

Larisa Shyhman

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Kiev

Ukraine

Interviewer: Ludmila Ovcharenko

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Larisa Shyhman is a short woman always ready to smile. She has a short haircut, gray hair and wears trousers and a little sweater. She looks young for her years. She has quick moves and manages to do housework during our conversation. She talks laughing about things, even if they were far from fun. She puts in some Ukrainian words, though she speaks Russian. She lives in a two-bedroom apartment in a standard house built in the 1970s. She lets one room to a student. She has old furniture of the 1970s, but it's a very clean and cozy place where she lives.

My paternal grandfather and grandmother lived in Pervaya or Vtoreaya Slobodka near Kiev, I am not quite sure where exactly. Now it's in Darnitsa district of Kiev, but at that time it was on the outskirts of the city. Kiev was within the Pale of Settlement [1], but Jews, except doctors, lawyers and 1 or 2 guild merchants [2], were not allowed to reside in the town. My father's name was Haim Trahtenberg. He died before the revolution of 1917 [3] and I don't know his date or place of birth or anything about his family. They said he was a construction contractor. My grandfather died young and my grandmother used to say: 'One shouldn't marry an ill man'. She said this to her children and grandchildren. I don't know whether it was a traditional Jewish funeral. I think my grandfather was religious and observed all Jewish traditions since all children got Jewish names.

Grandmother Rosa (her Jewish name was Reiza) came from Grebenki, Kiev province, 50 km from Kiev. I don't know when she was born. She was a beautiful woman and didn't look like a Jew. I know little about her family. All I know is that she had few brothers. One of them moved to America before the revolution of 1917. He owned a factory. He was married and his only daughter died in an accident. My grandmother told me that before World War I [4], during pogroms [5] in Grebenki she kept her brothers in hiding in cells and she proudly walked in the streets, a beauty that she was, and everybody greeted her 'Miss, Miss'. She didn't fear anyone and nobody did her any harm. She sang Ukrainian songs beautifully and spoke Ukrainian and Yiddish. She didn't know Russian. When I remember her, she spoke Yiddish little. There were Slavic members of the family and she spoke Ukrainian. I don't know how my grandparents met and whether they had a Jewish wedding, but I believe they did since it couldn't have been otherwise at the time. After the wedding my grandmother moved in with my grandfather in Slobodka. They had six children. My grandmother was a housewife. Their oldest son was Moisey and then in 1898 my father Lev was born, then came Isaac, Mikhail and Grigoriy and in 1915 their daughter Yelizaveta was born. Shortly after their daughter was born my grandfather died leaving my grandmother with six children to take care of. She went to work as a broker to be able to give education to her children. They finished a secondary school and some of them continued studies. She was a fighter and she raised all children all right. She never remarried. She probably didn't want to, and, on the other hand, who would want to marry a widow with so many children? I think she was too busy to think about

marriage, but she loved men and couldn't bear girls.

Their family wasn't religious and I don't know why. They didn't celebrate holidays or Saturday. The only Jewish sign was matzah that my grandmother's brother sent them from America at Pesach, but my grandmother never showed her appreciation of it... There might be something wrong about her life after my grandfather died or it was something else, I don't know; she never talked to me about it. Or perhaps, she was just too busy.

After the revolution, when the Pale of Settlement was annulled, the family moved to Lipki, an aristocratic neighborhood in Kiev. Only wealthier and intelligent families lived there before the revolution. During the revolution they were forced out of there and Party authorities and NKVD [6] bosses and department moved to Lipki. Only high-level Party and military bosses lived in Lipki. There was a huge apartment where we lived, but it was like a communal apartment [7]. I don't know how my grandmother managed to move there with her family. Later my grandmother leased or sold two rooms, I wouldn't tell... There was a Jewish family living there.

Moisey, the oldest son, everybody called him Masey, finished a Railroad College. He was an engineer. His wife Manya was a Jew; they didn't have children. My father's family was multinational: Jews, Russians, and Ukrainians... Such a mixture. Only Masey happened to have a Jewish wife and the rest of my aunts were Russian or Ukrainians. My Granny didn't worry about that. Moisey died of some problems with kidneys before the Great Patriotic War [8].

Uncle Isaac had higher education. He was chief financial officer at a metallurgical plant in Konstantinovka Donetsk region where he lived before WWII. I don't know anything about his first and second wives, but I knew his third wife Anastasia well. She looked after the children, he had two, before he married her. She was a very nice and kind lady. She died after the war... Isaac's son Grisha was born in 1920 or 1921. He studied in a tank school from where he went to the front. They said he perished near Kiev in 1943... But I don't know for sure. Their daughter Basia was 3 years my senior. She finished a college and in the late 1980s they moved to USA. They live there with their children and grandchildren. Basia has two daughters: Sopha and Faina. When Basia's husband died in the 1970s, all Odessa came to his funeral. I don't know who he was, but he was helping many people. He was rich. Basia died in America in 2003. I didn't keep in touch with her. Asia, Isaac and his third wife Anastasia's daughter, was born in 1937. She went to America with her daughters. She calls my sister Maya occasionally. Asia married a Russian man whose father was a colonel. They had a house in Odessa [9]. Isaac and his family moved to Odessa some time after the Great Patriotic War. Asia joined him after she divorced her husband in the 1970s. Her husband was a drunkard. He was very handy and smart, but he drank a lot. Asia has two children: daughter Nastia and son Igor. They are nice people and do well in life.

Uncle Mikhail was an NKVD officer. When arrests and purges [10] began in 1937 he started drinking and quit his job. He couldn't bear it: they were arresting decent and intelligent people... He had many different women. He got married in 1937, but I don't know whether it was his first marriage. His wife's name was Murah. She was attractive and sewed well, but after my uncle died we hardly ever saw each other. I remember much better that my uncle had an affair. Her name was Nadezhda, but I don't remember her last name. She lived in Moscow and visited him. He loved her a lot, but it didn't work out. My mother said that Nadezhda was an illegal daughter of a prince or count and that her sisters lived in France where they left before the revolution of 1917 and she

stayed. Her stepfather treated her like he would his own daughter. She was an intelligent and beautiful woman. Her father had a mansion in Khmelnytskyi. In the late 1920s Mikhail was NKVD chief in Khmelnytskyi and they met. She often visited us and my grandmother liked her a lot. She died in Moscow in the 1960s. Uncle Mikhail perished like a hero near Smolensk during the Great Patriotic War. His name is engraved on a gravestone there. My aunt went there to annual meetings at the invitation of a general...

My father's third brother Grigoriy died young before the Great Patriotic War. He had testicle cancer. He worked as a joiner for my father. Grigoriy was single.

My father's sister Yelizaveta finished school and worked at a sugar factory in Kagarlyk near Kiev. It was hard to find a job in Kiev. She graduated from University and worked as a librarian. She met her husband Zakhar Chechin, Russian, working in the library in the Aviation College. He became like a father to me later... They lived in a civilian marriage before the great Patriotic War and got married much later.

After finishing school my father went to work. During WWI he was a private at the front fighting against Germans... He also served in The Red Army during the revolution and Civil War [11]. This is the way he was. He was a communist and believed in all these ideas... As for my grandmother, she couldn't care less about politics, so it was his own choice.

My mother's parents came from Dymer near Kiev, in about 70 km, in Kiev region. My grandfather's name was Solomon Lubalin (Jewish name Shlyoma). His friends called him Shlyomka. He was born in 1867. All I know about his family is that his brother, whose name I don't remember, was a manufacturer and lived in Kiev before the revolution of 1917. He owned a small sugar factory. His children studied in grammar schools. My grandfather lived in Dymer. He was big, handsome, tall and broad-shouldered. He didn't look like a Jew, perhaps, only his Jewish accent betrayed him. He spoke Ukrainian and Jewish. They said that during pogroms he pretended to be deaf and mute to conceal his accent. His friends plotted this disguise. They said: 'You, Shlyoma, pretend that you are mute and we would talk for you'. So he was surviving. He had many friends in Dymer and they were Jewish and Ukrainian. They came to see him and sat at the table to have a shot of spirit, he used to drink spirit and smoked self-made cigarettes. I remember them sitting at the table recalling their youth. It even seems to me that my grandfather had more Ukrainian friends. In the past, at the time of Jewish towns, people didn't have conflicts... There was no segregation, all were equal. However, my grandfather was wealthy and greedy. He was manager of a manor in Dymer and kept livestock at home: cows and goats...

I think my grandmother and grandfather had a religious wedding. My grandfather observed Jewish traditions all his life. I don't know anything about my grandmother: she died young in the 1910s. She fell ill with throat tuberculosis. One of her sons contracted it and died, too. He was very the youngest. My grandfather had three children to raise. My mother was the oldest. She was born in 1902 or 1903, I don't remember exactly, her sister Yevgenia was born in 1905, and then their brother Mikhail was born. Soon my grandfather remarried. His wife's name was Lisa Vaisbuch. She wasn't wicked, but she was indifferent, I would say. She didn't care about her husband's children. She had her own: Yevsey and Sasha. Uncle Yevsey was chief accountant, I don't know where he worked. He was a nice person and he was also at the front... He kept a pig in the cellar. I remember this well.

My grandfather's family observed all Jewish traditions. Since they didn't force anybody I remember little. He had a seat at the synagogue, an expensive one. He didn't wear anything special in everyday life and didn't have payes. However, on holidays he put on special clothes and prayed. There was different food cooked, I am not sure whether it was kosher, but it was a traditional Jewish cuisine, that's for sure

After the revolution of 1917 my grandfather's family moved to Kiev. My grandfather sold his house and livestock and bought an apartment in the Podol [12]. It was a nice apartment with many rooms. After they moved my grandfather began to sell furs. His friends from Dymer who were hunters brought him furs.

My mother sister's name was Yevgenia Solomonovna. For some reason my mother has the patronymic of Shlyomovna in her passport and my aunt is Solomonovna [the customary polite address in Russian is by first and second name. The latter (patronymic) consists of one's father's name and a suffix: -ovna for women and -ovich for men, i.e. if Ghita's father's name was Iosif, her patronymic is 'Iosifovna'], I don't know how this happened to be so. She finished a few grades at school and married her stepbrother Yasha, my grandfather second wife Lisa's son. They never told me about their wedding, but I think it was a traditional Jewish wedding. My aunt was a housewife and she did it well. She lived to turn 80. They had a good life, but after the war things didn't go well. Her husband returned from the front and worked as an accountant and some time later he happened to have cancer and died. Her son, my cousin brother Izia, two years younger than me, born in 1927, was a very handsome guy. After finishing a Silicate College he worked as an engineer. Izia died young in the late 1940s - throat cancer. Yevgenia's grandson married a Russian girl from Ivanovo (today Russia) when he was in college. They died in a car accident in the late 1950s, very young. They went to visit her mother in Ivanovo traveling with their baby...

All I know about my mother's brother Mikhail is that he worked as a joiner before the war. He got married shortly before the Great Patriotic War and went to the front. His baby was born afterward, but I don't know exactly when... Mikhail perished at the front and we didn't know where or how. We were not in touch with his family.

My mother's name was Basheva Lubalina, she was usually called Sheva or Shura in the Russian manner [13]. She was born in 1902. Since my grandfather was so greedy my mother finished only two grades, probably then my grandmother died and her father didn't want her to continue studies. So my mother had little education and worked as a seamstress.

I have no idea how my parents met, they never told me. They had a civil wedding. As I already mentioned, my father was an atheist and my mother didn't seem to believe in anything living with my grandmother. When they got married my mother moved in with my father. My father was a joiner and my mother became a housewife. They had a good life. My father wasn't tall, my mother was taller and somehow bigger than him... My father was thin and baldish. He was nice and cheerful. He danced well and he passed it to me. He was very honest and decent and my mother was kind, quiet and phlegmatic. One could tell at once that my father was the head of the family and my mother relied on him in everything.

I was born in Kiev in 1925. They named me Larisa and I didn't have a Jewish name. Before the war we lived with grandmother Rosa, my father's mother. We had a huge family: my uncles and their

wives and my aunt with her husband... We lived in Pechersk in the very center of Kiev. Our apartment looked like a communal apartment: huge, just gorgeous. There was everything there, and what a kitchen... Everything was big, there was stucco molding, a fireplace and radiators... There were family gatherings in the kitchen on Sundays. There were long dinners, there was alcohol on the table and there were conversations. An interesting family, close. My parents and we lived in a big room. Uncle Moisey and his wife lived in a small room next door to ours. All different people, but we went along with all neighbors. I remember my birthday when I was a small girl, my mother didn't have money to arrange a party, and she said we couldn't celebrate, but then our neighbors came with their food and there was a party.

I went to kindergarten and everybody liked me. What a nice girl, they said. And I was funny. There were two sisters working as tutors in our kindergarten. Their last name was Volkonskiy. They were educated and cultured, those two sisters. They were older ladies and didn't have any relatives. They liked me a lot and they asked my mother's permission to take me to their home. Later they disappeared and nobody heard about them again.

On holidays we visited my mother's father. I learned about Jewish traditions there, but I wasn't interested, though I remember holidays. Of course, Chanukkah was children's favorite holidays. We were given money... However greedy my grandfather was, he gave us money. I also remember him giving us nuts. Grandfather also wore something strange... We, children, what could we know? We laughed.

I have vague memories about famine in 1932-33 [14]. It wasn't so bad in Kiev. Big town - they didn't let it suffer that much. We weren't wealthy and we didn't have much. I remember that there wasn't good food... When I went to a summer camp, had some bread with me. There were bread coupons... My parents had to save to buy a radio or a coat for my mother...

When I was small, my aunt Yelizaveta worked in NKVD library and later she went to work at the library in Aviation College. There was a cinema theater in the NKVD library and there were concerts. I always went there... I often ran to see my aunt. There was a canteen where they had nice food. My aunt didn't have a children and she bought me food. I liked reading very much. My aunt had a wonderful collection of books. My aunt and her husband had a small apartment on the third floor and we lived on the second floor... She left her keys with us and I used to go there to read books.

I went to Russian school #86 [15] in Pechersk that used to be a grammar school before the revolution. There were naughty children in our class and so was I... We were friends. We used to fight with children from other streets, we used to do many things together. There was no national segregation. We were all friends. Nobody thought 'Is he a Jew? Is he not? I think it started after the Great Patriotic War...

There was also a children's club nearby. During its construction we used to call it a 'chocolate house'. It's still called so. It's of chocolate color. They invited famous people like Petrovskiy [editor's note: Petrovskiy, Grigoriy Ivanovich (1878-1958) - Soviet Party and state official. From 1919 - chairman of VCIK Ukraine. 1937-38 deputy chairman of the supreme Soviet of the USSR. From 1940 - deputy director of the Museum of Revolution of the USSR], he lived across the street from our home. He came to tell children about the Soviet regime and our army... There were many

activities in the club and children could choose what they liked to do. Children were involved in many activities, they didn't go loose like they do now. We also played outside, we played football and I was a goalkeeper. Well, it was different... I used to do modeling, drawing and embroidery. I hated circus and there were no interesting children's programs.

We played football and teased the children of Kossior [16], who were always accompanied by two agents. Two agents escorted them to school and we teased them... We said, you are two little ones, they don't allow you to be by yourselves... Many Party officials lived nearby. Kossior was a common man. He even gave us rides in his car... Later Khrushchev [17] lived in his house. Khrushchev's daughter was a very nice lady... His mother often sat in the yard. Poor thing, she was lonely at home and she used to sit in the yard on her stool wearing a white kerchief, a Ukrainian woman. She watched children playing. And we were naughty...

It was fearful in 1937, wow... People were taken away. There were searches in our home: they were looking for gold in Jewish homes. We were an ordinary family, but they still searched, turning the whole apartment upside down. It felt terrible. My grandmother woke up and there were NKVD officers standing over her demanding gold. Later the situation was resolved, nobody was arrested... I think they didn't since my uncle Mikhail was working in NKVD. But still, we got so scared then... All we had were these golden earrings with little emeralds – I always wear them: my aunt gave them to me as my wedding gift. Perhaps, my aunt had some jewelry, but just small ones, while there was a common belief that all Jews were rich... When there were so many common workers among Jews... For example, my husband's father was a shoemaker. They were far from rich, they were poor... Only anti-Semites believed that there were no working Jews, there were only Jews in trade...'. They also used to say that Jews were 'at the front in Tashkent' [Editor's note: Tashkent is a town in Middle Asia; it was the town where many people evacuated during the Great Patriotic War, including many Jewish families. Many people had an idea that all Jewish population was in evacuation rather than at the front and anti-Semites spoke about it in mocking tones] ... How about my close ones? So many relatives perished at the front! But I think those anti-Semitic talks were inspired after the war... When I went to school the situation was all right: I finished 8 grades; I was a pioneer and then a Komsomol member [18] – this was mandatory at my time.

I believe that because Mikhail was a ChK officer, my grandmother managed to keep in touch with her brother in America [19]. Nobody asked any questions. He even wanted to have one of the children when his daughter died. My mother had two of us – on 1 April 1937 my sister Maya was born. But my parents didn't give any of us to him: they didn't know what was waiting ahead...

There were no discussions about the war in our houses and we only heard on the radio that a war began. At first there were talks that it wasn't going to last long and there was nothing to be worried about, but in August, when it became clear that German troops were advancing, he decided to send my mother, Maya and me to uncle Isaac in Konstantinovka Donetsk region. When the war began, my father said from the beginning that all Jews had to leave their homes since Germans would have no mercy toward them. I don't know how he knew... So, he took us to the station where we boarded a train. He said 'I'll be back soon' and he left and the train departed and we never saw him again. It turned out that my father and uncle went to a military registry office to volunteer to the front and they were recruited to the army immediately. We only heard about it from letters when we arrived in Donbass... Since my father was a high-skilled joiner, he could have a delay from

being sent to the front, but he volunteered there. At first, he was near Lubny and we received his letters from there, but then we were on the go again and there were no letters from him. Later we got to know from the archives that he perished in 100 km from Kiev, near Fastov, in 1943.

We didn't stay long in Konstantinovka. There were air raids, it was horrific... The metallurgical plant where my uncle was working was evacuating to Siberia and we moved with it. When we left we saw how workers blasted the furnaces. When we were on the way my mother decided it was better to join my grandfather. He had left Kiev before us and went to a village in Krasnodar region. So, we changed our train for another one moving in that direction. There were combat actions in Rostov already and we just got into a frontline vicinity... Maya was only 4 years old. To get out of there the train made a detour, but it didn't work that well and as a result, we got to the vicinity of Stalingrad (present Volgograd, today Russia), in a steppe. The frontline was nearing Stalingrad and we got in an air raid somewhere in the steppe. The others were running around and I stood still as if I grew roots where I was. I was standing by the train with my mouth open. I was gazing around. Nothing happened this time. My mother was sitting with Maya under her wide skirt... She found two shell splinters beside her afterward. How did it happen that she wasn't even injured?

Later we went Astrakhan on a barge. It was cold, but we didn't have any winter clothes. We left Kiev when it was summer. We were told that holding Germans back was a matter of one or two months... Maya was freezing and she fell ill with tuberculosis of her knee joint. We almost starved to death on the road: there was nothing to eat. Only once in a while we could get some boiled cereal...

In Astrakhan we were accommodated in a school building. Somehow teachers noticed our family among so many other people there. They took us to their teacher's office and gave us some food. We could only have a bit at first to avoid stomach problems. Maya got warm, but there was something wrong about the way she looked. One could tell she was ill, but nobody knew what happened to her. We thought it resulted from her getting so very cold on the way there. The situation in this school was horrible: children were dying, there were so many coffins. Terrible. Then I fell ill with scarlet fever and was taken to hospital. 2-3 days later Maya fell ill with diphtheria. She was taken to another hospital. I had a good treatment. Chief of my department was a nice and sympathetic man. He gave us food to our heart's content and I gathered it in a bag to give it to my mother. Since it was an infectious department and there was no communication allowed I threw this bag through a window. I even had my tea without sugar to send it to Maya to bring her to recovery... Later, when I recovered this chief of department didn't want to let me go. He said: 'Are you going back to this school? Stay here, at least, it is warm here', but I was eager to be with my mother like all children...

When Maya recovered we were taken to a German settlement [20], in the Volga region. There was a Nemtsevolzhskiy district in Saratov region with German and Ukrainian population. Those Ukrainian migrants moved to the Volga area during the reign of Yekaterina [21] or Soviet authorities deported some [22], as unreliable residents. They gave their villages names of Ukrainian towns: Kievka, Poltavka, Kharkovka.... So we lived in Kharkovka. Here was 'ded Vasyl' ['ded' literally means 'old man' in Russian]. When he saw us he said at once: 'I am taking this family with me'. So it's only in his home we recovered our feelings. I went to deliver water to fields. I had a strange horse looking like a camel. I also made haystacks and worked on a combine unit. All kinds

of work I did. Ded Vasyl liked me a lot. I used to read him the Bible. He couldn't read. It was a Bible or Testament, a huge book, I don't remember exactly. He loved it when I was at home... He always sent me milk or something else. So we were all friends. My mother worked in a vegetable garden. Maya was already ill, but she went to kindergarten anyway.

In 1942 my aunt Yelizaveta found us there. Uncle Zakhar was mobilized and sent to Cheliabinsk and my aunt was with her Aviation College in Aktyubinsk, Kazakhstan, 2500 km from Kiev. She finally found us and we moved to where she was. She was afraid to see us miserable, starved and exhausted, but we were from a kolkhoz and looked well fed, pink and beautiful, round cheeks this big. The situation was worse in Aktyubinsk. My mother lived separately renting a small room from Kazakh people: terrible smell, dirt... Terrible... My granny and I lived with my aunt since there was no room for me where my mother was. Maya was taken to hospital immediately and they diagnosed her tuberculosis of the knee joint. They provided medical treatment for her, but they couldn't bring her to final recovery and she became an invalid of group 3: she was lame. I became an apprentice at a power plant to obtain my card. What I did there? I cleaned it and came home all dirty with fuel oil, with only my teeth white... Looking terrible, dirty... Then my aunt employed me as a courier. Winters are severely cold in Aktyubinsk and I had my feet frostbitten the moment I started work. I only had rubber galoshes to wear. There was a school of radio operators opened in Aktyubinsk. I finished it and went to work as a radio operator in 1942. The Morse code and so on. I worked with planes, sending them to Tashkent (today Uzbekistan) where they had crews formed and then they returned, landed where we were and we sent them to the front. This was how I worked.

I also went to dance in a dance group in 1942-43. There was an aviation school teaching pilots. They were going directly to the front. There was an amateur performers' club. I danced well. We gave concerts in hospitals. I looked like a girl, but I was a teenage girl and felt like seeing boys. All my friends had boyfriends and only I was alone. Later I had my admirers as well. One pilot wanted to take me to near Moscow area. He was stationed in Astafievo. Then political officer and everybody around were telling me: 'Go ahead! What are you going to do here?' Still I was concerned. It happened then that they abandoned girls after they took them away. I thought: 'I will go with him and he would abandon me. What will I do?' There was another pilot from Chkalov, a tall one. He flew a fighter plane. He also wanted to take me with him and I hid away when it was time for him to fly away... He was looking for me, but I didn't want to fly away... I was merry and always smiled... a coquette...

In 1944, when Kiev was liberated, uncle Zakhar sent us an invitation from Cheliabinsk. They didn't let me go since I was subject to the draft already. I had this status ever since and even had a uniform and three insignias when I was in Kiev. So, I didn't have permission to go. My family left in haste: Maya was taken with plaster on her leg. Aunt Yelizaveta, Granny and Maya left for Kiev. My mother went to her father in Kuibyshev [Samara at present, today Russia] before (he moved there when the frontline advanced to Krasnodar region). She didn't get along with grandmother. Daughter-in-law, you know. From Kuibyshev she went to Kiev. I stayed in Aktyubinsk alone. I seldom think about it. These are hard memories. I don't like them. I felt so hurt, I didn't even write letters. I worked. I saw so many horrible things... I still remember planes crashing into the mountains in the fog, but they didn't cancel flight: it was a war. My aunt wrote me: 'Request transfer to Kiev'. It wasn't easy to obtain permission to come to Kiev.

One day in 1945 chief of the republic's department arrived and I described this situation to him and he said: 'You know, I cannot send you to Kiev, but I can arrange for you to go a bearing location school in Baku', - location operators land planes, special training. So I agreed and went to Baku in Azerbaijan, 3500 km from Kiev where I finished this school. I was there on Victory Day on 9 May 1945. Everybody was so happy... Meanwhile my aunt addressed deputy chief of the department in Ukraine. He wrote a letter requesting my transfer to Kiev upon finishing school in Baku. I arrived in 1945 and went to work as a radio operator in Zhuliany airport. I worked there until retirement.

When my grandmother, mother and Maya arrived in Kiev, there were some ministers living in our apartment. They didn't let anybody in. My grandmother received a room since uncle Mikhail was a hero of the war. She died in 1945-46. My mother and sister went to live with my mother's father. My grandfather also lost his luxurious apartment in Podol. After the war he either bought or received a two-bedroom apartment in a one-storied building in Podol. I also moved there after I arrived from Baku. My grandmother and his wife lived in a bigger room and my mother, Maya and I lived in a small 13-square-meter room. He was not very happy about it and we even had to go to court to make him allow us to live there, but why talk about it...

'Struggle against cosmopolites' [23] didn't have any impact on us. We were miserably poor. However, there was a search in my grandfather's apartment one day in 1948. I was at work. They took away my grandfather's furs. Those KGB officers probably knew that my father perished at the front. They saw how poor we were, so they put the best furs under my sister on the bed and told her to sit on the pillows. So it was. Even they felt sorry for us and left a portion of what they found during the search for us to be able to buy food after they left. They saw how greedy grandfather was. He picked on us even about little things. For example, my grandfather always hid away his clock and we didn't have one at all. At 7 a.m. I had to be in Kreschatik [Kreschatik is the main street of Kiev], from where there was a bus to the airport. So a janitor woke me up whistling from outside. I got up and walked to Kreschatik. Since it was still dark in winter a militiaman on duty escorted me there. He then even proposed to me, but I didn't want him. When my sister was in a recreation center and there was plaster all over her body he never even sent her an apple... He had apples getting rotten under his pillow and he was far from poor.

Actually, I never faced anti-Semitism. My colleagues respected me at work. Only once, during the period of 'doctors' plot' [24], one colleague used to talk about it whenever head of department came in and then repeated: 'Do you see it now? Do you?', but then another colleague said: 'Just leave her alone'. And that was all. Well, Stalin's death, the 20th Congress [25]. Yes, I can tell, it was a shock, but then it passed - there were other things to think about.

I didn't continue my studies. I didn't have a chance: Maya was ill and my mother had no education to get a job with a decent salary... she was so miserable after my father perished, everything went wrong and we were always hard up, but she wanted to get something nice for me to wear. I was young and was to find a fiancé and there was nothing for me to put on...

But I didn't brood about things. I was cheerful and pretty. I danced in the ensemble of the Civil Air Fleet. We danced folk dances. Even Veryovka [26] wanted to take me to his group, they were just starting. He wanted to have me and Tania Belaya, he liked us a lot... I think we danced well. I shouldn't boast, of course. I also danced solo... We gave concerts in the Harrison and in Aviation College... We performed a lot.

My husband's name was Abram Shyhman. His Jewish name was Abram-Moishe. Everybody called him Misha: he chose this name for himself, but his family called him Abram. He was born in Kiev on 21 July 1926. He was one year and a half younger than me. His family was more religious than mine: they celebrated holidays and spoke Jewish at home... His father Samuel was a shoemaker and then he worked at a fish factory and storage facility. His mother Faina sewed at home. His parents lived with his sister Maria (5 years older than him), and they also celebrated holidays there. I remember we visited them at Pesach. However, I don't know whether it was just a tribute to traditions for her. It seems to me, it was his mother who observed it all. Misha left home at 16. He wasn't religious. He had other things to do. After finishing a college Maria worked as an economist. After the war she married Elia Zhernovskiy, a Jew. Her husband was wealthy. He was an economist and during the war he participated in combat actions. In 1948 their daughter Natalia was born, a veterinary, she lives in Kiev. In 1951 Pyotr was born. He is in America now.

Misha finished 2 grades in a Jewish school and then he went to an ordinary Ukrainian school. He finished the 10th grade during the war. His family was in evacuation in Fergana (today Uzbekistan) and he actually finished secondary school by correspondence. In Fergana he was recruited to the army. He was 16 years old. They gave him a rifle that was almost bigger than him. They say he was so thin that he could hardly hold this rifle... He was very smart and they decided he could serve where he was. He became a radio operator. He did so well at school that they made him a teacher in a school for radio operators in Fergana. Although he was still a boy, he was smart. After the war he got a transfer to the vicinity of Mukachevo in Ukraine where he stayed two years. So he served in the army 7 years since wartime was not included in the term of service. Then Misha moved to Kiev and became chief of the locator department. He also studied at the evening department in college. He finished Radio Faculty of Kiev Polytechnic College. He was very smart, indeed: mathematician, physicist and in general... He made 19 inventions, all of them practical.

We met at work. He was so serious and sound-minded and I teased him. Misha conducted our political classes. He lectured on political economy, politics and communism... He was a communist and believed in the party. He was devoted to its ideas. Just imagine: after working a night shift we were sleepy and he was telling us about communism... Khrushchev said then that we would build communism. I found it funny: we were hungry and cold, so who could speak about communism? But these political hours were mandatory. We began to meet in a strange way: he was seeing my friend, but then he decided to meet with me for some reason. I didn't even think about him. Frankly, I didn't want to get married. Why marry? I knew plots and danced in my group and always had enough admirers. I was afraid. I didn't like housework, it wasn't for me. I liked reading and going to theaters and cinema. My grandfather kept grumbling that I should get married. They even found a man for me, but I didn't care. It was time for me, but I didn't want to.

Then Rimma, my friend, began to see Misha. I always had many friends. We went to the cinema once. He took Rimma home and then he went home with me. And then it started. Actually, I had been seeing a pilot from Ashkhabad before. He wanted to take me with him. He flew there and was away for a long time and there came Misha. When he came back to take me with him a year and a half later, I was married and pregnant. I said: 'You should have come earlier...' But I loved him anyway. Misha was smart, and it was interesting to spend time with him. I was fond of astronomy and he told me interesting things about stars... Then we had a walk in Podol and were passing a civil registry office and he said: 'Let's go in', and I said: 'Let us'. So we registered our marriage. No

parties, no traditions. We were poor. My aunt, when she heard about it, she ran out to buy me tights; mine was all patched. We got married in April 1954.

He came to live with us in our room with my sister, my mother: how I managed to get pregnant there I cannot imagine! Then on 8 December 1954 Leonid was born. So we lived in this tiny room. Misha's department in the airport was closed and he was sent to work in design institute 'Geophyspribor'. Misha also studied and we sent Leonid to a nursery school when he was three months old. I went back to work. Our parents couldn't support us: my mother was poor and his parents were workers. Our first years of marital life were very hard.

In 1957 my grandfather died at the age of 90. He left a lot of money, but his wife took it all. The Jewish community made arrangements for his Jewish funeral in the Jewish cemetery.

Our life began to get better gradually. Misha was valued in 'Geophyspribor', he worked there for a long time. He was training instructor at first, it was something different and I don't know any details. Then he got a transfer to a design office department. Misha earned well and received significant bonuses for implementation of his inventions. He was even awarded a silver medal for them. He was a joiner and then electronic equipment specialist. He made tools. When he had his both feet on the ground he wanted me to quit my job and stay at home, he said: 'if you want to go back to work, I will help you with employment'. But his mother told me to keep my job since otherwise I would wear an apron and slippers for the rest of my life. I also wanted to stay at work. I liked my collective, I enjoyed it there and my colleagues liked and respected me. So after my second son Gennadiy was born on 17 March 1961 I returned to work at the airport.

My husband's colleagues also treated him well and I don't think he faced any oppression due to his nationality. My sons did well at school where they had many friends. We had a good life and never considered departing from this country. Even when our children began having problems with 'line item #5' [27] when entering colleges and getting job assignments [28], I didn't think about it. We managed somehow.

My sister Maya finished 10 grades at school and didn't continue her studies. She spent a lot of time in hospitals. She worked as furnace operator and salt loader and then she was a janitor, I don't know. Her husband's last name is Zhitnitskiy, they were introduced to one another being invalids. Her husband's name was David, he was a Jew, everybody called him Dima. He was also an invalid of grade I. He served in the army in Lithuania and there was something I don't know there: some combat action, I don't know any details. To make a long story short, they took him home when he was paralyzed. He also had a rear disease: his liver generated silver. Doctors from Moscow tried to treat him and even an English professor. They actually brought him to recovery. His hands didn't function, but they rescued him. Their son Vladimir was born in 1978. When Maya got pregnant there was a group of doctors watching her. Her husband died of cirrhosis in the 1980s, his liver failed him.

My mother died in 1976, she was buried in a town cemetery in Kiev, there were no traditions followed.

My older son Leonid took after his father, he is very smart. Gennadiy is also smart, but Leonid is smarter. He was very handsome, everybody said so. He was tall, my both sons are tall. Leonid had

excellent marks and went to enter a college in Moscow. He wanted to be a theoretical physicist. There was the 'fifth line item' problem and it was hard for Jews to enter colleges. He passed his exams in physics and mathematic wonderfully, there were no marks, only plus marks. He got three plus marks in physics and three in mathematic. He even solved some problems in the same way as the teacher who was checking his test. However, he was not so successful with his composition... Misha didn't mentioned it to him and I didn't know either that it was better to make it short, but with no mistakes. His subjects was 'Scientists all over the world' and he got confused. Who knows correct spelling of those Japanese names? He got a 'two'. And he returned home. We hastily submitted his documents to Kiev Polytechnic College. They wanted him to fail, of course. Here in Kiev. Anti-Semitism was not so strong in Moscow. He was so bright with his answers, particularly in physics, that one lecturer in the commission said: 'That's enough with torturing him'. There was a woman among them, nasty one, she pushed on him so hard that even her colleague couldn't bear it longer. 'That's it' - he said, - 'What do you want from him?' - They asked him so many additional questions! But he was good at physics and mathematic. He had to solve a problem at the exam (and maybe it was plotted so), and he found a mistake. He explained it in his test. As for Russian compositions, he got a '3' again. But he entered a Power Faculty. What of it? He finished it and wrote the best diploma. They said he should go to production industry right away, but the 'fifth item' and - they refused to employ Leonid. Assistant dean went to ask for him and to tell them how smart he was, but 'he was a Jew' and they didn't accept him. So he got a job where a 10-grade schoolgirl could cope. He was so distressed. This killed him morally. His wife Ludmila, they finished the college together and got married when they were students, she wasn't a Jew, was sent to work at the device manufacturing plant 'Communist'. Ludmila's last name was Vetrova: her mother is Ukrainian and her father is Russian. They have a good life together. In the long run my husband employed my son Leonid. He is an electronic equipment specialist. On 15 September 1985 my first grandson Valentin, Leonid's son, was born.

Gennadiy is a redhead. There were no redheads in our family, but he is one... He is very nice. He is an ocean of charms. Always cheerful and smiling. He studied in Moscow College of Oil and Gas named after Gubkin. It was easier for him to enter college: he had a red diploma of technical school and skipped exams. He laughed: 'If I had to take exams, I would fail Russian for sure'. His wife Olga studied with him. She is so smart... She is also half Ukrainian and half Russian. We learned a lesson from Leonid's employment experience and Misha requested his acquaintances all over the Soviet Union, abroad and in Czechoslovakia to help Gennadiy with employment in Moscow. He managed to get a job and stay in Moscow. Olga's father had an apartment there. Her father was a professor and was a dean in Metallurgical College in Volgograd. Her mother was also a metallurgist and received a special pension for her accomplishments. They also had an apartment in Volgograd and two children besides our Olga.

On 13 March 1986 Gennadiy and Olga's son Stanislav was born. I decided to go to Moscow: Gennadiy asked me to help them with the baby. Olga's parents were busy with their vegetable gardens in Volgograd. So I bought tickets for late April. On 26 April there was an explosion in Chernobyl [29], so I went to stand in line to buy vodka. There were problems with it in Moscow when during perestroika [30] they introduced prohibition and one could pay for things with vodka.

Well, though they didn't inform people about this explosion, my husband worked with isotopes and had special devices. At first, it was clear in Kiev, but then, when I was standing in this line, the

radiation moved in our direction. Misha went to look for me to tell me to stay at home, but I was not there. Then I left Kiev. I had tickets and it was easier for me, but there were crowds of people who wanted to take their children away from Kiev. My husband went to Chernobyl soon. They sent people there, but he went on his own will. He said that when this unit exploded older people had to go there. They had lived their life and young people should stay away. He went there on 30 April. I was in Moscow and didn't know about it. Misha went there with his devices to measure radiation. Miners were following him. He instructed them where they could walk, where they had to run or step over... Of course, he was exposed to a big dose. And in 1992 he died having melanoma of the skin. Before he died he didn't function, even his speech organs... So I am alone...

Gennadiy and Olga moved to Israel. Olga said they had to go and shortly after Stanislav was born in 1990 they managed to leave. They lived in Ramat Gan and now in Forsaba near Tel Aviv. I visited them in 1994. They had a wonderful life there. And they are doing well now. As long as one has a good job there life is all right. Olga worked in a hairdresser's first. Gennadiy hauled garbage and was a janitor while learning Ivrit. Their specialty was digital electronics and they are in demand. If Gennadiy had spoken at least English he would have got a job immediately. Now he's got a job of his specialty. Olga works as a programmer. She has no language problems, while Gennadiy does since even his Russian writing has never been good. I didn't want to leave Kiev. My sister was there and Leonid with his family. But Olga's parents went there: they sold of left everything back. Their second daughter and son followed them later. There are many Russians, more than Jews, there now...

My sister Maya moved to Germany in 2001. Her son wanted to go there. My daughter-in-law Ludmila, who was eager to move to Germany, started it all... She was getting information and documents for the whole family, but she never finished it. She died young. They prescribed her too many antibiotics and her white haematocytes stopped functioning. She didn't want to die, poor thing. She was a nice lady and housewife...

We obtained permission to move to Germany two weeks after Ludmila died. I didn't want to go. Maya had a stroke three days before departure and was taken to hospital: can you imagine? It was probably too stressful for her. Then they had to have their documents reissued. They sold their apartment and left. Of course, she didn't have a chance here. How expensive medications are here and misery and terrible attitudes... They have wonderful conditions there. She receives a pension for her invalidity. Her son doesn't work. He takes care of her since she is an invalid. He lives with a German woman, but they haven't registered their marriage as yet.

Leonid remarried. She is a good woman, they work together. My grandson Valentin entered the Faculty of Physics and Mathematic in Kiev Polytechnic College. He passed his entrance exams well, his tuition is free of charge and he receives a stipend. Leonid is an electronic engineer and is doing well... But this is not what he wanted to be: theoretical physicist...

Gennadiy's family celebrate all holidays and observe traditions. Their older son Stanislav was circumcised after they arrived and so was their younger son, born there on 15 February 2000. They named him Gavriila after Olga's grandfather who was chief mechanic. There this name sounds like Gabriel. Stanislav's name is Sosl in Ivrit.

After the break up of the Soviet Union [31] my life hardly changed, I was already a pensioner. I read and watch TV. I have many friends and we often get together, sort of a 'club for those who are over 30'. We laugh a lot, they respect me well. We celebrate Jewish and other holidays. I get along well with them. I don't care about nationality whatsoever. I have a small pension, but I can manage. I don't go out much. They come from Hesed to help me around. I am optimistic and how can one be otherwise? Life is short!

GLOSSARY:

[1] Jewish Pale of Settlement: Certain provinces in the Russian Empire were designated for permanent Jewish residence and the Jewish population was only allowed to live in these areas. The Pale was first established by a decree by Catherine II in 1791. The regulation was in force until the Russian Revolution of 1917, although the limits of the Pale were modified several times. The Pale stretched from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, and 94% of the total Jewish population of Russia, almost 5 million people, lived there. The overwhelming majority of the Jews lived in the towns and shtetls of the Pale. Certain privileged groups of Jews, such as certain merchants, university graduates and craftsmen working in certain branches, were granted to live outside the borders of the Pale of Settlement permanently.

[2] Guild I: In tsarist Russia merchants belonged to Guild I, II or III. Merchants of Guild I were allowed to trade with foreign merchants, while the others were allowed to trade only within Russia.

[3] 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 WWI, 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.

[4] World War I: World War I, military conflict, from August 1914 to November 1918, that involved many of the countries of Europe as well the United States and other nations throughout the world. World War I was one of the most violent and destructive wars in European history. Of the 65 million men who were mobilized, more than 10 million were killed and more than 20 million wounded. The term World War I did not come into general use until a second worldwide conflict broke out in 1939 (World War II). Before that year, the war was known as the Great War or the World War.

[5] 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.

[6] NKVD: People's Committee of Internal Affairs; it took over from the GPU, the state security agency, in 1934.

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

apartments still exist today.

[8] 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.

[9] 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.

[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] 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.

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

[13] Common name: Russified or Russian first names used by Jews in everyday life and adopted in official documents. The Russification of first names was one of the manifestations of the assimilation of Russian Jews at the turn of the 19th and 20th century. In some cases only the

spelling and pronunciation of Jewish names was russified (e.g. Isaac instead of Yitskhak; Boris instead of Borukh), while in other cases traditional Jewish names were replaced by similarly sounding Russian names (e.g. Eugenia instead of Ghita; Yury instead of Yuda). When state anti-Semitism intensified in the USSR at the end of the 1940s, most Jewish parents stopped giving their children traditional Jewish names to avoid discrimination.

[14] 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.

[15] In the USSR schools had numbers and not names. It was part of the policy of the state. They were all state schools and were all supposed to be identical.

[16] Kossior, Stanislav (1889-1938): One of the founders of the Communist Party in Ukraine and General Secretary of the Communist Party from 1928-1938. He was arrested in the course of The Great Purges of 1936-38, known popularly as the Yezhovshchina (after NKVD chief Nikolai Yezhov who conducted them), and executed.

[17] Khrushchev, Nikita (1894-1971): Soviet communist leader. After Stalin's death in 1953, he became first secretary of the Central Committee, in effect the head of the Communist Party of the USSR. In 1956, during the 20th Party Congress, Khrushchev took an unprecedented step and denounced Stalin and his methods. He was deposed as premier and party head in October 1964. In 1966 he was dropped from the Party's Central Committee.

[18] 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.

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

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

[21] Catherine the Great (1729-1796): Empress of Russia. She rose to the throne after the murder of her husband Peter III and reigned for 34 year. Catherine read widely, especially Voltaire and Montesquieu, and informed herself of Russian conditions. She started to formulate a new enlightened code of law. Catherine reorganized (1775) the provincial administration to increase the central government's control over rural areas. This reform established a system of provinces,

subdivided into districts, that endured until 1917. In 1785, Catherine issued a charter that made the gentry of each district and province a legal body with the right to petition the throne, freed nobles from taxation and state service and made their status hereditary, and gave them absolute control over their lands and peasants. Catherine increased Russian control over the Baltic provinces and Ukraine. She secured the largest portion in successive partitions of Poland among Russia, Prussia, and Austria.

[22] Forced deportation to Siberia: Stalin introduced the deportation of Middle Asian people, like the Crimean Tatars and the Chechens, to Siberia. Without warning, people were thrown out of their houses and into vehicles at night. The majority of them died on the way of starvation, cold and illnesses.

[23] 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'.

[24] 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.

[25] 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.

[26] Veryovka - Grigoriy Gurievich Veryovka (1895 - 1964): a famous Ukrainian Soviet composer, conductor.

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

[28] 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.

[29] Official statistics in the USSR kept silent about the consequences of Chernobyl power plant disaster, especially the number of dying from oncological diseases. The doctors had a classified direction to show in the documents that a patient died from other than oncological disease.

[30] 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 democratise 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.

[31] Breakup of the USSR: Yeltsin in 1991 signed a deal with Russia's neighbours that formalized the break up of the Soviet Union. The USSR was replaced by the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).