

# Rachel Gitelis

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Odessa

Ukraine

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## My family background

My grandfather on my father's side, Shulem Gitelis, was born in Olgopol [450 km from Odessa] in 1863. I visited Olgopol once when I was a child. It was a remote small town. I remember a market and a synagogue; maybe there was more than one. My father, Mordko Gitelis, told me that the inhabitants were mostly Jewish, and that they had good relations with the Ukrainian farmers of the villages around. My grandmother, Surah Gitelis, was two years younger than my grandfather. I have very dim memories of them because we only visited them rarely. They were dressed in plain clothes, not very fashionably. My grandfather had a black capote [caftan] and a black little cap [kippah], and my grandmother wore a dark dress and a kerchief. They spoke Yiddish and were religious. My grandfather was a teacher of Hebrew in cheder. [Editor's note: In cheder they did not teach Hebrew as a language but as the language of the Torah and the Talmud, so it was really the study of these books in Hebrew rather than Hebrew as such.] My grandparents had five children: my father, his brothers, Idl and Shimon, and his sisters, Gitl and Manya.

Idl was born in Olgopol in 1892. He studied in cheder. Later he finished an accounting school and became an accountant. In the 1920s he moved to Rybnitsa in Moldavia. His wife Rosa and he had two children: Nelia and Fira. Nelia lived in Murmansk. She died recently. Idl died in Rybnitsa in 1965.

Shimon was born in Olgopol in 1894. He also finished cheder. He was a laborer. He didn't get married. He perished at the front during World War II.

Gitl was born in 1896. She received religious education at home. She had a private teacher, who was one of my grandfather's pupils. Gitl was a housewife. She was religious, observed Sabbath and followed the kashrut. She was married to Sania Gitman, and they had a daughter called Sonia. Sonia lives in Germany. Gitl died in Odessa in 1978.



Manya was born in 1898. She studied at home like her sister. She married Meyir Miaskovetskiy and was a housewife. They had two daughters: Tania and Rusia. Manya died in Storozhynets, Chernovtsy region, in 1967. Her daughters moved to Israel in the 1990s and died there.

My father was born in Olgopol in 1888. He could speak Yiddish, Russian and Ukrainian. He finished cheder. He was gifted, but couldn't continue his education. He was the oldest child in the family and had to help his father at work to provide for the family. After finishing cheder he became an apprentice in sorting out eggs. There was no work for him in Olgopol, so he moved to Ladyzhin in 1908. Ladyzhin was a bigger town. The majority of its population was Jewish. Ukrainian farmers from a nearby village sold their products at the market. The Jews of Ladyzhin were storeowners, bakers and tobacco manufacturers. Tobacco was grown in Ladyzhin. I went to see the process of tobacco leaves being dried once.

My grandfather on my mother's side, Shulem Roizmarin, was born to a poor Jewish family in the town of Ladyzhin, Podoliya province, in 1848. He died in 1908. My grandmother, Brana Roizmarin, told me that he died suddenly when sitting at the table. My grandmother was born in Ladyzhin in 1853. Her parents were merchants, just like my grandfather's family. Her family was not rich either. The Jews of Ladyzhin at that time were all petty merchants.

I loved my grandmother. She was very nice and kind. She wore long skirts and a shawl. She went to the synagogue on Fridays, Saturdays and holidays. All her children went to the synagogue with her. She owned an inn, and I spent most of my time with her. She had a house with a few rooms that she rented out to visitors coming to town. Her tenants were actors, musicians and chazzanim. There was always music playing in her house, and her guests sang a lot. My grandmother didn't have a garden or any livestock, but she was always busy anyways, with so many people to be tended. She didn't have any kitchen or housemaids. She came to our house every Friday, and my mother and her baked bread to last for the whole week. They baked it in a special oven in the stove where my mother usually kept meals for Saturday to keep them warm. They also baked delicious matzah for Pesach.

My grandmother had six children. Mosha, Avrum-Leib, Shimon, Itzyk and Aron, and one daughter, my mother Hana. My mother's oldest brother, Mosha Roizmarin, was born in 1876. He studied in cheder. He got married and had a son and a daughter. In 1924 his son moved to America and his daughter went to Moscow. Mosha moved to Tulchin, Podoliya province.

Avrum-Leib Roizmarin was born in 1878. He finished cheder. In 1927 he moved to Odessa where he was a worker at a factory. He and his wife Bluma had two sons: Shulia and Motl. They perished during World War II. Avrum died in the 1950s, and Bluma died in the 1960s.

Itzyk Roizmarin was born in 1880. He also finished cheder. He was married and had three children: Fania, Zina and Yasha. He moved to Odessa in 1916 where he was a nickel plater. He and his son Yasha perished in the ghetto in Odessa in 1941. His daughters both died in Odessa: Fania in the 1970s and Zina in the 1980s.

Shimon Roizmarin was born in 1882 and also finished cheder. He lived with my grandmother and helped her to run the inn. He had a gramophone, and there was always music in their house. We liked to sing in Yiddish and I remember the words of one song, 'Why does my fiancé have to be a soldier?'. Shimon moved to Odessa from Ladyzhin in 1927. He worked at a plant. He and his wife

Hava had two sons: Aron and Abrasha. Abrasha died in an accident before the war, and Aron died in the 1980s. Shimon died in 1965 and his wife in 1979. They were both buried in the Jewish cemetery in Odessa.

Aron Roizmarin was shot by the GPU [1](#) in the 1920s when he was 37 for refusing to give them his valuables. I remember the night when he was shot. Many people came into the streets crying. Somebody was holding me. It was such a sad night. His wife Mirl was left behind with their children: Shaya, Shulia and Sonia. Shaya and Shulia perished at the front during the war, and Sonia died in Odessa in 1980.

My mother, Hana Roizmarin, was born in 1888. She was the youngest in the family and helped her mother around the house. She received a religious education at home: A melamed taught her to read and to pray in Hebrew. When my father came to work in Ladyzhin in 1908, he rented a room at the inn. He fell in love with my mother and she liked him, too. Five years later they got married. I never knew why it took so long and never asked them why. I have a copy of their marriage certificate issued by a local rabbi in 1913. I don't know any details about their wedding, but I guess they must have had a traditional Jewish wedding.

After their wedding they lived in a house, which was specifically built for them, next to my grandmother's inn. There were three rooms in this house. The furniture wasn't very rich. We had two kitchens, the winter kitchen inside the house and the summer kitchen outdoors. We had no servants, but a shabesgoy [non-Jew] came once a week on Sabbath to do whatever work we weren't allowed to do. We had neither electricity nor running water, nobody in Ladyzhin did. We had a stove in the house and a kind of toilet in the yard. It was a small house, and there wasn't enough space for all of us, so my parents began to build a bigger house. They didn't complete the construction thought because we had to move to Odessa.

They opened a food store in one of the rooms of the house - it simply had a number of shelves and a counter. They sold honey, butter, herring, and so on, which were purchased from the surrounding villages by a young man whose nickname was 'Burl, the pug-nosed'. It was a pure family business without any employees. Our store was popular and always full of customers, Jewish and non-Jewish. My parents were honest and decent people and always treated their customers in fair and just manner.

## Growing up

My parents had three children. My sister Freida was born in 1914, my brother Burl in 1916, and I followed in 1918. My mother told me about the pogroms [2](#) in Ladyzhin in 1920, which were organized by the gangs of Petliura [3](#). People were hiding in their cellars then. We had no cellar. My mother was looking for shelter, but nobody let her in. People were afraid that a small child - I was two years old - would make a noise and that bandits would find out where they were hiding. My mother was embarrassed. Accidentally I slipped out of her trembling arms and fell into another cellar. The kind people hiding inside not only caught me but also let my mother come in with the other children. Later these people were saying that I brought them luck because they all stayed alive. While hiding in cellars during pogroms my mother got kidney problems from the cold and dampness. In 1923-1924 she had a surgery and one kidney was removed. She had a surgery at a private clinic in Odessa. I suffered from headaches after I fell into the cellar.

I have many memories of our life in Ladyzhin. I remember how we celebrated holidays in our family. We always celebrated Sabbath. On Sabbath we always had a lovely tablecloth, beautiful dish sets and lots of delicious food: Gefilte fish, very nice and rich broth, meat, pickles, white bread, apples and wine, of course. My mother and grandmother always lit candles on Saturdays. They all prayed and never worked on Saturdays. My parents went to the synagogue on Saturdays and on holidays. I also remember going to the synagogue a few times on Friday. We had separate kitchen-ware for dairy and meat products. The dishes that we used at Pesach were kept in the attic. They were very beautiful pieces. I remember that the house was always cleaned before Pesach to remove the chametz. I helped, of course, but I don't recall details anymore. On Pesach we always had matzah, matzah pudding, broth and Gefilte fish. My father conducted the seder ceremony and read the story of the exodus of the Jews from Egypt. The whole family was there for the seder. My brother asked the 'mah nishtanah' question and it was also his job to find the afikoman. My father prayed on all Jewish holidays. We celebrated the major holidays like Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Chanukkah and Purim as well, but I don't really remember them, only the gifts on Chanukkah. My grandmother and my parents spoke Yiddish, but they could also speak Russian and Ukrainian. They spoke Yiddish and Russian with the children.

I began to study at a Jewish lower secondary school in Ladyzhin in 1926. All subjects were taught in Yiddish. My sister and my brother also went to this school. I only attended classes in Ladyzhin for two years. I had some friends in Ladyzhin but I've forgotten their names and only remember Molka and her sister, who were the daughters of our Jewish neighbors. Later they moved to Tashkent.

My parents didn't discuss the Soviet power and its attitudes towards Jews in the family, but I know that it was due to the Soviet power that we had to move. In Ladyzhin we were considered rich people because we were shop owners. Therefore it was dangerous to stay after the Revolution of 1917. Some people came to search our house in 1927. They were looking for gold, but we didn't have any. My mother had a leather-and-fur coat, a very nice one, which they took away. They even apologized to my mother for having to fulfill their order. My parents decided to close their store. We left for Odessa in 1928. About half a year later my grandmother, Shimon's family, Aron's widow, Mirl, and her children moved to Odessa, too. My mother's brother Itzyk lived there.

Odessa seemed a big beautiful town to me compared to Ladyzhin. I admired its toyshops and the beautiful dolls that were sold there. Life was hard in Odessa in the beginning. My father didn't have a profession and trained to become a nickel plater. It was a hard and hazardous work, and my father was often ill. My mother was a housewife. We became poorer, but my mother still tried to cook something better on holidays.

We kept observing all Jewish traditions. My mother and my father went to the synagogue on Sabbath. There were several synagogues. We dressed up and visited our relatives or they came to see us. We only observed some rules of the kashrut, as it was impossible to buy kosher products in stores. We had special dishes for meat and dairy products though. On Pesach we had Gefilte fish, gefrishte motses [steamed matzah in Yiddish] and pancakes. My father held the seder ceremony. On Yom Kippur all members of the family fasted, even children over 5 years of age. I remember Purim and hamantashen with raisins and poppy seeds. We observed Jewish traditions until my mother died in 1966. I still have two candlesticks which my mother used on Sabbath.

There was a Jewish theater in town. I often went there. They had very good performances, but I don't remember any plays or names of actors.

In the beginning we lived in a small one-bedroom apartment. There were five of us. There were two beds, a wardrobe and a table. I shared a bed with my sister Freida. We lived in this apartment until 1937 or 1938, and then we moved into a bigger one-bedroom apartment. It was twice as big as our previous apartment, and there were two kitchens in it. One was a common kitchen that we shared with other tenants. We cooked in this common kitchen, and our own kitchen served as my parents' bedroom.

There were several Jewish schools in Odessa before the war. In 1929 my sister, my brother and I went to the Jewish lower secondary school. I remember a big gym, and I also recall concerts where I sang Jewish songs. We had a very good singing teacher. We called him 'Tra-la-la'. We studied Yiddish language and literature, German and Russian, mathematics, history and many other subjects. We didn't have any special Jewish subjects. [Editor's note: In Jewish schools in the USSR the students were taught the same subjects as in other schools, but the language of instruction was Yiddish.] We studied in Yiddish and I still have a very good conduct of Yiddish. I had many friends of various nationalities. During my summer vacation after the 8th form I took up jobs at the port as an accounting clerk to help my parents. I had many friends at school, but none of us was a pioneer or a Komsomol [4](#) member. It wasn't mandatory at that time, and we didn't find it necessary. I kept in touch with my schoolmates for a long time. Many of them moved to other countries and some of them have already died. There were nine of us including myself. There are only three of us left in Odessa now: Mirah, Kinera and I. We call each other and talk about the past.

In 1933 there was a famine [5](#) in the country. It was a hard time for our family. My father was ill and my mother couldn't find a job. My mother took her golden earrings to the Torgsin store [6](#) to exchange them for some bread. My mother and Hava, Shimon's wife, were selling this bread at the market to buy some other food from the money. Every evening we had some bread, a loaf among the five of us, and some soup. Every afternoon I came from school and took a bowl of soup to Grandmother Brana, who was living with Uncle Shimon. Sometimes she stayed with us for a few days, but she always hurried back home 'to sleep in her own bed', as she used to said. She was very old, and it was hard for her to endure the hardships of the time. She died in 1934 when she was about 80. She was buried in the Jewish cemetery near the Chumka [7](#). All our neighbors came to her funeral. The Kaddish was recited in the cemetery and for seven days we all sat on the floor wailing for her.

In 1936 my father went to look for a job in Kutaisi, Georgia. He worked as a nickel plater there. When I was in the 9th form in 1938, I left my school because we were going to follow my father to live in Kutaisi. However, we had to cancel our departure because my brother fell ill with tuberculosis. My father returned to Odessa in 1938. I didn't go back to the school. I got a job as an accounting clerk at the Krupskaya knitting wear factory. I finished an evening accounting course in 1940 and worked in the factory until 1941 when we evacuated.

My sister Freida finished secondary school and an accounting course in the 1930s. She worked as an accountant in an office. My brother Berl finished secondary school in 1932 and entered the Odessa Machine Building College. He studied there several years, but then quit and went to work as a nickel plater with my father in the Caucasus. He fell ill in 1938 and died in 1940. He was a very



talented and handsome boy. His death was a terrible blow to our family, and my father said that there wouldn't be any music or entertainment in our house for a year. After a year had passed, he turned on the music and said that life was to go on. My brother was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Slobodka [8](#). During the war the cemetery was ruined and we couldn't find his grave after the war.

### **During the war**

I knew that Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933 and that there was fascism over there, but I wasn't really concerned about things [Editor's note: In 1933 Hitler became chancellor, in 1934 president and supreme commander of the armed forces]. The 1930s was the period of arrests in the USSR. [The so-called Great Terror] [9](#) But fortunately it didn't affect our family. In 1939 the Germans occupied Poland. Then many people perished in the Finnish war [10](#). We still believed that the war wouldn't hit our country but in 1941 the Great Patriotic War [11](#) began.

German bombers started dropping bombs on Odessa. We lived near the sea and decided to move to our friends, who were living in the center of Odessa for safety reasons. The first month of the war was horrific. There were constant air raids. My mother and sister were very afraid of the bombing. I wasn't and even went to our old home to water the flowers. The farmers stopped selling their products at the market. They were afraid to come to Odessa. Local people, who kept livestock, came to sell food at the market. We didn't have a fridge or a cellar and couldn't buy stocks of food. We kept butter in a bowl of water and replaced the water to keep it fresh longer. My father was summoned to the military registry office. My mother wanted me to go with him. The registry office was located near the Opera Theater, far from our house. When we were on the way another bombing began. We hid in a building, although we knew that it was a poor protection during such disasters. My father was released from military duty due to his poor health.

We decided to evacuate in September 1941. Our relatives didn't come with us. My father was against it. His argument was that our army would defeat the enemy and that the war would be over soon. My mother told him that they had to leave for the sake of the children. We didn't have any information about what the Germans were doing in the occupied areas. We obtained an evacuation permit and boarded a boat at the port. We didn't know what its point of destination was. The boat was overcrowded and there was no water there to wash oneself.

There were people from Bessarabia [12](#) who had been traveling for a long time. They had lice and we contracted lice from them. There was no food on the boat either. We reached Novorossiysk, a port on the Black Sea in Krasnodarskiy region [200 km from Odessa]. There we could either exchange our clothes for food or buy some. We got on the train heading for Karaganda region in Kazakhstan. When the train stopped we could go and buy some food again. It was my duty to fetch some water to wash ourselves and drink. Our trip lasted a week, or longer, before we arrived at Jan-Arka station, Karaganda region, Kazakhstan [2,000 km from Odessa]. We rented a small room with two single beds in it from a Kazakh family, where we lived throughout the evacuation period. They had a cow and every morning our landlady left a jar of milk at our door. 'This is for the children', she used to say.

I was lucky and found a job at a canteen. The human resource manager there liked me and offered me a job as a waitress. I cried because I couldn't bear the smell in the canteen, but my mother said that I had to accept this job because nobody else in our family had one. There were two girls from

Odessa in this canteen, and they also convinced me to accept it. After some time I got used to this work. Every morning I came to the canteen wearing a starched apron. The other employees liked me and called me 'Purple Rose'. People could get food at the canteen for money or cards. People were starved because the monthly cards only lasted for one or two weeks. We always gave the leftovers to starved people. We had many Jewish, Russian and Kazakh friends during our evacuation. I remember a nice Russian woman, Dusia, and a man, Vania, from Belarus. He was shell-shocked and couldn't talk. People were saying that he began to talk because he fell in love with me. He and his friend, Volodya, went to the front and wrote to me from there. Unfortunately, my husband destroyed all their letters later. I have no idea what happened to these two men.

Later my sister got a job as an assistant accountant at the same canteen. My father got a job as a storeman at the railroad storehouse. My mother was too weak to work. She observed Sabbath and followed the kashrut even in evacuation. She didn't work or cook on Saturdays, but we had to work on Saturday.

It was very hot in Kazakhstan in the summer, and there were terrible sandstorms. One had to walk with one's eyes closed. Our house was located at the bottom of a hill and once I couldn't even find it during the storm. Sometimes my father accompanied me to work during such storms.

In 1944 we heard that Odessa was liberated. Through a search bureau we found out that my father's sisters, Manya and Gitl had survived and were in Olgopol. During the war there was a ghetto in Olgopol, guarded by the Romanians, who were a little bit nicer to the Jews than the Germans, and my aunts and their families survived. We decided to go see them before we went to Odessa. We took a train to Kodyma station [400 km from Odessa] and from there we went to Olgopol on a horse-driven cart. In Olgopol we lived at Aunt Gitl's house until the end of the war. My father worked as an egg sorter. Aunt Gitl had a kitchen garden near the house. We ate what we grew there. My aunts were so poor that they wore dresses that they made from bags. On 9th May 1945 the war was over and we began to pack to go home. We went to Kodyma on foot and from there we took a train to Odessa.

We stayed at our acquaintance's house for some time. We found out that some people in high positions were living in our old apartment. They refused to move out, and we went to live with Mirl, Aron's widow, in the center of Odessa before we received a new apartment. Her daughter, Sonia, and Sonia's two children also lived there. Sonia's husband had perished at the front. They lived in a poor one-bedroom apartment. The living conditions were terrible, of course, but we were happy to be alive. After a few months we received a one-bedroom apartment. It was just one room but we refurbished a small hallway into a kitchen. We had no comforts whatsoever. Later we installed a water supply pipe, but the toilet was outside. There was no heating in the apartment, and it was very cold. We bought coal and used a burzhuika [a primitive iron stove] to heat the room. We didn't have any furniture. Everything had been stolen from our former apartment. Only our wardrobe had been saved by our neighbor and he gave it back to us.

## Post-war

It was difficult to find a job after the war. There were only vacancies for qualified personnel. I got a job by chance and became an assistant accountant at the card office. My sister got a job as an accountant in an office. My father worked as a nickel plater, and my mother was a housewife. My father worked several years until he fell ill and died in 1950.

Many Jews who stayed in Odessa during the war perished in the ghetto, including my cousin Yasha, his father Itzyk and my mother's cousins Sosia, Freida, Enta and Feiga. There were many other people we knew that perished. After the war all Jewish schools and the Jewish theater were closed. We couldn't believe that we wouldn't have an opportunity to go to performances in Yiddish. There was only one operating synagogue left in Peresyp [13](#) whereas there were over 100 synagogues before the war.

We continued to celebrate Jewish traditions. My parents went to the synagogue on Saturdays and on holidays and never used public transportation. My mother had a seat in the synagogue in Peresyp. My parents always bought chicken at the market to take it to the shochet to have it slaughtered until the shochet moved to Israel in the 1970s. I didn't feel any anti-Semitism in Odessa after the war, although there was anti-Semitism on a state level. Jews had problems entering higher educational institutions and finding jobs after finishing university.

My sister married Leib Goldferb, a Jew, that returned from the front, in November 1945. They had a Jewish wedding party at home with a rabbi and a few guests. They lived in his apartment. She was a housewife. Leib came from a very religious family and always observed all Jewish traditions. My sister used to take chicken to the slaughter facility in Odessa. She cooked traditional Jewish food at Pesach and other holidays. But neither she nor I went to the synagogue like our mother used to. In 1946 their daughter, Ada, was born, and Marah followed in 1952. She was my favorite. Freida's children are very dear to me. They have always been with me in good and in bad times.

I married Itzyk Moshevich Knepfolgen in 1951. My good friend introduced us to one another. We had a Jewish wedding with a chuppah, and our marriage was registered in the synagogue. We had many guests and a lot of food at our wedding party. Itzyk was two years younger than I, and he had a secondary education. His mother and sister were still alive. His father perished at the front. Itzyk was also at the front during the war and he was wounded on his arm. After the war he worked at a store, and then he got a job as a plumber. We lived with my mother.

Unfortunately, our marriage fell apart. We were very different and had different views of life. I was used to going to work, but my husband was convinced that I should be a housewife. He couldn't provide for his family. He made many promises to me, saying he would find a well-paid job, but he never kept his promises. He never thought about tomorrow and wasted all the money he had. Our marriage lasted eight years. We didn't have any children and decided to get divorced. The divorce was a great disappointment to me. A friend told me later that Itzyk moved to America in the 1970s.

When we got divorced my mother said, 'Rachel you're growing old and you'll be alone'. I answered, 'You see what bad luck I have. But I'll take care of you whatever happens.' My mother died in 1966 at 78. We buried her in the Jewish cemetery according to the Jewish traditions.

In the 1950s Stalin was planning to deport all Jews to the North and Far East [to Birobidzhan] [14](#). There were many discussions on this subject, but it never came to it because Stalin died in March 1953. I remember this day very well. People were very worried. They couldn't imagine their life without him. I just felt sorry for him like I would have for any other human being. When Khrushchev [15](#) denounced the cult of Stalin at the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU [16](#) we believed that all he was saying was true because we were taught to believe our government.



We didn't know much about Israel, but we were happy that our people got a new motherland. I have never been to Israel, but I would like to see the country. It will always remain a dream considering my age. I've watched TV programs about Israel and talked with my acquaintances about it. I am very pleased that young people have an opportunity to fly there to see the country.

In the 1970s many of our relatives and acquaintances moved to other countries. Gitl's daughter, Sonia, and her son live in Germany, and Manya's two daughters moved to Israel. They died, but their children live and work there. Mirl's daughter, Ada, and her family live in Israel. Idl's granddaughters are in Murmansk and Moldavia. We also planned to move, but had to cancel our plans. My sister died of a long-lasting disease in 1981. One of my nieces married a young Jewish man, but his family didn't favor the idea of departure to another country. Younger members of my family are thinking of going to Israel.

I retired in 1974. Before my retirement I was a packer at the Metalwork plant. I quit my accountant job due to my illness. I live with my sister's husband and my older niece Ada. My younger niece Marah lives separately, but we are still very close. Marah is an English teacher at the Jewish school. She graduated from the Faculty of Foreign Languages at the Pedagogical Institute. Both my nieces help me a lot. We observe Jewish traditions - Sabbath and the kashrut. We now have kosher food stores in Odessa. Marah's son, Sasha, and Freida's husband go to the synagogue. Jewish life has revived in Odessa in recent years. Jewish organizations support old people. I hope it will continue this way and pray for peace in the whole world. I am 84 years old now, 'un ikh fur shoyrn funem yarid' [Yiddish: I am slowly leaving this world behind].

## Glossary

### **1 GPU**

State Political Department, the state security agency of the USSR, that is, its punitive body.

### **2 Pogroms in Ukraine**

In the 1920s there were many anti-Semitic gangs in Ukraine. They killed Jews and burnt their houses, they robbed their houses, raped women and killed children.

### **3 Petliura, Simon (1879-1926)**

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

### **4 Komsomol**

Communist youth political organization created in 1918. The task of the Komsomol was to spread of the ideas of communism and involve the worker and peasant youth in building the Soviet Union. The Komsomol also aimed at giving a communist upbringing by involving the worker youth in the political struggle, supplemented by theoretical education. The Komsomol was more popular than

the Communist Party because with its aim of education people could accept uninitiated young proletarians, whereas party members had to have at least a minimal political qualification.

## **5 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.

## **6 Torgsin stores**

These shops were created in the 1920s to support commerce with foreigners. One could buy good quality food products and clothing in exchange for gold and antiquities in such shops.

## **7 Chumka**

Man-made mound over the common grave of plague victims in Odessa at the beginning of the 19th century.

## **8 Slobodka**

Neighborhood on the outskirts of Odessa.

## **9 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.

## **10 Soviet-Finnish War (1939-40)**

The Soviet Union attacked Finland on 30 November 1939 to seize the Karelian Isthmus. The Red Army was halted at the so-called Mannenheimer line. The League of Nations expelled the USSR from its ranks. In February-March 1940 the Red Army broke through the Mannenheimer line and reached Vyborg. In March 1940 a peace treaty was signed in Moscow, by which the Karelian Isthmus, and some other areas, became part of the Soviet Union. [11](#) Great Patriotic War: On 22 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.

## **12 Bessarabia**

Historical area between the Prut and Dnestr rivers, in the southern part of the Odessa region. Today it is part of Moldavia.

## **13 Peresyp**

An industrial neighborhood in the outskirts of Odessa.

## **14 Birobidzhan**

Formed in 1928 to give Soviet Jews a home territory and to increase settlement along the vulnerable borders of the Soviet Far East, the area was raised to the status of an autonomous region in 1934. Influenced by an effective propaganda campaign, and starvation in the east, 41,000 Soviet Jews relocated to the area between the late 1920s and early 1930s. But, by 1938 28,000 of them had fled the regions harsh conditions, There were Jewish schools and synagogues up until the 1940s, when there was a resurgence of religious repression after World War II. The Soviet government wanted the forced deportation of all Jews to Birobidjan to be completed by the middle of the 1950s. But in 1953 Stalin died and the deportation was cancelled. Despite some remaining Yiddish influences - including a Yiddish newspaper - Jewish cultural activity in the region has declined enormously since Stalin's anti-cosmopolitanism campaigns and since the liberalization of Jewish emigration in the 1970s. Jews now make up less than 2% of the region's population.

## **15 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.

## **16 Twentieth Party Congress**

At the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956 Khrushchev publicly debunked the cult of Stalin and lifted the veil of secrecy from what had happened in the USSR during Stalin's leadership.