# Iosif Shubinsky

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Of all of my forefathers I only knew about my great-grandfather, but I never met him. His name was Meyer Shubinsky, and he was born at the beginning of the 19th century. He was a tailor. I think he was rich because he owned two houses and a cow. He had eight children: Tevye, Nuchem, Godl, Mosya, my grandfather Kopl, Sureh-Leah, Avram and Chaya.

The oldest son, Tevye, was born around 1830. He lived in the village of Talny near Uman. He got married there and had children. The second son was Nuchem. He was two years younger than Tevye, so he must have been born around 1832. I know that he was a cantor, and when he was praying, people from other synagogues would come to hear him. He had two children. The next son was Godl, who had two children, then came Mosya and then Kopl, my grandfather, who was born around 1850. He had a younger sister called Sureh-Leah. Her husband was called Moishe. He was a tailor and they had children. The youngest son, Avram, was a retail trader. Then there was another daughter, Chaya, but I never met her and don't know anything about her.

I would like to tell you about my grandfather Kopl's family. His eldest son was called Chaim. He was born around 1871. He had three children, who moved to America after the Revolution of 1917 1. Three years ago I got a letter saying that his eldest son is still alive. I was surprised. He is older than me - and still alive. Then my grandparents had a daughter, Golda, born in 1875, whose photo I still have. His next son was my father, Veniamin Leib, born in 1876. After him came another daughter, Chaya-Rukhl, born in 1877. She also moved to America, and her son still lives there today. She divorced her husband. Then there was another daughter, Riva, born in 1882, who was single and died when she was young. The next child was Nuchem, born in 1885, who stayed in Zvenigorodka and was killed by the Germans. In a picture I have you can see his daughter with a cigarette. She was also killed by the Germans: she looked out of the window and was shot. And finally there was Avram, the youngest son, born in 1889. That's the generation of my family that I remember.

My great-grandfather owned two houses, which stood next to each other. Between them there was a barn where horses could be kept. He left these two houses to two of his sons. My grandfather Kopl lived in one house and his older brother Mosya in the other. My grandfather was very poor. He set up a hotel in his house. In Ryzhanovka people didn't work during the week, but had fairs on Thursdays. So visitors came to the fair and stayed at my grandfather's hotel. He also cooked for them and thus earned his living. The entrance to the hotel wasn't from the street, but through the barn. There was one big room and two small rooms. There was hardly any furniture in the house. The big room was furnished with a table and long benches. My grandmother lived in one of the

small rooms, so there must have been a bed or something in that room, but there was nothing else. I remember jugglers who came to the fair on Thursdays. One of them was from China. He stayed at my grandfather's hotel. An organ-grinder also stayed at his place. He had a street-organ that only played one song: 'Oh, Marusya, oh Marusya'.

All people in our family spoke Yiddish. There were many Jews in the village, but I don't remember them because we moved to Zvenigorodka when I was four. We only visited my grandfather in later years. There was a synagogue in Ryzhanovka; or maybe even two. All the Jews lived downtown, while the Russians lived on the outskirts of town. There were stores downtown and a trading square in the area where my grandfather lived. There was a tavern in the middle of the square that looked like a hall. Weddings took place there. There was a lot of dirt in the streets. After the rain it was impossible to walk in the street.

I remember my aunt Chaya-Rukhl's wedding. My grandmother was already ill. So, from our house to that tavern, where the wedding took place - it was around 200 meters - she was taken by sledge because she couldn't possibly walk through all the dirt. The dirt reached our knees! In those times young people who got married always had a chuppah - a traditional Jewish wedding ceremony under a canopy. The main participant of the ceremony was the rabbi who lead the ceremony. He gave a glass of wine to the groom, then to the bride, and then this glass was broken, which symbolized happiness. Then, when the groom put a ring on his bride's finger, he said one sentence: 'Rey akt mekadeshes li...', which means 'You will be my wife' in Yiddish. This is the official part of the ceremony. It is followed by a non- official part - the wedding feast. There was no orchestra in Ryzhanovka. There were only Jewish bands - klezmer musicians. It happened so that two weddings took place at the same time. The better klezmer musicians played at one wedding, and the worse ones at ours. There was a tradition that klezmer musicians were paid separately for each dance. For instance, if you wanted to dance a waltz, you ordered your waltz and paid them immediately. Klezmer musicians were interested in playing at richer weddings where they could earn more. However, my uncle Chaim was witty. He put three rubles on the floor, slightly covered them with his cap and went to talk to the chief klezmer musician. He said, 'Look, go play at this wedding! Don't you see - these are rich people, they throw money on the floor'. And thus he enticed them. All the guests at the wedding were Jews. They were all relatives. They married their relatives and came together again at the wedding. So, our weddings were purely Jewish.

Our neighbors were on good terms with us. A Ukrainian family lived next to my grandfather's house. They had a garden, and every time they collected fruit, they shared some with my grandfather. They were very good neighbors. I remember one landowner had a lot of cherry trees in his garden. So his wife would go around the village in a cart and throw cherries to everyone she saw, especially little children.

My father had many different professions. When he was young he visited the United States. One of his relatives, who also went by the name of Veniamin, moved to America after a pogrom 2 in Odessa, and sent an invitation for my father to come and join him there. In America, he owned a chocolate factory and a factory manufacturing wallpaper. My father worked at the latter one. He spent two and a half years in America; then he returned to Ryzhanovka. Later, after he got married, he moved to Zvenigorodka, opened a confectionary shop and manufactured wafers. He

made wafers with his own hands. He made a mixture of flour, eggs and milk. Then he poured this mixture into two presses and closed them. Beneath the presses stood two big Primus stoves, which heated the presses. After enough heating, the hot wafers were taken out and processed on the table.

My mother's name was Etl Aronovna Shubinskaya, nee Upendik. She was born in Zvenigorodka in 1887. My father was eleven years older than her. He died in Kazakhstan during evacuation in 1945. They had three children: I was born on 14th January 1907 and the eldest son; one year later, in 1908, my brother Meyer was born; he was killed at the front. and in 1911 my sister Sonya, or Bidona followed. Sonya lives in America. She moved there in 1989.She recently celebrated her 90th birthday. It's amazing, I have lately paid attention to the fact that we probably have some special genes in us - we all live very long. My uncle Godl, whom I've already mentioned, lived for 100 years - he died exactly at the age of 100. My aunt Golda lived for 90 years. My mother died when she was 86, but she was ill; she had cancer. I will also turn 100 soon - in about five years.

I was four years old when we moved from Ryzhanovka to Zvenigorodka in 1911. We bought a house with grandfather Aron. I know that they didn't have enough money, so they borrowed money from their friend, a barber.

The house was nice and new. It was located on the outskirts of town, near the Russian cemetery. But there was a big square not far from it, even though it was at the end of town and only Russians lived there. The house was made of clay. It was nothing special, but nice.

The roof was made of iron. The house was divided into two. Both had two rooms and a kitchen. My father experienced both good and bad times. For some time we lived with my uncle Chaim; but then he was killed in Zvenigorodka ghetto in 1942. I remember Zvenigorodka very well. I remember that the furniture in our place wasn't very luxurious, but it included everything we needed: beds, chairs, tables, etc. My mother cooked in pots. There was a big oven, in which we baked bread for the whole week. There was a well in the yard. Every day we would fetch water from there - first the adults, and later, when I was older, I.

My father was very religious. He prayed every day. He attended the synagogue. He also fasted when it was necessary. My father kept every rule, every tradition. Every Saturday, when he went to the synagogue, he took me with him. Since he wasn't allowed to carry anything in his hands on Saturday, I carried his tallit. When I turned 13, my younger brother accompanied my father to the synagogue. We weren't allowed to carry anything in our pockets either, according to the Jewish tradition, that's why we would tie our handkerchiefs around our necks. In America, however, my father embraced some secular manners as well. He could speak English after spending more than two years there even though he wasn't really educated. But people often came to ask his advice when they were in need to know how to deal with the one or the other situation in life.

My father played the trombone. He wasn't a musician though. My mother sang; she had a wonderful voice. She mostly sang Jewish songs. By the way, she sang songs I rarely hear any more today. My brother played the mandolin. My sister couldn't sing at all.

My mother's parents lived with us. My grandmother's name was Hannah- Riva Barabash and my grandfather's Aron Mendelevich Upendik. They both died around 1928: my grandmother died first and two weeks later my grandfather passed away.

Grandfather Aron worked as a glasscutter all his life. He would go around villages and offer his services to people. He made special stretchers to carry glass to the place where it was cut. Cutting glass is hard work.

My mother was a very good cook. Her mother taught her. My grandfather's sister-in-law was a specialist when it came to cooking: she cooked for every wedding or any other celebration for which something delicious had to be cooked. She was the one who taught women to cook all kinds of different tasty things. The best dish was sweet-and-sour roast meat.

And here's how we celebrated Pesach. First of all, just like all other Jews, we burnt chametz, that is, we burned all food leftovers that had leaven in them and began to only eat matzot.

In Ryzhanovka we baked matzot at home - we made thin dough from flour and water, put it on baking trays and into the oven. The process of matzah-baking was the better holiday for young people in our village than Pesach as such. Usually, all the young people from the village gathered at our house and made a lot of matzot - 20-30 kg of matzos, much more than people make now. Now they only buy one or two kilograms, while in those times they would buy dozens of kilograms. So, first the youth would gather in our house, then in another house, then in yet another house - they would go around the village singing songs and celebrating. We held the tradition to celebrate all holidays with the whole village. On Easter Ukrainians would treat us to their delicious cakes; on Pesach we treated everyone to matzot. It was a lot of fun. In Zvenigorodka, however, there was a special machine that made matzot, so there we began to buy matzah rather than bake it ourselves.

There were four synagogues in Zvenigorodka, but there were a lot of Jews. There are very few Jews left now. My wife's sister and her husband still live in Zvenigorodka, and they say one synagogue has been given back to them. But in Ryzhanovka no Jews are left at all. The synagogue in this village was very beautiful, with many decorations... It was small but beautiful, especially inside. The other synagogues were large.

I remember how synagogues were destroyed under the Soviet rule [see struggle against religion] 3 . Komsomol 4 members would march and sing: 'Away with rabbis and priests, we will climb into the heaven and scatter all gods...'

I never walked with them; I never joined the Komsomol. I was more drawn to my Jewry. My father was religious and I was a believer, too. I also attended the synagogue and prayed. Usually, we wore the same clothes as the people around us, only when we went to the synagogue we always wore hats or caps. I remember well the ceremony when I turned 13, my bar mitzvah. The ceremony was held at my uncle's, my mother's brother.

His official name was Mendl, just like my great-grandfather, but we all called him Zeidl. His name was changed in his childhood. When he was still a boy, his nose was often bleeding. His parents

took him to a rabbi. The rabbi said, 'Don't call him Mendl any more, call him Zeidl. And put a little key around his neck'. They put a key around his neck and began to call him Zeidl - and he stopped bleeding. I don't know why - whether it was due to the key, or his new name, or if it just stopped in general - but fact is his nose stopped bleeding.

After he got married, he and his wife began to invite people to pray at their house; they got together for a minyan. This was a tradition back then when it was too difficult to go to the synagogue: Jewish people would pray in somebody's house. But they could only pray if ten men gathered; if there were only nine it wasn't allowed to pray, according to the tradition. But if there were nine Jewish men, they were allowed to even take a Russian man in order to be ten.

When I turned 13 and had to undergo that special ceremony to come of age and read a section of the Torah I didn't go to the synagogue, but to that minyan. There I read my part from the Torah. And everybody liked it a lot. After most people left, the hostess laid the table and treated me to dinner. I even remember that she gave me vodka to drink - that's how impressed she was with my reading. I didn't know Hebrew at the time. I could only pray in Hebrew a little, but I couldn't really read or speak it. Most of my life I dealt with the Slavic philology.

Under the Soviet power I couldn't be involved in the study of the Hebrew language. But without reading and understanding the Torah, the Bible, one cannot understand writers, architects, or artists... For example, a certain artist has made illustrations for the whole Bible. If I look at his picture from the Bible 'Return of a Prodigal Son', I can see that it's nice, but what does it mean? What son is he talking about? Why is he prodigal? In order to learn all of this, I began to read the Bible. And I got so interested in it that I didn't just read the Bible, I even began to study the Bible after I retired. And I also learned Hebrew.

So, in Zvenigorodka I began to go to school. I entered a two-year Jewish school. We were taught in Yiddish there, but nothing Jewish was taught. I learnt the ABC; I was eight or nine years old. Then one more year was added to the school, so I finished three years there. That's all, I had no other chance to study there any more - the Revolution took place; gangs 5 were all around. However, I had a great desire to study. For some time, a very short time, I studied at vocational courses, but then a special 'Worker's Department' [rabfak] 6 was opened and I studied there for some time. I studied and worked as a barber at the same time. Then I worked as a watchmaker. And then I moved to Kiev.

I was 16-17 years old. Many people were unemployed at that time, and there were special employment agencies in towns and cities. In Zvenigorodka there was no industry. There were three mills, one factory and a meat plant, if I'm not mistaken. The rest of the people worked as shoemakers. There was no place to work. Five to six kilometers outside town there was a watermill. It stood idle, but it had to be guarded. So, the employment agency offered me that job. I agreed. For some time I worked there. Then I worked as a barber in the central barber's shop.

One of my friends gave me a gift - a guitar. I wanted to learn to play the guitar very much, but I didn't know how or with whom. So I began to learn it on my own and I managed to play some songs soon. Then I met a girl who asked me if I wanted to buy a mandolin that used to belong to her

brother. He had moved away and left it in her possession. I was saving money for a pair of pants at the time. So, I was facing a choice: should I spend my money on a mandolin or on a pair of pants? I bought the mandolin. I had no spare pants, but I had a mandolin. I played my mandolin, gave my guitar to my friend Kostya and we played together. Then we joined an orchestra and played with it. We performed in a club, playing waltzes and other dances. Sometimes we even played outside, in a big square and many people gathered around to listen to us.

Kostya - his full name was Konstantin Yuryev - was my best friend. His family belonged to the sect of Old Believers who combined traditions of Christian Orthodoxy and Judaism. They believed the Orthodox Church was no longer pure Christianity, while they did their best to maintain religious purity according to their understanding, so they always tried to stick to their own and live in their own communities. The Russian authorities hated them and often made raids in their villages. My friend's family lived across the square from us, so we could see one another from afar. I also had other friends, the Chudnovskies, for instance. I was a calm person. I had a lot of friends.

I was very interested in books. I would read about something interesting and then share it with my friends - and they got interested in it, too. We didn't have a lot of books at home, only a few. We read books from the library. Our club used the central library in the city. I also knew a lot of anecdotes and funny stories. My friends loved to listen to me telling them. For instance, we would go to a concert in the city garden to watch some performance. Then I would have to go home, passing by a cemetery. Not everyone would go to the outskirts, where I lived, especially not near the cemetery. People were afraid of it. But I would tell anecdotes to my friends on my way home and they were glad to walk me home. Kostya was my best friend. He felt at home at my house, and I felt at home at his house. When I talked with Kostya, I would speak Russian. When he came over to me he would speak Yiddish. Later, he knew Yiddish very well because he spent a lot of time in our house and heard Yiddish every day.

I remember how the Soviets came to power. First we had a temporary government. We had a Russian teacher at school, Zhakov. He organized a manifestation. He went to the second floor of the post office, went out on the balcony and talked to people. The crowd listened to him attentively. I don't remember what he was saying, but I remember how he took a portrait of the tsar, tore it to pieces and threw it over the balcony.

Then terrible things began to happen. The Bolsheviks came; Denikin's 7 soldiers came; Petliura's 8 soldiers came and then some rebels came to our village, too. It was horrible. All the time we had to hide from everyone in basements because of the shooting. I remember I was recovering from typhus when Denikin's soldiers came to our village. One of them came to our house, stood over me with a hand grenade and wanted to throw it at me. My father stood between us. The soldier hit him with a rifle or something, and my father fell down. I think I will never forget this incident.

Every time the government and the power changed, we knew we'd better go into hiding. For instance, one of our Russian neighbors came to our house and sought for weapons. We certainly had none. He couldn't steal anything from us, so he decided to break our gates - it was all he could do to harm us. One time Petliura's soldiers came and knocked at our door yelling, 'Open the door!'. In the window we could see that those were soldiers, so my uncle jumped out of the window on the

other side of the house, went to Petliura's officers and brought them to our house. The officers looked like decent people. They talked to their soldiers and took them away. We had a neighbor, who spoke fluent Ukrainian, and once she went and talked to the soldiers and they just left. The neighbor was Jewish but she spoke fluent Ukrainian because she lived in the village. So, all in all, there were different experiences. Another time, when Denikin's soldiers attacked our village, an old man, the father of the famous Jewish singer Khromchenko - thought he could talk to them and reach some agreement. [Khromchenko, Solomon (1907-2002): famous Ukrainian born Jewish singer. Soloist in Kiev and later in Moscow's Bolshoi Theater; taught at the State Musical Pedagogical Institute. In 1991 Khromchenko repatriated to Israel, where he continued both his singing and teaching activities.] We all hid, while he went out to talk to them, but they took him to the wall of our house and shot him. Every regime brought more victims. Representatives of the Soviet power came to every village and town, demanding gold, money, food... It was easier for us, workers, at that time. I was also working then, combining my studies and work. I got used to it.

My parents didn't care. They only wanted their life to be quiet and comfortable. They never got involved in politics, they didn't know how to deal with it. My grandfather read a lot of newspapers though and insisted that the Bolsheviks were the best because they were against the war. Well, that was his understanding, but neither he nor anyone else from our family got involved in politics.

I remember the famine 9 of the 1930s. My father was swollen up due to starvation; I was starving, too; everybody was starving. We thought it was easier to live in Kiev because it was possible to find jobs there. In Zvenigorodka, let alone in Ryzhanovka, it was too hard to find a job. So, we moved from Zvenigorodka to Kiev. The situation there was also very difficult. For instance, my father got a salary, bought a loaf of bread with this money, but on his way home this loaf of bread was stolen from him and he came home with nothing. It was a real tragedy. Certainly, we were all starving.

This was in 1932. It was hard to find work in Kiev, but we had to find an apartment. We settled in a house on Novo-Prozorovskaya Street, in the area of Vladimirsky market. It was a private house made from stables. Many apartments were made from former stables and then given out to rent. So, we lived in one of those. We occupied one room: we slept, cooked, and ate in this one room. There were several people living in this one room: my father, mother, brother, my sister with her husband, and I. Sonya's husband Grisha Varenburg served in the army and as soon as he returned from the army they got married. He worked as a barber from his early childhood.

I couldn't find any job first, but finally I found work at a tailor's shop. I was a simple worker there; helped put material in neat horizontal rows. I worked there for six months and then I entered university. Of course, I didn't enter university immediately. After the tailor's shop was closed, I was looking for another job. I went to the plant that manufactured fire extinguishers. I couldn't work there for a long time because it was very hard work. At the same time, my brother was working at a disinfection station. He worked as a paramedic. One day he offered me to come and work with him. So I went there and worked as a barber. This station was located very far, almost at the other end of the city, which is why I was given a room to live in that area. So, my brother and I lived and worked there. But I wanted to study. One day I went and got registered at the library. I began to read books. Soon, I was asked to help some workers with finding books and thus I became a librarian at that station. Soon after that I entered the Library Institute. It used to be called Kharkov

Institute of Journalism, but later it was renamed Library Institute and yet later - All-Ukrainian Institute of Communist Enlightenment. Anyway, my diploma is equal to the diploma of a teacher.

When I studied at university, especially from 1934 to 1937 [during the so-called Great Terror] 10, people were arrested practically every day. Almost all of our teachers were arrested. But we believed that everything was justified. We were sure of that and therefore didn't protest. Moreover, there were many married couples at university, and many wives denied their arrested husbands. They said, 'If he is like that, I don't need him!'.

I joined the Communist Party when I was in the army. There were many people who didn't join the party. I studied at that university for some time, but I received my diploma from the Pedagogical Institute.

When I graduated, so-called 'buyers' came to select workers for their institutions. That's when I was selected to work at the department of manuscripts in the library of the Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. I had never even dreamt about it! You can't even imagine the place I worked at. It was so interesting there that every day I would go to work as if it was the cinema. Every day I would learn something new. I was working on the subject of Russian philology back then. I remember, before I studied at university, I didn't like working, I only liked reading. When I was a barber, I always hated it when clients came.

There were many Jews who came to Kiev from other cities and small towns. But everyone treated them nicely. There were a lot of mixed marriages, nobody thought of nationality at the time.

My father worked as a glass-cutter at the Physiology Institute. My mother was a housewife. My brother Meyer attended some medical vocational courses in Zvenigorodka, then worked in the hospital under the leadership of the well-known doctor Shmigelsky. By the way, Shmigelsky had a Jewish wife.

My brother worked as a nurse. Then he moved, after Doctor Sigalov took him as his assistant. When World War II broke out, my brother had a special red paper in his military ticket, which meant that at the first call-up he should come to the military enlistment and registration committee. He went there before any call-up. He was assigned to a military unit on the second day of the war [see Great Patriotic War] 11. We never saw him again. Neighbors told us he had come to say goodbye, but we weren't home. In May 1941 he got married. His wife went into evacuation; she was a teacher. After returning from evacuation she fought with us for our apartment, so we didn't communicate with her much afterwards. I think she got married again. My sister Sonya worked at a sewing factory. Then she got married and worked as a manicurist at the same place where her husband worked. Then they moved to America. She has a daughter and grandchildren. She even has a great-granddaughter.

When I was young I had some love affairs, of course. In Zvenigorodka my friend Kostya had a cousin, Marusya Kovalyova. She was a very nice girl. We would often get together, take our instruments and celebrate holidays at her house. We mainly celebrated Russian holidays. I remember we played a lot, but I don't remember anybody dancing. We also sang songs there. And

we drank vodka. We never got drunk, we just drank a bit. In Kiev I had a girl-friend, whom I met accidentally in Zvenigorodka. I came to visit, and she came to visit there as well. She was a very nice and interesting girl. Once our book club had a picnic in the forest and we had a guest, a well-known critic called Adelgeim. I invited my girl-friend to this picnic, and he enticed her. He began dating her, so I dropped her.

I continued to study music on my own. I had a record-player at home. One time I was buying records and met my neighbor, Grisha Boginsky. He asked me, 'Where are you going?' I said, 'Home'. He said, 'Wait, let's go to this house, there are interesting girls there. I will introduce you to them'. I said, 'Fine, but what about my records?' He said, 'No problem, take them with you'. So, we went to that house. There were two young girls: a blond and a brunette. I was introduced to them and suddenly I said, 'Wait a second, you are Fayerstein'. I was right: she was my far relative from Zvenigorodka. Her first name was Eva. She was eleven years younger than me. I took her out. But first I asked, 'Oh, what about my records?' She said, 'You can leave them here'. So I left my records at her house and came by the next day, as if to pick them up. Anyway, to cut a long story short, I married her in 1939. There was no wedding ceremony; we simply went to the registration office and began to live together as husband and wife. In those times people often did just that.

Eva worked at a Jewish collective farm 12 in Zvenigorodka. She came to Kiev to do accountancy courses. She didn't finish those courses: she was working and studying at the same time. Anyway, we got married. By the way, here's a good example of ethnic relations. Her father had a cousin who married a Russian peasant woman. They had children, grandchildren; then they died. Many years later I went to Zvenigorodka on vacation. One time my wife's sister came over. She told us that a man had come from the village of Volyntsi and heard that her last name was Fayerstein. He asked her, 'Is your last name Fayerstein?' She replied, 'Yes'. He said, 'In our village we also have Fayersteins'. My father-in-law said when he heard this story: 'To tell you the truth, it was my cousin who married a Russian girl and who lived in Volyntsi'. Later, we had a whole family from Volyntsi coming over to meet us. We also learned that there were Fayersteins in other villages: Shpol and Morinets. They only changed the name Fayerstein to Farstein - it was easier for them to pronounce it that way. One time a young man from Shpol came, who also came from a family of Farsteins. He explained to us that his grandfather was still called Fayerstein. This young man got married and came to live in my apartment for two years - he studied at university, but stayed at my place even after his graduation.

When I got married we began to rent an apartment on Novo-Prozorovsky Street, across from my parents'. The street was so narrow that I felt both living at home and living with my wife. We had no kitchen, so we cooked on a Primus stove. We had a small corridor, where we cooked. My wife worked at a secret construction site on Zhukov Island. I worked at the Academy of Sciences. Our life was fine. On 22nd June, at 6am, we heard shooting. We went outside. A son of our neighbor, who had just come home from the army, said, 'Oh, these are training maneuvers!' Later, when I came to work, I saw a piece of a shell - this shell had exploded somewhere near the Bolshevik Plant and one of my colleagues had taken a piece from it.

We worked on Sundays. It was hard. We often worked on Saturdays and Sundays. I had a radio for some time, but according to the Soviet law I had to turn it in to the authorities. I remember I took it

there, but before I gave it away, I was able to listen to Molotov 13 and Stalin, who announced the war. There was no panic; people were simply worried. Then I was called up. I came to the military enlistment committee and was sent to the ammunition warehouse. I worked there for two weeks. We loaded weapons. We left Kiev when the Germans were already very close. My wife went with me. We made two backpacks out of sacks, put them on our backs and went on foot. I remember crossing the bridge across the Dneper. We walked on foot, all the time. We stopped at Glukhov. My wife ate with me. I simply sat her down at my table, and my colleagues didn't object. So she stayed with us. Later I gave her a special paper that proved that she was the wife of a soldier and gave her the right to evacuate. I had no rank at the time. I was just a soldier. There was a group of workers of the Academy of Sciences, who were taught some things about fighting. We learned lubricating oil materials. We were taught by General Yakshin. We were joking that after the Academy of Sciences we entered the Academy of Yakshin.

We retreated and learned at the same time: during the day we retreated, at night we learned. Well, I can't say it was real studying. Anyway, we finished the course and I got my rank as junior lieutenant.

I became commander of a rifle platoon and was sent to Kursk region. The commander of a company was killed and I had no idea what to do! Anyway, since I was sent there, I had to do something. So I went to that company. The soldiers were asleep because it was nighttime. I asked, 'Is anyone here?' An assistant was there. I asked, 'Do you have a list of some sort?' He said, 'No, just these guys, the rest have been killed...'. It was total chaos, nobody knew anything. In the morning an attack started. We began to attack. And I knew nothing, absolutely nothing: who should go where and how. But I went into attack and my platoon followed. I didn't even know who exactly was in my platoon. We came to our destination at dawn. Firing began - the Germans were firing. It didn't last long, only for about 30 minutes. I was wounded very soon. First I didn't even feel it; I only felt warmth. I put my hand to the place that felt warm and saw something red. I realized it was blood and decided to retreat. I saw that other soldiers were retreating as well. The sun was shining and it was frosty.

The Germans occupied a school building and could easily see everything we did. We were crawling. Suddenly one of our soldiers said, 'Do you have matches?' I said, 'No, I don't smoke'. He searched his pockets and found some matches; then he set some hay on fire. The smoke from the fire helped us crawl further. We only heard the sound of flying bullets. I had a winter hat that was tied on top. I wanted to tie it under my chin, but my hands were frozen. By the time I had crawled to the commander of the company my hands, ears, nose and feet were frozen. When I reached him he looked at me and said, 'Are you done?' I replied, 'Yes, I am. I'm wounded', whereupon he said, 'Ok, leave'.

I went to the hospital. But I didn't spend too much time there. When I came back, officers from the personnel department asked me, 'Do you speak German?' I replied, 'Yes, but not perfectly'. They said, 'Will you be an interpreter for the platoon?' I said, 'I will'. So, I became an interpreter. One day the chief of the political unit came to our platoon by car. He told me, 'As of tomorrow you will work for me; I'm taking you to work for the division'. So, I got to the division. I was appointed senior instructor of the political unit of the division to work with the troops of the enemy. It was a high

position. The same position belonged to Erich Weinert, the famous German poet. [Weinert, Erich (1890-1953): German poet, writer, painter and illustrator; fled from Germany in 1933, fought in the Spanish Civil War in 1937 and was granted asylum in the former Soviet Union. He returned to Berlin in 1946 and continued writing poetry directed against militarism, nationalism and fascism.] In general, such positions belonged to important people.

I was given a pair of horses, a driver, and a mortar. But my mortar didn't fire mines - it fired leaflets. I would take this mortar and go to the front line; it was particularly good to do that at night. I would fire it, making sure that the wind blew in the right direction. I also used a record-player with German records. I went to the Germans and talked to them, calling upon them to give up, to stop shooting at us, etc. Soon, a telegram came from the headquarters that ordered my officers to send me to the headquarters. So, I went to the headquarters of the army. There, all senior instructors from all divisions were gathered for advance training. We spent two months in training. This was in the area of Zhytomyr, Ukraine, around the end of 1943.

There were also courses for German anti-fascists. During these two months we moved to the territory of Poland. We found ourselves in the town of Dembnitsa, which was located near the San River. A count lived in that town. His mansion was given to us for training. We, Soviet soldiers, occupied one half of it, while the German anti- fascists occupied the other half. We often talked to each other and exchanged opinions. We finished our training at the same time as they did. Upon completion we were put in two lines, facing each other. We were told, 'Every instructor should choose a German to work with'. Everyone tried to choose Germans who spoke Russian, so that it would be easier to work with them. But I was looking for a German who wouldn't speak Russian: first of all because that way I would have plenty of German-language practice with him; and secondly, he wouldn't escape. Those who spoke Russian could easily escape, but a German soldier who didn't speak Russian; where would he go? So, I chose young, 18-year-old, Hans, a student. He gave up and claimed he was against the fascists. So, we went to a new unit. I began to work with this German. I dictated letters to him and he wrote them because he could write in German much better than me. We would go to the front line and talk to the Germans. By the way, I wish I had kept my coat, which was full of bullet and shell holes. We would play a record with German songs, and then the Russian song Katyusha, which the Germans liked very much; they even shouted to us to play Katyusha. And then we began to fire at them... with our letters.

Then he would say, 'Your commander, such and such, is leading you to certain death. Stop fighting. The fascists say that the Russians kill their prisoners of war. That's not true. See, I'm German, my name is Hans, and I'm alive and talking to you'. These were the words I dictated to him. One day, our scouts came with five Germans, who had given up after reading our letters. I was awarded a medal for this. One time an officer said at our party meeting, 'What are you looking at? Look at Shubinsky: he had no weapon, but captivated five German soldiers'.

For a long time I knew nothing about my parents. Later I learnt that my parents evacuated from Kiev. They left on their own, without any organization. I knew they were having a bad time at different evacuation destinations. I wrote to many places but couldn't get any certain information about them. I was looking for them for a long time. Only in 1943 I was informed that my parents were in Kazakhstan. My wife also went there. My father died there. But I don't even know where he

was buried. There is no cemetery there - a stone was simply put on his grave. Here, in Kiev, I set up a special tombstone for my mother, after she died, and for my father.

There was no anti-Semitism in the army. Only Jews served in the first political department, led by Fux. The chief of the political department, Betkham, was also Jewish. In the second political department I was the only Jew, but in none of these places did I feel anti-Semitism.

Soldiers rarely get a leave during the war, but I was given one. I went to Kiev. My wife was in Kiev already; she stayed at a friend's house. There was no place to live. I was given a room that belonged to one woman, who lived alone in two rooms. She was certainly against us but didn't want to have a lot of trouble, so she agreed to let us stay there. We lived in Stalinka [a district in Kiev]. Later, we changed the room for a basement because our relations with that woman were bad. Our room in the basement was nice but small. We lived on Ulyanovy Street, opposite the polyclinic. We created two rooms in the basement. In the beginning we got constantly flooded from the first floor because our ceiling was partly ruined.

I was elected chairman of the house committee. Every house had such committees to keep order in the house. Once, I had some high officials come visit me. After they climbed down to my basement with great difficulty, they told me they would give me another apartment. They made me number one on the privileged list for apartments. For ten years I remained number one on that list, even though apartments were given to other people. Ten years later, I was offered a new apartment. It wasn't new in the strict sense of the word: somebody lived there but got a better apartment, and I was given this one. But I have to say: it was a good apartment, even if just a communal apartment 14. There were six neighbors: a Russian from Novosibirsk in the first apartment, a Pole in the second, a Ukrainian in the third, a Chinese in the fourth, a Jew in the fifth, and me. Six neighbors of different nationalities, but our relationships were wonderful. Why? Because we hardly spoke to each other.

In the morning I would see one of my neighbors on my way to work and say, 'Good morning'. In the evening I would come home, see another neighbor and say, 'Good night'. That's all, no other relations. We never celebrated holidays together or visited one another. It was wonderful to live that way. But when I received my next apartment, these neighbors came to me and said, 'Now we can tell you that we are sorry you are leaving'. I asked 'Why?' And the answer was: 'Because we were never enemies, but we never were friends either'. However, for instance, when one neighbor's daughter had to write something in English for school, I helped her and she got an excellent mark. Or, take the husband of our Chinese neighbor: he was an artist, but illiterate. Sometimes he had to write inscriptions on tombstones, so I helped him to spell words correctly. I lived 22 years in that communal apartment. It was really close to my workplace, just across the street. Wonderful! But it was still a communal apartment. Afterwards I got a separate apartment in another district of Kiev - Teremki. It was a new district. I received a two-bedroom apartment. It was a wonderful, excellent, quiet place. I couldn't have dreamt of anything better. I lived there for 20 years.

I felt anti-Semitism only when I heard of the Doctors' Plot 15. I worked in the department of manuscripts of the Republican Library, and the chief of department was David Mikhailovich.

There was a Jewish newspaper in America - I think it still exists - called Forverts. Its editor once came to Kiev and visited our department. Usually, when high-ranking officials came, I was always present at the meetings. This wasn't because I was so smart or important, but because my chief worked part-time at a university, and he was mostly occupied there, so he didn't know all the details of what was going on in our department. Therefore he always asked me to be present. That time we talked to the guest, and my chief showed him a manuscript by Gogol 16. It was a large notebook written in Gogol's handwriting. This original was of great historical value. After we talked, the guest left. Soon, the director summoned the chief of my department. When he returned, he said that there was a rumor that one of us wanted to sell this manuscript to that American guest for money. It was a very unpleasant story. A similar story happened to me, when I was accused of taking an original from the library. It took a very long time to clarify things, and I realized that there was some reason behind it all.

During the first war in 1956 in Israel, I heard my new chief of department saying, 'I wish I could go and shoot a few Jews'. That's when I felt anti-Semitism. And he was an invalid - he had lost his leg in the war.

I remember the Jewish Cabinet of the Academy of Sciences. It existed until 1948. I knew its workers Spivak and Loitsker, very well. I often went there to listen to the best Jewish actors - Anna Guzik and others. Spivak was a highly educated man, a corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences. Nevertheless, he was killed in 1949. Litsker was imprisoned but then released. He couldn't find a job, so we wanted to take him to our department. But my Jewish boss was against it. He said, 'We are two Jews here - why do we need a third one?' Such things happened as well.

After the war my wife worked as a bookkeeper in a food store. She worked there until her retirement.

Our son Boris was born in 1948. My wife and I always spoke Yiddish to one another, and my mother always spoke Yiddish to her grandson. He was a good boy and a good friend of his grandmother. He is a mathematician now; he graduated from university, then finished some computer courses and now his work deals with computers. He supports Jewish traditions in his family.

My grandson Zhenya lives in Israel. He graduated from Jerusalem University. He served in the Israeli army and upon completion of his service he was offered to stay in the army. He has some rank there now. So my family is scattered around the world. My wife's sister remained in Zvenigorodka, while her grandson lives in Israel.

My wife Eva died in 1985. Since then I've been living alone. My son would come visit me and cook. But gradually I realized I couldn't take care of myself any more. Then I got ill and was taken to hospital. So, we decided to unite with my son's family.

I devoted all my life to Russian and Slavic manuscripts: Russian writers such as Gogol and Turgenev 17, Ukrainian writers, descriptions of autographs of Ukrainian writers starting from the end of the 10th century and up to the middle of the 19th century.

Was only Gogol anti-Semitic? What about Pushkin 18? What about Chekhov 19? Once Sholem Aleichem 20 wrote something and asked Chekhov to review this work, but Chekhov refused. Leo Tolstoy 21 and Korolenko 22 were real Russian intelligentsia. Every nation has good and bad people.

The manuscripts that I was accused of selling, were actually transferred to a secret storage place. They may well have been destroyed. I only know there were manuscripts by Sholem Aleichem, typed, with his remarks. It was a greeting card with an invitation to dinner. It said, 'I invite you to dinner, to eat gefilte fish'. From 1949 to 1990, nobody studied Jewish manuscripts in the Academy of Sciences, and that's 50 years. Once there was a man called Epstein, who studied them. I remember him because I helped him: he wanted to measure the length of the Torah scroll, so we put it on the floor and measured it. But after Epstein nobody ever studied them! Sometimes people turned to me with questions, but not in our department. I was once invited to the Central Archive. They found two manuscripts and didn't know what they were. I went over there and looked at them. There was one small book. I opened it and closed it almost at once. They asked, 'So, you don't know what it is?' I said, 'Yes, I know what it is'. When I opened it, I saw gallows and dead bodies on them. So I said, 'It is Megilat Esther. And this other piece I need to read some more'. I read it and it turned out to be a section from the Torah. That was the only case when somebody was interested in Jewish manuscripts.

I retired and began to study them. Before my retirement I couldn't study them. But now I'm very interested in these things: I read the Torah and learn Hebrew words. I'm very glad that Jewish life has lately revived in Kiev. Three synagogues and a kosher cafeteria are operating; there are Jewish programs on TV, where I can learn the news about Jewish life in Ukraine and in Israel. A lot of interesting Jewish newspapers are published as well. It's wonderful that I can buy matzot any time I want. Sometimes a car comes to my house and takes me to Hesed where I spend the whole day, listening to Jewish concerts, watching Jewish movies and just talking to people who are spiritually close to me.

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 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.

3 Struggle against religion: The 1930s was a time of anti-religion struggle in the USSR. In those years it was not safe to go to synagogue or to church. Places of worship, statues of saints, etc. were removed; rabbis, Orthodox and Roman Catholic priests disappeared behind KGB walls.

4 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.

5 Gangs: During the Russian Civil War there were all kinds of gangs in the Ukraine. Their members came from all the classes of former Russia, but most of them were peasants. Their leaders used political slogans to dress their criminal acts. These gangs were anti-Soviet and anti-Semitic. They killed Jews and burnt their houses, they robbed their houses, raped women and killed children.

6 Rabfak (Rabochiy Fakultet - Workers' Faculty in Russian): Established by the Soviet power usually at colleges or universities, these were educational institutions for young people without secondary education. Many of them worked beside studying. Graduates of Rabfaks had an opportunity to enter university without exams.

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

8 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.

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

10 Great Terror (1934-1938): During the Great Terror, or Great Purges, which included the notorious show trials of Stalin's former Bolshevik opponents in 1936-1938 and reached its peak in 1937 and 1938, millions of innocent Soviet citizens were sent off to labor camps or killed in prison. The major targets of the Great Terror were communists. Over half of the people who were arrested were members of the party at the time of their arrest. The armed forces, the Communist Party, and the government in general were purged of all allegedly dissident persons; the victims were generally sentenced to death or to long terms of hard labor. Much of the purge was carried out in secret, and only a few cases were tried in public 'show trials'. By the time the terror subsided in 1939, Stalin had managed to bring both the Party and the public to a state of complete submission to his rule. Soviet society was so atomized and the people so fearful of reprisals that mass arrests were no longer necessary. Stalin ruled as absolute dictator of the Soviet Union until his death in

March 1953.

11 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.

12 Collective farm (in Russian 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 Molotov, V. P. (1890-1986): Statesman and member of the Communist Party leadership. From 1939, Minister of Foreign Affairs. On June 22, 1941 he announced the German attack on the USSR on the radio. He and Eden also worked out the percentages agreement after the war, about Soviet and western spheres of influence in the new Europe.

14 Communal apartment: The Soviet power wanted to improve housing conditions by requisitioning 'excess' living space of wealthy families after the Revolution of 1917. Apartments were shared by several families with each family occupying one room and sharing the kitchen, toilet and bathroom with other tenants. Because of the chronic shortage of dwelling space in towns communal or shared apartments continued to exist for decades. Despite state programs for the construction of more houses and the liquidation of communal apartments, which began in the 1960s, shared apartments still exist today.

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

16 Gogol, Nikolai (1809-1852): Russian novelist, dramatist, satirist, founder of the so-called critical realism in Russian literature, best known for his novel the Dead Souls (1842).

17 Turgenev, Ivan Sergeyevich (1818-1883): Russian writer, correspondent member of the Saint Petersburg Academy of Sciences (1860). Turgenev was a great master of the Russian language and psychological analysis and he had a great influence on the development of Russian and world literature.

18 Pushkin, Alexandr (1799-1837): Russian poet and prose writer, among the foremost figures in Russian literature. Pushkin established the modern poetic language of Russia, using Russian history for the basis of many of his works. His masterpiece is Eugene Onegin, a novel in verse about mutually rejected love. The work also contains witty and perceptive descriptions of Russian society of the period. Pushkin died in a duel.

19 Chekhov, Anton Pavlovich (1860-1904): Russian short-story writer and dramatist. Chekhov's hundreds of stories concern human folly, the tragedy of triviality, and the oppression of banality. His characters are drawn with compassion and humor in a clear, simple style noted for its realistic detail. His focus on internal drama was an innovation that had enormous influence on both Russian and foreign literature. His success as a dramatist was assured when the Moscow Art Theater took his works and staged great productions of his masterpieces, such as Uncle Vanya or The Three Sisters. and also had some religious instruction.

20 Sholem Aleichem (pen name of Shalom Rabinovich (1859-1916): Yiddish author and humorist, a prolific writer of novels, stories, feuilletons, critical reviews, and poem in Yiddish, Hebrew and Russian. He also contributed regularly to Yiddish dailies and weeklies. In his writings he described the life of Jews in Russia, creating a gallery of bright characters. His creative work is an alloy of humor and lyricism, accurate psychological and details of everyday life. He founded a literary Yiddish annual called Di Yidishe Folksbibliotek (The Popular Jewish Library), with which he wanted to raise the despised Yiddish literature from its mean status and at the same time to fight authors of trash literature, who dragged Yiddish literature to the lowest popular level. The first volume was a turning point in the history of modern Yiddish literature. Sholem Aleichem died in New York in 1916. His popularity increased beyond the Yiddish-speaking public after his death. Some of his writings have been translated into most European languages and his plays and dramatic versions of his stories have been performed in many countries. The dramatic version of Tevye the Dairyman became an international hit as a musical (Fiddler on the Roof) in the 1960s.

21 Tolstoy, Lev Nikolayevich (1828-1910): Russian novelist and moral philosopher, who holds an important place in his country's cultural history as an ethical philosopher and religious reformer. Tolstoy, alongside Dostoyevsky, made the realistic novel a literary genre, ranking in importance with classical Greek tragedy and Elizabethan drama. He is best known for his novels, including War and Peace, Anna Karenina and The Death of Ivan Ilyich, but also wrote short stories and essays and plays. Tolstoy took part in the Crimean War and his stories based one the defense of Sevastopol, known as Sevastopol Sketches, made him famous and opened St. Petersburg's literary circles to him. His main interest lay in working out his religious and philosophical ideas. He condemned capitalism and private property and was a fearless critic, which finally resulted in his excommunication from the Russian Orthodox Church in 1901. His views regarding the evil of private property gradually estranged him from his wife, Yasnaya Polyana, and children, except for his daughter Alexandra, and he finally left them in 1910. He died on his way to a monastery at the railway junction of Astapovo.

22 Korolenko, Vladimir (1853-1921): Russian writer and publicist, honorary member of the Petersburg and Russian Academies. His stories and novels are full of democratic and humane ideas; he criticized the revolutionary terror that seized the country after 1917.