Naum Kravets

Naum Kravets
Moscow
Russia
Interviewer: Ella Levitskaya
Date of interview: January 2005

I met Naum Kravets twice. The interview took place in his apartment, which he facetiously calls Hall of Fame. It is a small one-room apartment, and it does look like a museum. There are pictures of his relatives and front-line fellows on the walls.

The books shelves are abundant in books on WWII - fiction, memoirs and historic researches. An officer's cutlass has its place of honor. After his wife's death, Naum mostly stays in his daughter's apartment, but he tenderly takes care of his so-called museum and is constantly replenishing it. Naum is a stocky man with a childish looking smile and eyes. Naum is very brisk in spite of his aching legs - a result of battle injuries. He is a globe-trotter. He takes a keen interest in the events in Russia and all over the world. But he says, 'East or West - home is best.'

I am kindly asking everybody who reads this interview: if somebody from my relatives in the USA happens to read this interview, or a person who knows anything about my kin, please contact Centropa, where my contacts are available. I am anxious to find out about my kin and keep in touch with them. I hope you will be able to assist me. If somebody from my relatives or acquaintances reads the story of my life, please get in touch with me!

Family background

The history of my paternal relatives goes back to my great-grandfather Peter Kravets. He was a thoroughbred Ukrainian. He lived in Uman [Ukraine, 200 km south-east of Kiev]. The family of my great-grandmother Rahil, Ruhl, also lived there. My great-grandmother's father was an acolyte in a small Jewish prayer house on the outskirts of Uman. Rahil was the youngest child. She was the only daughter in the family; there were three more sons. Great- grandfather Peter Kravets was the eldest son in a large peasant family. Back in tsarist times it was provided by the law that only the eldest son was to be drafted into the army, and the rest of the sons were to be drafted only during war. Great-grandfather Peter and my great-grandmother Rahil fell in love with each other when

they were young. They probably understood that it was next to impossible for them to get married due to the difference in nationalities, but their love was very strong.

Peter was drafted into the army. At that time the term of the army service was 25 years [see Nikolai's army] 1, and my great-grandmother was waiting for her beloved for 25 years. Back in that time it was impossible to picture the only daughter of a very pious Jew, the acolyte of the Jewish prayer house to marry an alien, a Ukrainian. I think for the family of my great-grandfather it was also hard to approve of such a marriage because they also were very religious, Orthodox.

Rahil's father had striven to marry off Rahil, but my great-grandmother was adamant - she was waiting for her beloved and was against any other wooers. Rahil's father abided the idea that his daughter would die a spinster. When Peter came back from the army, he went to Rahil's father and asked for her hand. Rahil asked her father to bless them. Of course, Rahil's father didn't give his consent very quickly, but neither he, nor Peter's parents managed to make them change their minds. Peter said if their parents hadn't blessed them, they would have eloped together. At that time it was even a more grievous sin than marrying a person of a different belief, so both families gave their consent. Though, Rahil's father insisted that the marriage should be in accordance with the Jewish rituals, and Peter was supposed to profess Judaism. But it didn't stop the beloved. Peter accepted giyur [proselyte] and the rabbi timely carried out all rites. The wedding took place under a chuppah, in accordance with the Jewish tradition.

The soldiers who served the full term in the army were granted a certain amount by the tsarist government so that they could build their own house and make a husbandry. The newly-weds moved into their own house. They had a wonderful life. Shortly after the wedding, Rahil got pregnant and that made Peter even happier. Unfortunately, this story has a doleful end. Peter had lived with Rahil only for a year and a half, and died. He just went to sleep and never woke up again. Some people said that he died from happiness, as it was way too much for one person to take.

My grandfather, their only son, was born after Peter's death. I don't know exactly when he was born, it was in the 1860s. Great-grandmother named her son Peter [common name] 2 after her husband, the deceased father. His Jewish name was Pinhas. Great-grandmother had enough money to get by, and when Grandfather became adolescent, she sent him to study in Odessa 3. Grandfather became the apprentice of a merchant [of Guild I] 4 who sold fabric. He became an expert in fabric; he was especially knowledgeable about woolen cloths.

Grandpa came back to Uman and started working for a Polish merchant as an appraiser. It was a rare profession which was in demand, so my grandfather was often called to different cities to appraise different batches of goods. Great-grandmother Rahil lived a long life. I reckon she died at the age of over 100. I don't remember her, but when I was born, she was still alive.

In my mother's words, when I was born she showed me to my great-grandmother. She took me in her hands, had a look and said that the first-born was not good, too small. Mother said she was crying a lot because Great-grandmother didn't like me. Great-grandmother died in 1927, when I was two. She was buried in accordance with the Jewish traditions in the cemetery in Uman. Her grave is still there.

Grandfather got married at a mature age. He was about 30. At that time it wasn't customary for men to get married at a young age, as a lad was to supposed to become independent, have his

own business and house before getting married. Grandfather was married to a Jew, Etl, the only daughter of Uman's rabbi. I don't know her maiden name. Of course, the family of my maternal grandmother was very religious as the family of a rabbi was expected to be.

The newly-weds moved to the house of great-grandmother. The house was very big, great-grandfather built it for a large family, but it turned out that only my grandparents lived there. Grandmother was a housewife after getting married. She took care of the children, and the household. She gave birth to eight children, but only five of them survived. My father Solomon Kravets [Jewish name: Shloime] was the eldest. He was born in 1891. Then Isaac, Haim, Aron and Rafael were born.

My grandparents were religious people. The family observed all Jewish traditions. Uman was a Jewish town; about 40 percent of the population was Jewish. Grandfather took his children to the synagogue when they were very young. All Jewish holidays were marked at home. Sabbath was observed. Yiddish was spoken at home. All sons got Jewish education; they went to cheder.

Grandfather was an educated man; he understood that secular education was necessary. My father finished a Jewish lyceum in Uman. Secular subjects were taught there. There was a profound study of mathematics and foreign languages. The rest of the sons went to a compulsory Jewish school. The family was well-off. Apart from working as an appraiser, my grandfather acquired his own warehouse for wholesale trade of fabric. After finishing school my father started assisting my grandfather: he brought goods for his warehouse and worked there.

Father's two brothers Haim and Aron left for America before the outbreak of World War I. They settled in New York and got married there. His two other brothers, Isaac and Rafael, stayed in Uman. Grandfather taught them his profession and both sons helped him out. Before the [Russian] Revolution of 1917 5, my grandfather went to America to visit his sons and find out whether it was worth for the whole family to move there. Grandfather stayed there for a while and then came back to Uman. Then they were too tied up in their business to go there again. Then the revolution broke out in 1917 and it was impossible to go anywhere, so they had to stay in Uman.

Before the revolution Grandfather sent my father to Warsaw to study. Father studied book-keeping, but I don't know where exactly. He got married when he got back to Uman. His first wife's name was Liba. It was a prearranged marriage. She didn't love Father, because she was in love with the son of the owner of the local sugar mill. In 1915 their only son Lev was born. His Jewish name was Leib. Liba was a housewife.

Father was taking trips constantly. Once when he came back home, he didn't find his wife there. She had left the little son and gone to her lover. To avoid a scandal Liba and her beloved left Uman. First Lev was raised by the grandparents, and when my father married my mother she also became the mother of my stepbrother. Lev lived in our family and Mother treated him like her own child. When Lev was grown-up, about 20 years old, my parents revealed the truth to him: that my mother wasn't his real mother. I was present when that conversation was taking place. Lev took time to think things over and then said that he hadn't known another mother and didn't care to know about her. Before the very outbreak of war, in 1941, his real mother came to Uman. She found my dad and asked him to bring Lev to her. Father did what she asked, but their meeting was of short duration. Lev wasn't willing to talk to her. At the beginning of the war Liba died during a bombing.

My mother's parents were also inhabitants of Uman. Grandfather's name was Yankl Schneider, and Grandmother's name was Enya. Grandfather was a drayman. He had his own horses and carts. In fall and winter grandfather organized a string of carts consisting of Jewish and Ukrainian draymen. They brought grain to the mills, and took flour from the mills. In fall they used carts and in winter sleighs. In the fall-winter period Grandfather earned money for his large family and starting in spring he took care of agriculture, grew vegetables and grain. Grandfather leased a field from the landlord and the whole family worked in the field. Grandmother was a housewife.

There were twelve children in the family. I knew nine of them; the rest died when they were infants. The eldest was mother's brother Efim [Jewish name: Haim]. Then two more sons were born after him. One of them was Naum. I don't remember the name of the other brother. Then daughters were born: Zina [Jewish name: Zindl] was the eldest, Bronya was the second one, and my mother was the third one. She was born in 1904. Her Jewish name was Shifra, but she was called by the Russian name Shura. Then Maria [Jewish name: Mariam] and Genya were born.

My grandparents were religious. They observed all Jewish traditions, marked Sabbath and Jewish holidays. Only Yiddish was spoken at home, though all children and Grandfather were fluent in Russian. Grandmother didn't speak Russian, though she understood most things. I don't know what kind of education my mother and her siblings got.

My mother's eldest brother Efim was an apprentice to a smith. Then he worked in his teacher's smithy. He got married. He had only one son, Grigoriy. I don't know what the other brothers of my mother did for a living. After the Revolution of 1917 and following the Civil War 6, pogroms 7 commenced in Uman, and both of them were drafted into the Soviet army. Mother said that Naum, who I was named after, took a horse from Grandfather and fled saying that he didn't want to wait patiently to be killed by gangs 8. He joined the cavalry of Kotovskiy's 9 squad and was killed in action during the Civil War. Mother said that there was a girl in that squad. Naum fell in love with her and she loved him back, but they were predestined not to be together.

The second brother, whose name I don't remember, also joined the Red Army. He was a commissar [see political officer] 10 in the cavalry regiment. He wasn't killed. He died of typhus fever. When the regiment was on demurrage in some sort of hamlet, not far from the town of Belgorod, Kharkov oblast, he was accommodated in a hut, whose host had died of typhus fever. He was buried in Belgorod in a common grave at the square by the train station. His name is engraved on the tomb. My mother and I went there. He must have been highly appreciated by the Soviet regime, because grandfather received a large allowance for him for that time.

All of my mother's sisters were married to Jews, and all of them had traditional Jewish weddings. I don't remember the last name of Zina's husband. I know that his first name was Lev. He was a barber. He lived in Kharkov. After the wedding, Zina moved in with him. They had two children. Both of them were older than me. I don't remember their names. A Polish Jew called Zamel wooed Bronya. After the wedding the newly-weds went to Poland and settled in a town not far from Warsaw. Bronya's husband was a butcher. They had four children: their sons Mikhail and Naum, and the daughters Irina and Anna. Mother's younger sister Maria, whose married name was Berkovich, gave birth to three children: two sons, Igor and Gennadiy, and a daughter, Yana. I don't remember what her husband did for a living. Genya was married to an accountant called Lesnevskiy. I don't remember his first name. Her son's name was Leonid, and her daughter's name

was Anna. All of them gradually moved to Kharkov, where my mother's elder sister Zina lived. Only the grandparents stayed in Uman for a while. Later on they moved to Kharkov too.

All my mother's sisters were beautiful, but mother was a true belle. After the revolution and the Civil War the family was indigent. The Soviet regime confiscated my grandfather's horses and the skimpy plot of land that the family was given wasn't enough to get food. Mother told me about her love for a neighbor's son. They couldn't get married because both families were poor. When my father wooed my mother, Grandfather was happy to give his consent to their marriage. Father was rich, but he was much older than Mother. They got married in 1921. Father was 30, and Mother was 17. Of course, they had a true Jewish wedding.

After the wedding, my father rented two rooms with balconies on the second floor of the two-storied mansion of Doctor Rafalovich. In a year my parents had their first-born, who died as an infant. I don't even know his name. Shortly after the birth of the baby, Father decided to leave Uman. These were the times of the NEP 11 and my father was afraid that all rich people would be persecuted. Father left for Moscow and found a job as an accountant. Mother temporarily stayed in Uman. When she found out that she was pregnant she decided not to stay in Uman and found money somewhere and went to Moscow. Father rented a room in a communal apartment 12 on Arbat Street.

Growing up

I was born on 4th January 1925. When my mother was having labor pains, Father hired a cabman and took her to the hospital. At that time most of the hospitals accepted only members of the trade union. Mother was a housewife, so she wasn't a member of the trade union. They didn't want to help my mother in any delivery house. Finally they found a hospital on the outskirts of the city, where my mother was taken to the delivery ward. When Mother and I were discharged from the hospital, Father rented a bigger room. My life started in the hamper placed on the table as there was no money to buy a bed or a stroller for me. The landlady gave my mother old bed sheets so that she could make swaddles. When spring came, Father took Mother and me to Uman and again we settled in the house of Doctor Rafalovich. We lived together, and once a month my father came from Moscow to visit us and to give money to Mother.

When I was one and a half years old, we finally moved to Moscow. Father also took his son Lev, born in his first marriage, to Moscow. Neither I nor Lev knew that we had only a common real father. We lived in the center of the city, not far from Arbat. Mother was discontent as she thought it was bad for the baby to live in the center of the city because of the smog and dirt. She started asking Father to look for another apartment. Father found lodging for us and we moved to a Moscow suburb, Cherkizovo. Father rented two rooms in a private house. The host's family also lived in that house with us. The house was sold several times, but we stayed there under all owners. In 1933 my sister was born. She was named Rena [Jewish name Ruhl] after our great-grandmother.

Every year I went to Uman. Lev and I, and later my sister, Lazar and Aron, the sons of my father's brother Isaac were taken to Grandmother's every summer. She and her younger son Rafael lived in a large house. Grandfather didn't live with her for some reason. Grandmother managed to take care of all children and our parents came to get us closer to the fall. I remember Uman since

childhood. The town is historic. The splendid Sofievskiy Park has remained the main sightseeing attraction in Uman. The park was built by a Polish magnate, Count Pototskiy, who lived in Uman. He dedicated it to his concubine, the Greek Sofia. Later on he married her. The count was in love with Sofia, but he couldn't marry her when his wife was alive. He had the park and palace built for Sofia. She lived in the palace in the park. I can talk about Sofievskiy Park incessantly. There are so many things to tell. The count hired an Italian landscape designer, who created wonderful scenic views - the best in the world. Empress Catherine 13 visited the park. During World War II Hitler visited Sofievskiy Park on multiple occasions. This magnificent nook was neither devastated nor plundered by the Germans. It remained untouched. It is a unique place. I remember it since childhood. Even the trees in the park are planted in such a way that the different hues of the foliage form the word 'Sofia' which can be seen from a plane.

Uman was a true Jewish town. The wisest and most educated Jews, tzaddiks, lived in Uman. There were a lot of synagogues and prayer houses in the town. Before the revolution there were several cheders and one yeshivah. Of course, the Soviet regime closed down all those institutions when the struggle against religion 14 commenced, but two large synagogues remained before World War II [see Great Patriotic War] 15. A lot of old buildings are still there, in the center of Uman. These are mostly two-storied log houses. The logs of the ground floor had a deep clay coating and the top was made of close fitted logs. Uman is surrounded by thick forests, so wood was one of the most affordable construction materials. Rich Jews and the local intelligentsia [mostly Jewish] lived in the center of Uman. There was a large pond far from the center. That was the area, where poor Jews lived. There were one-storied simpler buildings. But there were kitchen gardens, orchards and flower beds by those houses. Mother's parents lived in that district, but father's parents lived in the center. The land plots were more expensive there. That is why there was no room for the orchard, just for a flower bed. During my childhood my cousins and I often went to my maternal grandmother Enya to enjoy a tidbit - cherries, sweet cherries and raspberries.

There is another unique place of interest in Uman that I remember. In the center on the main square there were tubes with copper taps placed on the ground. Those tubes were not filled with water, but with warm brewed tea. It was possible to come there with a glass and have tea or come over with a tea pot and take tea home. Especially on Sabbath many people came for tea as it wasn't allowed to do anything about the house. Later I found out that the tea wasn't for free: the owner of that tea business was paid monthly by the inhabitants of the town. Grandmother often sent us there to fill the teapot with tea.

Usually my grandmother managed to cope with the house chores herself. When the grandchildren came over during the summer time, she hired two Ukrainian ladies to help her about the house. It was the time of more intensive shopping and cooking. I enjoyed going to the market with Grandmother and the maids. Each of the ladies took a shoulder yoke and appended two baskets on it. Grandmother haggled, bought food and put it in the baskets. Ukrainian boys with clay mugs ran around the market shouting, 'Cold water! Cold water!' I always asked Grandmother to buy me a cup of that spring water, which remained cold in spite of the heat. I also remember how Grandmother baked bread in a big Russian stove 16. The loaves were big, with a nice crust and smelled so well that my mouth watered. Grandmother took the oven-fresh loaf into the yard and we rushed to each try and snatch a bigger piece. Afterwards, Grandmother failed to make us come and eat lunch as we were full with bread.

In Moscow my father worked as an economist at the military engine-building plants. Mother was a housewife. She took care of the children and the household. In 1932-33 there was terrible starvation in Russian villages, especially in Volga region. A lot of children became orphans. There were only two orphanages in Moscow, and there were much more orphans so there was an organization responsible for finding foster parents for the orphans. Mother fostered a Russian orphan girl named Lidia Tsulimova, born in 1916. It was a foster-parent program. The children weren't adopted, the organization was merely guaranteed by parents that the orphans would be treated the same as their own children and wouldn't be used as servants. I don't know what my mother's motivation was, as she had already three children after my sister was born. I know that father supported her idea as well. I knew that Lidia was not our blood, but my sister was sure that Lidia was her elder sister. In our family there was a tradition of going shopping before Pesach. Each child got new clothes. Lidia was also given new things like the rest of us. We also had meals together. Lidia finished school and entered university, the social department. She worked as a historian in the Marx and Engels institute all her life. [Editor's note: the institute named after Marx and Engels was founded in Moscow in the 1920s by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR as an institution of higher education for experts in communist ideology and propaganda.] She retired from there. We still keep in touch, call each other, come over for a visit. She is 89.

I cannot say that Father was a religious man. For example, our family didn't observe the kashrut. I remember that Mother cooked pork stew. Grandfather Pinhas came to us from Odessa for a couple of days. He liked delicious food, and when Mother treated him with pork, he always kissed her hand after meals and said that the food tasted really good. The only thing Grandfather asked was not to tell Grandmother about it. Both Father and Grandfather went to the synagogue. Sometimes they took me with them. It is difficult to judge how religious they were. I remember that Father didn't pray though he had tallit, tefillin and a prayer book. In the synagogue Father paid some of the religious Jews for them to read a prayer for my father. I remember that once a Jew during prayer turned to my father and asked, 'What is your wife's name?', and a little later, 'What are your children's names?' He must have mentioned us in his prayer. Mother didn't go to the synagogue, but every morning when she got out of bed she prayed mixing Russian and Jewish words. She asked God for health for her husband, son and daughter and all relatives. She also finished her day praying.

I didn't get a Jewish education. When I turned 13, Grandfather and Father took me to the synagogue for my bar mitzvah. I was given tallit and tefillin. I knew what they were for. I still keep those. Mother had kept them even during World War II. Sometimes I went to the synagogue with my father.

At home we celebrated Soviet as well as Jewish holidays. We always had matzah for Pesach. Father bought it in the synagogue. I liked it a lot. I don't think we marked Jewish holidays in accordance with traditions. Once Mother's elder brother Efim came to us for Pesach and he conducted the seder. But it was the only case. Father didn't conduct the seder. I also remember Chanukkah. All adults who came over to see us on that day gave us, kids, small change. That is why I was always looking forward to Chanukkah. When winter came, I kept on asking Mom whether Chanukkah was coming. We celebrated such Soviet holidays as 1st May, 7th November [October Revolution Day] 17, Soviet Army Day 18 and New Year's Day.

In late fall my paternal grandmother Etl came for a visit and usually stayed until spring. Grandmother loved my mother very much. She said she gave birth only to sons, but God heard her plea and sent her a wonderful daughter - my mother. When Grandmother came over, she took up cooking and didn't let Mother cook anything. I think Grandmother wanted to make sure that it was kosher food. Of course, when Grandmother came, there was no way we could eat pork.

The Orthodox Church wasn't far from our house. When I was a child, I liked to go there. When Mother couldn't find me, she went to the church and took me home. She didn't scold me for that. Grandmother spoke Yiddish. I talked to her in Russian and she understood me. I also understood everything she said in Yiddish, though I didn't speak that language. My parents spoke Yiddish with Grandmother, and Russian with us. When Grandmother wasn't with us, they spoke Yiddish only when they wanted to conceal something from us.

We were rarely punished in childhood. Mother was stricter than Father, but she never chastised us. The hardest corporeal punishment was when she pinched our ears, but it was better than listening to her edification. Father hit me only once. There was one rule in the family. On Sunday, my father's only day off, the whole family was to get together at the table for lunch at 2pm. Father left for work when we were sleeping and came back late, so Sunday was the only day when he could find time to communicate with his children. Once I was one hour late for dinner because I had stayed outside longer. Father came up to me and hit me. I think he didn't mean to, but he hit on my solar plexus. I began to choke, turned blue, and Grandmother had to resort to artificial respiration. When I was able to breathe normally, she came up to my father and slapped him hard. It was the only case when I was hit. There were no other incidents like that with any children of our family.

When I turned six, I went to the pre-school of the seven-year Russian school. It was the first time when I came across anti-Semitism on a social level. It was a suburb, Cherkizovo, so there were less educated people, more peasants. Children weren't brought up very well. I was the smallest kid in the class and didn't know how to fight. The other boys often teased me and cried out, 'Yid.' It was very offensive. There were other Jews in our class, but I was the only one who was teased. In two years the church that was close to our house was demolished, and a Russian ten-year compulsory school was built instead. I was transferred to that school. I made friends with boys of different nationalities. Russians, Ukrainians and Jews were among my friends. There was even one Latvian boy. I kept in touch with one of my school friends, David Akselbant, in the lines and after the war. He was a lawyer. He is deceased now.

I wasn't a very good student. To begin with, I was lazy, besides my health was poor. I got sick pretty often in childhood, I was a bad trencherman and Mother suffered a lot because of that. I missed classes because when I got sick, then I had to catch up. In spite of that I wasn't a poor student, medium I would say.

I was a young Octobrist 19, then a pioneer [see All-union pioneer organization] 20, and then a Komsomol 21 member. Like most children back in that time I was very politically motivated. Political classes were held on a regular basis as well as lectures on international events. We knew that all capitalist countries were enemies of the USSR. That is why when repressions [see Great Terror] 22 commenced in 1936, we took them as divulgement of enemies of the Soviets, who wanted to undermine the Soviet regime. I remember how at the classes we were painting over the

portraits of the state and military leaders who turned out to be enemies of the people 23. Probably there were children of the repressed in our class, but we didn't know about it. There were no meetings in our school where children of the repressed were stigmatized because they didn't recognize the enemies in their parents. There were such types of meetings in other schools. I think that the director of our school, a Jew named Mikhail Goldstein, deliberately created a benevolent atmosphere in our school. My parents must have discussed such arrests at home, when they spoke in sotto or began speaking Yiddish all of a sudden. They never discussed it with us.

When Hitler came to power in Germany, fascism was condemned in the USSR. We didn't consider fascism to be referred to us. We thought it would be beyond us. Only in 1939, when Hitler's troops attacked Poland [see Invasion of Poland] 24, our family came across fascism. Mother's elder sister Bronya lived in Poland with her family. When the Germans came to Poland, her husband was taken to the concentration camp, but Bronya and her children managed to come to the USSR. Hardly had she crossed the border, was she arrested and sent to the camp for defectors, and from there they were exiled to Siberia, to the town of Soli. Mother tried to make arrangements for them to be exempt from the camp. She went to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to warrant for them. Finally, her attempts were successful and they were released from the camp. Bronya and her children weren't entitled to live in Moscow, only at least 100 kilometers away from the city. Mother managed to move Bronya's elder daughter to Moscow. Irina stayed with us until she got married. Bronya's son Mikhail volunteered to join the Red Army. After the Finnish campaign [see Soviet-Finnish War] 25 he came to Moscow for short visits, but he didn't live with us. After the war all of them moved to Kharkov and in the 1970s Bronya's children immigrated to Israel. Bronya didn't live to see that; she died in the late 1960s.

Father didn't take part in our upbringing. Our mother took care of our nutrition and health as well as our patriotic upbringing. We grew up firmly believing that we had the happiest childhood thanks to Stalin and the Party. We knew that the Soviet regime was the most impartial, the Soviet army was the strongest and invincible and everybody ought to be strong, brave and loyal to the communist ideas, even ready to sacrifice life if needed. At that time there were a lot of militarized circles and organizations. At school I joined the society OSOAVIACHIMA [Editor's note: a society of assistance in defense and aviation and chemical construction, it was a mass volunteer organization of USSR citizens, existing from 1927 till 1948. The aim was to assist the army in military training of civilians and nurturing patriotic spirit in them]. I finished cavalry school. It was really hard for me, because I was feeble and sallow. I went in for sport, poured cold water on my body trying to get stronger. We boys weren't even allowed to approach the horses. One of the pass-fail tests at school was vine cutting. If such a guy like I was to ride a horse - he would either fall and injure himself or injure the horse with the cavalry sword. That's why there was a merry-go-round in the cavalry school surrounded by the vine. We were sitting on the wooden horses of the merry-go-round and cut the vine. It was hilarious.

After the Finnish campaign the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact 26 was signed. Even now I cannot comprehend how Germany, the enemy, turned into our friend and ally. All our favorite antifascist movies that had been shown in the USSR for a long time, were banned, namely 'Professor Mamlock' 27, and 'The Oppenheim Family.' [The feature film 'The Oppenheim Family' is about the tragic fate of a Jewish family in Nazi Germany. The film was shot by Russian director and producer Grigoriy Roshal and screened since 1939.]

In 1937 Grandfather Pinhas Kravets died in Odessa. My parents and Lev went to the funeral. My sister and I were left with Lidia. Grandfather was buried in accordance with the Jewish ritual in the Jewish cemetery in Odessa. In 1940 my maternal grandmother Enya died. Mother went to her funeral in Kharkov. At that time father couldn't leave work; my sister and I stayed with him. After Grandmother Enya's death, my mother insisted that Grandmother Etl should move in with us. She did. Mother started working as an accountant at a plant not far from our house. Grandmother was the homemaker.

My elder brother Lev lived with us. At school my brother took an active part in Komsomol work and after finishing school and his army service Lev entered the Supreme Party School 28. He was sent to the district party committee in one of the remote districts in Moscow for that time, Sokolniki. Having returned from the army Lev went to Uman to visit Grandmother Etl and he married a Ukrainian girl there and brought her to Moscow. First, they lived with us, then Lev was given a room in a house constructed for the employees of the party committee. They moved into the new apartment. Before the very outbreak of World War II, Lev sent his pregnant wife to Uman, to her parents. Her son Vladimir was born in August 1941 in Uman. Lev didn't live to see his son. He went in the lines during the first days of the war and perished in 1941. In January 1942 his wife was notified that Captain Lev Kravets was reported missing in November 1941.

During the War

In June 1941 I finished the 8th grade. Mother wanted to send me and my sister to her kin in Kharkov, but she didn't manage to do that. On 22nd June 1941 Molotov 29 held a speech regarding the outbreak of war. All schoolchildren who were in Moscow rushed to school. We were taught how to quench fire bombs. We took part in fighting battalions 30. When Moscow was bombed, peoples' volunteer corps' were on the roofs of the houses equipped with boxes with sand and tongs. Luckily our house wasn't hit by the bomb. Mother, Grandmother and my sister stayed in the subway every night. Metro trains weren't operating, the rails were covered with wooden cover and people slept on them. In the morning, people went back home. At night I stayed to watch the apartment.

In July 1941 the Komsomol organization of our school started collecting students of the 8th, 9th and 10th grades for harvesting in Moscow oblast. We were distributed in squads, our parents gave us food, and in the evening they took us to the Rizhskiy train stations with the trains and locomotives. [Editor's note: There are nine main railroad stations in Moscow. The stations are named after train routes: from Yaroslavlskiy train station the trains leave in the direction of Yaroslavl, from Belarusskiy train station in the direction of Belarus, from Kiev train station in the direction of Kiev etc.]. In the morning we arrived at Izdeshkovo station, located on the bend of the Dnepr, between the cities of Vyazma and Smolensk [360 km west of Moscow]. We got off the train singing loudly. Then militaries came over to us and said that we were in immediate battle area, so we were supposed to keep quiet, and not unmask ourselves. The Germans were close by! It was glowing on the horizon. It seemed to us that it was the front-line, burning Smolensk, the city where our soldiers were fighting desperately trying to break through the siege.

We were taken to the bank of the Dnepr. Komsomol and party activists informed us that we had come to construct a defense line, stretching from the White to the Black Sea to block the fascist invaders. They took our passports and Komsomol membership cards and assigned students to be the foremen. The tools were to be supplied in the evening. We had neither lodging nor food. There

was a village close to us, but people were evacuated from there and the cattle were taken away. There was a mental asylum on the outskirts of the village. The inmates were left by the personnel. But there was some food in the hospital. In the morning picks, spades and sketches were brought. The Dnepr was supposed to be a natural barrier, and beyond that we had to dig a moat in the shape of a trapeze six meters deep and with a bottom width of two meters. Then, beyond the moat, we were supposed to dig the trenches for our fire points and pits for the German tanks. Having finished the digging the militaries were supposed to come over and cement everything.

During the first days of our work pictures were taken from the German planes. Then their leaflets were released from the planes reading, 'Children, go to your mothers and fathers! You have nothing to do here.' After a while when we ran out of food and started starving they released boxes containing one herring, hard biscuits and the same leaflets. We rushed to those boxes, and then were shaking our fists at the leaving planes. From time to time we observed the groups of our soldiers who managed to break through besieged Smolensk. They were filthy and exhausted. Many of them were wounded. They shared the few things they had - be it a rye rusk or lump of sugar. They put down the addresses of our parents just to write a short message saying that we were alive. In the daytime the boys took up digging and the girls went to the forest to pick some berries, roots, and mushrooms for us to have something to eat. All of us were dressed in summer clothes, but it was getting colder and colder. We were through with the first line of the trenches and were waiting for the military to cement them. But they didn't show up.

In early September German troops started the first bombing of our construction site. It was the time of panic. People were scattering towards the river. Many died. I ran until I fell in the pit. I wasn't strong enough to get out of it, but it kept me safe. In the morning the students and senior pupils buried the perished. There were a lot of them. Wounded children were crying from the horror and pain. There were neither doctors, nor nurses. We tore our clothes to make bandages for the wounded. I vaguely remember those things as I was in shock. In the afternoon party activists came from Vyazma. They took the wounded and left. We stayed. It was cold. At night we clustered together trying to keep each other warm with our bodies. At daytime we kept on working without paying attention to the constant roaring from Smolensk and the bright artillery flashes.

The Germans stopped bombing, but we turned out to be forgotten and unneeded. We couldn't tell our troops from German ones. We were scared. Girls were sobbing. We boys tried to keep cool, though we were about to burst into tears. Now over 60 years have passed and I still dread the idea what might have happened to us if Germans had captured us without documents. Dozens of thousands or even hundreds of thousands of schoolchildren and students were working on that defense line. The works were performed until October 1941. We couldn't work; our tools were useless. We were left in the lurch and we were aware of it.

In early October at night the cavalry regiment came to our construction site. Then I found out that it was the cavalry regiment of the regular army that was to take up position here. But nobody told them that there were children in that place. The military men were terrified. The commander made arrangements to get us all together and a soldier started to take us to a spare space. We got cold. We were crying. They counted us. They put two soldiers to each hundred and set them aside. There were over a thousand of us. The injured were placed on carts; those who were fine went on foot. We were taken to Vyazma. Then I found out that they took us through the only 'doorway' which wasn't shot at by the Germans. They rescued us.

We were brought to the municipal Ispolkom 31 in the center of Vyazma and then the militaries left. Then some Komsomol activists gave us passports and Komsomol membership cards. They gave us food: a loaf of bread for two and a tank of sour cream for all of us. Here they were picking students and 10th-grade pupils to form marching squads. They were taken aside, given military uniforms and weapons. They didn't take any military - just left as they said 'to immortality.' All of them died in the suburbs of Smolensk. There were several busses. Girls took them. The boys stayed. That night Vyazma was severely bombed and we were sheltered in the basement of the Ispolkom.

In the morning I decided to go to the train station. The cars with shells were exploding and I wanted to look at that. I was standing there and watching cars blast and burn. Some officer clad in cape and helmet came up to me and took my hand. I wanted him to leave me, but it turned out to be my brother Lev, with bristles and dirt on his face. He didn't recognize me at once either. He took me for a boy who wanted to go to the front lines. Lev said he would be taking me with him and we went to the Ispolkom. Lev came up to the senior officer and said that he wanted to take his brother. I also asked my brother to take my friend David Akselbant with us. Lev took us to the sanitary train, which carried wounded from Smolensk. The train was heading towards the East, to the rear. So, my brother saved my life. Lev asked the engineer to take us to Moscow. Lev hugged me, kissed and left without saying good-bye. It was the last time I saw him.

I don't remember how I got home. I only remember my mother and grandmother bursting into tears when they saw me. They tucked me in bed and called a doctor. I had pneumonia, hepatitis, dystrophy and all kinds of other diseases. Mother and Grandmother took care of me the best way they could. In the evening Grandmother and Rena went to the metro and Mother stayed with me. Father wasn't with us at that time. In August 1941 he went to the front as a volunteer. Bombings took place every night. By mid-October Moscow became a front-line city, and on 6th October we were declared besieged. All plants and enterprises were evacuated to the rear. The government moved to Kuibyshev [Samara at present]. The city was taken by anarchy and panic. Stores were plundered. Military patrols shot the plunderers on the spot. There were rumors that Moscow was full of diversionists.

Mother went to the plant in the morning, but it had been closed down. She rushed home and started hastily packing the most important things. Grandmother flatly refused to leave with us saying that my mother had a lot of things to do even without her. She said she would be waiting for us to come back. Mother hired a cabman, and we loaded our things in a barrow truck. Our eyes were full of tears as we said goodbye to Grandmother. Grandmother didn't see us again. In late October she went to a bread store while Moscow was being raided. There were our anti-aircraft guns near the store and a shell pierced my grandmother's head. She died at once.

We came to the train station. It was crowded with people. We could hear lamentation and wailing. Mother left my sister and me and rushed to the booking-offices. She came back closer to the evening. Her coat was torn, but her face beamed with happiness: she managed to get tickets to Sverdlovsk. The train was supposed to leave a long time before, but they hadn't even announced boarding. Then, the sirens were screeching - the warning of a coming air raid. When the air-raid was over there was a rumor that the train was on the platform. It is difficult to picture how my mother managed to get two children and baggage on the train. At the mere thought that we had made it, some militaries showed up ordering us to leave the train. The train was given to transport the wounded to the rear. We took the locomotive, and were transferred to another platform. The

locomotive was about to depart, people were jamming. Mother had to leave our things behind to hold me and Rena by our hands for us not to be separated. We managed to squeeze in the train, but we had neither things nor food. All we had was some money and mother's wedding ring. Then I found out that mother had a gold watch, which used to belong to my grandpa Pinhas. Before he died, Grandfather had given it to my father, who left it with my mother before going in the lines so she could give it to Lev or me. Mother kept the watch even in the hardest days, and gave it to me after my return from the war. I still keep it. I will give it to my grandson.

The train left the station quietly. In the morning, at some station we saw the shambles of the train we had to leave as per order of the militaries. The trip was long. We were hungry. Our train had long stops, letting the other trains pass and go ahead. The trains with the wounded were ahead of us. It took us more than a month to get to Sverdlovsk, covering over 800 kilometers to the north-east of Moscow. It was winter when we arrived in Sverdlovsk. We settled in the club on the train station square. We went to the bathhouse. While we were bathing, our clothes and boots were sanitized. We were given food cards for three days. Three days later, my mother received a job assignment to work as a typist in the district Ispolkom of the village Zaikovo, Sverdlovsk oblast. We went to Zaikovo. The local population wasn't very amiable: we weren't the first evacuated people in the village. Mother was employed at the Ispolkom. They gave her the address of our lodging. There were some more evacuated people in the same place. The hostess gave us a couch in the corner of the room behind a curtain. We sat down and burst out crying. Then she gave us warm potatoes and our life seemed a little better.

In January 1942 I went to the 9th grade of the local school. I had missed a year and a half, so I had to study hard to catch up. I couldn't study at home as the hostess prohibited us to light a kerosene lamp to save costs. I had to study in the evening in my classroom at school. I started working in the kolkhoz 32 during the summer vacation to get some products for the workday units - trudodni 33. Besides, we were fed in the kolkhoz canteen. I finished the 9th grade with good marks. One day I read an announcement in the paper regarding preparatory courses by the Ural Industrial Institute. I sent my application there. Soon, I got an invitation letter from the institute.

The classes started in late May 1942, so I went to Sverdlovsk. I started studying. Then my mother and sister came to me. Mother left her previous work-place and found a job in Sverdlovsk in the electroplating shop of a machine building plant in order to get a food card [see card system] 34. After classes I worked as an assistant of a turner in the mechanics workshop of the mining institute, so I also got a food card. So, we had two food cards given to workers and one dependence card given to my sister, and thus managed to get by somehow. I also did some odd jobs. I was loading shells and aviation bombs.

We were notified that my father, Lev and my grandmother had died. We also were informed of the mass execution of the Jews in Uman. In late 1941 we received a notification that my father Somolon Kravets was reported missing. Only after the war some of my father's front-line fellows came to my mother and told her the details of how my father died. Their unarmed battalion left Moscow and went to Mozhaisk, the point where they were supposed to join a certain military unit and get ammunition. But they didn't manage to reach that place. On their way German spies on motorcycles chased them down and killed almost everybody, including my father. Few survivors came back to Moscow. So, that was the way my father died.

My father's brothers Isaac and Rafael were also in the lines. I had a reason to hate the fascists, so I decided to go to the front as a volunteer. In July 1942 together with my fellow students I went to the headquarters of the Ural military circle requesting to be drafted into the lines. The general, the commander of the military circle, tried to convince us that we were too young to be in the lines, but we were persistent and went there over and over again. In the end, each of us wrote an application. The general sealed them in an envelope and sent us to the military enlistment office in Sverdlovsk.

The commander read the memo from the general and ordered us to come the next morning with the necessary things and food for three days. I didn't know how to tell Mother about it. I pondered over how to break the news to her when she came back home in the evening. At last, when my sister went to bed, I told Mother about my intention to leave the next day. She was very sad, but she didn't try to talk me into staying. In the morning my mother saw me off to the military enlistment office and said good-bye.

I was assigned to Squad 38 consisting of 50 people. Then the officer came, looked through the list, aligned us and we left for the train station. I didn't doubt that we would be taken to the lines. We arrived in Perm late at night. We got off the train, aligned and came to a building with a big iron gate. They let us in, closed the gate and told us to have a rest. The following morning two marine officers and our commander came. They took us to a classroom and told us that now we would be taking exams in Russian language and literature and mathematics. We were told that those who passed the exams would go to the navy school, and the rest would go to the replacement depot. It was a navy school, evacuated from Azov to Perm. In the morning we had breakfast and then sat our exams. From our entire group only five of us got excellent marks for all exams, including me. The rest were sent to the replacement depot, and from there to the lines. I never saw any of them again.

The five of us were taken to the navy school base. We were taught the navy courses. We had to learn the statute. In two weeks there was a board meeting of the mandate committee of the school. The chairman of the board was the general-lieutenant Kvade. I must have looked feeble because the members of the board suggested teaching me weaponry, signaling, and tooling. Finally the headmaster of the school asked me what I wanted to do. I said firmly that I would like to be an aircraft mechanic. Everybody burst into laughter. Somebody said that I wouldn't reach the airscrew. Then one of the members of the board, Captain Danchenko, asked to transfer me to him. He heard the objection saying that I was feeble and had no stamina for big physical exertion. The doctor who was also a member of the board asked me to squat for ten times, then he checked my pulse, and then he asked me to squat again. He checked my pulse again and said: 'By looking at him he seems feeble, but his heart is working like a clock.' After his words I was sent to Captain Danchenko. Four of my friends were already with him. We were trained to be operators of aircraft radar stations for the USSR Navy. He picked five people, because there were five fleets in the USSR, so one of us for each fleet. We studied for half a year, until December 1942. We graduated as air navigators-radar operators in the rank of master sergeant.

There I fell in love for the first time. The headmaster of the school Kvade, a Frenchman who had lived in Russia for a long time, once informed us that the Leningrad Opera and Ballet Theater had been evacuated to Perm. Kvade invited vocalists and choreographers from the theater to come to our school. The cadets had an audition and those who had an ear for music and a good voice, were

enrolled in the choir. Kvade told the rest that they should be taught ballroom dances because every officer, in his words, was supposed to be well-mannered and a good dancer. Kvade said that we would dance at the victory day feast in Berlin. At that time we couldn't comprehend it as there was a war going on, bloodshed, and we were to be taught dancing and etiquette! But how could we argue with the commander! The cadets built a dance pavilion by the entrance to the school. Local girls were invited to our dancing classes. They taught us how to ask a girl for a dance, how to leave in case she refused. Of course, we learnt how to dance. Those who danced carelessly were given two to three extra duties. That's why everybody was trying hard. At dancing classes I met a local girl called Izolda and fell in love with her. We met only at dancing classes and only danced together. The rest of the time I only dreamt of seeing her. I never saw her again.

In January 1943 I finished school and was assigned to the 15th separate reconnoiter regiment of the Baltic Navy, which was conferred the [Order of the Combat] Red Banner 35 twice. I had to go to Leningrad. It was the time when the city was still besieged [see Blockade of Leningrad] 36. I was to be dispatched from Moscow, so I came to my native town for a day. There was nobody from my kin or acquaintances there. I corresponded with my mother and knew that her kin from Kharkov had been evacuated to Chimkent, Uzbekistan. My mother and sister went to them after my departure. Our apartment in Moscow was occupied. There was a woman with two children. Her husband was in the lines. She suggested that I should stay overnight. I was lying on my sofa among the things I was used to since childhood, but I couldn't fall asleep. The next morning I went there with the director of the housing department and attesting witnesses to make the inventory of our belongings.

Then I was to leave Moscow for besieged Leningrad via the 'Road of Life' 37 over the frozen lake [Ladoga], accompanied by incessant firing. The regiment was positioned in a Leningrad suburb. From there I took a car to Oranienbaum bridgehead. [?ranienbaum was the name of the town of Lomonosov before 1948, in Leningrad district, with a dock on the Southern coast of the Gulf of Finland. Oranienbaum bridgehead was built in September 1941 during defense actions at the Leningrad front.] There were four navy bomber reconnaissance ICBM-2 on the lake by the city of Valdai [now Lomonosov]. I didn't have to serve there for a long time, because when German aviation attacked, those four aircrafts burned down like candles. I came back to Leningrad, where the main regiment forces were positioned. I was assigned as operator of the radar station. The marines met me with a mug full of spirit. Having drunk it I felt dead. I slept for two days in a row. I came around, but every time I had water, I felt queasy.

During the breakdown the regiment commander, Hero of the Soviet Union 38 Usachev, asked who the radar operator was. I briskly cried out: I. He looked at me and asked if I would be able to turn on the radar. Everybody left except for the cockpit crew and me. The aircraft bomber reconnaissance was disguised and placed separately. It was guarded by a special sentry. I climbed to the cockpit and turned on the station. When the screen lit, I was screaming with joy. The commander ordered to get the plane ready for the flight. They helped me put a parachute on. It was forbidden to be in the cockpit without a parachute. We went towards the Finnish Gulf. It was my first reconnaissance flight. I didn't know how to jump with a parachute, but I wasn't scared. The most important thing for me was to show that I could. I traced the target on radar and told the commander at what distance it was. He came to the target and made sure that the distance was correct, so we were seeking another target. It was my only experience with that plane; it couldn't

be used in the Baltic Fleet. The aircraft was transferred to the Northern Fleet.

My cockpit crew was transferred to dive bomber remodeled into bomber- reconnaissance. The plane didn't have a radar-set so I had to take the place of radio-operator gunner. At school we were taught how to use onboard guns. One thing at school, but in the battle it is quite different. My first battle flight was very sad for me and for our plane. We were in the air for 15 minutes when a German plane showed up above the sea. It made a run-in immediately. I was supposed to repel the attack. I was supposed to take out the gun from the well of the left board and carry on the top edge to fire on the top. I started to fire from the well and crashed with bullets the right board of my plane with the control cables: steers of depth, turn, altitude. Having fears that the plane might crash, I decided to fasten those cables somehow. I unzipped the parachute, took my fur overall off and covered those steel cables with my overall. In a jiff, I was freezing. It was frosty and windy winter-time. The cockpit was open. I could hear over my headphones that the commander talked to the air navigator saying that is was such a pity the gunner had been killed in his first battle flight. They didn't understand that it was me who was shooting; they thought it was the Germans. He made only one run-in, and it was me who crashed our plane. I don't remember how long the flight was, but when we came back to the base, I was like a frozen clump. I was stripped naked, put on the tent of the plane and rubbed up with snow .Then I was taken to our aid station. I stayed there for three days. I was afraid that I would be assigned to the penalty squad.

When I was discharged from the hospital, I was even scared to go to the canteen to have something to eat. When I decided to come to the canteen, nobody reproached me. They even encircled me and compassionately asked how I was doing. The plane was repaired. All holes were mended. After that they didn't give me assignments for two weeks. Every day at the breakdown all were given assignments, except me - they didn't include me in any cockpit crew. Then they decided to include me in the crew of the regiment commander. I think I survived owing to a great crew of pilots.

Then I was taught how to shoot. An elderly gunner called Chernobai said if the German was higher up or at level with us, I should tell the head pilot, 'aft stick!,' and in a jiff I would be higher than the German so I would be able to shoot at him. If the German saw the fire, he wouldn't approach. Such a piece of advice was very handy for me. When I was in the air and a German plane was approaching I cried out to the head pilot: 'aft stick!' He gained altitude and I was continuously firing at the German so he didn't approach. So, we did our reconnoitering and came back safely. I had flown on my remodeled old plane until 1944 - the time when American planes were given to us by lend-lease [lend-lease is the system of transfer (loan or lease) of weaponry, ammunition, strategic raw materials, provision etc.; supplies in terms of lend-lease were made by the USA to the ally-countries on anti-Hitler coalition during World War II. The law on lend-lease was adopted by the USA Congress in 1941]. Americans sent us the planes Catalina [sea gunboats], torpedo carrier Boston-?20G and one big Boeing-25. Since that time I was an air navigator on those planes. Those planes were considerably different from ours. For example, Catalina could have 24 non- stop flights and reach an altitude of 10,000 meters. It was a hermetic plane, where seven to eight people could fit comfortably. People could even walk on that plane. At that time that plane seemed huge to me, but today when I see it in the museum I think, 'God, what a tiny plane!'

At that time our aviation was called naval. Battle ships, torpedo boats and submarines are the striking force of the fleet. All other troops of the navy are considered auxiliary. These are aviation,

seaman gunners, artillery. Armored trains along the coast are also auxiliary troops. But the course of war, especially the Leningrad siege, turned things upside down: aviation, not the battle ships, was the striking force of the Baltic Fleet [this was not observed on other fleets]. Part of the Baltic Fleet was locked in Leningrad and most of the battle ships were stuck in Kronstadt due to severe frosts. The exits to the sea were barred with antisubmarine nets and mine fields. Neither fleet nor submarines could put to sea. Only boats with a shallow draft could put to sea: barges and motor boats. Some submarines were able to break through antisubmarine nets, put to sea and take part in battles.

Aviation took up most of the load: reconnaissance, sinking adversary ships, attacking land troops. Aviation was supposed to find antisubmarine nets, and spare navigating channels in 1944. The Svirsk-Petrozavodsk operation was underway. There was a large hydro power station on the river Svir. If the dam of that power station was crashed, the water from the pond would stream to the land, where German troops were positioned, and sink them. After that the assault could be started. For that operation to be successful it was important that the sea bomb was released precisely for the dam to be undermined. It was a pinpoint job. The following factors had to be considered: the speed of the stream, the direction of the wind, the way the bomb was released. It was supposed to reach the dam and not to explode before that. The commander of my crew, a Jew called Pavel Skvirskiy was to prepare and execute the operation. We were thoroughly getting ready on the aerodrome in Panevezhis. We made the following lime drawing on the landing field: Svir in the area of the power station, with the turns and bends, and dam across the river. Of course, we didn't release bombs, but ingots weighing the same as a bomb. We had been flying from morning till night releasing those ingots in order to calculate at what distance and altitude they should be released. Skvirskiy was trained so well, that he could visually determine the required parameters.

On the day scheduled for the operation we flew to the designated point and Skvirskiy firmly and accurately released two depth bombs in the river, which reached the dam and exploded. Water flooded the German positions and our troops advanced to attack the Germans. The operation was under command of Marshal Meretskov [Meretskov, Kiril Afanasievich (1897-1968): Soviet military commander, Marshal of the Soviet Union (1944). During the Great Patriotic War he was commander of a number of armies and fronts.] It was a success giving an opportunity to Marshal Bagramyan to attack on the Baltic front. [Bagramyan, Ivan Khristoforovich (1897-1982): Soviet military commander, Marshal of the Soviet Union (1944, 1955). During WWII he was army commander, since 1943 commander of troops of the 1st Baltic and 3rd Byelorussian fronts.]

In 1944 our regiment was to seek antisubmarine nets, blocking the Finnish Gulf from the Finnish coast to ours. When we were looking for the nets, two German planes attacked us, and our plane fell and crashed. When we were falling I fell out of the cockpit. The trawler picked me up. I lost my parachute and my bunny boot. I got frozen during the minutes of my stay in the cold water. They rubbed me warm. I stayed in the regiment hospital for a few days. Then I joined the lines. One pilot of our regiment, Nikolay Shapkin, managed to take a picture of the nets. It was a very difficult task. Aerial photography could be performed only at an altitude of no lower than 1,000-1,200 meters on a sunny day under condition of direct sunlight - when the sea was transparent. Germans were aware of those technical conditions of aerial photography. When such a rare sunny day occurred and the Baltic Sea was calm, Germans paroled and guarded everything. Every time the regiment commander sent a crew to perform aerial photography, it didn't come back. Our regiment lost five

of our best crews .Shapkin neglected all instructions and shot the photographs at an altitude of 100-200 meters. Right in front of the Germans he flew across the Finnish Gulf, performed aerial photography and returned. Since it was an afternoon, and the aircraft wasn't reflected in the sea, the Germans didn't notice him. Nikolay photographed navigation channels and the fleet had the chance to put to sea. After that operation Nikolay was conferred the title 'Hero of the Soviet Union.'

There was another plane crash I had to go through. In 1945 when we left Palanga for reconnaissance in the sea we were attacked by two Messerschmidts on the way back. The pilot must have been wounded, as he didn't bring the plane to the water and bumped into a sand hill. The plane was deformed and the pilot hurt his cranium. The plane was corrugated. The radio operator gunner was squeezed at the back. At that moment I was in the cockpit, in the turret. The turning turret is a device where doubled guns are fastened. It is turning in circle for all-round visibility. It was more modern American equipment. That turret ruptured along diameter and the gun carriage pressed down on my thorax. I lost consciousness and came around when I heard: 'Is anybody alive?' It seemed to me that I said, 'There is!', and later I was told that I gave a squeak. They could take me out only by sawing the turret, because the plane was deformed. We weren't far from the aerodrome, so our support staff and doctor came over. When they took the load off, I was choking with blood. My ribs weren't fractured, but dented squeezing my lungs and diaphragm. I was conscious in the hospital when I got a cast reaching my neck. I could hardly breathe. I couldn't even sneeze. There was no roentgen unit in the hospital at that time, so surgeons rectified my ribs by grope. They managed to put me together somehow. In a month I was back in the lines. Since then I was called by the nickname 'Lucky Kravets.'

At night our aviation didn't fly as we didn't have any means for that. When Americans gave us one plane, equipped with radar, Borzov, the commodore of the 1st mine and torpedo regiment, and Hero of the Soviet Union, for the first time made the decision to launch a torpedo attack at night. They needed a radar expert. I was assigned to take part in the preparation and execution of that operation. It happened in 1944. That night being a member of the crew of regiment commander Borzov, I located and torpedoed of the German transport with a full load weight of 12,000 tons with the help of radar. It was a big success and that operation changed the tactics of the military operations on the Baltic Sea.

When we came back from the flight, Borzov aligned the crew, took his Order of the Red Star 37 from his jacket and attached it on mine saying, 'Wear mine before you receive yours.' I was wearing his order for a couple of weeks. Then I received my Order of the Red Star and gave Borzov's back. It was my third award. My first and biggest award was the Medal for the Liberation of Leningrad 38. It is the most precious medal for me. I think all Baltic marines take pride in the Medal for the Liberation of Leningrad because it was very hard to get it. Then I received a Medal for Military Merits 39, and then the Order of the Red Star. There were more awards afterwards.

Torpedoing adversary troops was very jeopardous. Aviation torpedoes were used for that purpose. They were a little bit lighter than the navy ones - about 800 kilos. For a torpedo to hit the target it was necessary for the plane to be positioned along the center of the ship, as it was a stationary target for it. The air navigator was to take the plane precisely to the center of the ship and the plane descended to the level of the largest mast, i.e. about 30-50 meters, depending on the type of the ship and torpedo. In this case the torpedo wouldn't take a vertical position, but it was positioned as if it went with the plane so it could enter the waters.

Within that time the ship was moving forward, but that distance was enough for the torpedo to come out of the water and rush to the ship. But the enemy wouldn't patiently wait for the torpedo to be dropped and would open fire first. Besides, there was another peril: the plane was supposed to be flown above the ship with its most vulnerable part - belly being open to the enemy. If the enemy didn't lose equanimity, he could easily crash the plane, which had nowhere to go being defenseless during the maneuver. There were two ways to escape attack - it might be possible to make a pitch to the right, but the altitude was only 30 meters during that maneuver, if the plane dumped too low it would touch water with the wing. In this case, taking into account the speed, the wing would be immediately cut and the plane would sink. It might be possible to make a pitch to the left. All depends on the skills of the pilot. It would be very hard to exit from pitch at a low altitude and with such a heavy missile carrier. They say during torpedoing the crew's chances were fifty-fifty. By the end of the war the Germans had changed the tactics; they were shooting at the water, not at the plane. The shells hit the water and created a big column of water which crashed the plane for sure.

I cannot say that my first battle was the hardest. It was scary all the time. But the feeling of fear was momentous during the first seconds of flight. There was a brutal fear when leaving the aerodrome: it gave you the creeps and you had a lump in the throat. But it didn't last long as you see the eyes of your fellow who got over that feeling. When the work is done, you don't fear, just get focused on things to be done. You are to be responsible. Then you calm down. Later on, when you return to your aerodrome, having a meal at the canteen, taking some rest in the cubicle, you are as if in the battle for the second time, analyzing your mistakes, bombers and have an understanding how to escape them. Another thing: you shouldn't think over wrongdoings, perils, or remember the perished comrades before going into battle. I noticed many times, if somebody had such thoughts he was embraced with fear and that person died.

There is another factor known by navy pilots, though this factor isn't revealed by the theoreticians. Thirty percent of navy pilots are killed in action, because the pilot loses the perception of land when he is above the sea. Over the sea, when the coast cannot be seen, the pilot doesn't feel where the land is and where the sky. Things in the sky are reflected in the water. This sensor perception leads to the state when the pilot doesn't perceive what to do with the handle. Instead of going down, he would soar into the sky or would rush into the abyss because he doesn't understand his position in space. If there are no ships and no planes close to you, you have the feeling as if you don't move. If there is a shadow from the plane, you just see it. You hang with your shadow. You look at the propellers, they are rotating, you look at the gauges - you can see that you are moving, but a pilot loses the feeling that he is moving. This is especially true so for the fighter pilots - as there is a sole pilot in the plane. If there is a crew in the plane it is easier. In case the pilot loses control, the air navigator might give him a prompt - and all feelings are restored.

We understood that in 1944 German pilots couldn't fight in the open sea. Once our fighter went towards the sea and two German planes were attacking close to him within visibility of the coast. Our pilots moved deeper towards the sea, but the Germans were lacking behind, and then turned back towards the coast. They didn't have the trained pilots who knew how to find their way in the open sea. We weren't trained either, but we understood those things rather swiftly. When we understood that the Germans couldn't fight away from a visible coast, all our pilots started taking advantage of that situation when German fighters were attacking.

There were flights, when a certain task had to be fulfilled, and there were free hunting ones - just having a look what was going on in a certain part of the sea or land. Our commandment was very interested in the territory of Pomeransk bay, because the German fleet was positioned there and sea transport was formed to supply the northern army. Forage, ammunition, products as well as troops were transported by trains. Then they were loaded on sea transport and sent to the northern army. Our task was to hunt German sea transport. Germans had their military aviation which was chasing us. Once, we went on such a free hunting looking for the sea transport. It was a beautiful sunny day.

The sky wasn't clouded and we were enjoying that scenery. I looked out the cockpit. On our way back a German fighter Fokke- Wolf-190 suddenly showed up in front of us. It was a powerful plane, it was meant for one pilot, but it was well-armed: a 16-mm cannon was on the nose of the plane with two heavy guns. If that fighter started fire, there would be nothing left of the target. I saw the face of the German pilot; I even remember that his glasses were on his forehead. He also didn't expect us, his gaze dropped. We were flying at the same altitude and could collide any minute. The German fighter pulled the handle, soared above us, turned back and rushed into attack. But he must have run out of shells, as he missed a couple of times and fled. I was at a loss and couldn't even stretch my arm out to the gun. I had compunction for a long time - how could I have been so inattentive? The commander of the crew didn't even understand what had happened - he had looked ahead not to the side as I had.

Navy aviation was considered to be among the elite troops. We were supplied very well. The pilots were fed the best way. Every day we had wheat bread, meat, 20 grams of butter and 20 grams of sugar. They must have taken into account that during a two-hour flight each member of the crew lost about three to four kilograms of weight due to high energy consumption.

We lived where we were told to - be it a dug out or a non-demolished house, and sometimes right in the open land. We made a fire in the center, covered the ground with pine branches and spent the night in a sleeping-bag. Once we were lucky to settle comfortably. In 1944 Finland came out of war and became a neutral state. Our commandment decided to transfer four of our planes to Helsinki to reconnoiter directly via the coasts of Sweden. I was a member of the crew in Helsinki. We settled in the hotel of a Russian immigrant, who had fled from Petersburg to Finland in 1917. We had meals in his restaurant. In 1993 I was in Finland for a visit and visited that restaurant again. Now his son is the owner of the restaurant. He said that his father used to tell him about Soviet pilots who lived in his hotel during the war.

The technicians had to stay by the planes at the aerodrome. In wartime any day might be your last one, but even in wartime I felt the age of adolescence. I fell in love with a girl who worked at the meteorological observation station during my training at the aerodrome in Panevezhis, Lithuania. Once, the commander sent me to get the weather report. I was given the data by this girl. I don't remember her name, just her face. We got acquainted and I always came to her to get the weather data, at the meteorological observation station. It was a long way to go, and nobody was willing to do that. I was running there if somebody told me that the weather report was required. I wanted to see her. Soon, our training was over and we left Panevezhis. I never saw her again.

There was another time I fell in love, though it was preceded by an unpleasant event. In 1944 we were shot by an anti-aircraft gun and the fragments of shells hit the accumulator, placed in the

middle of the plane, the bomb door. I noticed the smell of acid. If it came out, the plane would explode: the single-wire system of 27 voltage would fire and the plane would explode. I was closer to the bomb door and I had to do away with the hazard. I always took my cutlass on flights. It was a big help at that time: I cut the upholstery, the wall between the cockpit and bomb door, and propping to the board with my legs I managed to reach the accumulator. Acid was coming out of the accumulator, and I put my goggles to the forehead for them not to be covered by acid. I didn't have a spanner and I started to shake the wire fastened to the accumulator with the clamp. I took it off. At that moment I was burnt with acid. My lashes were burnt and my eyes hurt real badly. But it wasn't considered a trauma and I still was supposed to take part in battle flights. The doctor of our squad had no idea how to treat eyes and he constantly put lapis imperialis in my eyes to kill the pain, but my eyes were getting more and more inflamed.

Soon we were transferred to the aerodrome of the Estonian town Piarnu. One of the officers said that he had seen a house, from which people were leaving with eye bandages. There might have been an oculist there. I understood that I was taking a risk by going to an unknown doctor, who might be hostile towards Soviet soldiers. I didn't tell the commander where I was going but I told one of my friends. I said if I didn't come back, they would know where to look for me. One of the soldiers was willing to go with me in order to protect me in case somebody wanted to harm me. A girl in a white robe opened the door. She didn't speak Russian, so I just pointed to my inflamed eyes and she let us in. There were patients in the hall. The doctor stepped out of his office. He was a tall red-haired man with huge arms and rolled up sleeves. I went up to him and showed him my eyes. He turned back to his office. The nurse pushed me to the door of the office and put me in the seat. The doctor examined my eyes, then said something to the nurse. She gave him some drops and he dripped them in my eyes. I had a smart pain and turned blind at once. I wanted to take the pistol from the holster and shoot the viper! But I restrained myself, and gradually the pain ceased and then it was gone. Then he gave me some more medicine and there was no pang. The doctor said in German 'Morgen' ['tomorrow'] and pointed at his watch - the same time.

I was supposed to take a flight at that time, but my friends helped me out. One guy flew instead of me; the other one accompanied me to the doctor. I was given a loaf of rye bread at the canteen to pay the doctor. The doctor didn't take the bread, and I left it on the nurse's desk. I continued to go to that doctor throughout our stay in Piarnu. When we were leaving, the doctor gave me a jar of the ointment. I fell in love with the nurse, when I was going through the treatment. Her name was Marta. She didn't speak Russian, I didn't speak German. We communicated with gestures, hugs and kisses. Every day I plucked flowers for her on the landing field. I didn't bring any more bread, as nobody gave any to me. Then we had to part.

We were transferred to a new place. I suffered from that trauma a long time, even after the war. My eyes didn't heal for a long time. I looked awful: a tanned face, white circles around my eyes because of wearing goggles, red and swollen eyelids. I looked like a monkey of an unknown breed. Even my mother didn't recognize me at once, when I came home on vacation when the war was over. I was cured, but my eye lashes never grew back.

Apart from the battle tasks our regiment also took care of reconnaissance in the rear of the enemy. For this purpose we had a civil plane. It was placed separately from the others. It was painted in black without having any state demarcation or stars. It was flown at night-time and was used only for reconnoiters, for distributing leaflets etc. I had to fly on that plane three times. The first flight

took place in 1943. The commander called me and said that I would be the air navigator on that plane. I received the course in a sealed envelope. The pilot didn't know where we were heading. I was instructed to open the envelope only after the plane had taken off. The information contained in the envelope was as follows: route, navigation course, point of reconnoiterer's ejection. The map was clear. The flight was secretive, so there was neither a radio operator nor a gunner on the plane. I had heard about that aircraft from another pilot and was aware that the take-off time was only 23:00. Things were ready for the flight: the engines started.

The paratrooper was to be catapulted out and I was supposed to assist in that at the bomb door - to hook the lanyard and open the hatch at the right moment so that the paratrooper could eject. It was supposed to happen at a low altitude - not higher than 500 meters. We weren't permitted to talk to the paratroopers. 15 minutes before take-off, a car drove up. A man clad in a civilian coat got out of the car. I could notice a general's trouser stripe and military cap on him. Then a girl got out of the car, she seemed a transcendent beauty to me: tall, slender, curly blond hair, dressed in a decollete evening gown. The general told her something, then she came up to me and said tenderly, 'Hello, buddy!' She said her name was Tanya, and I said my name was Naum. We got on the plane and Tanya asked me to help her put a parachute on: I was supposed to put the parachute straps on her shoulders, then between her legs and get them connected. I touched her leg, my hands trembled and I was embarrassed. Tanya understood that, she looked at me and said quietly, 'It's OK. Let's work.' I helped her put on the parachute somehow and smooth out the wrinkles on her dress. I took my jacket off and put it on the floor so she could sit on it. I also warned her when she was to eject, I would take the jacket and she would fall in the open hatch. I fastened the lanyard of her parachute.

We flew on our course. I saw we were moving along the sea coast - to the right there was dark land and to the left there was the bright sea. I understood that we were heading towards the Latvian city Liepaja. I was focused on time. My main task was to follow the exact time of the ejection. I gave the order to slow down and pulled my jacket out. She fell through the hatch. On our way back I was thinking about the great girl we had ejected to face certain death. I continued to recall her for a long time and felt perturbed.

In fall I got the assignment to eject a reconnoiterer once again. I came up to the plane. Again the car came over with the same general, though this time he was accompanied by a peasant woman in a plush coat and oversized boots. Her face was hidden with a kerchief. She talked to the general, came up to me and cried out with the voice that I remembered very well, 'Alive!' and kissed me. I wouldn't have recognized her if not for the voice. In my memories she remained the beauty in the evening gown. Again I had to eject her. It was the last time I saw Tanya.

But my story is not over. I was invited to Leningrad to celebrate the 25- year anniversary of the Victory. The ceremonious meeting took place in the Leningrad Drama Theater. We came into the hall. I saw my acquaintances, we hugged each other, recalled the past. First, I didn't pay attention when it was announced onstage that a famous reconnoiterer, Hero of the Soviet Union Galina Galchenko, was present. Her name didn't ring a bell. During the break we went to the restaurant. We took out seats, and a small grey-haired woman came in. She took a quick glance at us and suddenly came up to me and told me with Tanya's voice, the voice I would always keep in my mind, 'Alive!' We hugged each other and kissed. It was she who turned out to be Galina Galchenko, the reconnoiterer, the former commander of the reconnaissance department of the Baltic fleet, the

spouse of Kolesnikov, Hero of the Soviet Union, commander of the fighters' regiment of the Baltic fleet. Finally, I had a chance to ask her why she had been wearing an evening gown that one time. Having been defeated in Leningrad, the Germans retreated to the West and Hitler replaced the commander of the northern army. The residence of the new commander was in Liepaja, where he had to carry out some of Hitler's special tasks. That information was known by our agencies, but the task was to find out what kind of special mission he was supposed to carry out as per order of Hitler. The headquarters of the Supreme Command assigned this operation to the Baltic fleet. Galina knew German, was involved in reconnaissance and undertook the task. That evening there was a reception at the residence of the commander. That's why she was in the evening gown. It turned out that she was ejected right over the park of the residence. Galina successfully fulfilled the task and many other tasks afterwards.

My last flight was to the German town of Gartz early in the morning of 8th May. We headed towards Botanic bay, then to Elsa island in Estonia. We were allowed to take a rest after the flight. It was noon, so I decided to take a nap as I didn't have any other flights scheduled for the day. Hardly had I fallen asleep when I was woken by shooting and loud voices. I felt warm in the fur sleeping bag and wasn't willing to leave it. Suddenly one of the pilots rushed into the room and cried, 'Victory! Victory!', and shot a string of bursts in the ceiling. We always slept in underpants, so I hurriedly put my pants and jacket on and rushed outside. The pilots of our regiment were aligned. They were shooting in the air and crying, 'Victory, Victory, the war is over!' I took out my pistol and started shooting as well. I wasted all cartridges. That was the way I celebrated victory day. Then our squad commander came and took a picture of us. On the occasion of the victory I was awarded an Order of the Great Patriotic War 40 of the 2nd class and a Medal 'For Victory in the Great Patriotic War' 41.

Of course, the war wasn't over for our regiment. By the end of June we were taking part in fierce battles. German army North and troops of general Vlasov [military] 42, settled in the town of Liepaja, Ventspils having retreated from Leningrad. Swedes took an attempt to save the personnel of that group: all waterborne platforms - bases, ships, rafts, boats - were sent here, to Liepaja in order to move military personnel. Our task was not to let them leave. They had nothing to lose and they had to break through in battles. Group North was very strong. It was fighting fiercely like a tracked down animal. That's why we had to come back from Gartz. First we came to Lithuania, then to Palanga, and from there we had to move to the aerodrome in Sirvintos, wherefrom they couldn't escape. We had gross casualties.

On Victory Day, 9th May 1945, my friend, Alexander Kurzenkov, Hero of the Soviet Union, died. He got an assignment to take a reconnaissance flight. On that day our regiment was replenished with new unseasoned pilots, born in 1926. One of them wanted to take a flight with the instructor as he hadn't had the chance to be involved in action. Nobody wanted to do that. Finally, Kurzenkov took pity on him and said that he would take him. Hardly had the planes taken off the instructed pilot came back. When he landed he said he had problems with the engine. Then the mechanics said that the engine was OK. He merely turned yellow. Alexander went by himself without cover. I remember his last radiogram word for word: 'I see 21 pennants - it means 21 ships are putting to sea, -and I am in battle with 16 planes ...' - And his final words: 'I am ramming. Adieu.' That was it.

Patriotic spirit was very high at the front. We were raised as patriots of our country. What we had to deal with at war nurtured this spirit even more. It was written on board of our plane: 'For the

Motherland, For Stalin!' Those words were written only on those planes, whose crews distinguished themselves in battle and I took pride that there was such an inscription on ours. On our torpedoes it said 'For Stalingrad!', 'For Leningrad!' We fought for the whole country, for our kin and certainly for our favorite leader, Stalin.

There was no anti-Semitism on the fleet. People were assessed by their personal traits and by battle experience. There were no other criteria. One of the best pilots of our regiment, Pavel Skvirskiy, was a Jew; the squadron commander, Babadjan, was an Armenian. Nobody was even giving it a thought that nationality made a person different. There was no anti- Semitism when I did my post-war army service. Maybe, my authority of battle- seasoned front-line ace was the reason for it. They might have said something in my absence, but I never came across disrespect in my presence.

I finished the war in the rank of lieutenant. I wasn't promoted in rank because of the commandment or anti-Semitism. I was constantly asking the headquarter officers to 'forget' submitting my name in the report on rank promotion. The matter is when I came to the regiment I understood that the officers would stay in the army until retirement, but those who had junior ranks would have the chance to demobilize after the war. I couldn't see myself in the army after the war. Since childhood I had dreamt of being a doctor, an oculist. When I was a child, I saw a movie about an oculist who came to a God-forsaken hamlet and cured a blind girl. I was deeply impressed by the movie and decided that I should be the same as the main character of the movie. That's why I wanted to leave the army after the war. I received an officers' ration and cash allowance. In addition, Mother also received an officers' monetary certificate for me in spite of the fact that I had a junior officer's rank.

After the War

I wasn't demobilized after the war and stayed in the army for involuntary service. Men born in my year were supposed to demobilize in 1950. I was sent to the town of Mamonov, the extreme Western point in the Soviet Union, bordering on Poland. The town was named after the Hero of the Soviet Union Mamonov, who had liberated that town. I had finished only nine grades of school before the war, so I decided to take the opportunity to finish the 10th grade. One of our officer's wives was a teacher and she decided to help me get ready for the final exams of the 10th grade. I went to her place for private lessons. Then, that woman made arrangements with one of the teachers from the compulsory school of Konigsberg [Kaliningrad at present] for me to take final exams with the graduates of that school. I was given a leave to take my exams and we went to Konigsberg. I successfully passed all exams and obtained my secondary education certificate.

I corresponded with my mother during the war. Once in 1944 after being hospitalized due to a plane crash, I was even given a one-week leave and visited my relatives. My mother and sister lived in Moscow at that time. They had come back from Chimkent. I knew that my maternal grandfather Yankl died in Chimkent in 1942. The rest of the family members came back to Kharkov after it had been liberated. Our relatives were in the lines. In 1943 my father's brother Isaac was killed in action. Father's younger brother Rafael went through the entire war and became a career soldier after the war. He served in the Far East. Having resigned he came back to Moscow. Rafael died recently, in 1999. Mother's elder brother ?fim was also in the lines. His only son Grigoriy was at the front as well. Grigoriy survived the war, but he was severely wounded in the head. He lived

in the Far East after the war. He was turning blind. There was nothing the doctors could do as it was the result of the wound. The disease was progressing and he died young, in 1957.

The same family, victims of bombing, lived in our apartment. It was the family I saw, when I was on the way to the front from military school. When Mother was in evacuation she kept paying for the apartment. On her way back she brought the receipts. They came to an agreement with the lady who lived in our apartment: she gave one room to my mother and sister. My sister finished school and entered the Moscow Finance and Economy Institute, the Faculty of Production Economy. In thought, we got along with our new neighbors. In 1947 our neighbor threw our things out of the apartment and hung a lock on our door. My mother and sister had to settle in the shed and bring our things there. Mother wrote me about it. I wrote to the regiment commander about it and asked him for a short-term leave.

The commander gave me two strong sailors, sent me to take a military plane leaving for Moscow and issued a letter for the commander of the military enlistment office saying: 'Provide an apartment for the mother of officer Kravets. Commander of regiment # 115.' He gave me three days to take care of things. We came up to the door. One of the sailors pushed and all locks fell off. The neighbor started screaming. People gathered in the street. I took Mother from the shed and the sailor started pointing at the neighbor's things and taking them outside. The house manager came over and showed the record of our inventory, the one I had made before leaving for the front, and the payment receipts and also the letter of the regiment commander. The house manager temporarily let my mother move in and filed the case in court. For the reason that I had to leave soon, the lawsuit was the next day and the court made a ruling stating that the apartment belonged to us. The house management was supposed to find lodging for the evicted neighbors. My mother and sister remained in our apartment. I came back there after demobilization in 1950.

I didn't want to join the Party neither in the lines, nor later on. Once, at the beginning of the war, I was present at a party meeting where they considered the case of one of the pilots and edified him for a minor offence, and I remembered that the party activist kept on saying that such an offence wouldn't be taken into account if he wasn't a party member. He was a communist, and such things couldn't be forgiven. After this incident, I didn't even think of joining the Party.

I was demobilized in the rank of senior lieutenant. I didn't clearly understand what I would do next in my civil life. I had to earn a living. When I came back to Moscow, I was pleasantly surprised. I was told in the military enlistment office that I was to receive a pile of money: for successful reconnaissance, military flights and torpedoed adversary vessels. I was at a loss when I received the money. Before leaving the bank I transferred part of the money to orphanages and part to my mother and sister. Even the amount left for me was big. That's why I decided to procrastinate with the idea of seeking a job and live comfortably while I had some money. Once a month I bought tickets for the whole repertoire of the Moscow theaters, almost every night I went to the Bolshoi Theater 43, Maly Theater 44 or some other theater. I decided to visit all Moscow restaurants. Sometimes I came home at dawn, and Mother was very worried, didn't go to bed.

My mother started looking for a fiancee for me and invited the daughters of her friends. It looked rather innocent. My mother's friend came over to have tea with the grown-up daughter. Then Mother's friend stayed with us and Mother suggested that I should see off the daughter. I wasn't willing to do that, but I had to. Mother thought it would be a better chance for us to get to know

each other. But I tried to do my best not to meet that girl again. Mother had her understanding of a good wife for me, I had my own. She thought the most important thing was that my wife should come from a well-off Jewish family; I had other criteria. Besides, I wasn't going to get married yet at that time, though it perturbed my mother. I didn't look attractive at that time as I mentioned before: white circles under my eyes and inflamed eye lids. Mother told me that I was incapacitated, besides didn't have higher education - so I shouldn't be so picky. I didn't want to assume responsibility for a family. I felt inferior: while I was at war, people of my age were studying, listening to music, attending art exhibitions. I wasn't well up in art, painting. I liked listening to music, but didn't understand it. At times, my granddaughter tells me what is the message of the composer in his piece, and after listening to it again I have certain images. But still, I had missed the time, when those things were easy and natural. I had lost that and would never get it again.

One year passed, and I decided to look for a job. Again I got lucky. By chance I read an announcement in the street about a job opening in a design bureau for radar experts. I was offered a job immediately and was assigned to the flight test laboratory. In the 1970s the bureau was turned into the corporation Phasotron-NIIR Scientific Research Radio Institute. The corporation still exists, and I'm still working there.

In spite of the fact that the cosmopolitan trials [see campaign against 'cosmopolitans'] 45 were over in the USSR, Jewish life was haltered and anti-Semitism was strengthened. Still, I never came across anti-Semitism at work, not even in the hardest years. In our bureaus Jews were respected, more than half of the members of the scientific council were Jews. The director of the design bureau, and later scientific research institute, never paid attention to the nationality factor. Professional skills were always the most important for him. The chief designer was the Jew Vitaliy Kunyavskiy, my director, the creator was a Jew, Solomon Roshal, and the scientific consultant was Boris Bramberg. In the museum of our institute there are pictures of the persons who made the biggest contribution in the creation of the modern equipment, shown in the exhibits. There are a lot; I cannot name all of them. If not every second, every third there is a Jew. Anti-Semitism has never been observed in our company, neither in the USSR nor in today's Russia.

My job was connected with travel. I left for Moscow to the training area for three months to test new facilities. Then, I spent 10-15 days in Moscow and then I was off for another trip. I had worked there for a year and then Kuniavskiy, the chief designer of the aviation plant, came for testing works. Apart from the work at the plant he taught at Moscow Aviation Institute. He said he would assign me to an accelerated 3.5 year course at the Radar Location Department of the Aviation Institute. I was content with my life, and didn't want to study. I had a good salary. I was paid additional money for each test flight. I was providing for myself and my mother without any higher education. Kuniavskiy didn't want to listen, and said that such a job required only an expert with higher education. I had to yield. I graduated from the institute in 1958 and obtained a diploma of an engineer on radar location. After graduation Kunyavskiy promoted me and I was assigned the director of the test stand. My salary wasn't as high. I didn't have test flights, so I wasn't paid an additional premium. But I was a go-getter. I was promoted again and again at work. I became chief engineer and then leading project engineer.

I got married in 1953. Mother managed to find a wife for me, the daughter of her friend. I liked quite different girls, but I couldn't explain that to my mother. Besides, she would have never approved of my marriage to a non-Jewish girl. Strange as it may be, I was an obedient and loving

son and it was easier for me to agree with my mother than to hurt her with my disobedience. My future wife, Anna Kurnik, was an only daughter. Her mother worked as chief of a canteen. Her father was an accountant. Anna was born in Moscow in 1928. She graduated from the foreign language department of the Moscow Teachers' Training Institute and worked in a secondary school as English teacher. We hadn't been dating for a long time. All the same mother wouldn't have let me dodge from marriage this time, so we sent the documents to the state marriage registration office. The registration of our marriage was scheduled for 5th March 1953.

When I found out about Stalin's death in the morning, I flatly refused to get married on that day. At that time Stalin's death was a tribulation for me, and not only for me. Instead of getting married Anna and I decided to go to Stalin's funeral. There was a huge crowd moving towards the column hall, where the coffin with Stalin's corpse was placed. When we were in the throng, I understood that it would be next to impossible to get out of it. The crowd moved slowly, but soon I understood, that Anna was being taken away from me and there was nothing I could do about it. Cars were closely parked along the curb. People were walking on the road and it was impossible to get to the pavement. I managed to reach Anna's hand and pull her to the curb taking advantage of the turns of the crowd. When we came close to the curb on the corner, I pushed her and told her to creep under the car to get to the pavement. I followed her. That way we got out of the crowd. We were lucky, as there were a lot of people who fell victims to the crowd. My cousin Lazar, the son of my father's brother Isaac came to Moscow from Leningrad to attend Stalin's funeral. He came back alive, but he lost his coat, hat and boots in the crowd. There were people who were trampled to death.

We went to the marriage registration office ten days later, when the mourning was over, viz on 15th March. The head of the marriage registration office didn't want to register our marriage, because we hadn't come on the assigned date. I explained the reason to her and she registered our marriage. We were ashamed to celebrate our wedding. The whole country was mourning; how could we have a feast? Mother made a modest dinner, attended by us and Anna's parents. It was a quiet evening.

My life didn't change that much after the wedding. I was constantly on trips, and Anna lived with her parents. When I came back, I stayed in their place and again went on a trip for three months. That's why we didn't need a separate apartment. When Anna got pregnant, I understood that my life needed to change. I went to the ministry of the aviation industry for them to give me a job in another city, but with an apartment. I didn't want to create inconvenience to my mother, besides Anna's parents lived in a poky one-room communal apartment. There were no prospects for me in Moscow. Besides, my sister was an eligible bride, so she needed a place to live. I thought she would live with my mother after getting married.

I was transferred to Rybinsk, Yaroslavl oblast, 250 kilometers away from Moscow, to the position of the director of the climatic workshop at the military plant. The plant provided a wonderful two-room apartment for me on the bank of the Volga. My wife stayed in Moscow; my mother went to Rybinsk with me. All my things were packed in a small suitcase. Mother helped me buy furniture. She furnished the apartment and left. On 26th October 1954 I received a telegram saying that my daughter was born. I went to Moscow. There was quarantine in the hospital and I tried real hard to break through to my wife. I saw my new-born daughter through the glass door. We called her Stella. My wife and daughter stayed in Moscow, and I came back to Rybinsk by myself.

Two years later I returned to Moscow. We lived with my mother, who loved my daughter a lot. I went back to my former work place and was assigned to the same position - leading engineer of the project. I worked in my position until 1964. Then new experts came and I understood that I couldn't compete with them as they were better qualified. I decided to resume my studies. I didn't tell anybody of my intention and sent my application to the Moscow Institute of Electronic Machine Building, Computer Engineering Department, and passed the entrance exams for the evening course. When I found out that I had passed the exams, I told the chief designer, Kuniavskiy, that I had become a student and wouldn't be able to go on business trips. Of course, he didn't like that. Our relationship became slightly tense. They tried to talk me into taking short trips, but I refused because the trips were only to the military units. There the passport was taken upon arrival, so there was no way I could leave earlier, and I couldn't study without my passport. I said that during the war they were studying while I was in the lines. I said it was time for me to study and for the others to go on the business trips. I was threatened that they would cut my bonus and I would be transferred to another department. In 1970 I finished my higher education. Of course, I wasted a lot of time on unneeded, but mandatory subjects: Marxism-Leninism, philosophy etc. I regret that time was spent on useless things.

After graduating from the Moscow Finance and Economy Institute, the Production Department, my sister went to work as an accountant at the Maly Theater. She had a skimpy salary there and went to work for the Ministry of Heavy Industry as an auditor and economist. When she was in her graduate year, Rena got married. She didn't take her husband's name after getting married, and remained Kravets. I cannot say anything about her husband. I saw him only a few times, and he didn't stand out. I lived in Rybinsk, when my mother told me that my sister was getting married. I couldn't come to her wedding. In early 1955 I found out from my mother's letter that my sister had given birth to a daughter, Svetlana. When I came back to Moscow, my sister had already divorced her husband. She lived separately from Mother. In the middle of the 1980s, my sister and her daughter immigrated to Germany. Both of them are currently living there.

When at the Twentieth Party Congress 46 Nikita Khrushchev 47 held a speech divulging Stalin's cult, my belief in Stalin collapsed. I understood who Stalin was and what terrible crime he had committed. Of course, we were in the battles fighting under Stalin's name, but if he hadn't decapitated the army with the pre-war repressions, perhaps we wouldn't have had such casualties?! At that time junior officers were junior commanders of regiments, battalions. They didn't have proper experience. Maybe Hitler wouldn't have attacked us, if we hadn't had those repressions. I thought over all those things after the war, but thanks to Khrushchev I became more aware of it and saw things in a different light.

I was happy to learn the news that the state of Israel was founded in May 1948. I had never concealed my nationality. I take pride in the fact that so many remarkable people in all branches of science, culture and art came from the Israeli nation. I was worried about Israel when the Six-Day-War 48 and the Yom Kippur War 49 took place. I wished Israel would gain victory. I was rejoicing like a kid when this small country defeated huge Arab states. Being a former front-line soldier I was rapt by the victory of Israel and its army. Of course such events were covered in the Soviet press with bias - at that time the USSR didn't have any relationship with Israel, but the majority of the Soviet people was looking for the implication in the press and I was able to see that.

When mass immigration of Jews started in the 1970s, I wasn't willing to go, though I wasn't judging those who did. My relatives were leaving: the children of my mother's sister Bronya who fled from occupied Poland in 1939, and the children of my mother's sisters Maria and Genya. They also spurred me to go with them, but I stayed adamant. I cannot even say what made me stay. Probably my character was the main factor or the principle of 'the dog kennel' or 'my house is my castle.' I have always been conservative. I am like a bob - even with the coming wave - I would turn left or right, and still remain in the same place. I have never changed jobs and have stayed in one city all my mature life. I am aware that I would have a good living in Israel and would settle well because I'm a good expert. But I cannot get over my conservatism.

In the 1970s it was decided that our house in Cherkizovo was to be demolished and a new many-storied building should be constructed in its place. But we weren't happy with the apartment offered to us. I didn't want to resort to the court or prosecution; I just went to the military enlistment office and told them about everything. They promised to help me out. I was even given a four-room apartment, where I, my wife, mother and daughter settled. Mother wanted to live with us, though she had a chance to move out. I was afraid that my wife and daughter would bother her, but she was happy to spend time with them. Of course, my mother was a very close person to me.

Mother didn't mark Jewish holidays after the war. Our family marked Soviet holidays such as 1st May, 7th November [October Revolution Day], New Year's Day, Soviet Army Day, Victory Day 50. I spent Victory Day with my family only in the morning, when we went to the Grave of the Unknown Soldier to lay down flowers. Then I met with my front-line soldiers. Some of them lived in Moscow; others came here on the holiday. We remembered the past, drank to the victory, commemorated our comrades who didn't make it, and sang military songs.

In summer 1980 the Olympic Games were held in Moscow, and my mother asked me to show her the sites for the Olympic Games. At that time I was granted a car by the military enlistment office for being a war veteran. I took my mother on a tour all over Moscow. She looked at the stadiums, buildings of new hotels. Things were ready for the Olympic Games. Then I managed to get two tickets for the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games. Mother and I had seats on the tribune and enjoyed the wonderful event. She was happy like a kid and kept on saying that I was a good son. Shortly after that she died. She was buried in the city cemetery. The funeral was secular.

Meanwhile, my daughter was growing up. She finished the secondary school where my sister and I had studied and entered the Moscow Culture Institute, the Library Studies Department. My daughter wasn't raised Jewish; most Jewish children back in that time weren't. After her graduation, she became a librarian at the State Library of Technical Science. She got married in 1986. I don't want to dwell on her husband. Stella kept her maiden name Kravets. We exchanged our apartment for another one: three rooms for my daughter and one room for my wife and me. In 1987 Stella gave birth to her daughter Olga, and in 1991 she gave birth to a son, Mikhail. Stella left work after her daughter was born. My wife and I helped her raising the children. I take pride in her children. Now, my granddaughter is finishing compulsory school. She is also enrolled on preparatory courses for the Russian Medicine Academy. She passed the exams of the first term, in March she will be taking exams of the second term and after that she will enter medical academy and have a certificate of the secondary education. Besides, Olga finished a seven-year music school. Mikhail followed into her footsteps. This year he is finishing the seven-year music school and the 7th grade of secondary school. He hasn't made up his mind yet as to what he is going to become in the

future, but there is still time for that... In 2000 my daughter resumed working.

In 2002 my wife passed away. She was buried in the city cemetery next to her parents. Since that time I stay mostly with my daughter, and she is happy about it. The kids are growing up, and they should be raised by a man. Let it be a grandfather, not a father. I haven't retired yet. Two years ago the director of our enterprise asked me to set up the museum of our enterprise. He assigned me the director of the museum. First I was offended thinking that he thought it was time for me to retire, but when I started this work I found it very interesting. Of course, there are so many things to do, and I won't be able to cope with everything. Part of the work will be given to my successor, but we've made a start.

When perestroika 51 began, I believed Mikhail Gorbachev 52 at once. People always hope and I hoped that the situation in the country would change for the better. Things guaranteed by the Constitution, in actuality were not enforced in the USSR, but with perestroika we obtained our liberty of word, press. There was no censorship. The truth was revealed about real things that had taken place in the USSR during the Soviet regime. So, I had hoped that life would turn out for the better in our country. In the USSR religion was persecuted and during perestroika people were free to profess religion. Not only the elderly, who had nothing to lose, but also young people could go to the church, synagogue without fearing that it would be known at work. The Iron Curtain 53, separating us from the rest of the world, was removed. Now we had a chance to correspond with foreigners, go abroad and invite foreigners for a visit. My uncle Rafael, father's youngest brother, found their brother Haim's relatives, who were invited to the USA for a visit. Rafael was deceased. Haim managed to find his son's daughter. Haim's elder son was a doctor. During the war in Korea he went to the army as a volunteer and perished there. His wife and son Mitchel stayed by themselves. Haim's second son, Gerald Kravets, is currently living in Miami. Gerald is an architect. His house was designed by him. He has six children. His wife gave birth to twins three times. Four of them founded a jazz band. They are musicians. His daughter, Rena Kravets, lives in Chicago with two children. My uncle kept in touch with them upon his return. When he died in 1999 they stopped keeping in touch.

Life was harder for us after perestroika: prices escalated, there was a lack of products in the stores, even primary goods were missing, the currency devaluated... - probably it isn't Gorbachev's fault, and the enemies of perestroika are to be blamed for that. Everybody knows what perestroika was crowned with: the breakup of the Soviet Union [in 1991]. In spite of all shortcoming of the Soviet system I still miss the former Soviet Union. We lived in a big and powerful state and took pride in our country. And what is left of the USSR now? - A group of poor and weak countries. I understand that sooner or later there is an end to any empire, and from the point of view of historians there is conformity in that. I think the regime should be changed, introduce a multiparty system and do away with the leading role of the Communist Party and keep the Union. The process still remains unfinished. Russia in itself is imminent with collapse. If all republics become independent, what will be left of Russia, Moscow oblast?

I was happy to have been in Israel for several times. I went there for the first time when the USSR still existed. The Israeli Committee of the Veterans of War invited 30 front-line soldiers to go to Israel. The chairman of the Council, Marianovskiy, assigned me the leader of the group. I stayed in Israel for a month. Apart from the official program I had the chance to buy tours throughout the country. I was captivated by Israel. I liked everything: kibbutzim, towns and the desert. The country

is beautiful and people made it beautiful. It was an unforgettable trip. Later I went on a few more trips to Israel and was getting more and more fascinated with the country and its citizens. When I was in the Israeli airdrome of the armed forces the army commander gave me a tiny Torah. He told me that each officer, each soldier of the Israeli army is given such a Torah. He said that I should always have it on me for me to be protected. There is a special small pocket for the Torah in the uniform of an Israeli soldier. I don't have a pocket in my uniform, so my daughter made one for me. I keep my Torah close to my heart. If I put a jacket on, I put the Torah there. It is always with me. I don't think I'm religious, but I'm sure the Torah is taking care of me. I took part in two parades in Moscow in 1995 and 2000, devoted to Victory Day. Recently I found out that I passed the medical examination and was permitted to take part in the Victory parade in May 2005. They are even fixing the ceremonious uniform for the occasion. This is my last parade and I'm happy to take part in it. Frankly speaking I had a forlorn hope that I would make it.

I attend the Jewish cultural center. There, very interesting thematic events are held such as meetings with outstanding people, performances of actors, art exhibitions. I try not to miss those. There are also different gatherings, where people meet each other. Men and women of different age come over, meet each other and chat. I feel very comfortable there. I don't feel ill at ease as it usually happens with people you do not know. Not only single people attend such events, but also married couples. It's always nice to mix with people and look for new friends; there is also a chance to find one's love, who knows ...

Of course, I cannot complain about my life, but at times I'm asking myself: what are you, Naum? I remember myself as a young man and I think I have remained young in my soul. And now, more often I have to counterpoise my wishes with my opportunities... I'm trying to keep in shape, but I can still feel my war injuries. I'm fighting them. I'm not giving up.

Glossary:

1 Nikolai's army
Soldiers of the tsarist army during the reign of Nicholas I when the draft lasted for 25 years.

2 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.

3 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 cheders in 19 prayer houses.

4 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.

5 Russian Revolution of 1917

Revolution in which the tsarist regime was overthrown in the Russian Empire and, under Lenin, was replaced by the Bolshevik rule. The two phases of the Revolution were: February Revolution, which came about due to food and fuel shortages during World War I, and during which the tsar abdicated and a provisional government took over. The second phase took place in the form of a coup led by Lenin in October/November (October Revolution) and saw the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks.

6 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.

7 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.

8 Gangs

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

9 Kotovsky, Grigory Ivanovich (1881-1925)

Russian hero of the Civil War. He worked as an assistant to a manor manager. He was arrested several times over the years and was even sentenced to death, but this was later changed to penal servitude for life. In 1917 he joined the leftist Socialist Revolutionaries. He carried out a heroic campaign from the river Dnestr to Zhitomir in 1918 and took part in the defense of Petrograd in 1919.

10 Political officer

These "commissars," as they were first called, exercised specific official and unofficial control functions over their military command counterparts. The political officers also served to further Party interests with the masses of drafted soldiery of the USSR by indoctrination in Marxist-Leninism. The 'zampolit', or political officers, appeared at the regimental level in the army, as well as in the navy and air force, and at higher and lower levels, they had similar duties and functions. The chast (regiment) of the Soviet Army numbered 2000-3000 personnel, and was the lowest level of military command that doctrinally combined all arms (infantry, armor, artillery, and supporting services) and was capable of independent military missions. The regiment was commanded by a colonel, or lieutenant colonel, with a lieutenant or major as his zampolit, officially titled "deputy commander for political affairs."

11 NEP

The so-called New Economic Policy of the Soviet authorities was launched by Lenin in 1921. It meant that private business was allowed on a small scale in order to save the country ruined by the Revolution of 1917 and the Russian Civil War. They allowed priority development of private capital and entrepreneurship. The NEP was gradually abandoned in the 1920s with the introduction of the planned economy.

12 Communal apartment

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

13 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.

14 Struggle against religion

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

15 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.

16 Russian stove

Big stone stove stoked with wood. They were usually built in a corner of the kitchen and served to heat the house and cook food. It had a bench that made a comfortable bed for children and adults in wintertime.

17 October Revolution Day

October 25 (according to the old calendar), 1917 went down in history as victory day for the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia. This day is the most significant date in the history of the USSR. Today the anniversary is celebrated as 'Day of Accord and Reconciliation' on November 7.

18 Soviet Army Day

The Russian imperial army and navy disintegrated after the outbreak of the Revolution of 1917, so the Council of the People's Commissars created the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army on a voluntary basis. The first units distinguished themselves against the Germans on February 23, 1918. This day became the 'Day of the Soviet Army' and is nowadays celebrated as 'Army Day'.

19 Young Octobrist

In Russian Oktyabrenok, or 'pre-pioneer', designates Soviet children of seven years or over preparing for entry into the pioneer organization.

20 All-Union pioneer organization

a communist organization for teenagers between 10 and 15 years old (cf: boy-/ girlscouts in the US). The organization aimed at educating the young generation in accordance with the communist ideals, preparing pioneers to become members of the Komsomol and later the Communist Party. In the Soviet Union, all teenagers were pioneers.

21 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.

22 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.

23 Enemy of the people

Soviet official term; euphemism used for real or assumed political opposition.

24 Invasion of Poland

The German attack of Poland on 1st September 1939 is widely considered the date in the West for the start of World War II. After having gained both Austria and the Bohemian and Moravian parts of Czechoslovakia, Hitler was confident that he could acquire Poland without having to fight Britain and France. (To eliminate the possibility of the Soviet Union fighting if Poland were attacked, Hitler made a pact with the Soviet Union, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.) On the morning of 1st September 1939, German troops entered Poland. The German air attack hit so quickly that most of Poland's air force was destroyed while still on the ground. To hinder Polish mobilization, the Germans bombed bridges and roads. Groups of marching soldiers were machine-gunned from the air, and they also aimed at civilians. On 1st September, the beginning of the attack, Great Britain and France sent Hitler an ultimatum - withdraw German forces from Poland or Great Britain and France would go to war against Germany. On 3rd September, with Germany's forces penetrating deeper into Poland, Great Britain and France both declared war on Germany.

25 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 Mannengeim line. The League of Nations expelled the USSR from its ranks. In February-March 1940 the Red Army broke through the Mannengeim 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.

26 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact

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

27 Professor Mamlock

This 1937 Soviet feature is considered the first dramatic film on the subject of Nazi anti-Semitism ever made, and the first to tell Americans that Nazis were killing Jews. Hailed in New York, and banned in Chicago, it was adapted by the German playwright Friedrich Wolf - a friend of Bertolt Brecht - from his own play, and co-directed by Herbert Rappaport, assistant to German director G.W. Pabst. The story centers on the persecution of a great German surgeon, his son's sympathy and subsequent leadership of the underground communists, and a rival's sleazy tactics to expel Mamlock from his clinic.

28 Party Schools

They were established after the Revolution of 1917, in different levels, with the purpose of training communist cadres and activists. Subjects such as 'scientific socialism' (Marxist-Leninist Philosophy) and 'political economics' besides various other political disciplines were taught there.

29 Molotov, V

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

30 Fighting battalion

People's volunteer corps during World War II; its soldiers patrolled towns, dug trenches and kept an eye on buildings during night bombing raids. Students often volunteered for these fighting battalions.

31 Ispolkom

After the tsar's abdication (March, 1917), power passed to a Provisional Government appointed by a temporary committee of the Duma, which proposed to share power to some extent with councils of workers and soldiers known as 'soviets'. Following a brief and chaotic period of fairly democratic procedures, a mixed body of socialist intellectuals known as the Ispolkom secured the right to 'represent' the soviets. The democratic credentials of the soviets were highly imperfect to begin with: peasants - the overwhelming majority of the Russian population - had virtually no say, and

soldiers were grossly over-represented. The Ispolkom's assumption of power turned this highly imperfect democracy into an intellectuals' oligarchy.

32 Kolkhoz

In the Soviet Union the policy of gradual and voluntary collectivization of agriculture was adopted in 1927 to encourage food production while freeing labor and capital for industrial development. In 1929, with only 4% of farms in kolkhozes, Stalin ordered the confiscation of peasants' land, tools, and animals; the kolkhoz replaced the family farm

33 Trudodni

a measure of work used in Soviet collective farms until 1966. Working one day it was possible to earn from 0.5 up to 4 trudodni. In fall when the harvest was gathered the collective farm administration calculated the cost of 1 trudoden in money or food equivalent (based upon the profit).

34 Card system

The food card system regulating the distribution of food and industrial products was introduced in the USSR in 1929 due to extreme deficit of consumer goods and food. The system was cancelled in 1931. In 1941, food cards were reintroduced to keep records, distribute and regulate food supplies to the population. The card system covered main food products such as bread, meat, oil, sugar, salt, cereals, etc. The rations varied depending on which social group one belonged to, and what kind of work one did. Workers in the heavy industry and defense enterprises received a daily ration of 800 g (miners - 1 kg) of bread per person; workers in other industries 600 g. Non-manual workers received 400 or 500 g based on the significance of their enterprise, and children 400 g. However, the card system only covered industrial workers and residents of towns while villagers never had any provisions of this kind. The card system was cancelled in 1947.

35 Order of the Combat Red Banner

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

36 Blockade of Leningrad

On September 8, 1941 the Germans fully encircled Leningrad and its siege began. It lasted until January 27, 1944. The blockade meant incredible hardships and privations for the population of the town. Hundreds of thousands died from hunger, cold and diseases during the almost 900 days of the blockade.

37 Road of Life

It was a passage across Lake Ladoga in winter during the Blockade of Leningrad. It was due to the Road of Life that Leningrad survived in the terrible winter of 1941-42.

38 Hero of the Soviet Union

Honorary title established on 16th April 1934 with the Gold Star medal instituted on 1st August 1939, by Decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet. Awarded to both military and civilian personnel for personal or collective deeds of heroism rendered to the USSR or socialist society.

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

40 Medal For the Liberation of Leningrad
established by Decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet as of 22nd December 1942. Over one million and five hundred people were conferred with that medal.

41 Medal for Military Merits
awarded after 17th October 1938 to soldiers of the Soviet army, navy and frontier guard for their 'bravery in battles with the enemies of the Soviet Union' and 'defense of the immunity of the state borders' and 'struggle with diversionists, spies and other enemies of the people'.

40 Order of the Great Patriotic War
1st Class: established 20th May 1942, awarded to officers and enlisted men of the armed forces and security troops and to partisans, irrespective of rank, for skillful command of their units in action. 2nd Class: established 20th May 1942, awarded to officers and enlisted men of the armed forces and security troops and to partisans, irrespective of rank, for lesser personal valor in action.

41 Medal 'For Victory in the Great Patriotic War'
Medal 'For Victory in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-45', Established by Decree of the Presidium of Supreme Soviet of the USSR to commemorate the glorious victory, 15 million awards

42 Vlasov military
Members of the voluntary military formations of Russian former prisoners of war that fought on the German side during World War II. They were led by the former Soviet general, A. Vlasov, hence their name.

43 Bolshoi Theater
World famous national theater in Moscow, built in 1776. The first Russian and foreign opera and ballet performances were staged in this building.

44 Maly ('Small') Theater
a famous drama theater in Moscow, after, in 1804, the Moscow State Theater was formed. The

theater was named Maly ('Small') to distinguish it from the Bolshoi Theater ('Big'), used mostly for opera and ballet, and located across the Square. In the 1840s, the Maly Theater was called 'the second Moscow University.' It was looked to as a seat of progressive thought and a civilizing force in a society dominated by the repressive policies of Nicholas I.

45 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'.

46 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.

47 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.

48 Six-Day-War

The first strikes of the Six-Day-War happened on 5th June 1967 by the Israeli Air Force. The entire war only lasted 132 hours and 30 minutes. The fighting on the Egyptian side only lasted four days, while fighting on the Jordanian side lasted three. Despite the short length of the war, this was one of the most dramatic and devastating wars ever fought between Israel and all of the Arab nations. This war resulted in a depression that lasted for many years after it ended. The Six-Day-War increased tension between the Arab nations and the Western World because of the change in mentalities and political orientations of the Arab nations.

49 Yom Kippur War

The Arab-Israeli War of 1973, also known as the Yom Kippur War or the Ramadan War, was a war between Israel on one side and Egypt and Syria on the other side. It was the fourth major military confrontation between Israel and the Arab states. The war lasted for three weeks: it started on 6th

October 1973 and ended on 22nd October on the Syrian front and on 26th October on the Egyptian front.

50 Victory Day in Russia (9th May)
National holiday to commemorate the defeat of Nazi Germany and the end of World War II and honor the Soviets who died in the war.

51 Perestroika (Russian for restructuring)
Soviet economic and social policy of the late 1980s, associated with the name of Soviet politician Mikhail Gorbachev. The term designated the attempts to transform the stagnant, inefficient command economy of the Soviet Union into a decentralized, market-oriented economy. Industrial managers and local government and party officials were granted greater autonomy, and open elections were introduced in an attempt to democratize the Communist Party organization. By 1991, perestroika was declining and was soon eclipsed by the dissolution of the USSR.

52 Gorbachev, Mikhail (1931-)
Soviet political leader. Gorbachev joined the Communist Party in 1952 and gradually moved up in the party hierarchy. In 1970 he was elected to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, where he remained until 1990. In 1980 he joined the politburo, and in 1985 he was appointed general secretary of the party. In 1986 he embarked on a comprehensive program of political, economic, and social liberalization under the slogans of glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring). The government released political prisoners, allowed increased emigration, attacked corruption, and encouraged the critical reexamination of Soviet history. The Congress of People's Deputies, founded in 1989, voted to end the Communist Party's control over the government and elected Gorbachev executive president. Gorbachev dissolved the Communist Party and granted the Baltic States independence. Following the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States in 1991, he resigned as president. Since 1992, Gorbachev has headed international organizations.

53 Iron Curtain
A term popularized by Sir Winston Churchill in a speech in 1946. He used it to designate the Soviet Union's consolidation of its grip over Eastern Europe. The phrase denoted the separation of East and West during the Cold War, which placed the totalitarian states of the Soviet bloc behind an 'Iron Curtain'. The fall of the Iron Curtain corresponds to the period of perestroika in the former Soviet Union, the reunification of Germany, and the democratization of Eastern Europe beginning in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

54 Sakharov, Andrey Dimitrievich (1921-1989)
Soviet nuclear physicist, academician and human rights advocate; the first Soviet citizen to receive the Nobel Peace Prize (1975). He was part of the team constructing the Soviet hydrogene bomb and received the prize 'Hero of the Socialist Labor' three times. In the 1960s and 70s he grew to be the leader of human rights fights in the Soviet Union. In 1980 he was expelled and sent to Gorkiy from where he was allowed to return to Moscow in 1986, after Gorbachev's rise to power. He

remained a leading spokesman for human rights and political and economic reform until his death in 1989.