later I became a pioneer [see all-union pioneer organization] 10 and a Komsomol 11 member.

I spent my summer vacations at home. My friends and I went to the river or to the woods. Besides, we went to the fields of the 'Pobeda' kolkhoz 12 to pick berries and vegetables and we were paid with a certain quantity of what we had picked.

In winter 1936 my grandfather slipped on ice and fractured both his legs. He lived alone at that time. His children had their own families and my father's stepmother had passed away. My parents took my grandfather into our house. I shared my room with him. Since he couldn't walk I did all the chores for him. My grandfather told my parents that he was going to live for two more years since in the Nezhynski family younger sons lived until the age of 86. This was true: my grandfather died in 1938 at the age of 86. He was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Lokhvitsa in accordance with the Jewish traditions. I don't remember any details about the funeral, but I remember that my father recited the Kaddish for my grandfather. My grandfather said about me that I was going to live until the age of 86. I am 80 now and we'll see whether my grandfather's prophecy will come true.

In 1938 my father decided to move to Kiev. My older sister and brother lived in Kiev with their families and they convinced my father to move closer to them. My father went to work at a construction site and received a small room in a barrack. My mother and I stayed in Lokhvitsa for another year and in summer 1939 we moved to Kiev as well. My parents observed Jewish traditions and celebrated holidays after we moved to Kiev, only my father couldn't celebrate Sabbath since he had to go to work on Saturday.

I had finished the 9th grade in Lokhvitsa. I was supposed to go to the 10th grade in Kiev. My father wanted me to become a doctor, but I always dreamed of a military career. We, boys, liked watching movies about the Civil War and its heroes. Probably, under the influence of those films many of my contemporaries were dreaming of taking up a military career. In 1939 I went to the 10th grade of the special artillery school #13 13. It was my decision and my father wasn't really happy with this choice of mine. This was a military school. We wore uniforms and had military discipline. By the way, there was a bas-relief installed on the building of this former artillery school - the building on Yaroslaviv Val Street that houses a drama college now: four boys wearing military uniforms leave for the front.

The majority of the pupils were Jewish. I still see my former schoolmate Israel Tsepenyuk. During World War II he was commanding officer of a battery. He was severely wounded: he lost both his legs at the front. He has artificial limbs. After World War II he graduated from the Law Faculty. He became a well-known lawyer. He still works. Israel is a member of the veteran's organization that I head. We meet twice a month. Many graduates of our special artillery school perished during World War II. Many Jewish graduates became commanding officers and Heroes of the Great Patriotic War 14 during World War II. I finished this special school in 1940.

Then I was sent to Leningrad Artillery College #3 where I was to study for another three years. We studied heavy artillery equipment: 152, 130 and 205 mm cannons. I did very well in college. The only problem was Russian since I spoke Yiddish and Ukrainian and used many Ukrainian words in my Russian. In this college my Russian improved. I lived in Leningrad for a year. We lived in barracks and followed the military discipline. We were allowed a leave on Sunday. I always spent my weekend in the house of my father's sister Fania.

In 1941 the Great Patriotic War began. Before graduation I had served in an artillery battery of the artillery school cadets at the Leningrad front for a month. On 21st July 1941 we graduated from this college in the rank of lieutenants before the end of the term. We were sent to various fronts. Upon graduation I was sent to the Moscow regiment where they began to form the first 9 Mine Firing regiments of the Guards on 4th August 1941. Later they were called 'Katyusha' units; the wonderful 'Katyusha' about which songs were composed during the war.

'Katyusha' was a BM-13 mobile combat unit. It was first installed on Soviet ZIL-6 trucks and in 1943 they began to be installed on American Studebaker vehicles. A jet unit with directed missiles was assembled on vehicles. There was a control panel in the cabin. A commanding officer turned the handle and every 30 seconds a missile flew out of the unit. There were 16 missiles in the unit that left it within minutes. There was a maintenance crew of six military on a vehicle. There was no similar weapon at the time and in order to prevent the Germans from getting a hold of the units there was a box of tolite and a detonation cord installed on each unit. A commanding officer was to blast the unit if there was the risk that an enemy would capture it. There were such cases during the war when this was done.

I was assigned to regiment 2. Lieutenant Shenkel, a Jew, was the commander of the regiment and another Jew was the chief of the general headquarters. Captain Yuffa was the commanding officer of the battery where I was commanding officer of a platoon, and there was first lieutenant Israel Kobylnikov, also a Jew. There were many Jews in the regiment. A month after it was formed our regiment was sent to the Southern front. In early September 1941 we were involved in combat action on the left bank of the Dnieper near the village of Velikiy Tokmak in the vicinity of Zaporozhie. Germans suffered great casualties and damages due to our attacks.

We were moving to Donetsk. In December 1941 I was appointed chief of the intelligence service of our division. I was also promoted to the rank of first lieutenant and appointed commanding officer of a battery. In the intelligence service I was responsible for survey of the points at the front line where we had to shoot during attacks. I sat at an observation point near the frontline trenches and surveyed the German disposition area with my stereoscope and binoculars. When I observed accumulation of their forces and equipment I transferred my messages to our command post and from there they issued directions as for where 'Katyusha' units were to shoot.

In December 1941 I received my first wartime award: the medal 'For courage'. I was one of the first in our regiment to receive this award. In March 1942 I was sent to Moscow where they were forming new Guards units. I was appointed chief of the headquarters of a division of 'Katyusha' units in the 49 Guards Mining Firing Regiment. At the end of March 1942 our regiment was sent to the Southern front where I was assigned to the Guards Mine Firing Regiment 2. There were 1,300 military in this regiment. I was chief of headquarters of a division of 320 military.

When our regiment was deployed in villages we were accommodated in houses and in the field we lodged in dugouts. In winter we used a stove for heating and kerosene lamps for light. We made them from cannon shells. We made a wick for such a lamp and had sufficient lighting, actually. There were usually six to ten military in a dugout. When I was appointed commanding officer of a division in 1942 I had a dugout made just for me. I also had an orderly at my disposal. There were field kitchen units that provided three hot meals per day. When we were in continuous action field cooks used to bring food in thermos vessels to the frontline.

There was medical service in our regiment. Colonel Naumov, a military doctor, was in charge of this medical unit. There were assistant doctors and medical nurses in our regiment. The wounded got medical aid in the regiment and then were sent to the army or field hospital. Severely wounded were taken to rear hospitals by train. There were such hospitals in Moscow, Podmoscovie, Povolzhie, Siberia and Middle Asia. The patients were trying to stay in front hospitals to join their military units after they recovered. Many of them returned even if their treatment wasn't over. There was strong frontline friendship. Friends were like family at the front.

Sometimes we were next to penal battalions at the front. There were penal battalions in almost all rifle divisions in the last stage of the war. They were the first to attack the enemy. Usually the military tribunal decided who was to serve in such units. They were people that acted cowardly in action or violated the military statute or committed crimes at the front. The most severe crime was parricide. Such people were sentenced to death. The rest of them were sent to penal battalions. There were also prisoners that wanted to go to the front in penal battalions. They had to atone their guilt with their own blood. There were criminals and political prisoners in penal battalions. They remained in penal battalions until they shed 'the first blood', as they said. They either perished in battles or were released from their sentence after medical treatment in hospitals and returned to an ordinary military unit at the front.

The commanding officers at penal battalions were no criminals. They were awarded medals for the successful completion of their tasks. Sometimes they were awarded titles of 'Heroes of the Soviet Union' during World War II. This was the highest award.

In summer 1942 we were retreating to the Don River on the east. I was at the lead of a column of our division. Captain Pyotr Puzik, commanding officer of our division, was bringing up the rear. Now Pyotr has the rank of a general. We are friends. All of a sudden a column of German tanks showed up in front of us. My battery and I moved to Novocherkassk and Puzik moved to the Bagaevskaya river crossing. There was a frontline storage facility for weapons for 'Katyusha' units near Novocherkassk. There were about 600 shells stored there. In Novocherkassk Nikolay Nesterenko, the commanding officer of the Guards units of the Southern Front ordered our battalion to keep Novocherkassk from German invasion and fire all shells since it was impossible to remove them. We kept the Germans on the Northern side of Novocherkassk for 24 hours. In the evening I checked

the storages for shells: there was none left. Colonel Nesterenko thanked me for the completion of this combat task and said, 'I owe you an order, but now you need to move to Rostov, cross the Don River and the commandant of Bataysk will issue another combat task to you'.

In 1942, when Germans were advancing in the south of the country, heading to Stalingrad and Vladicaucasus, Stalin issued Order #227, 'Not a step backward!'. There were barrage units formed to capture deserters from combat fields. Such units were following military units. They had the right to shoot deserters. Such units closed main roads to prevent deserters from escaping. They only stopped solitary soldiers. They didn't stop military units since they could only be moving following someone's order. Many of those that were captured were sent to military tribunals where they were either sentenced to death or sent to penal battalions.

Following this order three-person courts were formed in military units. Members of these groups were party members. They were in full competence of issuing a verdict and carry out an execution with no further authorization. The members of such a 'troika' -a group of three - were: a political officer, a SMERSH representative - military intelligence [special units within the NKVD 15 structure called SMERSH; lit. 'death to spies!'], and an officer or soldier, a member of the Party.

Here is what happened in our regiment 49 in 1942 when I was chief of headquarters of our division: A commanding officer had to blast a 'Katyusha' unit if there was the risk that our enemy could get a hold of it. In July 1942 the Germans split us into two groups. One of the 'Katyusha' units was behind our column moving in the direction of a river crossing. German tanks were following it. 'Katyusha' was moving along a path between a cornfield on one side and a field of sunflowers on the other. The commanding officer got frightened, jumped off his unit and ran away into the cornfield. The driver of the 'Katyusha' turned left, into the field of sunflowers and managed to escape from the German tanks. The commanding officer crossed the river with other military units and returned to our division. He wanted to continue his service. To save his life he said he had blasted his 'Katyusha'. Our commandment believed him and he even received another unit when two weeks later his 'Katyusha' returned. The crew of cannon layer, soldier and driver, an old worker and a communist - all of them from Moscow - joined a tank brigade that was retreating and came to the river crossing with it. They fired their final volley and the tank brigade they were with helped them to cross the river to get to its left bank ahead of all. They found their military unit and then it became clear that their commanding officer had disgracefully left his unit in the face of the enemy. He was judged by a 'troika', sentenced to death and shot.

SMERSH units were also responsible for military counter intelligence in the army. There was a SMERSH representative in every military unit. This representative had to make sure that there were no spies or traitors in the unit. They had their informers that reported everything that people talked about to them, and a SMERSH representative could decide whether he should open a case or leave what he heard at that. We had two such officers in our regiment: an officer and his assistant. They didn't interfere with our business and we didn't bother ourselves with theirs. However, if something happened in the regiment that needed to be conveyed to the commanding officer of the regiment or chief of headquarters they informed them. Of course, there were no German spies and those representatives were interested in people that expressed doubts about our victory or said something negative about the Soviet power or Stalin.

After I became chief of headquarters of our regiment in 1943 there wasn't a single case of arrest or investigation there. People were patriotic and besides, the situation in the war was developing to our favor. When our regiment was staying in a town or village the SMERSH representatives asked questions about residents of this town or village since we were accommodated in their houses. If this town was under occupation they asked questions about how residents behaved during the occupation. Of course, there were people that wrote false reports on somebody else. Once I heard someone had written a slander report on somebody that held the post he was willing to get. Things like this happen, you know. People are just human. However, nothing of this kind happened in my regiment. There was also the possibility to get rid of someone that didn't quite fit into a team. There was the option to issue a recommendation for that individual so that he could get a promotion, but with transfer to another military unit - let somebody else suffer. There was even a humorous incident when a person was promoted to another unit and then returned as a boss into the initial military unit from where his career began. The circle was closed.

There were political classes in every unit. There were political departments in all military units. They were responsible for political education and training of the military. The Communist Party was a leading force in the USSR and political departments enforced the Party policies in the army. The chief of the political department in our military unit was Evgeni Yurovski. He had a party policy assistant, a Komsomol policy assistant and a mass media assistant. There were political meetings and discussions where they informed on the Party and government decrees and conducted political training. Besides, we conducted party meetings to make decisions about the daily schedule of the military unit. Political classes were extra hours of classes and we had to plan them when the schedule allowed it. The shortest meetings lasted about ten minutes and the longest were an hour maximum: we couldn't afford to make them longer considering the situation. This was the function of political departments.

In July 1942, after battles on the Don, I was promoted to the rank of a captain. I was 19 and was commanding officer of a division. We moved to Ordzhonikidze [Vladicaucasus at present, North Osetia] in the Northern Caucasus. We were provided with winter clothing - sheepskin jackets, valenki boots and fur hats, since it was very cold. Then our division went onto the battlefield.

My life changed once and for all there. During intervals we sometimes went to town. On 16th October 1942 I met Irina Razumnaya who was a student of Ordjonikidze Pedagogical College. Irina was born in Ordjonikidze in 1923. She is Russian, but I didn't care about it. I fell in love with her. She was the only child in her family. Her father, Alexandr Razumny, born in 1899 was a violinist in an orchestra, and her mother, Antonina Razumnaya, was a schoolteacher. After World War II she was awarded the title of an 'Honored Teacher of the USSR' and an 'Order of the Red Banner of Labor'. Irina wanted to become a teacher like her mother. Her parents welcomed me into their family.

In 1942, at the age of 19, in Ordjonikidze I became a candidate to the Communist Party. I thought it was my duty to join the ranks of advanced units struggling for the victory of the communist ideals. There was a simplified procedure of admission into the Party at the front. The candidateship was shorter in time. The rest of it was the standard procedure: an applicant had to submit a request and attach letters of recommendation signed by two party members. At a party meeting its resolution was issued, which had to be approved by a party commission. Then, in a short while, a party membership card was issued to a new member. I was admitted as a candidate to the Party

by the political department of Army 9. In January 1943 I became a member of the Party. At that time I received the award that colonel Nesterenko had promised a while before: for battles near Novocherkassk I was awarded the 'Order of the Red Star' 16.

After the battles in Northern Caucasus in October 1943 I was promoted to the rank of major and was appointed chief of headquarters of the 305 Guards Navy Mine Firing Regiment. It was a navy unit, but the commanding officer of the regiment and chief of headquarters were from artillery units. There were 'Katyusha' units in the land and navy forces.

The regiment where I was chief of headquarters participated in the elimination of German troops in Taman' [Northern Caucasus]. We participated in battles for Novorossiysk. Then our regiment sent landing troops to the Crimea: they landed in the spit of Chushka near Kerch. The regiment was exhausted after the battles near Kerch. We suffered great casualties and equipment losses. Due to this our regiment became a part of reserve troops of the Supreme Commandment staff. There were equipment losses and casualties in our unit. We were sent to the Schemilovo camp near Moscow to be reformed. We had to repair and replace lots of equipment damaged during air raids and firing. We also had to reman the unit. In January-February 1944 our regiment was remanned and reequipped, preparing for further action.

Through the whole period since my departure from Ordjonikidze I corresponded with Irina. This was very important to me since I didn't have any information about my parents' whereabouts until March 1944. Irina was the only close person for me. Irina's letters were of the utmost importance to me.

My wife was finishing college when my regiment was being remanned. This was probably the only opportunity for us to see each other. Nobody could say what was ahead of us.

I sent Irina a telegram signed by the commanding officer of the unit, saying 'Nezhynski is wounded. Please arrive, if possible'. I put down my address. There was no direct train from Rostov then. Irina got to Schemilovo via Stalinabad. She didn't know whether I was alive, but she was hoping for the best intending to look after me until I recovered. I had already recovered and met her at the railway station. She stayed with me for a few days and then I said, 'Let's take a risk. If I survive we shall live together. We shall see what life has in store for us. Let's get married!' We got married on 19th January 1944 in the town of Noginsk near Moscow. We had the choice between Moscow and Noginsk. Both were about 30 kilometers from our location. We then decided that since our last name starts with the same letter as Noginsk we should go there.

My birthday is on 29th January. My fellow officers wanted to celebrate the birthday of their chief of headquarters. I decided to celebrate our wedding on this day as well. On 29th January about 60 guests came to the cultural center in Schemilovo. Each officer brought his day's ration of food so we could make a dinner. Our guests also signed their photos and gave them as wedding gifts - there was nothing else to serve as a gift. It was a memorable party. Irina and I were young and full of hopes to be together for the rest of our life. In 2004 we shall celebrate our 60th wedding anniversary. We also celebrate 16th October, the day we met. We don't invite guests or even the children - it is our holiday and we celebrate it together.

My best friend, Pyotr Puzik, got married on the same day. I met him at the front and he became my lifetime friend. When the 2nd Guard Mine Firing Regiment was formed I became commander of a

platoon and first lieutenant Pyotr Puzik was commanding officer of a battery. Soon he became deputy commander of a division and I became chief of intelligence of a division and then was promoted to commanding officer of a battery. In March a few officers were sent to take part in the formation of a new regiment. I went to Podmoscovie where regiment 49 was formed. Puzik became commanding officer of a division in this regiment and I was assigned to be chief of headquarters of this division. We were side by side at the front. In summer 1942, when I became commanding officer of a division, he became deputy commanding officer of the regiment. In 1943 I was promoted to the rank of major and Pyotr became commanding officer of regiment number 305. He assigned me to be chief of headquarters in his regiment. From October 1943 till the end of the war we were the closest friends. He could always rely on me and I on him. Pyotr met his wife, Valentina, in Podolsk where he was on service as the commander of a platoon of cadets before World War II. Pyotr and his wife live in Moscow now.

Irina stayed with me until March. Then she left for home. She had to finish her studies. She passed her graduation exams successfully. She finished the college in the summer of 1944. She obtained her diploma in the name of Nezhynskaya. Upon graduation Irina volunteered to the front. My regiment was at the Finnish Front at the time. Irina got an assignment to my regiment. When she arrived she was assigned to the position of artillery armaments lab assistant. She was responsible for inventories of the artillery weapons delivered from a plant. According to the rules to hit the target successfully cannon shells had to be of one series. If cannon shells were of a different series we had to do additional zeroing in. A lab assistant was to watch that cannon shells of one series were delivered to each battery.

Of course, during military action Irina and I were at different locations, but we stayed together during intervals. We were both on military service and had meals in the field kitchen facilities. As an officer, I received additional food packages with tinned meat, tea and cookies or chocolate that I shared with my wife.

After I got married I managed to find my parents. The siege of Leningrad had been broken by then [see Blockade of Leningrad] 17. There was a marine that came from Leningrad into my regiment. I gave him a week's leave to Leningrad and asked him to see my father's sister Fania who lived in Leningrad before World War II. She wasn't there when he went to her address, but he went to the district housing department and got her address in evacuation. She was in Tashkent. I wrote her and she replied and sent me my parents' address. They lived in Novokuznetsk, Kemerovo region in Siberia.

Fania notified my parents that she had heard from me. We were all so happy to find each other. Back in 1941 my parents left Kiev on a horse-drawn wagon. My father evacuated my mother, my older sister and her son, my sister-in-law - my brother's wife - and their three children. My older brother was at the front. Sophia, the daughter of Israel and Hana, and her three-year-old daughter Inna also went with them. They moved to Lokhvitsa at first and when German troops approached the town they got on the move again. Sophia refused to go with them. Her husband was in the unit near Lokhvitsa and he was going to come and pick up Sophia and their daughter. Alas, this wasn't to happen. My parents left. Sophia and Inna stayed in Lokhvitsa. They were hiding until 1942. Local residents that knew our family well gave shelter to them. In 1942 someone reported on Sophia. She and her daughter were shot during one of the mass shootings of Jews in Lokhvitsa. Sophia was the most beautiful and bright of all the members of our family. What a tragic end this was.

The rest of my family reached Voronezh where they worked in a collective farm throughout the summer. In 1942 German troops were approaching Voronezh and they were all evacuated to Kemerovo in Siberia. I lost contact with my parents and didn't even know whether they were alive. My sister decided that they needed to have me get married when she heard that I was alive. She wrote me that she had found a beauty of a wife for me to marry. And I replied that I didn't need a fiancé. I wrote to her: 'I'm already married'.

In March 1944 our regiment was sent to the Karelian Front where we participated in battles against German troops from summer 1944 to September 1944 until we beat them all and freed Finland from Germans.

There was a German and a Finnish army fighting against us. One German group was in Kotlassk area and the other near Murmansk. The Finnish troops were in the south. I was in the 19th army heading for Kotlassk. Both sides incurred great losses and damage. However, Finland was beaten and capitulated. For battles in Zapoliarie I was awarded the Order of the Great Patriotic War, 2nd class. This was my third award: the first was the medal 'For courage', the 2nd the 'Red Star' and the 3rd was the Order of the Great Patriotic War for battles in Zapoliarie.

In Zapoliarie and from then on we had sufficient food supplies. We received food stocks delivered to Murmansk from Canada and America: canned meat, chocolate and sugar. The only thing we missed was brown bread. Americans only sent us white bread.

After every combat operation our regiment was pulled out into the so-called second echelon of the front line in reserve. We pulled out at the distance of 30-40 kilometers from the front line to repair and maintain equipment and train our battle craft. We also had some time for ourselves. There were amateur performers in every military unit. During intervals our soldiers and officers sang songs and recited poems. One lieutenant from Moscow sang arias from musical comedies. I heard many arias for the first time in my life. Sergeant Galina Garkusha sang pop songs beautifully. I remember 'A Raid Night' and 'A Sailor's Girl'. There were musical instruments in the units: guitars and accordions. We were young and full of energy.

After we beat German troops in Zapoliarie we were sent to the 1st Belarusian front. We traveled to Poland by train. In December 1944 we arrived at Lublin station near the Majdanek 18 death camp. I went to this camp once. It made a horrific impression. It's different from what they show in a movie or write in books. I saw with my own eyes gas chambers where people were smothered with gas and I saw a barrack full of shoes - there were children's shoes there as well. I saw heaps of women's hair in a barrack. I saw incinerator units where they burnt people. Of course, it aroused our feeling of hatred towards the fascists. We showed this to our soldiers: 'Look, here is what fascism is like. Look how it all happened'. Majdanek is located on the bank of the Vistula River nearer to the USSR. Battles were happening on the Vistula River already.

There were two bridgeheads near Warsaw: in the direction of Pulyw and Magnusy. My regiment was at the Pulyw bridgehead. In late November 1944 the Marshal of the Soviet Union, Zhukov 19, became commandant of the 1st Belarusian front. Before him Marshal Rokossovskiy 20 was in command of this front. In November 1944 he was transferred to the 2nd Belarusian Front. On 14th January 1945 the Vistula-Oder operation began under the command of Marshal Zhukov. The attack was heading to Berlin. My regiment was advancing in the south, in the vicinity of Warsaw. Our regiment participated in battles for Radom and for its successful advance was given the name of

Radomskiy. After those battles our regiment was called 305th Guards Krasnoznamyonny Order of Alexandr Nevskiy Radomskiy Mine Firing Navy Regiment. Such a long name. For participation in this operation I was awarded a medal for the liberation of Warsaw. After the liberation of Poland we reached the Oder river on the territory of Germany. For the Vistula-Oder operation I was awarded the Order of the Great Patriotic War, 1st class. This was my fourth order.

Our attack lasted for almost 20 days. The principle of our attacks was similar to German battle strategy back in 1941: our troops were following tank corps that broke the enemy's defense lines without looking backward. German troops that stayed behind us were destroyed by the following echelons. Tanks, artillery, infantry and rocket armies were moving fast to Berlin.

My wife was beside me all this time. I was concerned about her, of course, but it was so important that she was with me. Irina took part in all battle operations. She has governmental awards: medals 'For victory over Germany', 'For liberation of Warsaw', 'For defense of Zapoliarie' and 'For defense of Caucasus'. After World War II Irina was awarded the Order of the 'Great Patriotic War', 2nd class, on the 40th anniversary of the victory, and on the 50th anniversary she received an order 'For courage'. She was also awarded jubilee medals on the 20th, 30th, 40th, 50th and 60th anniversaries of the victory. My wife was with me until late March 1945. She got pregnant. Of course, I didn't want to have my baby born in a frontline hospital under bombardments. When the baby was due I sent my wife to her parents in Ordzonikidze. Our daughter Olga was born there. Irina and our daughter joined me in June 1945. We've been together since then.

In April 1945 combat operations were conducted on the Oder River. Our regiment, which was in the structure of the 49 Army, participated in the encirclement of Berlin. On 24th April our military units united with the armies of the 1st Ukrainian front in the vicinity of Potsdam, thus finalizing the encirclement of Berlin. We turned our 'Katyusha' units from the west to the east, which was a different experience since before we had only fired in the western direction. Our task was to destroy German troops in Berlin. We incurred great losses. A commanding officer of a division was severely wounded near Berlin. He was at the command point when the Germans attacked us. A bullet hit his skull base. He survived, however. He still lives in Leningrad.

On 2nd May 1945 the remaining German troops tried to escape in the western direction to the location where our regiment was deployed. Those were elite SS troops. They were scared of Soviet armies realizing there would be no mercy to them and wanted to break through to cross the Elba River where American troops were located. They had nothing to lose and were fighting with courage based on despair. We were fighting with them. Before night fell the German troops were almost done with: the majority of them were captured. I knew German a little and could interrogate Germans by myself.

There was a German major, a tank man, among captives. He was about the same age as I. I interrogated him. I was the first to hear from him and informed my commandment immediately that on 30th April some SS military picked several canisters of gasoline in their tank battalion located near the Reichs counselor office. As the major told me Hitler had committed suicide and they needed gasoline to burn Hitler and Eva Braun 21. Then the remains of Hitler's staff and the tank corps where this major served tried to get out of Berlin. We had a peaceful discussion with that major. He understood that the war was over and that he was talking to a representative of the victorious army. He told me that his family was not far from Berlin and said that he would

appreciate it so very much if I let him go home. I replied, 'You should have thought about it before. But now you will have to cope with some cold weather - I meant Siberia - before you can return to your wife'.

Our regiment took an active part in those battles. For battles in Berlin I was awarded the Order of the Combat Red Banner 22, the highest military award.

We advanced to the west a little. On 7th May we met with American troops north of Magdeburg and were allowed to take a rest. On 9th May we heard on the radio that Germany had capitulated and the war was over. We couldn't believe this was true. We hugged each other, congratulating each other for this victory. On 11th May I went to Berlin to take a look at the Reichstag that we had been firing during our attack on Berlin. Like other soldiers I signed my name on the wall of the Reichstag.

There were many Jews fighting on my side during the war. I met many Jews at the front. When I was commanding officer of a platoon there were two Jews in this platoon. They were radio operators. They came from Moscow. They were very intelligent. There were especially many Jews in artillery units. This branch of armies requires mathematic capabilities and an ability to take prompt decisions. Colonel Gutin, the commanding officer of the radio operator regiment fighting with us, was a Jew. The chief of his headquarters was Major Alexei Vysotskiy, brother of Vladimir Vysotskiy, the famous poet [Vladimir Vysotskiy, 1938 - 1980, a well-known Russian poet and actor in the Taganka Theater. He played a number of roles in movies. He is well known for composing and singing his own songs]. Levit, a Jewish man, was chief of the operations department of the 1st Belarusian Front - this was a very high official post; Chertok, a Jewish man, was chief of artillery of the Karelian front; colonel Bograt, a Jew, was chief of the operations department of division 107 in Zapoliarie. He became a general and was appointed commanding officer of a division. There was no anti- Semitism in the army. People were judged by their doings. There were about half a million Jews in the army at the beginning of the war. This is true data. Over half of them perished. Therefore, we can look into people's eyes and say, 'Yes, we were at the front and we fought honestly'.

Of course, every soldier at the front was fighting thinking about his family and his loved ones. Our prewar life and our hopes for a good life in the future was associated with the name of Stalin. We believed him unconditionally. During a battle when I was commanding officer of a division I gave the order 'For the Motherland, for Stalin - fire!' This wasn't a mere command - this was what we were truly feeling.

When in Germany we communicated with its residents. In late April 1945 Stalin made a speech. He said that we had to segregate fascism from German people. We didn't feel an urge for any revenge. Although we always remembered how much evil German troops caused we were loyal to German women, older people and children. As for men, there were almost none left: they were either captured or killed. No, we didn't feel hostile toward Germans. Vice versa, there were commandant offices established to support German residents with food. In the beginning women and children received food in our field kitchens. They were starving. We did it on our own initiative. We understood that German fascism brought much sorrow to the countries they occupied and to their own country.

In Germany we met many Soviet people that were taken to work in Germany. In January 1945, in the first villages we came to, we met Ukrainian and Russian girls working for wealthy farmers. I

remember a farmer from one village. He lost his leg at the eastern front in 1941. He had several girls from Ukraine working for him. The girls said their master treated them all right and we left him alone. Besides, we met many prisoners-of-war: Soviet, French and English soldiers. They were very happy to gain freedom. The USSR treated former captives returning from camps as traitors, but we knew under how hard conditions they were captured by the Germans and that they were victims of circumstances. There were some that we knew among those we liberated. I met the chief of headquarters of a neighboring division of our regiment. He was first lieutenant Smirnov. The Germans found him on a battlefield. He was wounded and lost his conscience. It's hard to imagine that any of those people gave themselves up to the enemy.

After the war our regiment stayed in Germany in the so-called group of Soviet troops under the command of Zhukov. We kept training and were prepared for combat actions, if necessary. Some military were released and new young recruits arrived. They needed training.

In January 1946 I received my first leave after the war. My wife and I went to visit my parents in Novokuznetsk, Kemerovo region, in Siberia. Our trip lasted two weeks. We stayed with my parents for a week. My parents were religious and they needed time to get adjusted to the thought that my wife wasn't a Jewish woman. However, they saw that we loved each other and had a daughter. They accepted the fact that I was married, and when they got to know Irina better they began to love her as their own daughter. Irina also loved them.

My sister returned to Kiev after World War II. Her husband perished at the front. Anna worked as an accountant at a plant. In some time she remarried. Her second husband, Alexandr Rabinovich, a Jew, was an engineer. They lived a happy life together. Anna's husband died in 1980. Anna will turn 90 next year. Anna's son Zakhar finished the Faculty of History of Kiev University. He is a teacher of history at school. He has reached the age of retirement, but he continues working. School is his vocation. His former pupils still visit their favorite teacher.

My older brother Arkadi was at the front during World War II. My mother received death notifications for him three times. My mother told me that she cried her eyes out when she received those notifications, but his Claudia kept saying, 'I don't believe it. He is alive, he will come back'. My brother survived. After World War II he lived in Kiev with his family. He worked at a construction site. My brother wasn't religious. This was due to the time when we were growing up. My brother died in Kiev in 1997. He was buried in the town cemetery. His wife died shortly afterward. His older daughter, Nelly, is a pensioner. Before she retired she was selling monthly tickets for public transportation. Arkadi's son Anatoli is an electrician at a construction site. He is a very skilled employee. Arkadi's younger daughter Raisa is chief accountant at a design institute. My brother's children have families of their own.

When my leave was over Irina returned to her parents and I returned to my regiment. In April 1946 I was sent to study at the Higher Artillery School in Kolomna. In October 1946 I finished it with excellent marks in all subjects. However, when I was at school my regiment was dismissed: the army was reduced after the war. I was appointed commanding officer of a division in another regiment. This regiment was based in Leipzig in Eastern Germany. Our military unit was based in a field camp and we got lodgings in apartment houses that Germans left for us. My family was with me there. In January 1948 my son Vladimir was born in Leipzig. I was commanding officer of a division until late February 1948. There was a process of replacement of officers in the German

based Soviet troops. There I faced the fact that Jewish officers were the first to be removed from Germany.

I was sent to the Transcaucasia military regiment where I became commanding officer of a division. While I was en route this division was also dismissed. I was appointed chief of headquarters of a 'Katyusha' division in the town of Kirovabad in Azerbaijan. Therefore, within two years I descended two steps lower; from chief of headquarters of a regiment to chief of headquarters of a division, but I kept my rank of a major. I understood it wasn't a favorable flow of things. I had no career perspectives in this branch of the army: there was not a single regiment in Transcaucasia, there were only divisions. In 1949 I decided to enter the Military Academy, named after the Soviet commander of the period of the Civil War, Michael Frunze 23, in Moscow. This was the primary academy in the Soviet army. This was when I faced anti-Semitism to the full.

There were 200 applicants to be admitted to the Academy. Over 50 Jews submitted their applications, but only five of them, including me, were admitted. I passed 13 entrance exams with excellent marks. I don't know what factor played its role, but they admitted me to the academy. I've never concealed my nationality. There was a mandatory line item 5 24 - nationality, in all application forms. I always wrote that I was a Jew. I had a friend named Leonid Romanenko. His father was Ukrainian. During the Civil War he was chief of ChK 25 of Poltava province. Leonid's mother was a Jew. Leonid put down in all forms that he was a Jew. He was not admitted to the academy and the deputy political chief of our training course yelled at him, 'What prevented you from writing that you were Ukrainian?' Leonid replied that his mother was a Jew and he loved his mother and wrote what he wanted to write.

In 1948 the so-called 'campaign against cosmopolitans' 26 began. It was at its height in 1949, when I studied at the academy. It didn't have any impact on me, but many lecturers and students were dismissed for various reasons.

All students of the academy were at least commanding officers of battalions in position and at least lieutenant colonels in rank. I had been a major for seven years by the time I entered the academy. In 1950 I was promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel. It was supposed to happen at a certain period of time, even though I was a Jew. The Minister of Defense Marshal Vasilevskiy signed an order for my promotion. In 1952 I finished the academy with honors. They gave me one good mark at an exam to prevent me from getting a gold medal. I understood all too well that it was all made up.

My family was with me when I studied at the academy. We couldn't bear the thought of having to stay apart for this long. Irina and the children moved to Moscow. We were accommodated in a family hostel for students of the academy.

After finishing the academy I was sent to Transcaucasia units where I became deputy commanding officer of the artillery branch in our regiment. However, when I returned it turned out that this position wasn't vacant and I was offered the position of commanding officer of the division where I had been chief of headquarters before I entered the academy. The former commanding officer of this division retired and I replaced him. This position was a promotion for me and corresponded with my new rank.

When I returned to the division after finishing the academy in January 1953 the Doctors' Plot 27 began. I was very concerned about its possible effect on me and other Jews from our division. There were many Jews in our medical unit; all best doctors in the army were Jews. However, nobody in the army believed newspaper publications about 'poisoning doctors'. Michael Tischenko, political officer, a Ukrainian man, spoke at a meeting where he declared that he didn't believe that the doctors were guilty. This meeting took place in February 1953. If Stalin hadn't died in March 1953 Michael could have been released from the army or even taken to the military tribunal court. At that period such disagreement with an official point of view might have been evaluated as state treason for a military. There was the death penalty for such a delinquency. However, Tischenko did this, though he was aware of the consequences.

Stalin's death in March 1953 was a terrible blow for me like for the majority of the Soviet people. I thought that life should have stopped. I couldn't imagine our country without him. However, the speech of Nikita Khrushchev 28 at the Twentieth Party Congress 29 helped me to get to the essence of things. I believed Khrushchev at once. I did remember very well the role that item 5 had played in the life of an individual during Stalin's time. However, anti-Semitism was the same during the period of Khrushchev and Brezhnev, his successor. The only difference was that people weren't taken to camps.

It was too much for the budget to keep a graduate of the Frunze Academy in the position of commanding officer of a division. In 1953 a new position was introduced in divisions: assistant commanding officer of anti-aircraft defense. The commander of the division decided to use me for this position. This position had to be held by at least a colonel in rank, and in 1956 I was given the rank of colonel. I was 33 years old and was the youngest colonel in our area. In 1958 I was assigned as chief of operations department of the division: this was another promotion. Chief of operations department is assistant chief of headquarters of division. Operations department is a main department in a division: it does all the planning and scheduling. There is an operations department, intelligence, communications, engineering departments, etc. in a division. Operations department is number one. When the chief of headquarters went on vacation the commanding officer of division authorized me to be his replacement. Later I was transferred to Yerevan, the capital of Armenia where we received a good three-bedroom apartment.

In 1960 general David Dragunskiy, a Jewish man, twofold Hero of the Soviet Union, became commander of Guards Army 7. Many people still blame him that he had to be chief of the anti-Zionist committee as a party member during the period of Stalin's rule. I don't think it was his fault: in those years he couldn't refuse from being what he was. I was deputy chief of operations department in a division in the army where Dragunskiy was commander. Later the chief of the operations department went to Cuba as a counselor and I became acting chief of the operations department in Yerevan. It lasted for a year. In 1962 I was elected deputy of military at a district council of people's deputies. I took an active part in all sessions of this council. I was responsible for protection of interests of the military and their families.

In early 1964 I was appointed chief of headquarters of the 145 motor rifle division in Batumi, the capital of the Ajaria Autonomous Republic in Georgia. I served in this division until 1969. During the last year and a half I was commanding officer of this division. To some extent this position of commanding officer played a wicked joke on me. Skachenko, the general of the army, commander of Transcaucasia military regiment, recommended me for the position of chief of headquarters of

corps, that was to be occupied by a lieutenant general, but when the new commander of the regiment arrived he said: 'I cannot allow a division at the frontier to have no commanding officer. Until a new commanding officer arrives, colonel Nezhynski will stay here'. There - I had to stay. I was commanding officer of the division until September 1968 when general Mishagin, a new commanding officer, arrived to take command of my division. I returned to my position of chief of headquarters of the division. Of course, I felt hurt. I decided it was time to retire from the army.

I addressed the military human resources department where I said that I was available if they wanted to use me as a lecturer in a military educational institution. I had a higher military education and sufficient experience. They promised to find me a job, but there were delays. In May 1969 I requested a medical fitness examination hoping that doctors would find out that I wasn't fit for further service in the army. In April 1969 I got a release from the army. At that time I received a cable from Moscow. They offered me a job at the same academy that I had finished. I refused since I didn't want to try my fate again. In May 1969 I retired from the army. I was allowed to continue wearing my uniform and I also got a military pension.

My wife had to travel with me a lot and had problems finding a job each time. It often happens in military units that officers' wives have to take up jobs of waitresses or hospital attendants, even those that have a higher education. After the war my wife was busy raising our children. When the children went to school and kindergarten, my wife got lucky. From 1953 to 1956 Irina was director of a library in a military unit of the division where I was chief of anti-aircraft defense. From 1964 to 1968 Irina worked as scientific employee in a historical museum of Ajaria in Batumi. She met with interesting people, guided tours and did research work.

I didn't want to stay in Yerevan after I retired. My parents returned to Kiev from Novokuznetsk in 1947. I decided to move to Kiev with my family. My parents bought a small house on the right bank of the Dnieper near the Paton bridge in Kiev. The house was on the slope of a hill. There were other small houses in the neighborhood. Many of them were clay houses.

My parents observed Jewish traditions after they returned. Of course, it was difficult to follow the kashrut at that time. It was a problem to buy food products. They ate what they could get. My parents celebrated Jewish holidays. There was a small synagogue in Podol 30. On holidays my father went to the synagogue in the morning. My mother prayed at home. She didn't go to the synagogue. She couldn't walk there, and public transportation was too irregular. My mother made matzah at Pesach and cooked delicious food for all holidays. There was no shochet in Kiev at the time. My father slaughtered chickens himself. There were two aging sisters living in a neighboring house. They believed my father to be very religious. They brought their chickens to be slaughtered by my father and believed that if my father had done it they became kosher chickens.

My father prayed at home every day and read religious books. My mother and father were poor. My father couldn't work any longer. My father and mother received miserable pensions. I supported them sending them some money each month. I also sent them gifts. My family and I visited them on my vacation. Of course, when we moved to Kiev I began to help my parents more, but I still think that I could have done more for them. My family and I visited my parents on their birthdays and on Jewish holidays. We were happy to see them. My mother died in 1966 and my father passed away in 1969. They were buried in the Jewish section of the Berkovtsy cemetery. I couldn't arrange Jewish funerals for my parents at that time. I come to the cemetery every year. I apologize for what

I might have done wrong. I wish I had spent more time with them. I wish we knew how to segregate major things in life from minor ones. We only begin to understand things when it is too late to do something about it.

We received a big apartment in the center of Kiev. Once I met the retired lieutenant colonel Waisband, my former fellow comrade. He offered me the job of the director of 'Kievkniga' book supply company. I began to refuse. I was a military and could be in command of a division, but had no competence in what he was offering me. However, he said that he knew me well and believed that I would manage all right. At that time Jews had problems with finding employment. To become director of a book company I had to be approved by a Party district committee. Waisband went to the district committee and insisted that they approved me for this position. In 1969 I became director of the 'Kievkniga' supply company.

I've always had a professional attitude when it comes to a job I have to do. I entered the extramural Faculty of Directors of Book Supplies of the College of Culture in Leningrad. I finished it with honors and got a diploma. Director of book supplies was a high position at that time. I worked there until 1993. Between 1970-1978 my wife was a bibliographer in the assortment office of my supply company. Irina loved books. Besides, she finished the Faculty of History and this helped her to do her job perfectly. Irina retired in 1978. She still loves books. She is fond of reading memoirs of people of the arts and theater. She spends her pension at book markets. I retired at the age of 70. By that time I had worked for 52 years, including my military career. I decided it was time for me to rest from work. The new director tried to convince me to take any position I liked, but it was hard for me to continue working and I refused.

My daughter Olga finished a secondary school in Yerevan. After finishing school she worked as a librarian in military units where I served. When we moved to Kiev Olga entered the department of book sales in a college in Kiev. She finished it successfully. Olga is a librarian. She likes her work. She has reached her retirement age, but she keeps working. Olga is single. She didn't want to marry a local man when we were in Transcaucasia. When we moved to Kiev her time had passed. She accepted it as it was. She lives with us and is our big support in life.

Our son Vladimir finished a secondary school with a gold medal in Batumi in 1966. After finishing school he entered Medical Military Academy in Leningrad. When he was a last-year student Vladimir married a Russian girl from Leningrad, Tatiana Krupakova. Tatiana finished a medical college in Leningrad. She worked as a medical nurse. She had to travel with her husband like my wife was traveling with me, but she always found a cozy house for her family.

After finishing the academy in 1972 Vladimir worked as a doctor in a cosmodrome. Then he was transferred to the Rocket army in Vinnitsa, Ukraine. Later he became chief of medical service in a regiment in Belaya Tserkov, 100 kilometers from Kiev. From there he got a transfer to a group of Soviet troops in Hungary. There he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel and became chief of medical service in the army in Hungary. After returning to Kiev my son lectured at the military department of Kiev Medical College and later at the Kiev College of Doctors' Advanced Training. In 1991 the last Minister of Defense of the USSR, Marshal Shaposhnikov, promoted my son to the rank of colonel of medical service. Vladimir works with medications now. He lives in Kiev with his family. We don't see each other often. He spends much time at work. His daughter Marianna, our only and darling granddaughter, was born in 1973. She finished a medical college

and is a medical nurse.

We didn't observe Jewish traditions in our family. I was a professional military and a member of the Party. It was impossible for me to observe any traditions. Besides, I grew up during the Soviet rule, studied at a military school and a military college and was far from the Jewish religion or Jewish traditions. Like many children of our time our children didn't identify themselves as Jews. We celebrated Soviet holidays and birthdays in our family. Irina made festive food and we invited guests. We had particularly festive celebrations on Victory Day 31, 9th May. This holiday is a mixture of joy and sorrow. Our army and our people defended our country and rescued the world from fascism. When I think about the price we paid for our victory and how many people perished I cannot help crying. On this day we always met with our former fellow comrades and went to the Grave of the Unknown Soldier. Then we got together at somebody's home. We sang songs of the war time and recalled our friends and relatives that perished.

We also remember our front line friends. I've already mentioned that we keep in touch with Pyotr Puzik and his wife. We talk on the phone and correspond. During my service in the Navy unit 305 I made friends with the assistant chief of the political department, Yuli Soliterman, a Jew. He was responsible for the tutorship of Komsomol members. Yuli was born in 1918. He lives in Moscow and we keep in touch. We send greetings to each other on every holiday. Yuli became a writer. He publishes his books under the pseudonym of Annenkov. He wrote 'A Torpedo Boat Flag' and 'The Miners' Senator' about Pablo Neruda, a poet. [Editor's note: Neruda, Pablo (pen name of Ricardo Neftali Reyes, 1904-1973): Chilean poet, appointed to various consular posts in Europe by the Chilean government in the 1930s, Chilean consul in Mexico from 1939-1943. Upon returning to Chile, Neruda became active in politics and joined the Communist Party. Written in an often surrealistic style, his poems depict an anguish-ridden world of chaos, desolation and decay. Neruda was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature in 1971.]

Yuli's wife, Elena Galperina, and he wrote the libretto to the 'Sevastopol waltz', a musical comedy. We talk on the phone on Victory Day, congratulating each other. Only six of my former fellow comrades of our regiment are still alive. Three of them live in Russia: Puzik and Soliterman in Moscow and Galski in St. Petersburg. Three live in Ukraine: I and Shevchuk in Kiev and Gasenko in Pavlograd. We met in Moscow in 1990 before the break up of the USSR. We agreed that we would continue to see each other until at least two of us were alive. It happened so that three people live in one country and three in another. We are too old to travel, but we talk on the phone and write letters to each other.

My parents and I were very happy about the establishment of Israel. In the late 1960s I became proud of Israel. In the middle of the 1960s the USSR sent military counselors to the armies of Egypt and Syria. They mostly sent specialists from Transcaucasia since the climate there was very much like in these countries. People didn't have to spent time adjusting to different climatic conditions. Since I was chief of headquarters of a division I took part in the selection of officers for the Egyptian army. In particular, in 1967 twenty officers from our division were sent as counselors for commanders of battalions, regiment headquarters and regiments of the Egyptian army. After the Six-Day-War 32 they returned home. Some of them were wounded. They treated me with respect. They used to say 'Here, comrade colonel is how one must struggle - like Jews did!' They said the Egyptian army was good for nothing. When listening to their stories I felt proud for Israel, for this small country that has to stand up against the whole Arabic world. It provokes arising admiration of

the military that have seen so much in their life. Basically, whenever it comes to any discussion of anti-Semitism I always say, 'Yes, anti-Semitism exists, but it's not as scaring as it used to be in the past, before we got a state of our own'. Now the Jewish country stands for all Jews and anti-Semitism is not scaring at all. We have to struggle against it and beat it, but not be afraid of it.

In the 1970s Jews began to move to Israel. I never considered emigration for several reasons. Firstly, my wife isn't a Jew and I was afraid that she would face a prejudiced attitude in Israel. Besides, I wasn't young anymore. I understood that it was unlikely that I would find a job and I didn't want to be a dependent and receive what I hadn't earned. My children weren't willing to move abroad either and we didn't want to part with them. At that time traveling wasn't allowed and we couldn't invite foreigners to visit us. At that time it was dangerous for residents of the USSR to keep in touch with friends or relatives abroad 33. I didn't approve of emigration.

Jews that were leaving inspired negative attitudes towards the ones that stayed. If a person submitted an application for departure his boss was having problems at work. Managers were summoned to district Party committees where they were accused of loss of watchfulness and support of the world of Zionism. The USSR and Israel had a tense relationship. Managers were hesitant of employing Jews. Every Jew was suspected to be a potential emigrant and this might have caused problems in the future. Everyday anti-Semitism grew stronger. One could hear 'Go away to your Israel' in public transportation or in the street. That's why I didn't approve of those that were leaving. However, I changed my attitude. My friends and relatives left. My father's youngest brother, Boris Nezhynski, and his family emigrated to San Francisco in the USA. After perestroika 34 we often talked on the phone with him. Uncle Boris died recently. He was 90 years old. I'm in contact with his son Mark.

After I retired I bumped into my old friend Arkadi Zaretski. He was deputy chairman of the Kiev Association of Jewish War Veterans at the Jewish council in Ukraine. He convinced me to join this veterans' organization. I couldn't refuse: they were my comrades, veterans of the war. I joined the Kiev organization of Jewish war veterans in 1993. A couple of years later I became a member of the council of veterans and in 1980 I became chairman of council. We do interesting work and meet twice a month. Those meetings are always interesting, but alas... There are almost 300 members in our organization, but half of them are confined to bed. About 100 veterans attend our meetings. Regretfully, one to two veterans leave us each month. The average age of the veterans is 80. However, we go on...

In the late 1980s perestroika began in the USSR. Of course, it wasn't only good things that it brought, but I believe that life improved. We lived our life in complete isolation from the rest of the world. We weren't allowed to keep in touch with friends living abroad and travel abroad. Perestroika opened opportunities. It brought us freedom and open information about the past and present of our country. It brought freedom of religion that used to be a mere item in the constitution. It mitigated anti-Semitism. Diplomatic relationships with Israel were established. Jewish organizations began to operate.

The Jewish life has revived since Ukraine gained independence. Besides working in Kiev organization of Jewish war veterans I'm a member of Kiev Association of Jewish War Veterans, department for the ties with war veterans in Israel, a member of the organization of intellectual Jews 'Bnai- Brig' and a volunteer at Hesed 35. Besides, I'm a member of the Presidium of the

International Ukrainian Union of War Veterans.

I enjoy meeting with schoolchildren. I tell them about heroic deeds of our warriors on the front during World War II. I cannot say that I've turned to religion. Some of the veterans attend the synagogue regularly, but I don't. However, I appreciate those that do. I cannot say that I'm far from Jewish traditions. After I retired from my governmental service and started work with the Kiev association of veterans of the war, my family and I began to observe Jewish traditions. At that time religion wasn't persecuted any longer. In the 1990s we began to celebrate Jewish holidays at home. My wife cooks traditional Jewish food. We receive matzah for Pesach at Hesed. Irina makes chicken broth that we eat with matzah, like we used to do in my childhood. Our daughter identifies herself as a Jew. She joins our celebrations and likes going to Hesed with me. Our son is far from the Jewish life while our daughter is close to it. Our first toast at any celebration is 'Lehaim!' - 'To life!'

Glossary:

**1 Russian Revolution of 1917**
Revolution in which the tsarist regime was overthrown in the Russian Empire and, under Lenin, was replaced by the Bolshevik rule. The two phases of the Revolution were: February Revolution, which came about due to food and fuel shortages during World War I, and during which the tsar abdicated and a provisional government took over. The second phase took place in the form of a coup led by Lenin in October/November (October Revolution) and saw the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks.

**2 Civil War (1918-1920)**
The Civil War between the Reds (the Bolsheviks) and the Whites (the anti-Bolsheviks), which broke out in early 1918, ravaged Russia until 1920. The Whites represented all shades of anti- communist groups - Russian army units from World War I, led by anti- Bolshevik officers, by anti-Bolshevik volunteers and some Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries. Several of their leaders favored setting up a military dictatorship, but few were outspoken tsarists. Atrocities were committed throughout the Civil War by both sides. The Civil War ended with Bolshevik military victory, thanks to the lack of cooperation among the various White commanders and to the reorganization of the Red forces after Trotsky became commissar for war. It was won, however, only at the price of immense sacrifice; by 1920 Russia was ruined and devastated. In 1920 industrial production was reduced to 14% and agriculture to 50% as compared to 1913.

**3 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.

**4 Petliura, Simon (1879-1926)**
Ukrainian politician, member of the Ukrainian Social Democratic Working Party, one of the leaders of Centralnaya Rada (Central Council), the national government of Ukraine (1917-1918). Military units under his command killed Jews during the Civil War in Ukraine. In the Soviet-Polish war he was on the side of Poland; in 1920 he emigrated. He was killed in Paris by the Jewish nationalist

Schwarzbard in revenge for the pogroms against Jews in Ukraine.

**5 Denikin, Anton Ivanovich (1872-1947)**
White Army general. During the Russian Civil War he fought against the Red Army in the South of Ukraine.

**6 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.

**7 NEP**
The so-called New Economic Policy of the Soviet authorities was launched by Lenin in 1921. It meant that private business was allowed on a small scale in order to save the country ruined by the Revolution of 1917 and the Russian Civil War. They allowed priority development of private capital and entrepreneurship. The NEP was gradually abandoned in the 1920s with the introduction of the planned economy.

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

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

**10 All-Union pioneer organization**
a communist organization for teenagers between 10 and 15 years old (cf: boy-/ girlscouts in the US). The organization aimed at educating the young generation in accordance with the communist ideals, preparing pioneers to become members of the Komsomol and later the Communist Party. In the Soviet Union, all teenagers were pioneers.

**11 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.

**12 Kolkhoz**
In the Soviet Union the policy of gradual and voluntary collectivization of agriculture was adopted in 1927 to encourage food production while freeing labor and capital for industrial development. In 1929, with only 4% of farms in kolkhozes, Stalin ordered the confiscation of peasants' land, tools, and animals; the kolkhoz replaced the family farm.

**13 School #**
Schools had numbers and not names. It was part of the policy of the state. They were all state schools and were all supposed to be identical.

**14 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.

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

**16 Order of the Red Star**
Established in 1930, it was awarded for achievements in the defense of the motherland, the promotion of military science and the development of military equipments, and for courage in battle. The Order of the Red Star has been awarded over 4,000,000 times.

**17 Blockade of Leningrad**
On September 8, 1941 the Germans fully encircled Leningrad and its siege began. It lasted until January 27, 1944. The blockade meant incredible hardships and privations for the population of the town. Hundreds of thousands died from hunger, cold and diseases during the almost 900 days of the blockade.

**18 Majdanek**
concentration camp situated five kilometers from the city center of Lublin, Poland, originally established as a labor camp in October 1941. It was officially called Prisoner of War Camp of the Waffen-SS Lublin until 16th February 1943, when the name was changed to Concentration Camp of the Waffen-SS Lublin. Unlike most other Nazi death camps, Majdanek, located in a completely open field, was not hidden from view. About 130,000 Jews were deported there during 1942-43 as part of

the 'Final Solution'. Initially there were two gas chambers housed in a wooden building, which were later replaced by gas chambers in a brick building. The estimated number of deaths is 360,000, including Jews, Soviets POWs and Poles. The camp was liquidated in July 1944, but by the time the Red Army arrived the camp was only partially destroyed. Although approximately 1,000 inmates were executed on a death march, the Red Army found thousand of prisoners still in the camp, an evidence of the mass murder that had occurred in Majdanek.

**19 Zhukov, Georgy Konstantinovich (1896-1974)**
was born in Kaluga province, Russia, and died in Moscow. He was a marshal of the Soviet Union, and the most important Soviet military commander during World War II.

**20 Rokossovsky, General Konstantin K**
: the onetime construction worker who had somehow survived Stalin's military purges of the 1930s, emerging from the torture chambers with a mouthful of metal teeth and a steel will to prove his worth as a fighter.

**21 Braun, Eva (1912-45)**
mistress and later wife of the German dictator Adolf Hitler. She was a shop assistant to a Nazi photographer, through whom she met Hitler. She entered his household in 1936, although their relationship was kept secret. She had no influence on the government. Hitler married her in the last days of his life, and she joined him in suicide.

**22 Order of the Combat Red Banner**
Established in 1924, it was awarded for bravery and courage in the defense of the Homeland.

**23 Frunze, Mikhail (1885-1925)**
Soviet political and military leader.

**24 Item 5**
This was the nationality factor, which was included on all job application forms, Jews, who were considered a separate nationality in the Soviet Union, were not favored in this respect from the end of World War WII until the late 1980s.

**25 ChK (full name VuChK)**
All-Russian Emergency Commission of struggle against counter revolution and sabotage; the first security authority in the Soviet Union established per order of the council of people's commissars dated 7 December 1917. Its chief was Feliz Dzerzhynskiy. In 1920, after the Civil War, Lenin ordered to disband it and it became a part of the NKVD.

**26 Campaign against 'cosmopolitans'**

The campaign against 'cosmopolitans', i.e. Jews, was initiated in articles in the central organs of the Communist Party in 1949. The campaign was directed primarily at the Jewish intelligentsia and it was the first public attack on Soviet Jews as Jews. 'Cosmopolitans' writers were accused of hating the Russian people, of supporting Zionism, etc. Many Yiddish writers as well as the leaders of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee were arrested in November 1948 on charges that they maintained ties with Zionism and with American 'imperialism'. They were executed secretly in 1952. The anti-Semitic Doctors' Plot was launched in January 1953. A wave of anti-Semitism spread through the USSR. Jews were removed from their positions, and rumors of an imminent mass deportation of Jews to the eastern part of the USSR began to spread. Stalin's death in March 1953 put an end to the campaign against 'cosmopolitans'.

**27 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.

**28 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.

**29 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.

**30 Podol**

The lower section of Kiev. It has always been viewed as the Jewish region of Kiev. In tsarist Russia Jews were only allowed to live in Podol, which was the poorest part of the city. Before World War II 90% of the Jews of Kiev lived there.

**31 Victory Day in Russia (9th May)**

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.

**32 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.

**33 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.

**34 Perestroika (Russian for restructuring)**

Soviet economic and social policy of the late 1980s, associated with the name of Soviet politician Mikhail Gorbachev. The term designated the attempts to transform the stagnant, inefficient command economy of the Soviet Union into a decentralized, market-oriented economy. Industrial managers and local government and party officials were granted greater autonomy, and open elections were introduced in an attempt to democratize the Communist Party organization. By 1991, perestroika was declining and was soon eclipsed by the dissolution of the USSR.

**35 Hesed**

Meaning care and mercy in Hebrew, Hesed stands for the charity organization founded by Amos Avgar in the early 20th century. Supported by Claims Conference and Joint Hesed helps for Jews in need to have a decent life despite hard economic conditions and encourages development of their self-identity. Hesed provides a number of services aimed at supporting the needs of all, and particularly elderly members of the society. The major social services include: work in the center facilities (information, advertisement of the center activities, foreign ties and free lease of medical equipment); services at homes (care and help at home, food products delivery, delivery of hot meals, minor repairs); work in the community (clubs, meals together, day-time polyclinic, medical and legal consultations); service for volunteers (training programs). The Hesed centers have inspired a real revolution in the Jewish life in the FSU countries. People have seen and sensed the rebirth of the Jewish traditions of humanism. Currently over eighty Hesed centers exist in the FSU countries. Their activities cover the Jewish population of over eight hundred settlements.