

Eva Ryzhevskaya

Eva Ryzhevskaya is a petite lady. She has cropped blond hair, which used to be of copper color. Eva is as slender as a girl and I think this is the reason why she looks much younger than her age. Her voice sounds youngish as well. She is of honorable age. She turned 85 in December 2004. Eva lives in a small two-room apartment of a five-storied house built in the 1970s. Her apartment is immaculately clean. There are a lot of window-sill plants, well-taken care of by the hostess. Eva is very close with her daughter Olga, who is tenderly looking after her mother. Eva is an avid reader. She is keen on novices of literature. In spite of all the trouble in the life of this fragile lady, Eva managed to preserve something childish and touching.



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My family background

My father's parents lived in the Ukrainian village of Pismennoye, Dnepropetrovsk oblast, located 100 kilometers from Dnepropetrovsk [450 km from Kiev]. Dnepropetrovsk oblast was included in the [Jewish] Pale of Settlement [1](#), and there were a lot of truly Jewish towns. Pismennoye was a Ukrainian village. There was only one Jewish family in that village - my father's. Grandfather Moses wasn't born in Pismennoye. He came from Poland. I don't know exactly where he was from. I know for sure that he was Polish- born. I have no idea how he turned out to be in Ukraine. [Most of the territory of both, today's Ukraine and Poland, belonged to the Russian Empire up until the end of World War I.] He settled in Pismennoye, got married and started a family .Grandmother was born in Dnepropetrovsk oblast, but I don't know exactly where.

I never met my grandparents. Both of them had died before I was born. Grandfather's name was Moses Ryzhevskiy. I don't know my grandmother's name. There is little I know about my father's pre-nuptial life. I don't know what my grandfather did for a living. I assume, Grandfather was the bread-winner of the family, and Grandmother was a housewife, as was customary for patriarchal Jewish families.

The Ryzhevskiy family had five children. The eldest was Jacob [see common name] [2](#); his Jewish name was Jankiv. Then Abram, Simeon [Jewish name: Shimon] and their daughter Manya were born. My father Samuel [Jewish name: Shloime] was the youngest in the family. He was born in

1885.

As I said before, Pismennoye was a Ukrainian village. There was neither a synagogue nor a cheder there. However, my father and his brothers got some Jewish education. I think Grandfather was teaching them. All of them knew Ivrit; they could read and write in Ivrit. Father and his brothers finished the Ukrainian four-year elementary school in the village. There was no other educational institution in that village. Father was very gifted, and wanted to continue studying. He applied for the Russian lyceum in Dnepropetrovsk. Most of the students had to pay tuition, but the headmaster of the lyceum was entitled to admit some gifted students free of charge, as some charity organization was paying for them. But my father didn't succeed in that. He was told that there were only three percent out of the overall number of students, who didn't have to pay tuition, and those three percent had already been admitted. Besides, there was a five percent quota ³ for Jewish students admitted to educational institutions. Even if there had been money for tuition, my father still might not have been admitted because of that quota. He began studying independently. He had a lot of books. He bought both textbooks and fiction. During his adolescence my father began writing his own stories and novels. He still had that hobby at a mature age.

I don't know how religious my father's family was. The grandparents probably kept Jewish traditions. As an adult, my father was an atheist and so were his siblings. Only my father's older brother, Abram Ryzhevskiy, remained religious. Father's brothers got married. They had children. All of them stayed in Pismennoye. They built a small adobe house close to Grandfather's house, and lived there with their families. When their parents died, the eldest son, Jacob, moved into my grandfather's house with his family. All my father's brothers were involved in agriculture. They rented plots of land and grew wheat and sold it. Father's sister Manya was married to a Jew, who lived in a Jewish colony close to Dnepropetrovsk. She moved to her husband after getting married. My grandparents died in the late 1910s, before I was born. They were buried in the Jewish cemetery in Pismennoye.

My mother's family lived in the small town of Ingulets not far from Krivoy Rog, which also belonged to Dnepropetrovsk oblast [370 km south-east of Kiev]. My grandparents weren't born in Ingulets. Both of them were born somewhere in the vicinity of Krivoy Rog. They moved to Ingulets after getting married. There were several Jewish families in Ingulets, but most of its inhabitants were Ukrainians. My grandfather's name was Morduh Gitin, and grandmother's [Jewish] name was Golda, but Ukrainian peasants called her Olga. Grandfather rented a plot of land from a landlord and grew wheat on it. When the children had grown up a little bit, they started helping out their father. My mother's family was neither rich, nor poor. Grandfather built a nice, spacious house. The family was large, and I don't remember the names of all the children. One of my mother's older brothers was called Mikhail. She had several brothers, but I don't remember all of them. Then two daughters were born, Manya and my mother Sofia [Jewish name: Sols]. Mum was born in 1892. Two more children were born after her: her brother Joseph and her sister Esfir. All daughters were very beautiful, especially the eldest one, Manya. She was a belle.

Mother's parents were very religious. In my mother's words they always observed Sabbath and major Jewish holidays. Grandfather prayed at home, as there was no synagogue in Ingulets since there were only few Jews. Yiddish was spoken at home. We spoke Russian or Ukrainian with our neighbors - non- Jews.

When the sons grew up they became farmers. The younger, Joseph was involved in viniculture. He rented a large vinery, where he cultivated vintage sorts of grapes. The rest of my mother's brothers grew wheat. All of them were married. Unfortunately, it was such a long time ago, and I don't remember the names of their wives and children. We saw each other very rarely, when some of them came to Moscow.

I don't know anything about the education of my mother and her siblings. There was no Jewish school in Ingulets. I know that before getting married, Mother worked in the local village school as a teacher. She taught Russian language and literature.

My mother told me the story of how she met my father. One of my mother's relatives asked to invite my father to the family get-together on the occasion of the engagement of my mother's sister Manya. Father attended the party. He saw my mother there and fell in love with her. When he came back home, he wrote a letter to my grandfather in Ivrit, in which he asked for the hand of the middle daughter, Sofia. Grandfather was so moved that the letter was written in Ivrit that he blessed the coming marriage. The wedding took place in Ingulets in accordance with the Jewish traditions. My parents left for Pismennoye after the wedding.

My parents settled in a small house, which was built on the territory of the yard of my grandfather's house. Our house was a small adobe house with a thatched roof. There were two small rooms, one to the left of the hall, and the other one to the right. In front of the hall there was an entrance to the kitchen with a big Russian stove [4](#). To the right of the house an annex was built, which was used as a pen for the cattle. We kept a cow there. The door to the pen was from the hall. There was a door to the shed on the other side of the hall. There was a hatchway to the cellar right in the center of the hall. Mother kept firewood in the shed. In fall we put vegetables in the cellar to be stored for winter. Mother used to make a lot of jam. She also made sauerkraut and pickles in large barrels, which were also stored in the cellar. We had the earth floor covered with clay. We had a primitive house, even for a hamlet. We had an orchard behind the house. The village was facing the bank of the river Sura, which was a feeder of the Dnepr.

Of course, Mother had a hard life after getting married. The living conditions at her parents' house had been much better, as they were much better off. Nevertheless, we never heard our mother complain. She was constantly busy with the chores, but she always found time to talk to her children and help them out.

The first-born of our family, Mikhail [Jewish name: Moishe], born in 1914, was named after our paternal grandfather. When World War I was unleashed in August 1914, my father was drafted into the tsarist army. When my father was in the lines, my pregnant mother went to her kin in Ingulets. My elder brother was born there. Father didn't manage to see his first-born, as he was in the lines. Father was a signaler in the army, and he was responsible for telephone communication. There were times when he had to restore torn wire in the moment when the adversary was firing. Father was awarded with a St. George Cross [5](#) for bravery. It was a very precious award, and there were very few awardees. He came back from the lines in 1917. Father came straight to Ingulets. Mother said that her relatives played a joke on my father. They brought somebody's three-year-old child, and when my father saw that toddler he took him in his arms and started kissing him. Then he was shown his own son. Father stayed in Ingulets for a while, and then he took Mother and Mikhail to Pismennoye.

Grandfather Morduh died in 1923 and Grandmother died in 1926. Both of them were buried in the common village cemetery in Ingulets, as there was no Jewish cemetery there. The graves of my grandparents were a little way away from the other tombs. I don't know whether they had a traditional Jewish funeral.

Growing up

I was born in 1919. My Jewish name is Hava, which sounds like Eva in Russian. In 1925 my younger brother Lev was born. My sister Olga, born in 1927, was named after our maternal grandmother. Her Jewish name was Golda.

In 1917 the revolution broke out in Russia [see Russian Revolution of 1917] [6](#). My parents were rejoicing on that occasion. Before the revolution Jews had very restricted rights. There was a pale of settlement. Jews weren't permitted to live anywhere they wanted; besides there was a quota of admission to institutions of higher education. My parents were poor, so they didn't lose anything when the Soviet regime was established. There was nothing to sequester from them. My parents were happy that their children would be able to study and do what appealed to them.

Father became a farmer after his return from the army. We had a plot of land, which almost reached the river Sura. Father uprooted the trees and made an orchard there. His brother Simeon's plot of land was nearby. When the Soviet regime began to divide land, Father was also given a plot of land. He began to grow and sell wheat. When the Soviet regime introduced collectivization [7](#), my father was one of the first ones in the villages, who joined the kolkhoz [8](#). Mother also became a kolkhoz member.

Father was respected in the village. He was a literate man, which was a rare thing in villages. All villagers asked him to assist in writing an application or a letter. Father never refused anybody. All Ukrainians treated our family very well.

Mother worked the hardest. She got up earlier than anybody. When we woke up, the bread had been baked and the food had been cooked. Mother managed to do all the things. First she helped Father with the field work. When the kolkhoz was founded, she worked there full time. She also had to raise four children. Except for her main job, my mother did odd jobs as well, as there was a need of money. She was teaching a few schoolchildren to cram them for the studies in the city. Mother was also a good seamstress. She had a Singer sewing machine. It was her dowry. Mother sewed things for our family, and besides she took orders from our neighbors. Some people paid her with money, others with food. All house chores and husbandry was in my mother's hands as well. Mother never showed that it was hard for her to do all those things. She was always smiling and joking. We, in our turn, tried to help her out as well.

Russian was mostly spoken at home, though all the villagers spoke Ukrainian. Maybe the reason for it was the fact that Mother used to teach Russian before she got married. My parents spoke Yiddish on very rare occasions, usually when they wanted to conceal something from me. We had books at home. Mother brought the classics of Russian literature - Lev Tolstoy [9](#), Chekhov [10](#), Pushkin [11](#) - from Ingulets. We had known about those authors since childhood. Mother used to read us the books before we went to bed. Later we read books ourselves. I learnt how to read before I started school. Father was also a book-worm. He spent his spare time on self-education. After the revolution he started writing articles about village life and sent them to the local Dnepropetrovsk

paper. Sometimes my father's articles were published. They even sent a certificate for part-time reports. Father took pride in it.

Jewish traditions weren't observed at home. We, children, were not brought up as Jews. After the revolution my father's brother Abram was the only one who remained religious. He lived in a house in front of our house. There was no synagogue in Pismennoye, so Abram prayed and read the Torah at home. Sabbath was always observed in his house. On Friday night Abram's wife lit candles. She didn't do anything after she had finished praying. Abram spent Sabbath at home. He put on his tallit and read religious books. I came to them to put on the light in the evening, light the stove and help about the house. Abram always invited us to come to their house on Sabbath and on Jewish holidays. Our family got together in his house. On Chanukkah Abram gave us petty money [Chanukkah gelt] and we were agog to get presents from him. We were rather poor and were able to buy a dainty thing, a lollipop only with the Chanukkah gelt we got.

There was only one school in the village. It was a seven-year school. All subjects were taught in Ukrainian. I started school in 1927. There were very few Jews in the village: only our family and Father's brothers' families. In my class there was only one Jewish girl, the daughter of my father's brother Simeon. Both teachers and students treated us very well. There was no anti-Semitism at all. I was an excellent student for the entire seven-year period. I was a young Octobrist [12](#), then a pioneer [see All-Union pioneer organization] [13](#) like the rest of the children.

In the late 1920s collectivization started. Our village was also affected by it. The Soviet regime divided all peasants into three categories: kulak [14](#), middle and poor. Our family belonged to the third category, and we had nothing to lose. There were so-called kulaks in our village - hard-working people, whose families, including children, were involved in hard agricultural labor from morning till night. Of course, they had good houses, horses and cows. Everything was taken away from those people, and they were sent to Siberia. We weren't touched, as there was nothing they could have taken from us. The kolkhoz was founded after the dispossession of the kulaks.

In 1932 there was dreadful starvation in Ukraine [see Famine in Ukraine] [15](#). Maybe it was not so noticeable in the towns, but in villages people suffered a lot. There were villages in Dnepropetrovsk oblast where almost the entire population died of hunger. Not very many people died of hunger in our village, but still there was great suffering. We had some potatoes and mother cooked a pottage from it, and she made fritters from potato peelings. We went to pick nettle and sorrel. Good thing, my parents had their wedding rings. Mother took them to Dnepropetrovsk, to a Torgsin store [16](#). There were some stores, where it was possible to buy food products for currency and gold. Mother was able to buy two sacks of millet for two golden rings. Once a day my mother cooked millet porridge and added nettle to it. So, we were able to survive those hard times.

Having finished seven years of school, there was no place for me to study. I went to Dnepropetrovsk at the age of 13 and entered the 8th grade of a Russian ten-year school. Mother came with me and rented me a room from an elderly Jewish lady. Mother couldn't stay with me, she just found a lodging and left. I remained by myself. My parents sent me some money each month for me to buy things. I went to school. Besides I cooked for myself and did the laundry. I had to take water home from the water pump, located outside, and stoke the stove. All those things were easy for me, as I had been raised in the village. On holidays I came home to my parents to get some rest, and help them. My elder brother Mikhail left for Leningrad. He finished ten grades at

school and entered the engineering and construction institute. He lived in the institute dormitory.

Dnepropetrovsk was a large and multinational city. There were a lot of Jews. A third of the students in my class were Jews. There were Jews among the teachers as well. Students accepted me well, without bias, which was usually felt towards the novices. I joined the Komsomol [17](#) in the 8th grade.

When we were transferred to the 9th grade an experiment in the educational system was undertaken. The students of our school were entitled to enter the institute after the 9th grade on condition that they had all excellent marks for the entrance exams, or one good mark and the rest excellent marks.

My father wanted me to become a doctor. He thought it was the best thing to heal people. I liked that profession very much. After I had finished nine grades in 1935, I submitted my documents to the Dnepropetrovsk Medical Institute. Of course, I had worked very hard preparing for the exams, and succeeded. I passed all entrance exams and was enrolled in the first course of the therapeutic department. There were quite a few Jews in my group in the institute as well. Teachers were also of different nationalities, there were also Jews among them. There was even one German teacher, because close to Dnepropetrovsk there was a German colony [18](#), and there were many ethnic Germans there. I studied well. I wasn't involved in any Komsomol activities, I preferred studying medicine. Anatomy is the scariest subject for a freshman of the medical institute. I liked that subject very much, and I was aware that a good doctor wouldn't be able to work with poor knowledge in anatomy. In all the years of my studies at the institute I had mostly excellent marks in all subjects.

First, I lived in the room which my mother rented from the elderly lady. Then I rented another lodging, closer to the institute. The hosts were common Jewish people. The host was a tailor and his wife was a housewife. It was a room in their private house, where the son of the hosts lived as well. He was a poor student at school, and the hosts asked me to tutor him in accordance with the school syllabus. Owing to that, they let me live in their house for free. When I was in my second year of studies, the host said that a student wasn't supposed to wear a coat that was too small for him. So he made a coat for me, and again he didn't take money from me. Besides, he recommended me to his neighbors, whose children went to school. I gave private lessons and was paid for that. I also got a scholarship for being an excellent student. My earnings were enough to buy food; my parents couldn't help me with money. Sometimes, my parents came for a visit and brought me some products. It was a good support, but I usually provided for myself. When I was in the third year of my studies, I was given a room in the hostel, close to the institute. It was a room for four people. My roommates were three Ukrainian girls. We made friends, did the chores together, went to the cinema and theater.

In the middle of the 1930s repressions began [during the Great Terror] [19](#), reaching their peak in the year 1937. There were many articles in the papers and radio broadcasts on divulged saboteurs, the enemy of the Soviet regime, the so-called enemy of the people [20](#). Key military commanders, party and state activists were arrested. We believed in things we were told. We were blind, and tried not to notice the obvious. Though, now it is obvious to me. Back then we didn't question official information. Our belief in the Party and in Stalin gave no grounds for doubts. Sometimes, we discussed the topic of arrests, but we never questioned the guilt of the arrested.

During the war

Politics wasn't my cup of tea at that time. I had my own 'realm,' and I didn't care what was going on beyond it. Only when the war in Poland began in 1939 I began to listen to the radio and follow the events. After the war [Editor's note: Interwar Poland was divided up between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union in 1939.] there was a division of the Polish territory [see Annexation of Eastern Poland] [21](#), and we sincerely believed that we had set the Poles free from the suppression and given them the chance to live under the Soviet regime. When Hitler and Stalin concluded the Molotov- Ribbentrop Pact [22](#) I felt at ease. We knew that the USSR was assisting Germany, sending provision there. What was the sense in attacking if the assistance was coming from us? Of course I couldn't have pictured the horror that was to come.

In 1940 I graduated from the medical institute. I got a mandatory job assignment [23](#) to Donetsk oblast, Gorlovka [about 600 km from Kiev]. I was given a room in a two-room communal apartment [24](#) in Gorlovka. The second room was taken by a Ukrainian lady, who worked in the office of the coal mine, which was located nearby. We became friends. She came to see me rather often after the war.

It took me a long time to get to work. I had to take a bus. I worked as an ambulatory surgeon in the medical office of the coal mine. Of course, I didn't have any experience, just the knowledge acquired at the institute. I had to read a lot of textbooks and ask experienced doctors for advice.

The majority of my patients were coal-miners. I tried to study their labor conditions, their duties, and the main industrial injuries. I thought I had come there to stay. I had no idea that our peaceful life would be over soon. I descended into the mine to see how the miners worked. I was given a helmet and overalls. I went in the cage with the crew of miners. We went down a few hundred meters. It was scary, I could hardly breathe. I was constantly being reminded to breathe calmly and steadily. I wanted to see the working conditions for each profession. There were a lot of them. There were coal cutters, then there were timber men, who were supposed to set coal face, so that the walls wouldn't collapse. Chunks of coal were cut, sorted and loaded on trolleys. The trolleys ran on rails and were drawn by horses. Those horses stayed underground, and weren't brought back to the surface. They were buried in the mines as well. Trolleys came to special hoisters, in which the coal was taken to the surface. I was scrutinizing which traumas were most likely for each profession.

I had worked in the mine for a few months, and in spring 1941 I was summoned to the military enlistment office. Medical officers were supposed to be drafted into the army, no matter what they were specialized in. They told me to attend the courses of surgeons in Kharkov [440 km from Kiev]. Probably, in the highest strata of the government they had anticipated war and thought that there should be more surgeons. I didn't manage to finish the courses. On 22nd June 1941 [the beginning of the Great Patriotic War] [25](#) Molotov [26](#) made the announcement on the radio that Germany had attacked the USSR without having declared war. It happened on Sunday. The next day we were told about demobilization at our courses.

All my simple chattels fit in one suitcase. I sent the suitcase to my parents as well as a letter, and went to the collecting point. We were given uniforms according to our size. At the beginning of the war there were no uniforms for ladies. We were given soldier trousers, jackets and boots, and even warm underwear, though it was warm in summer. We got assignments straight at the collecting

point. I was sent to the operative dressing platoon of Medical Battalion 264 of Division 244 of the Ukrainian front as an attending surgeon. We were not given transport. I was taken to the hamlet of Kornevo, in the vicinity of Kharkov. It was the place where my division was positioned. I was assigned to the advanced detachment of the operative dressing platoon. From Kornevo our division had to walk to Krasnograd, then to Poltava, then Kremenchug... We were retreating, and there was no end to it.

Our divisions were in close battle being besieged by adversaries. We tried to walk through the forest, which was a kind of a cover. There were a lot of wounded. We had no opportunity to deploy a medical battalion. We made halts in the forest to assist to the wounded. Sometimes we managed to get at least one tent to be used for operations, and in most cases we made some sorts of huts from branches. We put the branches on the earth, covered them with a waterproof cape and made operations on the so-called impromptu table. There were so many wounded that the orderlies didn't manage to bring all of them to us. I was walking around the forest with the crew of orderlies to see who needed to be aided in the first place, and who might wait a little bit. I was making marks on the jackets: 1st, 2nd and 3rd priority. Of course, the first priority was to take those who were hemorrhaging. There were no conditions to conduct operations. Often there wasn't even water to wash your hands, let alone for a thorough hand-wash before an operation. Good thing we had a large reserve of abacterial surgical gloves and tools.

In general, the first years of war were the most complicated in terms of working conditions and moral state. Before the war we had been convinced that if somebody dared to attack us it would be an overnight war on the territory of the enemy. We believed in that, but it happened to be the other way around. Germans were moving forward, and our troops had to leave more and more towns and villages. We had severe casualties and it seemed to us that the end was near. At the beginning of the war our militaries had hardly any trucks. We weren't able to transport the wounded. The soldiers had to carry the wounded on stretchers to any populated place that wasn't captured by the Germans. Due to the lack of trucks there was a bad supply of equipment and medicines.

There were mostly young women in medical battalions. Apart from a weapon and the sack with an anti-gas mask, each of us was supposed to take the required tools, trying to lift as much as possible. Often there wasn't even drinking water, nothing to say of food. We were drinking from the dirty puddles, and that water seemed to taste so good! We walked for many kilometers each day. Maybe this is the reason why my legs and veins are hurting now. When we stopped the soldiers and orderlies were making huts and dug-outs for the operation unit. Lightly wounded ones weren't sent to the rear, they just stayed in the medical battalion. They were like attending nurses, taking care of the severely wounded.

Sometimes we were lucky, when we entered some sort of populated area and were able to take some devastated building. These were the cases of relative comfort. We were operating all day long. The operating unit was teeming with wounded. At daytime we operated in daylight. Of course, we couldn't even dream of operating with surgical lamps. At night we used any source of light we were able to find. If there were trucks close by, we were operating using the light coming from the car headlamps, which were removed from the car and connected to an electric generator. Some lightly wounded person was turning the handle of the electric generator. If there was no truck, we used a jar, poured oil in there and put a wick in there. The wick light was very dim, so somebody

had to stay very close to the operating table and keep the jar very close to the surgeon. We were almost working by grope, but we had no other way out. One minute of hindrance might end in death. There was no fear; we simply had no time for it. We were focused on the operation, things we were supposed to do, and succession of our actions. There were three to four surgeons in a medical battalion and the chief surgeon of the medical battalion - the only one who was an experienced surgeon. The rest were like me, graduates of the medical institute with work experience of less than a year.

There were very harsh conditions of personal hygiene. We had soap, but we didn't always have water, even drinking water. Of course, it was the reason why there were so many lice-ridden people. When we took a train to another location, we were put in a sanitary car. We were told to take our uniforms, which were sent to the sanitary processing, and after taking a bath we were sitting naked, waiting for our clothes in the anteroom. I had thick curly hair of copper color. I had to make a crew cut, so as not to be ridden with lice.

I didn't know what had happened to my family. I managed to find my elder brother Mikhail. During the war there was an organization, which assisted in finding people who were in the lines. The procedure was to write a letter indicating the name and surname of the person in question, fold the letter in the form of a triangle and send it to that organization, which tracked down the person and sent him the letter. My brother sent me a letter with the number of his field post. We kept in touch from then on. My brother had graduated from an engineering and construction institute, so he was sent to the combat engineering platoon. There was no communication with my parents, younger brother and sister. From papers I found out that Dnepropetrovsk oblast was taken by the Germans in 1941. I wrote to my parents a few times, but there was no answer. I hoped they had managed to get evacuated. My brother didn't know anything either.

Only later on, in the year 1943 when our troops had liberated Dnepropetrovsk oblast, I asked the regiment commander for a leave to go home and find out about my parents. I was given a truck and went to Pismennoye. I was told by the neighbor that the Germans had taken my family away. There was only one Jewish family in the village: I mean our entire family, including my father's brothers and their families. The whole family was arrested and kept in some sort of jail. There were about 30 of them. Then the Germans took them somewhere, and there was no trace left. They must have been shot, but it is not known where and when. Before the arrest, my parents had brought the pictures and most precious things to the neighbors, including the Singer sewing machine, and asked them to give them to me. Of course, I couldn't take anything but the pictures. I left the rest of the things with the neighbors, as I came there for just a couple of hours to clear things up and then went back to the front. There was nothing I could do, just mourn over my kin. During the relocation of our hospital, when the war was about to end, somebody stole my backpack with some personal things, photographs and the last letter from my parents.

I was assigned commander of the operative and dressing platoon. During the battles there was an acting forward detachment. A surgeon and two or three nurses went to the battlefield to administer first aid to the severely wounded - the most drastic measures - to remove fragments of shell and suppress hemorrhage. Then the orderlies took the wounded to the medical battalion. When our commander asked who would go to the forward detachment, I was the first to say that I would go. I was the chief of four men, who were permanently trying to talk me out from taking up the most dangerous tasks. I felt no fear to go to the forward detachment. It was not a kind of bravado or the

desire to stand out by courage. It was just because nobody was waiting for me at home; my family had perished. And my subordinates had wives, children, parents, who were waiting for them. If I were to perish, nobody would suffer from that, but me. I kept saying that and it was true. My elder brother was the only survivor of my kin. He was also in the lines, and might have died any minute. Combat engineer was one of the most perilous military professions with a very high lethality rate.

In summer 1942 our division was sent to Stalingrad. We approached the left bank of Stalingrad, but we were supposed to cross to the right bank. There were not enough boats. We were told that boats were used to transport equipment. Those who knew how to swim were supposed to swim to the opposite bank. I was lucky that I had been a good swimmer since childhood. I took off the uniform and boots and put them in a bundle. I tied it up to my head and swam to the other bank in my underwear. The Volga is a very wide river, and the place where we were positioned was a rather narrow part of the Volga - not exceeding 500 meters. I managed to reach the opposite bank. At that time the Germans had not started fire yet.

When we came to Stalingrad it wasn't devastated yet. Houses were not demolished. We stopped by a tractor plant and deployed a medical battalion there. The siege of Stalingrad began on 13th September 1943 [see Stalingrad Battle] [27](#). The plant was totally demolished because of systematic shooting by the Germans. Only bricks were left of the plant. Bombings and shooting were almost constant. Germans had been firing from morning till night, so we had to move to the basement of a semi-devastated house. We used bunks as operating tables. The most important was that the wounded were put on the bunks so we could remove the fragments of shells, suppress hemorrhage. The squads that were fighting in Stalingrad brought us the wounded straight from the battles. There was no light in the basement and some Uzbek soldiers were told to help us. They were afraid of the blasts. And the latter were constant, sometimes with the interval of a few seconds. As soon as the blast started, the Uzbeks lay down on the floor. There was no way we could interrupt operations. Such a fragile girl as I had to command, 'Get up, immediately!' They got up, and lit the candles at once.

Now I wonder how we could have possibly been working during the blasts. Usually hands shiver when there are loud sounds. But, I didn't hear the explosions as I was so immersed in my work. Usually one surgeon worked on five or six tables removing the fragments, suturing the vessels. Then the nurse was supposed to take up stitching and making anti-tetanus injections so that the surgeon could go to another patient. There were no narcotics. Operations were made even without local anesthesia and the soldiers were enduring pain. They even tried to comfort me saying that it didn't hurt that much as I had a light hand. We worked almost round the clock, as they were constantly bringing wounded, by the thousands. At times my eyes were closing down, and I took a half-hour break. Somebody was on supply for me for that time and I went to sleep by the wall for people not to step on me. After a catnap I had to regain my work.

All nonbacterial tools, bandages and medicines were brought to us in sterilized boxes from the rear. When they left again they took the wounded with them. The wounded were carried on stretchers to the crossing, and from there they were sent to the left bank of the Volga [Stalingrad stood on the right bank] to the hospital in the rear. The Germans were constantly bombing the crossing. When it got dark, the Germans used to flare lights. There were frequent cases when the transport with the wounded was sunk, and nobody could be saved.

My most dreadful recollection of the war goes back to the time of the siege of Stalingrad. The Germans were bombing incessantly, but they had their intervals, and we knew about them. The Germans were very punctual and had 15-20 minute breaks for breakfast and lunch. It was the time of our rest as well. We could go outside, inhale fresh air and see the sunlight. Once we left the basement of the house we were settled in and went upstairs. We were so surprised to see a ten to twelve-year-old girl in one of the rooms. A slender fair-haired girl was sitting at the grand piano. We started asking her questions. She said that her family had lived in that house. Her parents had died during the bombing and she remained by herself. Somebody asked if she knew how to play the piano. She unplaited her tresses, so that her loose fair hair covered her back. It turned out that she went to music school. We asked her to play something for us. At the top of her lungs she announced like a compere that she would perform Symphony #6 by Tchaikovsky [28](#) and sat at the grand piano. While she was playing, we were listening to her with bated breath. Can you imagine: war, a devastated house, a short recess in bombing, and a girl with loose fair hair playing Tchaikovsky...She finished playing, put her hands on the keys. We burst into applause and at that moment the Germans started bombing.

I asked the girl to stay with us. She promised that she would come to the basement, but later. She said she had to do something first. We went down to the basement, our operations started again. The girl didn't show up. When the bombing came to a halt again, we rushed to her apartment. We couldn't find her there. We went outside and saw her lying by the fence in a pool of blood. Her intestines were falling out from her abdomen, as a result of a shell fragment that had pierced her belly. Her serene and bright face and fair hair were covered in brick dust. I wasn't the only one who was crying. Even battle-seasoned soldiers, who went through pandemonium, were crying like babies. We couldn't get over that. Soldiers were supposed to die at war, not children, not the girl who was playing the piano. I would never forget that, even if I had lost my memory I would have never forgotten that girl. I will remember her till my death. She wasn't the first child murdered by the Germans. When we were retreating at the beginning of the war and moving towards Ukraine, we often saw the wells full with bodies of children. It was horrible, but these were nameless children. I saw the heaps of the murdered soldiers on the streets of Stalingrad. Death was everywhere. Everybody has his own perception and image of war. As for me, the image of war is that slender fair-haired girl lying in a pool of blood...

In early January 1943 the Soviet commandment delivered an ultimatum to the Stalingrad group of the German troops regarding full strategic surrender. The Volga battle was over on 31st January 1943 and resulted in the resounding defeat and destruction of the picked Hitler troops: 24 generals headed by a commander. 22 German divisions, army # 6, tank squad # 44 and 60 separate German squads were besieged. There were about 330,000 people. The Stalingrad battle brought a radical change to the course of the Great Patriotic War, and the Soviet Union was in the advantageous position. The president of the USA, Roosevelt sent a missive letter to Stalingrad. I have the text of that letter. These were the great words of the great man. Roosevelt wrote: 'On behalf of the United States of America I deliver this missive letter to Stalingrad to express our admiration of its valiant defenders, whose courage, great spirit and dedication during the siege lasting from September 13, 1942 till January 31, 1943 will always inspire the hearts of all free people. Their glorious victory stopped invasion surge and became the turning point in the struggle of the unified nations against the forces of aggression.' The radical turn in the course of the Great Patriotic War was commenced in favor of the Soviet Union. Roosevelt appreciated and understood

the role of our army in the victory in World War II.

Our division was not in Stalingrad on those days. We had terrible casualties, almost nothing left from the city. The surviving soldiers would hardly make up a regiment. We were taken from Stalingrad via the Volga. It was frightening. The crossing was constantly being bombed. The remnants of the division were sent to the suburbs of Moscow for reformation.

Owing to my work in Stalingrad, the commandment included me in the list of awardees of the Order of the Combat Red Banner [29](#). I didn't receive this order; I was given the Medal for Military Merits [30](#). It was my first award. When we left Stalingrad, the commander of the division gave us the awards right in front of the line of columns. When we started attacking I received my second award - an Order of the Red Star [31](#) and in September 1943 I was given the Medal for the Defense of Stalingrad [32](#).

The course of war changed after the Stalingrad battle. Now it was the Germans who were retreating. We were moving forward, and Berlin was our destination. Of course, we were in quite different spirits. We were not despondent as we had been during the times of retreat. It was easier from a moral point of view, but it was also easier from the physical standpoint. The army was now being supplied with trucks. We didn't have to walk and drag all those medical tools with us. Our equipment was transported in trucks, and usually there was room for us as well. We were given tents. Now, it was easy to deploy the medical battalion when we came to a new location. It was also better with the food supply. It was the time when we were supplied by our allies - the USA. American canned pork was a big help for us. When there were no heating means, we ate that meat with jellied fat.

We had to operate anywhere. Sometimes we had a chance to take the premises of a school or a hospital. Apart from working in the operation unit, we were supposed to set up the wards for the wounded. If we had sacks, we put hay and straw in them so that the wounded could lie down on them. There were a lot of operations. Each surgeon was operating on several tables simultaneously. We were not thinking of the conditions in the battlefield. We operated when it was raining or snowing. The only goal was to save human life. We were assisting people no matter what. We went to the front line along with the infantry. I was never hiding, and maybe this is the reason why God was sparing me. I was only once afflicted with contusion. I couldn't hear anything for a couple of days, but still kept on operating. I often donated my blood to the wounded. I had universal blood, of the 1st group [group 0], which could be used by anybody. There were times when during an operation I was giving blood to the wounded and kept on operating. There were times when we couldn't wait for somebody to give us the blood of the required group. During the war we became really experienced surgeons. We didn't have any specialization. All surgeons were able to do everything that was required. Only in peaceful times some surgeons are specialized in just abdominal operations, others in amputations. At war you never know what kind of patient you are going to get. Everybody was a multifunctional expert.

We were moving forward. In spring 1943 we set foot in our motherland again: liberated Dneprodzerzhinsk, Dnepropetrovsk, Kharkov. Our division took Zaporozhie, then Nikolayev. Our division was conferred an Order of the Red Star for the liberation of Nikolayev. After that we liberated Odessa. We rushed into Odessa unexpectedly and had taken the enemy aback. The Germans were running around outside in underwear. Then there was Nikopol. For the liberation of

the latter our entire squad, including me, was issued a commendation. I was awarded the Order of the Great Patriotic War [33](#), 2nd Class, for the liberation of Odessa.

I came in the lines in 1941 holding the rank of military doctor of the 3rd grade. It was the grade given to those who had finished the courses of surgeons. In the army I became a captain, which corresponded to my rank of military doctor of the 3rd grade. In 1944 I was conferred another military rank. I became major of the medical corps. I finished the war in that rank.

I was promoted after my rank was changed. I was transferred to the surgical mobile front-rank hospital of the 1st line Number 5218. The hospital was moving from one place to another with the army. Hospital of the 1st line meant that when we came to a new location, apart from operating rooms there were also wards for the wounded so they could go through post-operation treatment. Experienced army surgeons came to help other front-line surgeons improve their qualification. They performed show-operations and taught us. The operations in that hospital were mostly to remove the fragment, process the wound, conduct appendectomy, remove a gall bladder, operate on the stomach ulcer etc.

We had stayed in Romania for some time, when our hospital was transferred to Poland. We stopped in some sort of a village, the name of which I don't remember. We stayed on premises where there was hardly any room to put the stretchers. There was only the most necessary medicine. When I was doing the round I noticed that one of the wounded had lockjaw - a trismus. I remembered from my school textbooks, that trismus was the first symptom of tetanus. It was necessary to immediately inject anti-tetanus serum, but we had run out of it. I was supposed to go to another village to the medicine storage facility, but we didn't have any means of transport. What was I to do? There was no way I could linger. I had to make a decision very swiftly. Though I was an atheist, I went to the Catholic cathedral and found a priest there. I introduced myself and explained the situation in Ukrainian. Polish and Ukrainian were very similar languages, so he understood what I was saying. I told him that we were in the same boat no matter that he was religious and I was an atheist, and we had one common enemy: fascism. I told him about our severely wounded soldier who required an injection of anti-tetanus serum. I also mentioned that I didn't have any transport to go to the storage facility to get the medicine and asked him, whether he could send somebody with a horse.

The priest listened to me very closely and said that he would help. He kept his word. Hardly had I come back to the hospital when I saw the cart with the horse, sent by the priest. I told the coachman the way to the storage facility and he brought me the anti-tetanus serum very quickly. I gave the wounded the intravenous injection for it to be working quicker and soon the tetanus symptoms were fading. We managed just in time. We evacuated that soldier to the rear hospital. After a while the cart came back and the coachman told me that the peasants sent him to bring food for the wounded. He brought fresh dairy products: milk, curds and butter. We fed the wounded and had a meal as well. The next day the same man came again and from then on he brought us food every day while we were staying in that village.

We moved to Hungary from Poland. Hungarian doctors helped us a lot both with advice and medicine supply. They treated us very well. In the evenings they invited us over to have a cup of tea, treated us to grapes. In general, the population of all countries we went through, gave us a warm welcome. Poles, Czechs, Romanians and Hungarians had really suffered under fascism.

However, we were cautious of direct contact with the local population. The matter is that in every squad there were SMERSH [34](#) representatives. We were supposed to tell them in advance which populated places we were supposed to visit. I didn't pay a lot of visits, as I was afraid that I might be blamed of espionage. SMERSH didn't prohibit communicating with the locals openly, but I think that they were following us and had their stooges everywhere.

I became a party member during the war. I understood that it was necessary for me to do that. I was suspicious of those who refused to join the Party. The special department was also interested in those people.

Being a doctor I saw the Germans not only in battle, but also on the operating table and in the hospital. When our reconnaissance captured Germans to get information, some of the captives were wounded. If they were lightly wounded, they were sent to the headquarters for cross-examination. There were severely wounded captives, and it was important to save their lives. Sometimes we had to pay a high price for one captive: the lives of a couple of our reconnoiters. In spite of the fact that Germans murdered all my kin, it didn't even occur to me that I should not treat them. I was a doctor and I ought to do my job no matter who was on the operating table. The duty of a doctor is to help and to save life, not to judge. Not to mention that it was my obligation.

I didn't hate the Germans I was treating. I understood that there were few of them who wanted to fight. They were soldiers. Hitler gave an order and they were to carry it out. The Germans who were on the operating table used to reiterate that they were against war and fascism. Even if they believed Hitler, they still were responsible for their actions. We believed Stalin and were tacit accomplices of his crimes. Anyway in the post-war period Germans repented. They are still assisting those who suffered from the war. But our communists who had taken millions of peoples lives in the Gulag [35](#) are not penitent and are not going to contrite.

Political officers [36](#) were constantly inculcating others that those who surrendered to the enemy were betrayers and traitors. They were deserters. I always got perturbed about that. I knew that orderlies didn't always manage to take all wounded from the battlefield. Is a person guilty if he was wounded and captured by the Germans? And what if the person lost consciousness? What if the entire squad was besieged? There were different circumstances. I think those people are worth to sympathize with. I could speak my mind only with my bosom friends. I understood that I should be reserved in general. When we left the boundaries of the USSR, our division liberated camps, where both military and civilian captives were held. SMERSH took the military captives and sent them immediately to the Gulag. They didn't look into the circumstances of captivity. They merely thought if the soldier had been captured, it meant he was a traitor. Once I was the witness of a terrible scene - the execution of military captives. The execution was ostentatious, for everybody to see what would happen to those who came to Germans. The political officer ordered, 'Fire!', there was a shot and the captives fell dead. I saw very many deaths at war, but those deaths seemed to me uselessly ruthless.

It was hard for women at war. Apart from the natural burdens of the military life, front-line women were constantly harassed by young and strong men, as there were few women, but men wanted to have a 'normal' life. I was able to remain myself. I had a lot of admirers, but I didn't want to have short-term affairs, I wanted to preserve myself for the man I would fall in love with once and for all. When we were positioned on the bank of the Dnestr, dug-outs were made on the steep bank

slopes. My orderlies made a nice dug-out for me, put a bench there, covered the floor with branches and brought flowers. Men called my dug-out a cell, as they knew nobody stayed there but me. Things happened. But when I turned down somebody's offer they still didn't try to hurt me, and we remained friends. Of course, it was easier for those ladies who didn't adhere to such strict rights as I did. They had additional ratios and awards. But I didn't want that. Much time had elapsed since the war when I bumped into the chief surgeon, one of those front-line men who tried to get into my graces. We had a talk, and he said that such a pure girl as I was a talisman for the hospital.

I didn't feel anti-Semitism in the lines. I think that in such extreme conditions all seems minor with the exception of human traits. I didn't experience anybody's biased attitude toward me, and I didn't hear from anybody that they didn't receive an award or were promoted in rank for the reason of being Jews. Nothing of the kind happened.

In March 1945 we were transferred to Breslau, Germany, which bordered on Poland. [Breslau is about 70 km from Berlin south-east of today's German- Polish border. In March 1945, however, it was not yet the border between the two countries.] We deployed a hospital and the wounded were brought to us. We understood that the war was about to end, but our work was still intense. There were a lot of wounded, and unfortunately some soldiers perished in the last spring days of the horrible war. Breslau was the place where on 9th May 1945 we heard the announcement that the war was over with the unconditional surrender of Germany. It is difficult to put in words the feeling of unalloyed happiness at that moment. We went on an excursion touring Germany and Austria on the occasion of Victory Day: we traveled by bus for ten days and stopped in different cities. I managed to see the world-renowned opera house in Vienna. I got the chance to see that wonderful city.

Then we were taken to Berlin. I saw a high wooden fence on one of the streets in Berlin, with the names and origins of the soldiers who captured Berlin inscribed. We were shown the palace where pre-war meetings of Hitler and Ribbentrop had taken place. The palace was demolished. There was a huge crystal chandelier among the heaps of bricks and chips of furniture. Each of us took a crystal pendant from that chandelier as a keepsake. In spite of being devastated Berlin seemed a beautiful city to me. Then we went to Potsdam. We were shown the building, where the conference of the winners took place. Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill discussed the division of the territories and post-war regime of Europe. [At the Potsdam Conference (July 16th to August 2nd 1945) the US was represented by President Truman.] I was delighted that in spite of war almost every plot of land was planted with flowers. It was May, the period of blossom. We communicated with Germans during our stay in Germany. They gave us bicycles so we could go sightseeing after work. Germans were starving and we often gave them canned meat and bread from our ration. We didn't feel animosity from their sides. They treated us benevolently, and there was no thirst for revenge.

Our hospital was transferred from Breslau to Hungary. We were supposed to treat repatriates and Soviet citizens who were released from concentration camps. There were people who were afflicted with contagious diseases such as typhus fever, diphtheria etc. There were no doctors specializing in infectious diseases among us. Hungarian doctors gave us the medical reference on treatment of infectious diseases in German and Latin. They also provided us with pills and antibiotics. We were told that we wouldn't be demobilized until all our patients had been cured. I didn't know what would happen to those people in our motherland, but we were supposed to cure them.

I corresponded with my brother and knew that he lived in the vicinity of Moscow, in Kuntsevo. The general-commander of the combat engineering troops, where my brother served, filed a request, asking to send military engineer Mikhail Ryzhevskiy to the Moscow military circuit for further military service, as he was experienced in military consultation and was involved in the construction of military aerodromes. My brother was given a room in a two-room communal apartment in Kuntsevo and enlisted for the Moscow military circuit. This happened before the war was over, in April 1945. Though, my brother's service began with building a dacha [37](#) for that general. Then my brother was demobilized and employed by a construction trust as an engineer. He married a Jewish girl, Anna. Their daughter Tatiana was born in 1949.

My brother told me what happened to my maternal relatives. Mother's brother Mikhail and his son Grigoriy were drafted into the lines. Both of them were front-line soldiers, were wounded, but came back home alive. Mother's brother Joseph died in evacuation in Siberia. Mother's sister Manya and her husband were shot by the Germans.

After the war

Mother's younger sister Esfir survived the war. She was a very beautiful and energetic woman. After getting married she lived in Krivoy Rog with her husband. Her husband worked in the mine and she was a medical assistant in the medical office of the mine. When the mobilization began, Esfir's husband was drafted into the army, and Esfir went in the lines as a volunteer to work as a medical assistant in the medical platoon. When the squad where Esfir was enrolled went through Krivoy Rog they were besieged by the Germans. Esfir was sheltered by her acquaintance, a Ukrainian guy, who had worked at the mine before the war. She stayed in his cellar during the period of the siege. That man brought her food and water. At night Esfir came out of the cellar for a little bit. Later on in Krivoy Rog there were more checks carried out by the Germans and the Polizei [The German word 'Polizei' (police) in this case refers to the local collaborators, armed by the Nazis]. Then the daughter of the man who sheltered Esfir gave her peasant clothes and a head kerchief, and took her to her relatives in a village, because it was safer there. Esfir, wearing a peasant kerchief, wasn't detained by the German patrol. When our troops liberated Krivoy Rog, Esfir came back in the lines and stayed there until the end of the war. When she was demobilized she returned to Krivoy Rog. Her husband also came back from the lines. They didn't have children and Esfir adopted the two children of her sister Manya, who was shot by Germans. She raised her niece and nephew, Natalia and Julius. Julius immigrated to France in the 1970s. Esfir died in Krivoy Rog last year.

After demobilization I was sent to the hospital of the veterans of war, located in the vicinity of Moscow. There were severely wounded soldiers who were supposed to take a long course of treatment there. I worked there for about a year as a surgeon. I lived in the hostel of the hospital. In 1947 we were unexpectedly told that the hospital would be closed down and we had to look for another job. In the post-war period there were very many surgeons, much more than during civilian times. That is why there was no demand for surgeons. There were no therapists in the lines, as people usually didn't get sick. In spite of the hard conditions, internal reserves of the organism were working well. I was looking for a job and understood that surgeons were not needed. I was suggested that I should get reeducated. I was given an assignment for courses of physiotherapists, held in the State Institute of Physiotherapy and Balneotherapy.

Before attending courses I decided to try to enter post-graduated studies. I knew that doctors who had been in the lines were admitted to post-graduate studies beyond competition. I wanted to go on with my studies and I went to the admission board. There was another lady who came with me, a Russian surgeon. The members of the board examined my documents and said that I was an efficient doctor and could work in any hospital and that I didn't need any post-graduate studies. They took the documents from the second applicant, though our cases were equal. Nationality was our only difference. Of course, nobody told me that there was no place for a Jew in the post-graduate department. But I understood the implication very clearly. It was the first time when I felt biased attitude towards me.

I stayed with my brother. He lived with his family in a two-room communal apartment, located in a two-storied barrack without conveniences. Toilet and water pump were outside. The apartment was heated with a stove, which was in the corridor between the rooms. We were heating it in turns with another family, who lived in our apartment. We cooked food on a Primus stove. I didn't think I would stay there, but I ended up living in my brother's apartment for 18 years. I had a sofa in the corner of the room, which was partitioned with a folding screen. Now Kuntsevo is a district of Moscow, but back then it was a village of Moscow region.

When I finished my courses the municipal health care department sent me to town hospital #29 to work as a physiotherapist. I worked there for over 40 years. The only way to get to Moscow was by electric train. Later on, buses went to Moscow, too. It took me so long to get to work, that I had no time for anything else after work. I came home just before going to bed.

In 1948 the state of Israel was founded. It was a real joy for me. I was happy that the USSR was one of the initiators for the foundation of the state of Israel. Though, later on the relationship between the USSR and Israel was harmed. The USSR deemed Israel to become its satellite, one of the countries of the socialistic camp, and Israel decided to follow its own way. The Soviet government could not forgive that. However, we followed the events in Israel and were concerned. I took such pride in Jewish people when they gained victory in the Six-Day-War [38](#) and Yom Kippur War [39](#). Jews knew how to build their country and how to protect it as well.

In 1950 my brother died tragically. He was on a business trip in Karaganda [Central Kazakhstan]. He was called there for consultation. Mikhail was supposed to return by train. But on that very day he turned 36. Mikhail refunded his train ticket and went home by plane to see his family in Moscow. There was a plane accident: the plane exploded in the air. Nobody survived; there was nothing left from the passengers. After my brother's death, I stayed with his widowed wife and daughter.

Physiotherapy was my main job. I liked neuropathology and took up a few neuropathology cases. I was on good terms with a very qualified neurologist, a Jew named Solomon Kantorovich. We worked in the same hospital. He taught me, and treated the patients independently. There were very many Jews in our hospital. The chief physician was also a Jew. Our department was even referred to as 'synagogue' in the municipal health care department. Of course, it was another demonstration that anti-Semites didn't even conceal their attitude. In 1948 the campaign against cosmopolitans [40](#) started, and we were aware that anti-Semitism didn't only occur on a social level, it was enhanced to the state level. The Jewish theater in Moscow was closed down, and its manager, a wonderful actor and the head of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee [41](#), Solomon Mikhoels [42](#) was assassinated. His assassination was disguised as a car accident. But everybody

understood what was going on, and feared that repressions might follow. Everybody understood that it was propaganda. There were rumors that Jews would be exiled to Siberia, and people believed that. There were times in Soviet history when certain people were forced to move [see Forced deportation to Siberia] [43](#): Crimean Tartars, Germans, Chechens, Ingush. Nevertheless, anti-Semitism wasn't felt in our hospital. On the contrary, during the campaign against cosmopolitans, the best doctors of the city were working in our hospital. I was lucky I worked with great experts and learnt from them.

It was the hardest for us when the Doctors' Plot [44](#) started. When the articles about 'Murderers in white robes' appeared in the newspapers, party meetings and team meetings were held to discuss the cases of the doctors poisoning people. At that time we understood that it was a libel. The most famous and the brightest doctors all of a sudden were turned into murderers! But I had to attend those meetings and raise my hand when we were voting for condemnation of the criminals. If I hadn't raised my hand, they would have fired me or put me in prison in the worst case. It was a dreadful time. Patients didn't change their attitude, neither to me nor to other Jewish doctors who worked in our hospital. Anyway, nobody openly showed mistrust and nobody refused to be treated by Jewish doctors. People were not that silly. They understood what was going on.

On 5th March 1953 Stalin died. Of course, we, doctors, anticipated his death. In radio round-ups we were informed that Stalin had Cheyne-Stokes respiration, and everybody understood that he was on the brink of death. When I found out about his death, I had a feeling that the world would plunge into the abyss. I couldn't fathom how we could possibly live without Stalin. It was sincere grief. When I was on the ward round, I dissolved in tears. Then I went to Stalin's funeral. I walked amid a huge crowd on semi- thawed snow.

Only after the Twentieth Party Congress [45](#), where Nikita Khrushchev [46](#) divulged Stalin's crimes, I understood that it was good to live without Stalin, without constant fear. After Khrushchev's speech it all dawned on me. In the lines people were facing death and were ready to die for Stalin. But if there had been no Stalin, there might have been no war. At any rate there wouldn't have been so many casualties. If there hadn't been repressions as of 1937, if Stalin hadn't decapitated the army, and killed the best military commanders, Hitler wouldn't have dared to attack us. Post- war repressions are also on Stalin's conscience.

I met my future husband at work. Leonid Krichevskiy was an engineer. He worked with medical X-ray and physiotherapy apparatus. Leonid graduated from college. He was a jack-of-all-trades. He was good at mechanics. Leonid previously worked in the military hospital and was responsible for equipment repair. In 1948 Leonid came to work in our hospital because of the mass dismissal of Jews. He was much older than me. Leonid was born in 1908 in Samara. After the revolution his family moved to Saratov [on the banks of the Volga, 700 km from Moscow, with a population of one million]. Leonid had stayed there before the war. He went in the lines as soon as the war began. After demobilization he was offered a job in the Moscow military hospital.

Leonid was married. His wife was twelve years older than him. They had a daughter. After the war Leonid divorced his wife, but they lived in the same apartment. Leonid wooed me for three years. First I didn't want to be with him, as I thought that he should live for his daughter. His child needed a father. Finally he broke down my resistance. His courtship was spectacular. There was a mail box with a slot on my door. Every morning when I went out, I saw a bouquet of flowers in my mailbox

and the words on my fence, 'I was here,' and the date. I never saw him bringing the flowers or writing the words on my fence. Then we started seeing each other. We got married in 1952. We didn't have a wedding party. We just registered our marriage in the state registration office and had a festive dinner with our closest relatives afterwards. We didn't have a place to live, and my sister-in-law talked us into staying in her apartment. We made a partition and stayed in the room. In 1954 my daughter was born. She was named Olga after my perished sister. Now the five of us lived in one room.

They treated me very well at work. They loved me and appreciated my work. I really worked very hard and didn't refuse anybody. Apart from the main work people were supposed to be involved in social work. I spread propaganda. I had extracurricular activities every week. Every week I was supposed to follow the press, the news in the political sphere of the country and foreign countries as well. Every Thursday I was to hold a special political class with students telling them the main events in the political life. I was supposed to cover those events from the standpoint of the communist ideology. Those classes were extracurricular, so people were not willing to attend them, but it was mandatory for them to be present. In case somebody skipped such classes he was fraught with administrative punishment, including dismissal. I remember how dreadful it was for me to speak about the horrors of the Israeli 'aggressors' on Palestinian land... but I had no way out, I could only express the official point of view.

The birth of my daughter changed my life. My maternity leave was very short - only two months. I had to put Olga in a nursery so I could go back to work. The salary of engineers was very skimpy, it was hardly enough to get by. I couldn't afford to stay with the baby. Leonid wasn't able to provide for us. In 1960 I was assigned chief of the physiotherapy department of the hospital. Of course, it was a promotion, but I didn't get a pay rise. We didn't have enough money for a comfortable living. So I had to look for additional work. When my daughter turned one, I went to work half time for the military academy of chemical defense. I held lectures there three times a week for four hours. I worked there for thirteen years. My husband died in 1964, when my daughter turned ten. He was buried in the city cemetery. I remained by myself. I had to provide for my daughter and for myself. After my husband's death I took another job. A medical school was opened by our hospital. After work I taught neuropathology and physiotherapy. I coped with my work. When I was young I was very energetic.

Olga went to school. She was growing up. My husband and I were atheists. Olga was raised without knowing anything about Jewish traditions, history and religion. Like the rest of the children she was a pioneer and a Komsomol member. We celebrated Soviet holidays such as 1st May, 7th November [October Revolution Day] [47](#), Soviet Army Day [48](#), and Victory Day [49](#). When our daughter was little we had a family tradition: on 9th May we went to the Grave of the Unknown Soldier and laid down flowers at the monument. In the evening we had a modest dinner, and my husband and I told our daughter about the war, and the way our victory was gained. Olga was raised a patriot. Having finished school she entered the Moscow Electric and Technical Communications Institute, the department of telecommunications. I was worried about my daughter, but she succeeded in passing her entrance exams and was enrolled in the first year. Olga was a good student, and she was assigned a job in Moscow after her graduation. She got a mandatory job assignment to the Moscow urban telephone network to work as an engineer. When Olga began to work, there was no need for me to have part-time jobs. I quit working for the academy and kept on working at the

hospital and medical school. In 1987 I retired.

Shortly before my husband's death, we received a one-room apartment in Moscow. We lived there for nine years. Being a veteran of the war, I was given a two-room apartment in a new Moscow district, Novogireyevo, on the occasion of the anniversary of our victory over Germany. As compared to the modern apartments mine is rather bad, poky with inconvenient layout. But I'm happy to have a roof over my head and my own lodging. I live with my daughter.

After her graduation Olga got married. Now her surname is Romanova. It was a short marriage; I don't even want to dwell on that. After getting divorced Olga came back to me. She doesn't have children. My daughter and I are very close.

Strange as it may be, Olga came to Jewry. Her personal life wasn't getting better, though she wanted to found a family. She had certain questions which remained unanswered. It seemed to Olga that her life had stopped at some stage and nothing would happen. Somebody advised her to read the Bible. For the first time, she was glued to the Bible and found the answers to all her questions. Olga was astounded and reproached me for concealing the book of veracity from her. Of course, she had not understood many things. Olga told me that she had a poor memory, didn't have a linguistic penchant, but some citations from Bible were embossed in her memory after reading them for the first time. Many things remained unclear to her, so she began to study the Bible and the Torah [Tanakh, the Jewish Bible contains three parts, Torah, Neviim (Prophets) and Ktuvim (Writings), therefore the Torah is a part of the Bible.] with the help of educators. She believes that those books are worth while studying for the whole life.

I brought up my daughter in the internationalist spirit, plying her with Russian culture. But my daughter identifies herself as a Jew since she has started studying the Bible and the Torah. She spends a lot of time in the oldest synagogue in Moscow. [The oldest synagogue and the only operating one during the Soviet regime in Moscow, located in the heart of the city, on Spasoglinichevskiy Lane, is now called 'Sinagoga na gorke' (Synagogue on the hill).] There she has a lot of friends. I don't share her interest in religion. If there is a God, and if Jews are the chosen people, how could he let the deaths of so many Jews during World War II happen? How could he let almost everyone of my kin die because of the fascists? I don't believe that it was the will of God.

In the 1970s mass immigration of Jews to Israel started. People who lived in the USSR for the first time had the opportunity to go abroad. Many of my acquaintances immigrated at that time. First I sympathized with them, and I was happy for them when I found out that they got settled well. I wasn't going to leave the country. There are some people who easily change things in their lives, but I'm one of those who have a hard time even moving from one apartment to another. That's why I was never looking forward to immigration. Now, it's too late even to think about that.

When in the middle of the 1980s Mikhail Gorbachev [50](#) declared the new course of the party, perestroika [51](#), I was delighted by that. I hoped that it would be for the better especially seeing certain changes happening in the country. Freedom of opinion and press appeared. There was no censorship in the mass media. The Iron Curtain [52](#) fell, after having separated the USSR from the rest of the world for decades. Now we had the opportunity to go abroad, invite foreign guests. During perestroika Jewish life began to revive. Then the pace of perestroika started to decline and life was getting gradually worse. Our skimpy wages were rapidly getting devaluated. The most necessary products were vanishing from stores. Maybe the opponents of perestroika, the former

governmental leaders, were doing those things for the people to get perturbed. They succeeded in that. All those things were crowned by the breakup of the USSR. Like many people of my age I regret that. We got used to the fact that all Republics were united and now all of them turned into independent states. [The Soviet Union was made up of 15 Republics (Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan) up until its disintegration in 1991.]. Economic and spiritual relations were torn. And what did we get in turn? We are separated from each other, and not only by boundaries. Many things had to be changed in the USSR, but there were good things as well. I think I'm not the only one who has such a point of view. Young people are prone to think differently.

Jewish life appeared in independent Russia. I heard from other people that there are many Jewish societies that provide significant assistance to people. I usually stay in. It's hard for me to go anywhere. I don't get assistance from charitable organizations. I have a daughter who does everything for me. Fascism appeared in Russia along with the revival of the Jewish life. More and more young people are imbued with fascist ideology. I think it's on a social level, but my daughter is sure that the fascists would like to come to power in our country. Olga is a determined person, and she is not prone to phobias. She isn't afraid of changes. She does fear to be without money or a job though. She believes there is a way out from any situation. I think it's in her genes to be aware of fascism. She knows that her relatives were murdered by fascists, and she is afraid that the fascists could come to power in Russia. She is constantly trying to convince me to leave for Israel. Of course, I understand that my daughter will not leave me. I want to die in my motherland. I don't believe that fascism would be a driving force in our country, which had suffered so much from fascism. We will see, maybe I am too optimistic.

Glossary:

1 Jewish Pale of Settlement

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

2 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 Five percent quota

In tsarist Russia the number of Jews in higher educational institutions could not exceed 5% of the total number of students.

4 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.

5 St

George Cross: Established in Russia in 1769 for distinguished military merits of officers and generals, and, from 1807, of soldiers and corporals. Until 1913 it was officially referred to as Distinction Military Order, from 1913 as St. George Cross. Servicemen awarded with St. George Crosses of all four degrees were called St. George Cavaliers.

6 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.

7 Collectivization in the USSR

In the late 1920s - early 1930s private farms were liquidated and collective farms established by force on a mass scale in the USSR. Many peasants were arrested during this process. As a result of the collectivization, the number of farmers and the amount of agricultural production was greatly reduced and famine struck in the Ukraine, the Northern Caucasus, the Volga and other regions in 1932-33.

8 Kolkhoz

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

9 Tolstoy, Lev Nikolayevich (1828-1910)

Russian novelist and moral philosopher, who holds an important place in his country's cultural history as an ethical philosopher and religious reformer. Tolstoy, alongside Dostoyevsky, made the

realistic novel a literary genre, ranking in importance with classical Greek tragedy and Elizabethan drama. He is best known for his novels, including *War and Peace*, *Anna Karenina* and *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, but also wrote short stories and essays and plays. Tolstoy took part in the Crimean War and his stories based on the defense of Sevastopol, known as *Sevastopol Sketches*, made him famous and opened St. Petersburg's literary circles to him. His main interest lay in working out his religious and philosophical ideas. He condemned capitalism and private property and was a fearless critic, which finally resulted in his excommunication from the Russian Orthodox Church in 1901. His views regarding the evil of private property gradually estranged him from his wife, Yasnaya Polyana, and children, except for his daughter Alexandra, and he finally left them in 1910. He died on his way to a monastery at the railway junction of Astapovo.

10 Chekhov, Anton Pavlovich (1860-1904)

Russian short-story writer and dramatist. Chekhov's hundreds of stories concern human folly, the tragedy of triviality, and the oppression of banality. His characters are drawn with compassion and humor in a clear, simple style noted for its realistic detail. His focus on internal drama was an innovation that had enormous influence on both Russian and foreign literature. His success as a dramatist was assured when the Moscow Art Theater took his works and staged great productions of his masterpieces, such as *Uncle Vanya* or *The Three Sisters*. and also had some religious instruction.

11 Pushkin, Alexandr (1799-1837)

Russian poet and prose writer, among the foremost figures in Russian literature. Pushkin established the modern poetic language of Russia, using Russian history for the basis of many of his works. His masterpiece is *Eugene Onegin*, a novel in verse about mutually rejected love. The work also contains witty and perceptive descriptions of Russian society of the period. Pushkin died in a duel.

12 Young Octobrist

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

13 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.

14 Kulaks

In the Soviet Union the majority of wealthy peasants that refused to join collective farms and give their grain and property to Soviet power were called kulaks, declared enemies of the people and exterminated in the 1930s.

15 Famine in Ukraine

In 1920 a deliberate famine was introduced in the Ukraine causing the death of millions of people. It was arranged in order to suppress those protesting peasants who did not want to join the collective farms. There was another dreadful deliberate famine in 1930-1934 in the Ukraine. The authorities took away the last food products from the peasants. People were dying in the streets, whole villages became deserted. The authorities arranged this specifically to suppress the rebellious peasants who did not want to accept Soviet power and join collective farms.

16 Torgsin stores

Special retail stores, which were established in larger Russian cities in the 1920s with the purpose of selling goods to foreigners. Torgsins sold commodities that were in short supply for hard currency or exchanged them for gold and jewelry, accepting old coins as well. The real aim of this economic experiment that lasted for two years was to swindle out all gold and valuables from the population for the industrial development of the country.

17 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.

18 German colonists/colony

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

19 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.

20 Enemy of the people

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

21 Annexation of Eastern Poland

According to a secret clause in the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact defining Soviet and German territorial spheres of influence in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union occupied Eastern Poland in September 1939. In early November the newly annexed lands were divided up between the Ukrainian and the Belarusian Soviet Republics.

22 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.

23 Mandatory job assignment in the USSR

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

24 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.

25 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.

26 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.

27 Stalingrad Battle

17th July 1942 - 2nd February 1943. The South- Western and Don Fronts stopped the advance of German armies in the vicinity of Stalingrad. On 19th and 20th November 1942 the Soviet troops undertook an offensive and encircled 22 German divisions (330,000 people) and eliminated them. On 31st January 1943 the remains of the 6th German army headed by General Field Marshal Paulus surrendered (91,000 people). The victory in the Stalingrad battle was of huge political, strategic and international significance.

28 Tchaikovsky, Peter Ilyich (1840-1893)

One of the most famous Russian composers. He wrote operas, concertos, symphonies, songs and short piano pieces, ballets, string quartets, suites and symphonic poems, and numerous other works. Tchaikovsky was opposed to the aims of the Russian nationalist composers and used Western European forms and idioms, although his work instinctively reflects the Russian temperament. His orchestration is rich, and his music is melodious, intensely emotional, and often melancholy. Among his best known works are the Swan Lake (1877) and The Nutcracker (1892).

29 Order of the Combat Red Banner

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

30 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'.

31 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.

32 Medal for the Defense of Stalingrad

established by the decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR as of 22nd December 1942. 750,000 people were conferred with that medal.

33 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.

34 SMERSH

Russian abbreviation for 'Smert Shpionam' meaning Death to Spies. It was a counterintelligence department in the Soviet Union formed during World War II, to secure the rear of the active Red Army, on the front to arrest 'traitors, deserters, spies, and criminal elements'. The full name of the entity was USSR People's Commissariat of Defense Chief Counterintelligence Directorate 'SMERSH'. This name for the counterintelligence division of the Red Army was introduced on 19th April 1943, and worked as a separate entity until 1946. It was headed by Viktor Abakumov. At the same time a SMERSH directorate within the People's Commissariat of the Soviet Navy and a SMERSH department of the NKVD were created. The main opponent of SMERSH in its counterintelligence activity was Abwehr, the German military foreign information and counterintelligence department. SMERSH activities also included 'filtering' the soldiers recovered from captivity and the population of the gained territories. It was also used to punish within the NKVD itself; allowed to investigate, arrest and torture, force to sign fake confessions, put on a show trial, and either send to the camps or shoot people. SMERSH would also often be sent out to find and kill defectors, double agents, etc.; also used to maintain military discipline in the Red Army by means of barrier forces, that were supposed to shoot down the Soviet troops in the cases of retreat. SMERSH was also used to hunt down 'enemies of the people' outside Soviet territory.

35 Gulag

The Soviet system of forced labor camps in the remote regions of Siberia and the Far North, which was first established in 1919. However, it was not until the early 1930s that there was a significant number of inmates in the camps. By 1934 the Gulag, or the Main Directorate for Corrective Labor Camps, then under the Cheka's successor organization the NKVD, had several million inmates. The prisoners included murderers, thieves, and other common criminals, along with political and religious dissenters. The Gulag camps made significant contributions to the Soviet economy during the rule of Stalin. Conditions in the camps were extremely harsh. After Stalin died in 1953, the population of the camps was reduced significantly, and conditions for the inmates improved somewhat.

36 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."

37 Dacha

country house, consisting of small huts and little plots of lands. The Soviet authorities came to the decision to allow this activity to the Soviet people to support themselves. The majority of urban citizens grow vegetables and fruit in their small gardens to make preserves for winter.

38 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.

39 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.

40 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'.

41 Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (JAC)

formed in Kuibyshev in April 1942, the organization was meant to serve the interests of Soviet foreign policy and the Soviet military through media propaganda, as well as through personal contacts with Jews abroad, especially in Britain and the United States. The chairman of the JAC was Solomon Mikhoels, a famous actor and director of the Moscow Yiddish State Theater. A year after its establishment, the JAC was moved to Moscow and became one of the most important centers of Jewish culture and Yiddish literature until the German occupation. The JAC broadcast pro-Soviet propaganda to foreign audiences several times a week, telling them of the absence of anti-

Semitism and of the great anti-Nazi efforts being made by the Soviet military. In 1948, Mikhoels was assassinated by Stalin's secret agents, and, as part of a newly-launched official anti-Semitic campaign, the JAC was disbanded in November and most of its members arrested.

42 Mikhoels, Solomon (1890-1948) (born Vovsi)

Great Soviet actor, producer and pedagogue. He worked in the Moscow State Jewish Theater (and was its art director from 1929). He directed philosophical, vivid and monumental works. Mikhoels was murdered by order of the State Security Ministry.

43 Forced deportation to Siberia

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

44 Doctors' Plot

The Doctors' Plot was an alleged conspiracy of a group of Moscow doctors to murder leading government and party officials. In January 1953, the Soviet press reported that nine doctors, six of whom were Jewish, had been arrested and confessed their guilt. As Stalin died in March 1953, the trial never took place. The official paper of the Party, the Pravda, later announced that the charges against the doctors were false and their confessions obtained by torture. This case was one of the worst anti-Semitic incidents during Stalin's reign. In his secret speech at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956 Khrushchev stated that Stalin wanted to use the Plot to purge the top Soviet leadership.

45 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.

46 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.

47 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.

48 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'.

49 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.

50 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.

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 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.