

# Rimma Leibert

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Ternopol

Ukraine

Interviewer: Zhanna Litinskaya

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*Rimma Leibert met me at the railway station in Ternopol where I arrived from Kiev. She came there with a group of ladies, activists of the Jewish community of the town. They were to help me find those who would agree to give me an interview. Rimma is a short round and very sweet lady radiating warmth and kindness. She showed me her family photos. She asked me whether I could interview her – though is relatively young, she said she wanted to have the history of her family written. Rimma really did make an effort to convince me. Her only request was to not do it at her home – for some reason she didn't feel comfortable about it. We had a meeting in the Ternopol hotel where I was staying.*

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## **My family background**

My maternal great grandfather Zalman Blumenzweig, an outstanding strong redhead man, was a loader in the Odessa [1](#) dock. My great grandfather was very religious. He prayed every morning, went to the synagogue, though it didn't keep him from using 'juicy' jargon of Odessa dockers. He had three sons: I don't know the name of the oldest one, the middle son's name was Haim and the youngest son was my grandfather Abram. They went to cheder and this was all education they got. The two older sons followed into their father's steps working as loaders in the dock. I don't know anything about the life of my grandfather's older brother – he must have died before the revolution of 1917 [2](#). As for Haim, he lived as long as the beginning of the Great Patriotic War [3](#). He, his son, daughter-in-law and his little grandson Monia perished during the German massacre of the Jews of Odessa in 1941.

My grandfather Abram, born in 1880, went to study vocation after finishing cheder. He became an apprentice of a blacksmith. Grandfather Abram was also a big strong man and did well in his vocation. Abram married Riva, a Jewish girl, and this is all I know about my grandmother. After the wedding the newly weds moved to Kerch town in the Crimea, in the east of the Crimean peninsula, where my grandmother's distant relatives lived. This town recently celebrated the 2600th anniversary of its foundation. It was founded by ancient Greeks and was called Panticapea. There was a big fish and trade dock in Kerch. The population dealt in fishing and fish industries. The

population was Russian, Ukrainian, Greek, Turkish, Crimean Tatar, Karaim and Jewish, of course. The Krymchaks and Karaims belonged to the Judaic faith like Jews. There were Christian churches, a Muslim mosque, six synagogues, a Karaim kinasa and a Krymchak synagogue in Kerch. There was a Jewish school for boys and girls in the town. The biggest synagogue was attended by Jewish doctors, lawyers and wealthy merchants. There were two synagogues for the military: there was a garrison in Kerch. One was for officers and another one – for soldiers. There was a craftsmen’s synagogue and two smaller synagogues. My grandfather Abram went to the craftsmen’s synagogue on Friday, Saturday and Jewish holidays. On weekdays he prayed at home with his tallit and tefillin on starting his days with a prayer. Grandmother Riva was also very religious. She was a housewife, as Jewish traditions required.

According to what my mother and older sister told me, my grandfather lived in a small house whitewashed from the outside in the suburb of the town near the seashore. In the evenings my grandfather went fishing to provide additional food for the family. My grandparents kept chickens and even a cow at one time. However, later, when the children grew older, they had to sell the cow. It was hard to get cow food in this steppe part of the Crimea where there was little grass. After my grandmother Riva died my grandfather remarried. My grandfather earned his living by making iron beds. He even made me one, when I was a child. My grandparents were poor and my grandfather could earn as much as was necessary to survive. My grandmother Riva was a kind woman. My mother’s early childhood was fair and happy. My mother told me she liked helping her father in the forge. On Friday my grandmother cleaned the house for Sabbath and cooked dinner leaving it in the stove till Saturday. There was plenty of fruit, watermelons and melons in the south. My grandparents grew grapes and had their own wine for adults and juice for the children on the Sabbath table. In 1920, during the Civil War [4](#), the time of devastation and epidemics, my grandmother Riva contracted cholera from her neighbors, whom she was trying to help, and died within few days leaving five children behind.

Grandfather Abram remarried, but his second wife, whose name I don’t remember since my mother didn’t even want a mention of her, happened to be a poor replacement of the mother of the children. My mother’s older sister Lusya, born in 1903, got married and moved to live with her husband. Her husband Yefim Tsyruunik, a Jew, worked at the mill. In the early 1930s he became chief engineer. Lusya had three children: sons Mikhail and Ruvim and Alla, the youngest, born in 1938. When the Great Patriotic War began, Lusya’s family decided to evacuate, but since Yefim was busy with supporting evacuation of other employees, they failed to leave. Kerch was invaded from the sea and the power in it switched from one side to another several times. Many Jews failed to leave Kerch. Grandfather Abram and his wife also stayed in Kerch. They were killed during the first anti-Jewish action. During the second action the Tsyruunik family was killed. According to what our neighbor, whom my mother met with after the war, said, Galifa, a Tatar woman reported on them to Germans. They were neighbors and Lusya and her husband had helped her a lot before the war. Galifa had many children, and my aunt gave her children’s clothes and supported her with money before the war.

My mother’s brother Boris, born in 1905, finished a rabfak [5](#) and entered Odessa Polytechnic College. He became an engineer. He lived in Odessa with his wife Polia, a Jew, and their daughter Bella. Boris was recruited to the army and perished near Sevastopol in 1941. Polia and Bella were in evacuation. Polia never remarried. She died in the early 1990s in Odessa. Her daughter Bella and

her family live in Australia. I have no contacts with her.

My mother's sister Ola (Jewish Golda), born in 1910, my mother Reizl, born in 1912, and the youngest Tsylia, born in 1915, had the hardest life with their stepmother. Actually, I don't know what was so bad about this woman. Perhaps, she just failed to win the girls' love. My mother didn't like her whatsoever. My grandfather's brother Haim came to Kerch to take my mother to Odessa, when she was 14. This happened before she finished the 7th form at school. Ola stayed in Kerch. In the late 1920s she married Adolph Vakerman, a Jewish man from Odessa, and moved to Odessa. In the late 1930s Ola's daughter Galina was born. Tsylia never got married and lived with Ola's family.

Haim's family lived in two little rooms near the dock in Odessa. However, Haim's wife welcomed Reizl, Haim's niece, warmly and never caused my mother's any discomfort about her living with them. Thus, my mother understood that it was hard for them to support her. Shortly after ward she went to work at the food preserve factory where she worked few years. Then she went to the cable factory. Having no education my mother worked as a laborer at both factories. In Haim's family my mother slept in a folding bed in the corridor. She gave her earning to Haim. She made friends in Odessa and they went to dancing parties, to the cinema and theater. When obtaining the passport, my mother changed her name to Rosa, a more convenient name at the time. My mother got fond of communist ideas like many young people of her time. She joined Komsomol [6](#) and started a new life. In Haim's family Jewish traditions were still strong. They celebrated Jewish holidays, bought matzah on Pesach and conducted seder. However, things were changing. Haim worked in a dockers' crew on Saturdays and could not celebrate Sabbath any longer. When famine began in Ukraine [7](#) they gave up kashrut eating whatever they could get to survive.

My mother was an active Komsomol member. On weekends she traveled to villages with a group of other activists to propagate kolkhozes [8](#). These groups arranged meetings and made concerts singing revolutionary songs, reciting poems for the communist regime. For her activities my mother was awarded a stay in a recreation center in Odessa in 1932. That was where she met my father, who was there on vacation.

I don't know anything about my father Boris Leibert's parents. All I know is that my grandfather's name was Iosif. They said my father, his brothers and sister grew up in a children's home in Odessa. My father didn't tell me anything about it. My mother mentioned once that grandfather Iosif was a craftsman. I don't know how the children happened to grow up in the children's home. Aron, born in 1903, was the oldest in the family. The next was Sima, born in 1905. My father Boris was born in 1907, and Mikhail, the youngest, was born in 1911. I don't know my father brothers or sister's Jewish names. I give their names as I heard them from my mother. It goes without saying that these children did not get any Jewish education. I don't know whether the boys finished cheder since I don't know at what age they became orphans. After the children's home they went to the army, finished military schools and became professional military. They were members of the Communist Party and were far from religion. This was the best way possible for the poor and orphaned: they were provided meals and uniforms in the army. Besides, they had a place to leave since after the children's home those children hardly ever had a place to go to. So, the army came to my father and his brothers' rescue.

My father's brother Aron finished a political military school in Leningrad and stayed to serve there. He also finished the Military Academy. At the beginning of the Great Patriotic War he was a colonel and lectured at the Academy. His wife Sonia, a Jew, came from the town of Mirgorod in Ukraine. They had two daughters: Lidia and Rita, born in the middle of the 1930s. They have a prewar photo where the girls were photographed with their friends. In early June 1941 Sonia and the girls went to Mirgorod to visit Sonia's parents. When the war began, they failed to evacuate and perished in Mirgorod. They and Sonia's parents were killed by fascists. Aron went to the front on the first days of the war. He was commander of a regiment. He perished near Kharkov in 1941. He didn't know what happened to his family. He was probably hoping they had survived.

My father's younger brother Mikhail also became a military. He was at the front during the Great Patriotic War. After the war he settled down in Ufa, Bashkiria (today Russian Federation), where his wife, son and daughter, born in 1941, were in evacuation. I know that my mother corresponded with uncle Mikhail, but I never saw him. I don't remember my cousin brother or sister's names. Uncle Mikhail died in the middle of the 1990s. I have no contacts with his children.

Sima, my father's sister, her husband and daughter lived in Odessa. I don't remember her husband's name. I know that he was a barber and earned well. Aunt Sima never had to go to work. In 1937 her daughter Nora was born. During the war Sima and her daughter were in evacuation some place in the Ural. After the war they returned to Odessa. Aunt Sima died about 20 years ago. Her daughter Nora and her children live in Israel.

My father Boris Leibert finished a political military school and served in Tbilisi, Georgia, where he was chief of political department of the garrison in Tbilisi. In 1932 he went to a military recreation house in Odessa. He met my mother and proposed to her almost two weeks after they met. My mother returned my father's feelings. They went to grandfather Abram in Kerch where they had a small wedding. They registered their marriage in a registry office in Kerch. My father didn't even want to hear about any Jewish wedding or traditions: he was a convinced communist. After the wedding my father and mother went to Tbilisi where my father was on service.

They lived in a good two-bedroom apartment in the apartment building for officers near the center of the town. My mother fell in love with Tbilisi, one of the most beautiful towns in the world, a warm hospitable town, with the beautiful thoroughfare of Shota Rustaveli, the Mtazminda Mountain dominating over the city and the narrow streets running down with two-storied houses in them, the laundry lines running across the streets. It was a multinational city. The population was Georgian, Armenian, Russian, Greek, Turkish and Jewish. There were Christian churches - Georgians are Christian, and Armenian Gregorian churches. There was a Jewish community in the city, but they led a very isolated life. My mother didn't have any Jewish acquaintances in Tbilisi. She socialized with other officers' wives and there were no Jewish women among them. My mother took an active part in public activities and was continuously elected to the women's council [editor's note: Women's councils - departments, included in Party organs at the direction of the party Central Committee in 1918. Their members were women activists and their tasks included ideological work with women industrial employees and peasants with the aim of their socialist education. Reorganized in 1929] of the military unit.

In 1934 my sister Maya was born named after the 1 May holiday. She likes recalling her childhood in Tbilisi. She had many friends. My parents' friends often got together in our house. They

celebrated Soviet holidays – the October Revolution Day [9](#), 1 May [‘International Day of Workers’ Solidarity’, now Labor Day]. My sister told me that they sang Soviet songs and danced waltz – the room was big enough for them to dance. Since my father was a military and a convinced communist he didn’t want a mention of Jewish holidays or traditions. He believed them to be the vestige of the past. My mother also adopted communist ideas and had no urge for Jewish traditions.

In 1939 my mother and sister went to Kerch for the summer. My sister often told me how she was struck by the Jewish life and the traditions that my grandfather and his wife led and observed. There were no bigger Jewish holidays in summer, but she enjoyed Sabbath, delicious challot that my grandfather’s wife baked, the ceremony of blessing the bread, wine and lighting candles. My mother said that after they returned to Tbilisi my sister cried and asked our father to allow us celebrate Sabbath at home, but he just laughed waving his daughter away.

## Growing up

I was born on 27 October 1939. Even my name reflects the contradictions that existed in the family. My mother wanted to name me Riva after her mother, but my father was dead against this Jewish name. The only thing my mother managed to beg from him was to leave the first letter of my grandmother’s name: the letter R. They named me Rema – an acronym of ‘revolution’ and ‘Marxism’. This name was put down in my birth certificate. At home, though I was called Rimma and I only heard the name of Rema for the first time, when it was time for me to obtain a passport. It was then that I changed my official name of Rema to Rimma.

I don’t remember about my childhood years in Tbilisi before the war, naturally. In summer 1941 our parents were planning to take my sister and me to our grandfather in Kerch. As for them, they wanted to visit my father’s brother Aron in Leningrad. My father had train tickets to Kerch for 21 June, but he had some things to do at work and returned the tickets. On 22 June 1941 the Great Patriotic War began.

## During the war

However little I was I remember how my father went to the front. Of course, these are dim memories. I remember us all going to the railway station in a car. Many people came to see my father off. My mother and I stayed in Tbilisi. My mother went to work at the army headquarters. She didn’t know anything about grandfather Abram, his family or her older sister Lusia. There were no letters from them and my mother realized that they either decided to stay in Kerch or failed to evacuate. We lived in Tbilisi during the wartime. My mother received cards [the card system was introduced to directly regulate food supplies to the population by food and industrial product rates. During and after the Great Patriotic War there were cards for workers, non-manual employees and dependents in the USSR. The biggest rates were on workers’ cards: 400 grams of bread per day] for my father who was at the front for herself and two children. I don’t know how she managed to get food for us, but I don’t remember being starved. I remember the market in Tbilisi where my mother often took me. I remember Georgian vendor women giving my mother discounts seeing her with two children. They gave me fruit and put more in my pockets. So I remember how kind these people were. I remember the feeling of shared disaster and sympathy. In 1942 there were air raids in Tbilisi and we had to go to bomb shelters. I even remember a plane with two fuselages flying over our yard. Before running to the bomb shelter my mother used to take the laundry off the line

and we were helping her. Often after work my mother went to help in the hospital in half hour drive from our house. My mother spent most time away from home. My sister looked after me and gave me food. Every now and then a neighbor would have come by to see whether everything was all right with us. Sometimes my sister and I took an old tram to go to the hospital. We recited poems and sang songs to patients. The wounded military laughed and looked happy. They gave us chocolate. This chocolate was so very delicious that I still seem to feel the taste of it on my lips.

My mother often wrote my father. I contoured my hand on a sheet of paper and put it in the envelop. My mother also corresponded with her sisters: Ola, her daughter Lidia and Tsylia were in evacuation in Kazakhstan. In 1942 Ola's husband Adolph Vakerman disappeared. My father, hearing about it, wrote Ola a letter stating that he would take care of Ola and her daughter and promised to take them to live with us after he returned from the front, but my father never returned. He perished during the liberation of Western Ukraine on 16 August 1944. I remember my mother turning into stone, when she received the death notification holding it in her hand. We were assigned to receive a little pension for our father.

In early 1945 the military unit where my mother was working in the headquarters, relocated to Western Ukraine. My mother decided to move with them. She didn't want to stay back. So we arrived in Lvov in January 1945 in a military train. My mother went to work in the officer's restaurant. There were many vacant apartments in Lvov and my mother received a posh two-bedroom apartment in the center of Lvov. There were furniture and household utensils in it. Its owners must have perished in the ghetto. My mother understood that they were Jews, when she saw a silver ritual dish for Pesach in the apartment. My mother sent an invitation letter to her sisters in Kazakhstan, and in autumn 1945 Ola, her daughter and Tsylia joined us. We lived together in our apartment. My mother brought food leftovers from her work, so we tried to manage through those hard postwar years.

## After the war

Once a military man came to the restaurant where my mother was working. He liked my mother and began to come there more often. So my mother met Boris Evenchik, who fell in love with her and proposed to my mother. My mother invited him to our home. He spent this evening with us and told us his story. Boris Evenchik was born to a common Jewish family in Minsk. His older brother's name was Iosif and his sister's name was Hana. Boris' mother died in the early 1920s and Boris went to work at an early age. He got fond of playing the tuba at the house of pioneers, when he was a child. Later he learned to play other musical instruments. He turned out to have a talent for music and entered a military music school. After finishing it he became a military conductor. Before the Great Patriotic War Boris, his wife Sonia and their daughters Maya and Lilia lived in Minsk. Boris was conductor of the military orchestra of Byelorussia. On the first days of the war Boris' military unit relocated to the frontline area. I don't know how it happened that his family failed to evacuate. I know that his wife, their two daughters, Iosif, his wife and two children, Hana, her husband and their three children perished during the first actions in Minsk. Boris was at the front through the whole period of the war. He was in Prague, when the war ended. He was awarded an order of Lenin [10](#), Combat Red Banner [11](#) and Red Star [12](#), and had numerous medals. When he returned to Minsk, he found the ashes of his home: a bomb hit the house directly. His friends Yakov and his wife Maria, who were in Minsk during the occupation, told him about the tragedy of his wife, children and relatives. Boris had a hard time telling us his story, but he wanted to tell us all about

his background. Mama and Boris got married soon and he moved into our apartment.

What do I say – Boris charmed me at once. It probably happened because I was growing without my father and I must have missed him a lot. I began to call my stepfather ‘papa’ almost at once and I never ever regretted this. He loved me as his own daughter and spoiled me even more than he probably would have spoiled his own daughter. But Maya did not accept the new father. She was older than me. She remembered and loved papa. She was even childishly cruel to mama reminding her of how she was sobbing after receiving the death notification and how wonderfully we lived before the war. However, my mother’s sisters were very bad to Boris. Only when I grew up I understood this was simple women’s jealousy on their part: they were alone while my mother had a handsome caring and loving husband.

For a few months we were living in the atmosphere of hatred that Ola and Tsyliya created, and my sister Maya was with them. Tired of all this Boris (I will call him stepfather for convenience, though he was the father for me) requested his management to give him an assignment some place far away from Lvov. He got an assignment to Zholkva town in Lvov region in autumn 1946. My sister refused to come with us. My mother only packed whatever clothes we had and we left without taking a cup or any other thing from the apartment in Lvov. Now I understand how hard it was for my mother to leave Maya behind, and I still have a hard feeling about Maya for this matter. We lived in Zholkva for less than a year before my stepfather got an assignment in Yavorov where we received a good four-bedroom apartment. Our life was gradually improving.

I went to a Russian school in Yavorov in 1947. There were no Jewish children in my class. I remember how the children in another class teased Valia Finkelstein, a Jewish black-haired curly girl. I had fair hair and didn’t look like a Jew, but I became very quiet fearing being insulted. I clearly identified myself with the Jewish nation since my early childhood and not in association with Jewish holidays or traditions. I didn’t have these, but I caught hostile glimpses and heard whispers, sometimes direct insults. To make the long story short, I never felt one of them among Russian and Ukrainian children. I always felt inferior about it and tried to draw no attention to my person. In the course of time this type of conduct became my way of life and I’ve remained quiet and distant. I wasn’t the best student at school, but I wasn’t among the worst either. I didn’t take part in any public activities and was always eager to come back home to enjoy the warm and cozy atmosphere of my family.

In 1950 my brother Eugeniy was born. My mother was a housewife. Boris earned well and we were doing rather well in this regard. In summer we went on family vacations to the Crimea. We rented a little hut at the seashore and enjoyed the sun and the sea, each other and doing nothing for few weeks in a row. These were the happiest moments of my life. I remember everybody’s concern in the early 1950s, when the state anti-Semitic campaign called ‘the doctors’ plot’ [13](#) began. My stepfather was very nervous. He smoked a lot reading newspapers with all those articles accusing rootless cosmopolites and poisoning doctors. However, this campaign had no impact on our family or acquaintances. The town was very small and there were not many Jews in it. In 1957 my stepfather got a job in Ternopol. I finished the 10th form in this town.

I liked chemistry and was attracted by medicine, when at school. After finishing school I tried to enter the Medical College for two years, but... it was next to impossible for a Jewish girl to get there. On the third year I submitted documents to the Faculty of Chemistry of the Polytechnic

College. Some time before I went to work at the chemical laboratory of the sugar factory – this was the vocation I was going to learn. However, I failed to enter the college again. They reasoned this by saying that I didn't have sufficient work experience. I worked at the sugar factory some time going home after night shifts across the dark town. It was next to impossible to get another job. Only on the fourth year I entered the Lvov Technical School of Cinema Logistics only because they didn't get sufficient number of students against their requirements. After finishing it I got employment at the Ternopol Department of Cinema Logistics where I worked as an engineer/economist till retirement. I also entered the extramural department of Kiev College of Public Economy and finished it. I had no conflicts or problems at work. Everything went quiet. I dutifully did my work as an engineer of the cinema physical plant. I got a small salary that was only enough buy sufficient food, necessary clothes and spend one week per year in the Crimea. I've never dreamed of having a car, a dacha or traveling far away. However, the majority of people in the USSR lived like this, and I never felt uncomfortable about it.

My sister Maya lived in Lvov with our aunts. However, in the course of time she made it up with my stepfather. She visited us and spent weekends or vacations with us. Ola's daughter Galina also visited us. My aunts never got married. All I know about Galina is that she started drinking vodka at the age of 16 and left her home with some gypsies. Ola fell ill from suffering and died in the late 1950s. Tsylia passed away in 1961. Since then Maya has lived alone in Lvov. She also finished a technical school and worked as an economist. Unfortunately, she and I are single.

It's hard for me to tell about Maya, but as for me, I've never met a man, whom I might fall in love with and who would be close spiritually to me. Firstly, there've never been Jews in my surrounding, and I've felt antagonism from others. Generally, I've been humble in life and it's been hard for me to make a closer acquaintance with somebody. It seems to me, I've grown up in the warm atmosphere of our home and was afraid that I would not love or be loved. I had friends and we went to the cinema and theaters and on tours together, but there was nobody with whom I might want to live my life. At work I was an active Komsomol member and even applied to the party, but the party district committee invited me there telling me that I wasn't mature enough to join the party. This was another demonstration of anti-Semitism. My stepfather felt so sorry for me. He told me to not reapply to the party. I became even quieter, worked mechanically and tried to not stand out. So I kept living in the apartment with mama, stepfather and my brother's family.

In 1984 mama got paralyzed, but she managed to recover. She died in 1991. A year and nine months later my stepfather passed away. Since then I've lived with my brother's family. My brother Eugeniy finished a music school and worked as a music teacher for some time, but later he began to play in restaurants and organized his own band. His wife Galina is Ukrainian. Boris, Eugeniy's only son, born in 1977, is my joy and delight. I helped to raise him and I feel happy for his successes. After finishing school Boris moved to Israel under a students' exchange program. He now studies in the University in Karmi'el in Israel. Galina has visited him there and now my brother's family is going to move to Israel. I will probably go with them. Traveling will be hard and I will have to cope with the hot climate in Israel, but I am so eager to see Israel. I dream of approaching the Wailing Wall and visit towns in Israel and I hope to be needed in Israel and if not – I will come back here.

I loved my parents dearly and it was very hard for me, when first my mother and then my stepmother passed away. Besides, a short time after my stepfather died, I was forced to retire



before time since I was the only Jewish employee at my work. I was having a hard time, but it happened so that at that time I came to the newly founded Jewish community in Ternopol. I felt myself at home and among my own people. I became an activist in the community. I go there for Sabbath every week, I help them to prepare for Jewish holidays, enjoy their celebration and study Yiddish in the community. I like everything about it. I feel that I missed a lot, when I was young. My mother or father were far from the Jewish life, but now I feel like discovering the Jewish world.

This is exactly why I am grateful to independent Ukraine. It gave the Jewish communities and traditions a chance to develop and prosper. Ukraine, almost the only one among the former Soviet Union republics, peacefully builds up a democratic society and I like it, because many other republics are at war – this is horrifying. In 2002 I visited Kerch, my mother’s hometown. I was struck by its contrasts: ruined plants and mines, half-ruined dock and the shining sea, ancient fortresses and plundered burial mounds. It will take time and effort to make Kerch and Ternopol developed town. What else struck me in Kerch was the reconstructed synagogue in a beautiful street with young cypress trees, nice Hesed and the Jewish community. This wasn’t possible during the Soviet rule, and I am happy that the Jewry has revived in my grandfather and mother’s hometown. I also went to the common grave outside the town where my grandfather and his family perished. The community installed a modest monument on the spot where the Jews of Kerch were killed (later Krymchak and Karaim people were killed here), where the mortal remains of my kin lie.

## **GLOSSARY:**

### **1 Odessa**

The Jewish community of Odessa was the second biggest Jewish community in Russia. According to the census of 1897 there were 138,935 Jews in Odessa, which was 34,41% of the local population. There were 7 big synagogues and 49 prayer houses in Odessa. There were heders in 19 prayer houses.

### **2 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.

### **3 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.

#### **4 Civil War (1918-1920)**

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

#### **5 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.

#### **6 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.

#### **7 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.

#### **8 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.

#### **9 October Revolution Day**

October 25 (according to the old calendar), 1917 went down in history as victory day for the Great

October Socialist Revolution in Russia. This day is the most significant date in the history of the USSR. Today the anniversary is celebrated as 'Day of Accord and Reconciliation' on November 7.

### **10 Order of Lenin**

Established in 1930, the Order of Lenin is the highest Soviet award. It was awarded for outstanding services in the revolutionary movement, labor activity, defense of the Homeland, and strengthening peace between peoples. It has been awarded over 400,000 times.

### **11 Order of the Combat Red Banner**

Established in 1924, it was awarded for bravery and courage in the defense of the Homeland.

### **12 Order of the Red Star**

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

### **13 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.