

Israel Gliazer

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Ukraine

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Israel Gliazer is a short elderly man with thick gray hair and shrewd dark eyes. Regretfully, Israel's memory occasionally fails him. He cannot remember the names of his close people. He felt excited during our meeting since this was the first time that he got an opportunity to speak about his life with every details. Israel lives in a small two-room apartment with his wife. There is plain old furniture of 1960s in his apartment. There are photographs of his relatives and children on bookshelves. He has free meals at the Hesed diner every day. He talks there with other old Jews. On Saturday Israel teaches Yiddish in the local community and sometimes he joins them on Sabbath. His wife has to stay at home due to her health condition and Israel tries to spend as much time with her as possible. Sometimes their neighbors and acquaintances come to see them. Their sons visit them often.

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My family background

I come from Western Ukraine. This land belonged to Austro-Hungary before World War I, later it belonged to Poland, in 1939 it became a part of the USSR and at present it is a Ukrainian terrain. My mother's mother whose name I don't remember and her father Gershl Leviter were born in a small town called Skalat, Ternopol district, in the middle of 19th century. My grandmother had died before I was born. My grandfather worked at the mill owned by some wealthy Jew. He was religious. Like all Jews of his time he wore a kippah and had beard. He went to synagogue on Saturdays and holidays. My grandparents observed traditions and holidays. My grandfather lived a long life. He died in late 1939.

My mother's family was a middle class family. My grandparents had a house in Skalat where only my mother's older sister and her family stayed to live with their parents. Unfortunately, I don't remember the names of my mother's brothers or sisters. All I know is that their two older brothers

had some argument with their father and moved to America shortly after World War I. There was no contact with them afterward. One of my mother's older sisters, her husband and their children lived in Zborov town, near Skalat. They perished in the ghetto in Skalat when fascists exterminated the remaining Jews in early 1944 before Soviet troops came to liberate the area. Only their younger daughter Etká survived by some miracle. She moved to Israel after World War II. She got married and lived a long life. There was another sister living in Skalat with her family. They also perished in the ghetto. Only Velvel one of her children survived. He had finished the Faculty of Judaism in Warsaw University before the World War II. During the war he was in the Soviet army and after the war he left for Israel where he worked as director of school for many years. Velvel died in 2001.

My mother Pesia Leviter was born in Skalat in 1886, she was the youngest daughter in the family. At her time Jewish girls got their education at home. My mother and her sisters had a visiting teacher. They got religious education and were taught to read and write in Yiddish. They learned housekeeping, cooking and Jewish traditions and holidays. My mother and her sisters were raised religious. My mother's marriage was prearranged by a matchmaker that was also customary in Jewish families. After my mother got married she moved to Pogdaytsy near Skalat where her husband Iosif Gliazer came from.

My father's family came from Pogdaytsy. I also grew up in this town. It's a picturesque town in the Carpathian foothills. Its population at the beginning of 19th century was under 15 thousand people, and 6 thousand of them were Jews. There was also Polish and Ukrainian population. There was a German colony¹ near Pogdaytsy - Benkendorf. On Sunday there was a market in the central square. Food products from the German village were the most expensive and popular since Germans were very clean and accurate. There were two-storied stone houses, a catholic church and a big and beautiful synagogue in the center of the town. In my childhood I used to listen to a cantor in the synagogue. There was an old Jewish cemetery with engravings in Hebrew on gravestones. Besides the central synagogue there were few smaller synagogues that belonged to craftsmen guilds and there were also Hasidic² synagogues and prayer houses. There were Gusyatin [by the name of the town from where their tzaddik came from] and Chertkov Hasidim [by the name of the town from where their tzaddik came from]. My paternal grandfather Menachem Mahnes Gliazer and his big family belonged to Gusyatin Hasidim. My grandfather was a craftsman, and was a very religious Hasid. He raised his children to profess Hasidism.³ My grandfather Menachem and grandmother, whose name I don't remember, died before World War I. They had many children. Some of them died in infancy, and I don't know their names.

My father's older brother Shymon Gliazer, born in 1870, was a craftsman. Shymon died before World War I, shortly after my grandfather died. I don't know the name of his wife or children. All I know is that his younger daughter Sarra, born shortly before he died, survived World War II. After the war she moved to Wroclaw, Poland. Sarra died in the middle of 1960s. Her son Moishe lives in Sweden now. My father's brother Yakov, Yankel in the Jewish manner, born in 1872, became a wealthy man before World War I. He owned the biggest garment store in Pogdaytsy. The wealthiest families were his clients. Yankel, his wife and children, whose names I don't remember, perished in the ghetto in Pogdaytsy during the Great Patriotic War. My father's older sister Sarra and her husband also perished in the ghetto in Pogdaytsy. Her older son Moishe served in the Polish army. He escaped to the Soviet army before Nazi troops came to Poland. Moishe was at the front. He perished in 1943. My father had another brother whose name I don't remember. He had died

before I was born. I know that his son Fishel Gliazer, who was a member of the Communist Party of western Ukraine, served in the Soviet army and was at the front. He later joined the Polish army where he was deputy political commanding officer. After World War II Fishel and his family lived in Warsaw and held high official posts in the Party leadership. He was wounded during the Great Patriotic War. These wounds caused his untimely death. His children are chemists. They live and work in Stockholm, Sweden. All children of my grandparents got religious education. The boys finished cheder and the girls studied at home with melamed teachers. I don't know whether my father's brothers and sisters were religious when they grew up, but I believe they observed Jewish traditions that they were taught when they were children.

My father Isif Gliazer was the youngest in the family, he was born in 1880. He studied in cheder a few years like all other boys in Hasidic families. Later he became a high skilled glasscutter. He owned a small crockery and household store and small glass cutting shop in the center of the town.

My parents got married in 1906. In 1907 my sister Etl was born. We called her Etkka in the family. Moishe was born in 1909 and Velvel followed him in 1912. In 1914 World War I began and our father was recruited to the Austro-Hungarian army. My mother and the children moved to some distant relatives in Czechia, [editor's note: by that time that territory was called Galicia], to escape from the war. Regretfully, I don't remember the name of the town where they lived. Our father returned from the front in January 1919 and our family returned home in Pogdaytsy. I, the youngest son, was born on 3 November 1919 in Pogdaytsy. The youngest of children in our family was Sarra, born in 1922.

Growing up

Our family lived in a small stone house in the center of the town. There were 3 rooms and a kitchen in the house. There was a tiled stove in each room and in the kitchen. We actually had all we needed. At times we had to mortgage our house and move into a smaller one, but then we managed to pay our debts and move back. Whatever the times we always had a fresh challah bread at Sabbath and our mother made delicious dinner of beef and chicken meat stew and gefilte fish when things were better, or something different when she couldn't afford fish. On Friday afternoon my mother and older sister were in the midst of preparations to Sabbath: they cleaned and washed floors, covered the table with a starched white tablecloth and cooked food to last two days: Friday and Saturday. On Friday evening my father closed his store and shop. We washed ourselves clean, put on our fancy clothes and sat down to dinner. Our mother prayed over candles and our father said a blessing to Holy Saturday, children and food and we started a meal. On Saturday our parents went to synagogue and one of the children carried their book of prayers. When it was my turn I carried it for them. After the service in the synagogue, our parents invited a poor person who could not afford to observe Sabbath – this was a custom that we always observed. My mother and father observed all Jewish traditions, observed kashrut strictly. My father wore a kippah at home and put on a wide-brimmed hat to go out. My mother always wore a dark wig becoming to her dark eyes. My parents were very strict about their religious life since they were Hasidim. They went to the Hasidic synagogue near our house on weekdays and on holidays they went to the central synagogue and I joined them to go there.

I have the best memories about observing Pesach. We had new clothes bought for us before the holiday and felt good about it. There was a bakery where they baked matzah and we used to spend

hours watching them make matzah for our family. We thoroughly cleaned up the house before the holiday removing chametz. Nobody did any work through 8 days of the holiday. My father and older brothers were at home and played with younger children. It was a lot of fun since we didn't spend this much time together when father had to go to work. We also visited friends and relatives and had guests at home. We didn't eat any bread through 8 days of the holiday – there was not a piece of bread in the house. There was flour made from matzah used for baking strudels with jam and nuts and very delicious cookies. We kept kosher crockery in the attic and took it out at Pesach. There was a dish with Haggadah food: an egg, potato and bitter greeneries. I also remember this holiday since I posed four traditional questions during the first seder to my father who comfortably sat on pillows at the head of the table. Those were questions about the history of this holiday and our father told us about Exodus of Jews from Egypt.

We fasted at Rosh Hashanah. [Editor's note: He means Yom Kippur] children fasted from the age of 5. [Ed. n.: Usually children start fasting from the age of 9, but for a shorter period as adults, until they turn 13.] We also observed Purim. There were costumed performances at Purim. Performers sang and told jokes and it was fun and laughter. Mother baked delicious pastries that we gave to friends, neighbors or even strangers. At Chanukkah we had a party with guests that gave us some change and our parents gave some money to their children.

The boys in our family went to cheder. We studied Jewish basics: we began with Hebrew alphabet and studied the language to be able to read prayers. Later we studied Torah and Talmud. There were no fixed terms of the course of studies in cheder. Usually children from poor families studied longer since this was their only chance to get some education. Children from middle class or richer families ignored cheder, when they went to a grammar school or other educational institution. My older brother Moishe didn't continue his studies after the cheder since he had to start helping our parents to support the family. Moishe finished an accounting course and worked in our father's store. There were no other employees working for my father. Velvel had a chance to go to a grammar school where he studied 5 or 6 years. He had to quit after he had had an argument with the director. He became an apprentice typesetter in a printing house and after finishing his training he began to work as a typesetter.

I was a spoiled boy being the youngest in the family. I had my whims: one time I wanted to have better clothes than we could afford or toys that children from wealthier families had. I didn't understand that one had to work hard to earn one's living. I went to cheder at the age of 5 and I studied two years. Then I went to a state lower secondary school. There was no Jewish school in Pogdaytsy. There were Polish, Ukrainian and Jewish children in our school. There wasn't any national segregation in those years. The word 'zhyd' was definition of nationality in the dialect of our area while in the USSR it was an abusive term. We studied Polish and Ukrainian literature and language. We studied Ukrainian classics Taras Shevchenko⁴ and Lesia Ukrainka⁵ and Polish classics Adam Mickiewicz⁶ and others. Children attended religious classes according to their faith. Jewish children were in class of rabbi Levental. He was a very intelligent man known in the area. I remember his friend visiting him, who was the head of Catholic diocese. He spent few days with his friend rabbi Levental in Pogdaytsy. This was a blessed period of time when representatives of all nations lived in peaceful consensus. During the Great Patriotic War rabbi Levental perished in the ghetto in Pogdaytsy.

I enjoy recalling the years of my youth. When I turned 13 I had a bar mitzvah ritual. Long time before my coming of age my parents bought me a tefillin and taught me to wind it on my right hand and head, but of course, I did it after I had bar mitzvah ritual. During bar mitzvah I recited prayers in Hebrew. There was a party at home. My mother and sisters cooked delicious food and we invited friends and relatives. They gave me presents, greeted me and wished happiness. After I came of age [13 years old] I began to attend the synagogue with my parents regularly. I went there every Saturday, put on my tallit and tefillin and prayed with other men. Of course, I wasn't a deep believer like my parents, but I tried to be loyal to them and attended the synagogue as required. I finished school in 1933 went to work at the printing house where Velvel was working.

Before the war

There was some confusion in our family at that period. The situation in the country was uncertain as well. There was a number of Zionist organizations, and there was also a socialist and a communist party in Poland. [In 1921 the Soviets and the Poles signed a peace treaty, which gave Poland substantial territories in the east that were mainly populated by Ukrainians and Belorussians. The internal political situation in Poland was not very stable]. In 1927 my sister Etki was attracted by Zionist ideas of establishment of an independent Jewish state and moved to Palestine with a friend of hers where she took part in the establishment of kibbutzim. Our parents respected her decision. She married Shmuel Gorin in Israel and they had two children: son Shmuel and daughter Nargisa. She sent us greetings on Soviet and Jewish holidays. Other members of the family didn't share her enthusiasm. We were having a good life here and had no intentions to look for any different life.

My older brothers Moishe and Velvel became fond of communist ideas and joined the Communist Party of Western Ukraine, forbidden in Poland [the Communist Party of Western Ukraine, formed in Lvov in 1920s spread its activities to the areas populated by Ukrainians in Poland. Their goal was reunification of the Ukrainian people, unification of Ukraine and annexation of the Western Ukrainian territories to the USSR. This Party merged with the Communist Party of the USSR in 1939. Many of its activists were arrested]. My father was trying to convince his sons to resume their faith and turn to Hasidism that was more important than any political tendencies to my father. He even consulted the rabbi about his disobedient sons. However, Velvel and Moishe didn't listen to our father. Velvel printed illegal communist flyers in the printing house that they spread. Velvel and Moishe were arrested and imprisoned in a political prison in Drogobych. In 1934 Moishe was granted amnesty, but Velvel had to serve his longer sentence. We have a photo where Moishe was photographed with other political prisoners released from the prison in Drogobych. There were representatives of different parties even hostile to one another in this photo: communist party of Western Ukraine, socialist party and even Ukrainian Nationalistic Party – there is a brother of Stepan Bandera⁷, Ukrainian national patriot, communist party of Poland. At present Bandera is an acknowledged national hero and patriot of Ukraine. He lived in Drogobych. This area belonged to Poland before 1939. Bandera struggled for the independence of Ukraine and reunification of the Ukrainian people.

I joined the Zionist organization of young Jewish people Hashomer Hatzair, that means a 'young guard'. It was a left-wing social democratic direction preparing Jewish young people to life in the Jewish state and its protection from enemies. It was something like a scout organization: we did

physical training, wore uniforms and ties and learned contemporary weapons. However, our organization did not call us to armed struggle for the establishment of a Jewish state that was different from followers of Zhabotinskiy⁸. We didn't have armed struggle in our plans. Each organization had a club where young people had classes and observed Jewish holidays. I remember Purim in 1934 when my sister Sarra and I attended a celebration in our club wearing our costumes.

However, peaceful life was not long. Hitler came to power in Germany and we were aware of his attitude toward Jews. In 1938 followers of fascists made their appearance in German neighborhoods, in Poland. The idea of Fascism had many followers and reached our town gradually. There were fights between the various national groups, Polish and Ukrainian, at times they united to fight with Jews: their idea was that Jews were to blame for all their troubles. Once we were also attacked by a group of Polish teenagers when we were coming out of our club, but there was no dramatic outcome that time, it was just one of these fightings and cursing. Mass media published anti-Semitic articles with illustrations: a Jew in black clothes and hat, with a beard, payes and huge nose throttling a farmer or worker, indicating that Jews were to blame for all hardships of life. We laughed at it having no idea that it would result in genocide and extermination of Jews. Well, even though we underestimated fascism, none of my friends or surrounding wanted to live in a fascist country. For this reason we had hopes for the Soviet Union that condemned fascism strongly and sympathized with Spanish people in their struggle against fascism, [during the Civil War in Spain]⁹. We were shocked to hear about the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact¹⁰. We thought it was a deal with fascists. When Hitler attacked Poland we decided to cross the border of the USSR. Actually, this was the only choice for my friends and me. If we had stayed we would have been captured by fascists. Few of my friends were recruited to the Polish army. Few of my other friends and I decided to start moving to the east.

There were 6-8 of us. When we reached Grimaylov town we heard that Soviet troops were moving to the Polish rescue. We joined a Polish garrison in Grimaylov, Skalat district and decided to wait for Soviet troops. We stayed in a basement overnight. We had cold weapons and two guns. We were concerned about our encounter with Soviet troops. What if they thought we were spies and didn't believe that we sincerely wanted to join them? We left the basement in the morning. A polish officer roe his horse to the central square and announced that the Polish garrison was leaving and Soviet troops were coming to the town. The officer also warned citizens against theft and marauding and left the square. An hour or two later Soviet tanks drove into the town. Jews and Ukrainians came out to greet Soviet troops while Polish residents stayed in their houses. I stayed in Grimaylov for few days and then got a drive back to my hometown.

There was already Soviet power in Pogdaytsy. They nationalized¹¹ small stores and shops, including my father's store. Soviet authorities had them removed and installed a monument to Lenin¹² in the central square. My father managed to take home the remaining goods, tools and materials. He sold out the goods and continued to take orders from clients at home. Moishe assisted him as before. He married Rivke, a Jewish girl, in 1937. Since Moishe was a member of the Communist party he didn't want a Jewish wedding, but our father and his fiancée's parents insisted and they had a traditional Jewish wedding with a chuppah at the synagogue. In 1938 their son was born. Velvel was also married. I don't remember the names of his wife, daughter or son. When the soviet power was established Velvel became chief of the military commissariat in Pogdaytsy. I worked in the nationalized printing house. It formerly belonged to Mainlis, a wealthy Jewish widow.

In early 1940 I was recruited to the Soviet army.

Since I had a lower secondary education my commandment sent me to the communications school for junior commandment at an air force division in Primorskiy region in the Far East, 7,000 km from home. At the beginning I was having a hard time since I didn't know Russian. Officers and soldiers had a friendly attitude and helped me a lot. I studied the language and technical subjects simultaneously. My commandment wanted to send me to an officer's school, but changed his mind due to my poor Russian.

During the war

In May 1941 after finishing my school I was assigned to service in the military aerodrome in Primorye, near where our school was. I often received letters from home. My mother was missing me. She begged me to try to get a transfer to Kiev, but I was too shy to ask them. It turned out to be better for me since when the Great Patriotic War¹³ began I was far from home. We heard about the war in the evening of 22 June 1941 after dinner. We usually marched to our barrack singing march songs, but this time our officers didn't give us an order to sing. It seemed strange to us. We were told to get together in the conference hall where we heard about perfidious attack of Germany. This was 12 o'clock Moscow time. [Editor's note: the time difference between Moscow and the Far East is 9 hours.] We heard the Molotov speech¹⁴.

Radio operators didn't get sufficient training. A group of us was sent to take a course of advanced training in Irkutsk. From there groups of radio operators were sent to the front. There was panic and confusion on the first days of the war. There was a lot of injustice. I heard that officers shot radio operators that failed to ensure communication with combat squadrons or planes accusing them of sabotage. My fellow comrades even told a sad joke that at the beginning of the war more radio operators perished than infantrymen. We needed better training provisions to improve communications and there was a special school of radio operators organized. I was selected to work as a training instructor in this school. I don't know the exact location of this school. It took us less than 24 hours to drive there. I trained radio operators in this school until late 1942. Every 4 months we sent another group of newly trained radio operators to the front.

In our military unit we lived in barracks, 4 tenants in a cabin, with a shower and toilet facility on a floor for 30 tenants, but there was always hot water and there was heating. My other 3 tenants were Russian officers. I got along well with them. Before 1942 we received more or less sufficient food, but then it got worse. In spring 1942 we only got some kind of soup with just one spoon of cereal with goosefoot or dandelion herbs. Cadets got swollen from hunger. In spring 1942 we even failed to form a unit to send it to the front since our cadets couldn't move from hunger and exhaustion. Medical commission selected the most exhausted cadets and sent them to a camp where they got better food. I wanted to be included in that group, but I probably didn't look that bad. In late 1942 I was assigned to be chief of radio station in an aerodrome in the rear of the 4th Ukrainian Front. Our unit was based near Kherson and Nikolaev in the south of Ukraine. We were following our troops advancing to the west. We lodged in barracks or dugout huts in the woods. We got along well and supported each other. We got sufficient food especially that every day our fellow comrades perished and we shared their food. Every day we received 100 grams of alcohol and we drank them in commemoration of those that perished. Our fellow comrades perished during their combat flights or during frequent air raids. In late 1943 some female radio operators arrived at our

unit. I must say we cared about them. I cannot remember that they got hurt. Even if such things happened the girls' fellow comrades taught abusers how to behave.

I joined Komsomol¹⁵ in the army and prepared my application to the Party for submittal. However, they didn't admit my application since I was an 'untrustworthy element' from the point of view of my commandment. It was a standard attitude to residents of the areas that were recently annexed to the USSR. Several times my fellow comrades submitted requests for my promotion, but again they refused for this same reason.

My fellow comrades were of different nationalities. We got along very well. Nobody cared about nationality issues. People were valued for their human merits. There were demonstrations of open anti-Semitism, however. There was a Jewish pilot in our military unit. He was a brave warrior awarded with medals and orders. Once an officer from another train abused him at a railway station. He called him 'zhyd' and said that he had bought medals and orders. They began fighting. Our guys came to his defense and another party also fought on the offender's side. Chief of the station had to give a signal for the trains to move before time to stop this fight. I had a friend, commander of a radio operator platoon. He was Loginov, a Russian officer. We shared one earth house for almost a year when he said once that the only merit of Hitler was extermination of Jews. Then I told him that I was a Jew. He was stunned and said 'I can't believe it. But you are a decent man!' I don't think he changed his attitude towards Jews after our conversation, but he agreed that they [Jews] had done no harm to him. He didn't even meet many of them in his provincial town. How did he come to saying so? I don't have the slightest idea. It was a hard moment for me. We were friends no longer, but I had to deal with Loginov in service.

I felt particularly bitter to hear this kind of things since I'd already heard about brutalities of fascists on occupied territories. I didn't have any information about my family. I didn't lose hope, but I understood that the worst things could happen to them. At the end of the war in spring 1945 our regiment was relocated to the vicinity of Vladivostok in the Far East. When military action against Japan¹⁶ began our unit within the structure of a division was relocated to the Korean port of Chongjin. A Japanese military school and two divisions were in defense of the town. Shortly after we occupied the port Japan capitulated. I was assigned to headquarters of 25th army in Pyongyang. I issued an army newspaper Krasnoye Znamia (Red banner) there. They were trying to convince me to take up a military career, but I refused.

Firstly, when I was in Vladivostok in 1945 I met a girl of my age. Her name was Ludmila Orlova. I fell in love with her. She came from a Russian family in Tambov. After finishing Moscow Pedagogical College she got a mandatory job assignment¹⁷ and went to work as a Russian teacher in Vladivostok. Ludmila was pregnant. I wasn't quite ready to live my life with her, but I understood that I had to marry her. Besides, I was eager to go home and find out what happened to my family. In late 1946 our son Yuri was born in Vladivostok and shortly afterward I was demobilized. We went to Tambov where we got married. We had a civil ceremony and stayed few weeks with Ludmila's parents. Her parents were religious and belonged to the sect of molokans¹⁸. They were very decent people. They welcomed me and invited us to stay and live in Tambov, but of course, I couldn't wait to go back to Western Ukraine. I left for Pogdaytsy and my wife and child stayed there hoping that I would come back or find a job and come back to take them to our new home.

After the war

I heard the horrific truth there – my family perished. My parents and sister moved to Skalat at the beginning of occupation. They were in the ghetto in Skalat with my mother's sisters and they all perished when fascists eliminated the ghetto in the end. My brother Velvel's family perished in Pogdaytsy. Velvel perished at the front in 1944. Only Moishe, my older brother, who was in the Soviet army survived. Moishe was wounded at the beginning of the war. He had to take medical treatment in a hospital and after the hospital he worked at a plant in Sverdlovsk. He found his wife Rivka in Ural, where she was in evacuation. Their son had died in a train during their trip. There was a short period after the war when residents of western regions were allowed to move to Poland. Moishe and Rivka moved to Wroclaw and then to Warsaw in Poland. I visited them several times in the 1950s. Moishe worked in the Polish Ministry of Finance, he was a clerk, but I am not sure about this. Moishe was an invalid of the war. He was severely ill and died in the late 1960s. His son lives in Stockholm, Sweden.

I couldn't bear the pain of losing my family. I decided to stay and live near their graves the rest of my life. Our house in Pogdaytsy was ruined. I went to work at the printing house. My wife and son joined me soon. Our second son Vladimir was born in 1948. I named him in honor of my brother Velvel. My wife became a teacher of the Russian language and literature. There was a need in polygraphic specialists and I even got a job offer from Kiev, but our regional leadership didn't want to let me go. They promised to give us an apartment and promotion, well, as they say, they were promising the moon and the earth. Finally we received an apartment in Pogdaytsy. I was deputy director of the printing house. Actually, only a member of the Party was supposed to hold this position. I submitted my application again. I had had a candidateship of over four years when only one was required. Mine was so long since I openly kept in touch with my sister Etká from Israel.

In 1948 I was enthusiastic about establishment of the Jewish state. I liked Israel, but I never wanted to leave the place where my family perished. I never considered moving to Israel. I corresponded with my sister Etká, even when correspondence was not allowed in 1940s-1970s, I received mail from her via Poland and Czechoslovakia, she sent her letters to the brother living in Warsaw, and my brother re-sent them to me. Poland was a socialist country and correspondence was allowed. (I visited Etká in 1999. She died two years later.)

Finally I joined the Party in 1950. Then I was appointed director of printing house in Chertkov near Pogdaytsy. After the war the attitude toward Jews changed. There was routinely and state-level anti-Semitism. Relatives of Jews shot in Pogdaytsy installed a monument in Pogdaytsy. Some barbarians pulled it down a week later. (There is a new monument installed in the 1990s in Pogdaytsy in honor of the Jews that perished during the war. It was funded by Jews from the USA, Israel and Germany. Many guests came to the opening ceremony.)

I also faced anti-Semitism. I was hardworking and had excellent organizational skills. People said about me that I could bring to success any failing business. It was true. I took up a lag of a printing house in Chertkov and within two years of my directorship we receive an award of all-Union Red banner: the highest industrial award in the USSR. I was offered to become director of a failing printing house in Ternopol. For this position I had to obtain approval of head of propaganda department of the regional party committee whose last name was Bobrichev. The man who was to introduce me to him, went into his office and I stayed in the hallway. Few minutes later I heard Bobrichev say loudly 'Is there nobody else, but a zhyd that you can suggest?' I didn't stay a minute longer. I know that Shelekhov, who came to introduce me to the party leadership, was trying to

explain that I was the best, etc., but I went back to the hotel and took a morning bus to Chertkov.

This happened in the very height of struggle against cosmopolitanism¹⁹ and Doctors' Plot²⁰. I remember a leading regional official telling a story that he saw some Jews getting to the water pipeline to blast it. It was impossible to believe it, but many people did. There were many provocative statements like this. I always believed in the ideas of communism and never doubted that a communist state had to follow communist principles, but I never worshipped Stalin blindly. I saw much injustice at the front and after the war and I had never doubted that the leader of the country was to blame for this. Even criminal thoughts occurred to me at times that Stalin was living too long. I took his death in 1953 with hopes for something better. Denunciation of the cult of Stalin in 1956 at 20th Congress of the Communist Party²¹ gave more hopes that real communists finally came to power. Unfortunately these hopes did not come true and our country and we went on this bitter way of hopes and disappointments.

Recent years

In 1962 I finished extramural department of the Ukrainian Polygraphic College. I got a profession of production engineer. In the early 1970s I accepted a job offer from Ternopol after Bobrichev had resigned. I received an apartment, my wife went to work at school and our children studied at the same school. I was chief of department of printing issues at the regional printing agency and later I became director of a failing printing house. It became one of the best, as usual, when I took up business.

My sons adopted their mother's nationality when they were obtaining their passports, but I think they are close to Jewish spirits and ways. They have a typical Jewish surname of Gliazer. For this reason they faced anti-Semitism when they were entering higher educational institutions or getting employment. Our older son Yuri finished school with all excellent marks, but he failed to enter Kharkov Aviation College. They told him directly that they had filled up the Jewish quota and there was no place for him. He finished the Radio Electronics College in Kharkov and became a high skilled specialist. He has a Russian wife named Alexandra. They live in Krivoy Rog. His older daughter Tatiana, born in 1970, finished Moscow Engineering Physics College. She lives and works in Moscow. His younger daughter Oksana is a medical equipment expert. She finished Ternopol Medical College and lives in Ternopol. My younger son followed into his older brother's steps. He finished the same college. He lives and works in Ternopol. His daughter Alyona is a candidate of technical sciences.

My wife and I lived a good life. We raised our children together, traveled to resorts and hardly ever separated. We worked a lot and could manage very well. We invited guests and friends on birthdays and Soviet holidays, sang songs, listened to music and talked about life. We didn't observe any religious traditions or holidays. In 1990 Ludmila fell ill and died of cancer. Her sister Nadezhda, who was single, had lived with us since the late 1980s. After her parents died in Tambov she moved in with us and we became a family. Nadezhda is a very nice person. She has always supported us and helped our children and grandchildren. We decided to get married and live the rest of our life together.

I retired few years ago. I was enthusiastic about perestroika²². We got an opportunity to travel to other countries and get to know the truth about our country and that horrible regime that we lived

our life with, but perestroika made the life of pensioners very hard. We've lost our savings and we receive such small pensions that we can hardly pay for our lodging. I think people had many hopes for perestroika, but nothing happened to improve our life. I am glad that the country is moving toward democracy and nations have got an opportunity to develop their cultures. There is Hesed in Ternopol. It provides assistance to older Jews. My sons also support me. I am a member of the community. I teach Yiddish in the club and conduct celebration of Sabbath in the way my father did it. There is nothing for me to learn. I acquired it with my mother's milk and remember well what I am supposed to know. I haven't become religious. We do not observe traditions at home, but I am glad that we haven't forgotten what our fathers and grandfathers bequeathed to us.

GLOSSARY:

1 German colonists: Ancestors of German peasants, who were invited by Empress Catherine II in the 18th century to settle in Russia.

2Hasid: The follower of the Hasidic movement, a Jewish mystic movement founded in the 18th century that reacted against Talmudic learning and maintained that God's presence was in all of one's surroundings and that one should serve God in one's every deed and word. The movement provided spiritual hope and uplifted the common people. There were large branches of Hasidic movements and schools throughout Eastern Europe before World War II, each following the teachings of famous scholars and thinkers. Most had their own customs, rituals and life styles. Today there are substantial Hasidic communities in New York, London, Israel and Antwerp.

3Hasidism: Jewish mystic movement founded in the 18th century that reacted against Talmudic learning and maintained that God's presence was in all of one's surroundings and that one should serve God in one's every deed and word. The movement provided spiritual hope and uplifted the common people. There were large branches of Hasidic movements and schools throughout Eastern Europe before World War II, each following the teachings of famous scholars and thinkers. Most had their own customs, rituals and life styles. Today there are substantial Hasidic communities in New York, London, Israel and Antwerp.

4 Shevchenko T. G. (1814-1861): Ukrainian national poet and painter. His poems are an expression of love of the Ukraine, and sympathy with its people and their hard life. In his poetry Shevchenko stood up against the social and national oppression of his country. His painting initiated realism in Ukrainian art.

5 Ukrainka, Lesia (1871-1913): Ukrainian poet and dramatist. Ukrainka spent most of her life abroad struggling to recuperate from tuberculosis. Her principal plays, using themes from Western and classical literature, include Cassandra (1908) and In the Desert (1909). The Forest Song (1912) is her dramatic poem based on Slavic mythology.

6 Adam Mickiewicz 1798-1855 Acknowledged as Poland's greatest poet. Whatever his chosen form - ballad, poetic tale, romantic drama, or epic - the result was artistically brilliant and profound in meaning. The leader of Polish Romanticism, he created such masterpieces as The Forefathers' Eve, Grazyna, Konrad Wallenrod, and the great Pan Tadeusz. Succeeding generations of Polish poets were to feel the force of his genius. Was an exile in Russia between 1824 and 1829 for his political activities. Spent the rest of his life in Western Europe.

7 Stepan Bandera, Ukrainian leader who led the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, (OUN). When he announced an independent Ukrainian government, he was arrested by the Germans and sent to [Sachsenhausen](#) camp. [Bandera](#) was shot and killed in 1959 by a Soviet agent.

8 Jabotinsky, Vladimir (Ze'ev; 1880-1940): Zionist leader, soldier, orator and a prolific author in Hebrew, Russian, and English. Born in Odessa he received a Jewish and general education. He became involved in Zionist activities at the beginning of the 20th century. During World War I he established and served as an officer in the Jewish Legion, which fought in the British army for the liberation of the Land of Israel from Turkish rule. He was a member of the Board of Directors of the Keren Hayesod, the financial arm of the World Zionist Organization, founded in London in 1920, and was later elected to the Zionist Executive. He resigned in 1923 in protest over Chaim Weizmann's pro-British policy and founded the Revisionist Zionist movement and the Betar youth movement two years later. In 1935 the Revisionists seceded from the World Zionist Organization after heated debates on the immediate and public stipulation of the final aim of Zionism and established the New Zionist Organization. Jabotinsky also founded the ETZEL (National Military Organization) during the 1936-39 Arab rebellion in Palestine. He died in New York.

9 Civil War in Spain – Spain between 1936-1939 was the staging ground for Hitler's Blitzkrieg giving General Franco victory over the Republican government. The Spanish Civil War was not only a battle against fascism, but also a social revolution. It involved all of Europe and the political forces of the left and the right, in the struggle to defend socialism and democracy from the forces of reaction

10 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact: Non-aggression pact between Germany and the Soviet Union, which became known under the name of Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Engaged in a border war with Japan in the Far East and fearing the German advance in the west, the Soviet government began secret negotiations for a non-aggression pact with Germany in 1939. In August 1939 it suddenly announced the conclusion of a Soviet-German agreement of friendship and non-aggression. The Pact contained a secret clause providing for the partition of Poland and for Soviet and German spheres of influence in Eastern Europe.

11 Nationalization: confiscation of private businesses or property after the revolution of 1917 in Russia.

12 Lenin, Nikolay (1870-1924): Pseudonym of Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, the Russian Communist leader. A profound student of Marxism, and a revolutionary in the 1890s. He became the leader of the Bolshevik faction of the Social Democratic Party, whom he led to power in the coup d'état of 25th October 1917. Lenin became head of the Soviet state and retained this post until his death.

13 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 Barbarous, 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.

[14](#) 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.

[15](#) Komsomol: Communist youth political organization created in 1918. The task of the Komsomol was to spread 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.

[16](#) War with Japan: In 1945 the war in Europe was over, but in the Far East Japan was still fighting against the anti-fascist coalition countries and China. The USSR declared war on Japan on 8 August 1945 and Japan signed the act of capitulation in September 1945.

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

[18](#) Molokans – the Molokan sect evolved out of the Doukhobor sect in the second half of the eighteenth century. The name "the Milkdrinkers" was given to the sect as a nickname by the Orthodox in 1765 because its members were said to have drunk milk during fast time. The Molokans themselves prefer to call themselves Spiritual Christians (Russian: *Dukhovnye Khristiane*). They grew up in opposition to the highly ritualistic, liturgy-orientated and strictly hierarchical Orthodox Church and the feudal social order associated with this Church. They were essentially a rural and peasant sect, although, unlike the very similar Doukhobors, a significant proportion of their members were also merchants, industrialists and townsmen (Russian: *meshchane*). The Molokans completely abandoned the Orthodox concern with liturgy and renounced nearly all ritual. Their belief that faith must prove itself by good deeds led them to renounce sacraments and icons as useless for the achievement of salvation. They hold Meetings devoted only to prayer, singing and sermons on moral and spiritual themes. They have rejected a hierarchical organization and do not have any priests or churches. Their groups are led and generally administered by elders who evolve out of their midst. Any member of the community can address the congregation and put forward his interpretation of the Bible.

[19](#) 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'.

[20](#) **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.

[21](#) **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.

[22](#) **Perestroika:** Soviet economic and social policy of the late 1980s. Perestroika [restructuring] was the term attached to the attempts (1985-91) by Mikhail [Gorbachev](#) 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 on the wane, and after the failed [August Coup](#) of 1991 was eclipsed by the dramatic changes in the constitution of the union.