

# Solomon Manevich

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Kiev

Ukraine

Interviewer: Zhanna Litinskaya

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*Solomon Manevich is a nice-looking old man. He doesn't look his age. He is always well shaved and is wearing an elegant casual jacket at home. He lives in a small but cozy one-room apartment in one of the newer residential districts of Kiev. There is a huge bookcase in the room with a collection of books: poetry, novels, biographies and memoirs of outstanding artists, poets and musicians. He is a very intelligent man. He reads a lot and collects memoirs about writers and artists. Solomon himself writes memoirs and is interested in all kinds of events. There are pictures of Solomon, his wife, his mother and cousin on the walls. Solomon's wife is a beautiful woman. She is much younger than Solomon.*



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## **Family Background**

My maternal and paternal ancestors came from small towns of the tsarist Russia (Belarus at present). It happened so that my father left the family when I was about 5 years old. I don't remember him and didn't know any of his relatives. My mother told me a little. Any subject associated with my father or his relatives was a taboo for my mother. She didn't wish to discuss this subject and didn't allow me to get much information about them. As for my father's parents, my mother didn't meet them.

All I know is that my paternal grandfather Peisach Manevich was born and lived in Mstislavl town, but I don't know anything about my grandmother or what they did for a living. I don't know when they were born or died. I only knew my father's sister Dina who lived in Moscow in 1930s. I visited her in 1935. I have dim memories of her. All I know is that she had a higher technical education and lived with her husband and children. I have no information about what happened to her after the Great Patriotic War [1](#). My father had another sister Guta who lived in Moscow. I never saw her

and have no information about her. As far as I know neither of them observed Jewish traditions. They spoke Russian. I know no other brothers or sisters of my father even if he had any.

My father Henry Manevich (his Jewish name was Evzer-Genekh) was born in 1888. I have no information about his childhood or young years, except that my father finished cheder and a 7-year Jewish school. I know that he met my mother before WWI I don't know where, and fell in love with her. My mother worked at a military hospital and my father followed her when the hospital relocated with the frontline during the Civil War [2](#). My father grew up in a poor family and like many other children from poor families got very enthusiastic about new ideas brought by the revolution and Bolsheviks. He joined the Bolshevik party. When he served during WWI, in the tsarist army he carried on propaganda against the tsar and the imperialist war. After the October revolution of 1917 [3](#) he finished School of Red Directors and became an officer at the revolutionary committee of Ekaterinoslav [Dnepropetrovsk at present]. My parents got married there. It took him a while to convince my mother to marry him.

I know little about my mother's family. My grandmother and grandfather died before I was born and I know about them what my mother and her brother told me. My grandfather's name was Yankel-Leizer-Evzer Katz and my grandmother's name was Sarra. They were born in a small town of Chahussy in Belarus in the 1850s. They lived in this town all their life. My mother told me that Chaussy where she was born and Mstislavl where my father was born were small towns with numerous Jewish population. Jews lived in small houses in central parts of the town. There was a synagogue and market square in the center: farmers came to sell their products at weekend. Jews were mainly handicraftsmen. My grandfather belonged to the middle class. He had Jewish education. I don't know whether he finished cheder or studied at yeshivah or was self-educated, but he had deep knowledge of the Jewish religion, traditions and history. Leizer read Torah and Talmud and had reputation of a wise man in the town. He held an official position at the synagogue - I know no details about this - and many Jews came to ask his advice on everyday matters: how to teach their children, or what to buy and how to deal with family budget. The family lived in strict accordance with halakhah, followed the kashrut and celebrated Sabbath and all Jewish holidays. My mother didn't tell me any details since she and her sisters and brothers found their father's requirement to strictly observe Jewish religious traditions a burden. It wasn't a burden only for Nohim, one of my mother's brothers. Grandmother Sarra was a housewife like all Jewish women. The family was very poor since grandfather didn't know any craft to enable him to provide for the family and reading religious books did not bring any earnings. The children were leaving their home when they were able to do some work to provide for themselves. Grandfather and grandmother died in 1910s - long before I was born.

Their older son Avel, born around 1875, moved to America in the 1900s. His younger brother Itzhok and Israel-Movshe followed him. I don't know when they were born. I have no information about my mother's sisters Etia and Lisa. Perhaps, they left the country as well. My mother never told me anything about them. We corresponded with my mother's brothers until around 1925 and they supported us a little, but then we stopped corresponding [4](#) with them since it was not safe at that period. I never heard about them again.

I knew well my mother's brother Nohim Berko Katz, born in 1878. Nohim received traditional Jewish education: he studied at cheder and later had classes with a melamed who taught him at home. Grandfather Leizer also taught Nohim hoping that in due time he would become a rabbi. My

mother's brother became a similarly well-educated man reading the Talmud and Torah like his father, but he was not adjusted to everyday life whatsoever. After the revolution of 1917 Nohim tried to do different things starting one business or another, but it didn't work. He was an apprentice of a shoemaker, but that was no success either. His brothers helped him sending him money or clothes. Once they even sent him some Indian rubber and Nohim started shoemaking business that fell apart like all his previous efforts. His wife Riva and their children Sarra, born in 1924 and named after our grandmother and Yan, born in 1926 and named after our grandfather, lived on what they received from America and when their connection with abroad came to an end my mother was helping them. We lived together before the Great Patriotic War. Riva died of cancer in the mid of the 1930s.

My mother Rachil Katz was born in Chaussy in 1886. At birth she was given the Jewish name of Rokhlia-Genia. My mother didn't like talking about her childhood and so I know only fragments of her life. After finishing the Jewish school she spent few years at home helping her mother around the house. My mother read a lot. She was fond of Russian classics and liked Pushkin, Tolstoy and Turgenev [5](#). She was bored with living in a small town with its old traditions and customs, she was attracted by new progressive ideas. Besides, my mother was eager to get a good education and become a teacher or a doctor. She left home at the age of 16. Looking for a job she visited few towns in Belarus. Somehow she happened to come to Tomsk, a big town in Siberia, in 1907. She found a job and was an attendant at the pharmacy in the town hospital, then assistant pharmacist and later she became a pharmacist. She didn't attend any school, but she was smart and the doctor she worked for sympathized with her and trained her after work. Her brother Nohim came to visit her there. My mother lived in Tomsk until 1910 and then she began to travel in Russia. She worked in Syzran, a town near the Volga River, Troitsk and few other Russian towns. I don't know where or how she lived at that time. I think she probably rented rooms from various people. At that time she became fond of Bolshevik ideas and attended clubs: there were communist units in every town, but I don't know how she got there. They studied Marx and Engels. My mother didn't become a Bolshevik, but in one of Bolshevik groups she met my father Henry Manevich. They went to the front together in 1914 when WWI began. My mother was the director of pharmacy in the hospital in the Southern front. She worked in Tiflis (the capital of Georgia, Tbilissi at present) and Sverdlovsk. In 1918 she and my father settled down in Ekaterinoslav [Dnepropetrovsk at present, a big industrial town in central part of Ukraine]. My parents were married by that time, but I have no idea when or where they got married or whether they had a wedding of any kind.

## **Growing Up**

I was born in Ekaterinoslav on 29th March 1919. From Ekaterinoslav the family moved to Rostov-on-the-Don and then in Kharkov. All I know is that it had something to do with my father's job. He was a logistics supervisor an official in public economy. My mother's dream of getting education came true in Kharkov. She studied and graduated from the Kharkov University and became a pharmacist. In 1924 we all moved to Kiev. Shortly after we moved, my father left the family. He remarried and left Kiev. It was a tragedy for my mother. She was a very proud woman and never forgave my father. I never saw my father again. My mother refused him to see me. She also refused from my father's money support. She never told me about my father. When I asked her questions about him she only told me negative things. I know that my father was a Deputy director of Berdichev leather factory for some time. From there he was transferred to Commercial

representation in Berlin. In 1937 [6](#) my father and all other employees of the Commercial representation were called to Moscow where they were arrested. He then disappeared like millions of other communists.

We lived in the apartment that my father received in Kiev. The house belonged to Kiev eparchy. It was in Rylski Lane near the St. Sophia cathedral. [Editor's note: St. Sophia Cathedral was a Christian church in the center of Kiev built in the XIth century. After the revolution it became a monument of architecture.] Before the revolution tenants of this house were clergymen and after the revolution the Soviet power made these apartments communal. Our apartment had 7 rooms. It belonged to a high-level clergyman, but at our time there were few other families in the same apartment where we lived. I think there were five or six families and each of them lived in one room. The toilet, bathroom and kitchen were of common use. I don't remember names of our neighbors. After my father left, my mother's brother Nohim, his wife Riva and their daughter Sarra moved into the second room in this this apartment. Since then we lived together, sharing food and sorrows and joys of life. Every family had their own lamp in the toilet and kitchen with a switch in their room. Every family had their own table and a primus or kerosene stove in the kitchen. [Editor's note: a primus stove was a small portable stove with a container for about 1 liter of kerosene that was pumped into burners.] There was also a schedule for toilet cleaning that all tenants had to do in turns and there were always quarrels about it. I have a dim memory of a Jewish family that were always quarreling about cleaning the toilet. On the door of the toilet room there was a schedule of using the toilet where specific hours when every tenant of the apartment could go to the toilet were indicated. The schedule was based on a number of members in the family: the more there were the more often they had to do cleaning. It was based on work and school hours of all tenants. Working tenants and students could use the toilet in the morning and housewives and other tenants that didn't work could use the toilet afterward. We didn't really communicate with the other tenants.

I was raised in the international and communist spirit. My mother spoke Russian to me and demanded that her brother and his wife did the same. They sometimes exchanged words in Yiddish and I could understand few words. My mother wanted me to study in Russian school. She believed that it would make it easier for me to enter an institute after finishing Russian secondary school. In 1920s the national policy required every child to go to school of his nationality. Since I was a Jew I was supposed to go to a Jewish school. Before my mother and I went to an interview at the Russian school, my mother told me to pretend I didn't know a word in Yiddish even if interviewers asked me questions in Yiddish. I did as my mother told me and was admitted to a Russian lower 7 year-secondary school. I had many Jewish class and school mates. Many Jewish children wished to study Russian since it was the only way to continue education.

Probably because I grew up without father I developed the feeling of responsibility. I knew that I had to study well and get a good education to go to work and support my mother. I was the youngest pupil at school since I went to school before I turned 7. I was a disciplined and industrious child. I became a pioneer and the ceremony was conducted at the Lenin Museum. It was a big honor, I remember. Idolatry of Stalin developed later, in the middle of the 1930s. I remember, when I was a junior student at school I had a book with the title Who Can be Example for Pioneers. There were portraits and biographies of Lenin and Trotsky [7](#) on the first pages, smaller portraits of Zinoviev [8](#) and Kamenev [9](#) and a small portrait and brief biography of Stalin at the very end of the

book. Gradually portraits of Stalin appeared in stores, schools and theaters. There was a statue of Lenin and Stalin on the bench installed on the bank of the Dnipro River. All textbooks began to praise the Great Stalin.

In 1928-29 people began to be called to NKVD [10](#) authorities asking them about relatives abroad and whether they corresponded with them. If people admitted that they did NKVD officers demanded gold and valuables from them and in many cases people even were arrested for this. My mother demanded that Nohim stopped corresponding with his brothers in America (she had stopped writing them long before) or receiving any help from them. Nohim obeyed and my mother was now responsible for supporting my uncle's family.

At school we celebrated the Soviet holidays and went to parades on 1st May and 7th November [11](#). At home we had a festive dinner, but no guests since my mother had a secluded life. We didn't celebrate New Year and didn't have a Christmas tree since this was forbidden as vestige of the bourgeois past. Uncle Nohim celebrated Pesach and bought matzah, but gradually he stopped doing that, too. I don't know any details since my mother didn't allow me to enter my uncle's room on religious holidays. She didn't enter his room either. She thought that being a Soviet child I had nothing to do there. I don't think he went to synagogue. He probably prayed at home, but I didn't see it. He looked like an ordinary man wearing ordinary clothes. He wore no hat and I don't think he followed kashrut since it was impossible in those years. There was no place to buy kosher products. It was even hard to get non-kosher food. We shared the kitchen and meals living together. In 1920s struggle against religion [12](#) was at its height. Religious people were losing their jobs and imprisoned and we stopped celebrating religious holidays at home.

I often went to the Sophia Square where during Christian holidays: Easter, Christmas, anti-religious meetings were conducted. People paraded with portraits of Stalin and slogans 'accelerated labor is our response to Chamberlain' [13](#) singing 'away with monks, rabbis and priests - we shall get as high as heavens to chase away all Gods from there'. Members of the Union of militant atheists and crowds teased parishioners walking to St. Sophia Cathedral. I was curious about what was happening around. I thought it was right that authorities wanted to rid people from religious oppression. I watched such events.

In 1932 famine [14](#) began in the country. At this period Torgsin stores [15](#) were opened in Kiev where people could buy food and delicacies like caviar or sea fish for gold and valuables. There was a saying 'Look, kids, what your ancestors ate before the first 5-year plan' [16](#). We didn't have any gold or valuables and didn't go to these stores, but I remember how other boys went to look at the windows of one of these stores. Watchful NKVD officers put down names of customers taking them to their cells to find out where they kept their gold treasures. I remember peasants from surrounding villages dying of starvation in the streets. They came to Kiev looking for work or food. Special trucks patrolled the streets to take away dead bodies. People said that those starving villagers kidnapped and murdered children to sell their meat at the market. My mother told me to be on guard and not to talk to strangers. Mother received some bread and food per coupons. She also brought some food packages and exchanged clothes for food. Sometimes we got a bowl of soup and a bun at school. The period of famine lasted all through 1933. This was a horrible time.

I finished school in 1933 and entered the Industrial Rabfak [17](#). This was a free educational institution for workers. To be admitted young people had to work and my mother's acquaintances



helped me to get a position of apprentice of mechanic at a shop. I didn't have to go to work, but was on the list of employees to be able to enter the Rabfak as a worker. I joined Komsomol [18](#) at school. It was mandatory to be a Komsomol member to be able to go to work or enter a College after finishing studies at school. I finished the Rabfak in 1935 and went to Moscow at the invitation of my aunt Dina, my father's sister who corresponded with us. I stayed a week at her place. I saw my father there for the first and the last time in my life. I was a maximalist and had a negative attitude inspired by my mother. I didn't even want to talk with him. Before and after this meeting I always wrote in application forms for the College, or employment requests that my father left the family in 1924 and I didn't know or see him.

I was aware of the actual situation and knew that historians manipulated with the history and I decided to stay aside from any political or social sciences and go to study at the Industrial College (that became Polytechnic College after the war). I entered the Faculty of Chemistry at the Industrial College in 1935. Efimov, the rector of this college was arrested and executed as a Trotskist [19](#) when I was a 1st year student. Then every year there was another director of the college assigned. Nobody asked where a previous one disappeared. [Editor's note: each year the actual director was arrested, then killed. So while Solomon studied there the college had 4 directors, from which 3 was killed.] We were all aware that they were exterminated as 'enemies of the people' and that they were innocent victims. The last rector during my studies - a postgraduate student called Shpilko, shook every student's hand fearing that one might be an informer and write a report on him. He was assigned by the Party committee of the College and was afraid to refuse this position.

I remember the Komsomol meetings conducted in the biggest conference hall of the College. They started after the lectures and ended at 2-3 at night, or at 6-7 next day in the morning. There were streetcars waiting at the entrance of the building. The main issue on the agenda was identification and denunciation of 'enemies of people'. We had discussions of the following kind: one saw Ivanov talking with Sidorov and Sidorov was having beer with Petrov who met with an 'enemy of the people' Stepanov that was arrested later. Summary: Ivanov, Petrov and Sidorov didn't report on Stepanov, which means that they were also 'enemies of the people and were to be expelled from College and Komsomol. [Editor's note: all names are fictive.] Decision of the meeting was sent to 'competent' NKVD authorities and nobody ever saw Ivanov, Petrov or Sidorov again. All these people were innocent victims of Stalin's regime. They vanished in camps and exile. Nobody questioned what happened to them. There was a person and then he disappeared. Keep your mouth shut if you want to live - this was a rule of life.

I remember how the secretary of the Komsomol committee of the College was expelled from the Party. At the time when Kosarev was the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Union Lenin Komsomol, the secretary of the college said a few good words about him not knowing that Kosarev would become an 'enemy of the people'. He was repressed immediately after the meeting at the College. Going home late I saw people pushed into the cars that people called 'Black Maria' cars. The head of the Chair of Higher Mathematics, Academician of the Academy of Sciences of the UkrSSR Kravchuk was repressed and so was the head of the Military Department of the College Kozko awarded with two Orders of the Combat Red Banner during the Civil War. People said that the reason for Kozko execution was his friendship with Yakir [20](#), Commander of Kiev regiment, who had been executed shortly before. Kozko asked me once about my patronymic of Henrikhovich thinking that it might be of German origin and whether my father was German

[everything related to foreigners aroused suspicions in espionage]. I explained that my father was a Jew and change his Jewish name Genekh to Henry.

It was impossible to believe that people who had recently protected their country from fascism were traitors. Party and state officials and common people suffered from repression. My mother's friend Grigori Sitnitski, a bank employee was arrested by a false report. He was incriminated acquaintance with his former supervisor, 'enemy of the people', ties with foreign intelligence agencies and some other nonsense. Grigori was 'lucky'. After tortures in NKVD cells he became an invalid and was released for absence of corpus delicti. He had to sign confirmation that he would not disclosed what happened to him in prison for the fear of death penalty. He told it in secret to his wife and she told my mother after Grigori died shortly after he was released.

I was fortunate as well: since I wrote in all forms that I didn't know my father I managed to escape the fate of the so-called 'members of the family of an enemy of the people' who perished in Stalin's camps. I realized that I had to adjust to the system or it might destroy me. I was an active Komsomol member and when I was a senior student I became the head of Academic sector of the Komsomol Committee of the College (This sector was responsible for successful studies of students.) Besides, this was a beautiful time of my youth. I read contemporary and classical books, went to the cinema and theaters - of Ukrainian Drama, Opera and even Jewish theater. I met with girls and often went out with my fellow students: Jewish and Russian.

After I finished the first year of studies of our military classes in the summer of 1940, which were mandatory in all technical higher educational institutions of the USSR, the training was cancelled. This military training allowed graduates to receive a military rank. I finished College with honors in November 1940. Before graduation I was called to the military registry office where I got an assignment to serve in the army in Saratov, a big Russian town near the Volga after I defended my diploma thesis. In December 1940 I arrived to Saratov. The headquarters assigned me as a machine gunner to the rifle regiment no. 110. I suffered all intimidation of a private of the army there. Any commanding officer could abuse or hurt us especially the first sergeant.

In February 1941 I was sent to Kuibyshev, a big town in Russia. As one with higher education I became cadet of the Regional school of the reserve political officers. The war was in the air. There were no discussions about the war or any preparations to the war, but we knew about the war in Europe and realized that Hitler could attack our country at any moment. In April-May many military schools in Kuibyshev accelerated graduation terms. Military units were relocating to the West. Many members or candidates of the Party graduated in the rank of junior political officers.

Komsomol members were in uncertain situation. Junior political officers were required to be members or candidates of the Communist Party. Recommendations to the Party could be issued only by members of the Party, who had known us at least for a year, but we studied in school for few months.

### **During the War**

On 22 June 1941 my friend Misha Polesov from Zaporozhiye and I watched First Lieutenant Lermontov [21](#) at the Drama Theater in Kuibyshev. During an interval someone said to us 'Guys, the war began'. We left the theater.

We were on the waiting list to go to the front. Meanwhile we listened to news and couldn't understand why our victorious army was retreating with enormous casualties. In July 1941 we received an assignment to military schools in Kuibyshev for positions of Komsomol leaders at battalions. Since I was a chemical engineer I was sent to the Volsk school of chemical defense in the town of Sheihana Saratov region. At this school I was insistently advised to join the party since only a member of the Party could hold my position. After I worked at school for a year I was given a recommendation and became a candidate and then - member of the Party. I had no choice and had to join the Party. It was my duty as a military. I lived in a separate room at a barrack. In November 1941 my mother and cousin Sarra, who were in evacuation in Stavropol region, moved in with me. Nohim and his son Yan were evacuated to Stalingrad region. Nohim died of starvation and hardships there. Some time later I managed to find my cousin Yan near Stalingrad and the four of us lived in this room of mine for four years during the war. Sarra and mother worked at a hospital and Yan worked at a military plant. I lectured to cadets. The training lasted three months before they were sent to the front.

In 1944 my mother, Yan and Sarra returned to Kiev. I was transferred to reserve regiment of chemical defense #24 in the vicinity of Sheihana. I never faced any anti-Semitism. After the war ended in 1945 I submitted my request for demobilization. It was not approved and I requested to leave. I went to Kiev to help my mother get back our apartment where other tenants settled down during the war. According to the law militaries had the priority right for having their apartments returned to them. It took me several weeks to work on it. I also had to apply some violence: my friends and I simply threw belongings of those tenants out of our apartment. The court made a verdict in our favor. After a month's vacation I returned to my military unit.

### **After the War**

In 1946 my acquaintances wrote a request to release me from the army. This request was approved by a military plant in Kiev. I demobilized and returned to Kiev, only I was not going to work at the plant, but wanted to be involved in science. I looked for a job at educational institutions and scientific research institutes. After the potential employers saw my nationality in application form they always gave me a polite refusal. This was the first time in my life when I faced stable anti-Semitism on a state level.

I looked for a job for about three months before I went to work at the military plant that manufactured radar sets. I was a senior foreman and deputy superintendent of galvanic shop. When working at the plant I got a good knowledge of greatly praised socialist organization of labor and planned economy. There was no work in the first two weeks of a month when all employees had to come to work to pretend they worked hard between 8am - 6pm. In the next two weeks the shop got overloaded with work. We worked until 2-3 am to complete the plan or otherwise workers might be fired or even arrested for 'sabotage'. There were terrible conditions at the plant when exhaust ventilation didn't function and workers refused to work. Lower management had to give an example of work in such conditions.

In the summer of 1947 the Town Party Committee sent me to Kopachev village, Obukhov district, Kiev region. I was responsible for harvesting. 20-30 people, mostly women, worked in this village. There was no equipment, but starved horses. However, it was necessary to collect the crops and I had to demand superhuman efforts from these miserable exhausted people. We worked 12-14



hours per day. Another difficulty was that the chairman of the kolkhoz was permanently drunk and it was next to impossible to make him work. Villagers were treated with all severity. There was a decree issued in 1932 according to which spikelets left on a field were declared a socialist property and villagers were not allowed to collect them. Starving villagers who collected them were declared 'enemy of the people' and sent to camps for a long term. I still remember with pain an invalid of the war who had lost his leg and had a self-made wooden limb. His neighbors reported on him for collecting a small bag of spikelets and he was taken to a cell in Obukhov. I don't know what happened to him.

In the autumn of 1947 I returned to the plant in Kiev. In January 1948 I managed to get out of the hell of rushed work at the plant. I was invited to the position of senior lab assistant at the Department of general chemistry of Kiev College of Civil Aviation which was newly established. I also taught at seminars and supervised laboratory activities at the daytime department and lectured at the evening department. I also wrote manuals for extramural students. In some time Professor Izbekov, Head of Department of General Chemistry of Kiev Polytechnic College invited me to become a lecturer at the College. Since the College of Civil Aviation was located across the street from the Chemical department of Polytechnic College and I managed to commute between two Colleges during an interval. Working in two Colleges I also passed exams for the title of candidate of sciences and became a scientific researcher.

There were two campaigns in progress in the country at that period: struggle against servility and reverence for the West. All biggest discoveries in the world were declared to have been achieved by Russian scientists. The history of science was rewritten. The second campaign was openly anti-Semitic. Mass media had publications about struggle against 'rootless cosmopolites' [22](#) - Jewish intellectuals and workers of culture. In both Colleges where I worked Jewish lecturers were not allowed to participate in commissions during entrance exams or even were dismissed. Party officials found formal reasons to fire people. Many Jewish employees from our College lost their job. I don't know whether any Jewish employee kept his job at that time. We didn't discuss this subject since we might be punished for such discussions. People didn't trust one another. I was also fired from the Polytechnic College in 1948.

At the end of the academic year 1947-48 the director of the College of Civil Aviation Pochasov told me that I was to be dismissed since the program in chemistry was reduced. I asked to resign after vacation to be able to find a job during vacation. I couldn't find a job at any College or scientific institute since they also were firing their Jewish employees. I was given polite refusals at all institutions.

Once I met my former co-student who worked at the commissioning trust called Orgcommuneenergo responsible for the power supply in Kiev. My former co-student helped me to get employed by this trust. Valia Gordienko, another friend of mine from the prewar time was a supervisor at this trust. I became an equipment mechanic and liked this job. I worked with new equipment and was involved in its commissioning, start up and modifications. I trained the personnel and installed this equipment. I was promoted to an engineer's positions in due time, then to senior engineer, to crew engineer and foreman. I received a higher salary than a standard engineer at any other enterprise. I worked at the commissioning departments for the rest of my life until I retired in 1982.

I remember Stalin's death in 1953. I sighed with relief when he died, although many of my acquaintances including Jews, were in panic. They believed that Stalin protected them from anti-Semites and that the situation would be worth after his death. I always believed that there would be time, when Stalin's tyranny would come into open, but I never thought that in less than three years after his death I would be reading a secret report of Khrushchev [23](#) 'The cult of Stalin and how to overcome its consequences' on XX Party Congress [24](#) under the portrait of Stalin at a party meeting in the office of director of the trust. I would like to mention that working at the plant after the war, at Colleges and commissioning departments I never faced any prejudiced attitude caused by my nationality. This was another proof that 'fish gets rotten from its head' and anti-Semitism was forced from higher levels of power.

I don't feel like talking about my personal life. I was no monk and met with women, but I got married rather late. My wife Emma Matseiko is much younger than I. She was born in a Ukrainian village in Vinnitsa region in 1939. Emma is Ukrainian. She was in occupation during the war. She graduated from Kiev State University. She is also a chemist. We got married in 1968 and have been together since then. We have no children, but this enabled us to dedicate our life to one another. Emma shares her outlooks with me and we are very much alike. We are fond of reading and go to theaters and concerts together. We spent vacations in the Crimea and Caucasus. We could afford traveling. Only I never traveled abroad - Jews were not allowed to travel abroad. My wife is a teacher of chemistry at school and I am retired.

My mother worked as a pharmacist in a pharmacy after the war until she retired. She lived along life and died in 1980. My cousin Yan graduated from Kiev Polytechnic College after the war and Sarra graduated from the Faculty of Letters of the Pedagogical Institute, at the Department of Russian Language and Literature also in Kiev. Now she is a specialist in the Russian language and literature. Sarra and her husband Abram (he is a Jewish) followed their children and moved to Israel in the late 1980s. Yan and his family also resides in Israel, they also moved in the late 1980s. If we had children we would probably move to another country. Since we don't have any children we don't feel like living in a different country just by ourselves.

I have a dual attitude towards perestroika. Pensioners suffered from it. We lost our savings and have miserable pensions. But I wouldn't want any return of the past. I don't want to live in the country where no human rights were observed. During the rule of Gorbachev I quit the Party in 1980s. I voluntarily returned my Party membership card to the Party authorities. I think Ukraine is right to seek independence and it would be wrong to seek unification with Russia at the moment. Russia inherited ruinous features from the Soviet Union: aggressiveness and ties with Arab regimes. I am convinced that there must be no union with Russia since communist fascists are very strong there. I vote for independent Ukraine. If I were young I would find a place in this new life. I believe that young people have more opportunities in life nowadays.

I've never celebrated Jewish holidays or observed traditions. I attend the Hesed in Kiev and am a member of the Jewish Culture Society. We, elderly Jews, get together once a month in Hesed. We listen to music, exchange books, discuss what we have read, talk about biographies of Soviet and Jewish writers and have various discussions. I attend lectures about Jewish life and read Jewish newspapers. I find it all interesting, but I feel it is too late to change my habits. I shall never believe in God, although I think there is some higher power, but it is nothing certain. I give tribute to Jewish traditions during Pesach: my wife and I eat matzah and no bread during this time.

## Glossary:

### **1 22 June 1941 - memorable day for all Soviet people**

It was the first day of the great Patriotic War when the Germans crossed the border of their country bringing the war to its terrain. 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 the German army had seized the Ukrainian Republic, besieged Leningrad, the Soviet Union's second largest city, and threatened Moscow itself. The Great Patriotic War, as the Soviet Union and then Russia have called that phase of World War II, thus began inauspiciously for the Soviet Union.

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

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

### **3 Russian Revolution of 1917**

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

### **4 Keep in touch with relatives abroad**

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

### **5 Turgenev, Ivan Sergeyevich (1818-1883)**

Russian writer, correspondent member of the Saint Petersburg Academy of Sciences (1860). Turgenev was a great master of the Russian language and psychological analysis and he had a great influence on the development of Russian and world literature.

### **6 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.

### **7 Trotsky, Lev Davidovich (born Bronshtein) (1879-1940)**

Russian revolutionary, politician and statesman. Trotsky participated in the social-democratic movement from 1894 and supported the idea of the unification of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks from 1906. In 1905 he developed the idea of the 'permanent revolution'. He was one of the leaders of the October Revolution and a founder of the Red Army. He widely applied repressive measures to support the discipline and 'bring everything into revolutionary order' at the front and the home front. The intense struggle with Stalin for the leadership ended with Trotsky's defeat. In 1924 his views were declared petty-bourgeois deviation. In 1927 he was expelled from the Communist Party, and exiled to Kazakhstan, and in 1929 abroad. He lived in Turkey, Norway and then Mexico. He excoriated Stalin's regime as a bureaucratic degeneration of the proletarian power. He was murdered in Mexico by Stalin's order.

### **8 Zinoviev, Grigoriy, real name Radomyslskiy (1883-1936)**

Political leader, activist, Member of the Central Committee of the Party from 1907-27; member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of the USSR. In 1934 sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment for anti-Soviet activities and propaganda; in 1936 sentenced to death and executed, rehabilitated posthumously.

### **9 Kamenev, Lev, real name Rozenfeld (1883-1936)**

Jewish political activist, revolutionary and devoted fighter for communism, state leader. In 1935 imprisoned for espionage, executed in 1936; rehabilitated posthumously.

### **10 NKVD**

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

### **11 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.

## **12 Struggle against religion**

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

## **13 Ostin Chamberlain (1863-1937) , Minister of Finance, Great Britain, 1903-05, 1919-1921, Minister for India 1915-17, Minister of Foreign Affairs 1924-29, Navy Minister in 1931,; conservative party**

In 1927 he was one of initiators of rupture of diplomatic relations with the USSR.

## **14 Famine in Ukraine**

In 1920 a deliberate famine was introduced in the Ukraine causing the death of millions of people. It was arranged in order to suppress those protesting peasants who did not want to join the collective farms. There was another dreadful deliberate famine in 1930-1934 in the Ukraine. The authorities took away the last food products from the peasants. People were dying in the streets, whole villages became deserted. The authorities arranged this specifically to suppress the rebellious peasants who did not want to accept Soviet power and join collective farms. These shops were created in the 1920s to support commerce with foreigners. One could buy good quality food products and clothing in exchange for gold and antiques in such shops.

## **15 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.

## **16 Five-year plan (5-year plans of social and industrial development in the USSR), an element of directive centralized planning, introduced into economy in 1928**

12 5-year periods between 1929-90.

## **17 Educational institutions for young people without secondary education, specifically established by the Soviet power**

## **18 Komsomol**

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



proletarians, whereas party members had to have at least a minimal political qualification.

### **19 Zinoviev-Kamenev triumvirate**

After Lenin's death in 1924 communist leaders Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin formed a ruling triumvirate and excluded Trotsky from the Party. In 1925 Stalin, in an effort to consolidate his own power, turned against Zinoviev and Kamenev, who then joined Trotsky's opposition. Both Zinoviev and Kamenev were expelled from the Party in 1927. They recanted, and were readmitted, but had little influence. In 1936 Zinoviev and Kamenev, along with 13 old Bolsheviks were tried for treason in the first big public purge trial. They confessed and were executed.

### **20 Yakir**

One of the founders of the communist party in Ukraine. In 1938 he was arrested and executed.

### **21 Lermontov, Mikhail, (1814-1841)**

Russian poet and novelist. His poetic reputation, second in Russia only to Pushkin's, rests upon the lyric and narrative works of his last five years. Lermontov, who had sought a position in fashionable society, became enormously critical of it. His novel, A Hero of Our Time (1840), is partly autobiographical. It consists of five tales about Pechorin, a disenchanting and bored nobleman. The novel is considered a classic of Russian psychological realism.

### **22 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 antisemitic 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'.

### **23 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.

### **24 XX Party Congress**

At XX 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.