

Evadiy Rubalskiy

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Kiev

Ukraine

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Evadiy Rubalskiy is a short man with a hobbling gait – the result of his wartime injuries. He has gray hair around the bald patch on his head, kind eyes and a low voice. Evadiy lives in a one bedroom apartment in a 1980s apartment building in Obolon, a new district in Kiev. Evadiy's younger daughter, who lived in this apartment previously moved to Israel, and Evadiy is alone now. He divorced his wife a long time ago. Evadiy does his own cooking, cleaning and washing quite well. He has many books: they are mainly wartime memoirs, scientific works on the history of World War II and fiction books on the same subject. Evadiy never gets tired of discussing the subject of the war. He spends a lot of his time with Yakov Voloshyn, also a veteran of the war, who lives in the next-door apartment. They met at the Kiev Jewish Veterans Organization in the Jewish Cultural Center.

My father's parents came from Pavoloch town [120 km from Kiev], Kiev province during the czarist time, which became Zhitomir region after the revolution of 1917 [Russian Revolution of 1917] [1]. Pavoloch was a Jewish town, one of many around Zhitomir. Jews were allowed residence within the Jewish Pale of Settlement [2] in czarist Russia, of which Zhitomir region was a part. The Jewish population in Zhitomir region reached 50% of the total population. Pavoloch was founded in 1603. The village was divided into two parts: Jews resided in its central part called the Pavoloch town. The total population was 10 thousand and Jews constituted about 5 thousand of the total number. [Editor's note: Jews numbered 2,113 in 1847, and in 1897 the number rose to 3,391 (42% of the total population) in Pavoloch. During the Civil War the townlet declined and most of its inhabitants left. Jewish residents numbered 1,837 in this time.] There was also Ukrainian and Polish population in the town residing in the suburbs – this part of the town was called Kutok ('corner' in Ukrainian). The village stood on the small Rostianitsa River with a water mill on the curve of river making a kind of a quiet corner area. After the revolution there was a kolkhoz [3] and a Jewish kolkhoz [Jewish collective farms] [4] established in the town. The Jewish kolkhoz was called 'Ferois' ('forward' in Yiddish).

All residents got along well, made friends and visited each other. There were no national conflicts in Pavoloch in the late 19th - early 20th century. There was an old wooden Orthodox Christian church in the town. It was over 400 years old. There was also a Catholic church in the village and two synagogues in the Jewish town. The bigger synagogue was called the Pavolochskaya synagogue ('Synagogue of Pavoloch'). After the revolution in 1920s the Soviet power started ruthless struggle against religion [5], but the synagogues in Pavoloch operated till the Great Patriotic War [6]. The smaller synagogue was ruined. The Pavolochskaya Synagogue houses a lore history museum nowadays. There was a Jewish general education school in Pavoloch before and after the revolution near the market in the center. There was also a cheder that had no official

status after the revolution, when Jewish children had classes with a melamed at his home.

Jews were engaged in crafts in the town: there were tailors, barbers, shoemakers, tanners, blacksmiths, tinsmiths, etc. There was a fair in the central square of the town once a week where farmers from the Kutok brought their food products for sale. Also, there was a market where local villagers sold whatever their Jewish customers wanted to buy: they only sold living poultry that Jewish housewives took to the shochet working at the market. On Friday they sold fish for Sabbath. Milkmaids delivered dairy products to Jewish homes. The market was particularly colorful in summer: red apples, yellow pears, plums and berries. The families living in the central part of the town could only afford little gardens with 2-3 fruit trees and some flowers growing in them. There were mainly wooden plastered and whitewashed houses in the town. They were warm in winter and cool in summer. There were tin sheets or thatched roofs depending on the well-being of owners.

My paternal grandfather's name was Iosif Rubalskiy, and my grandmother's name was Feige Rubalskaya, nee Bloovesteyn. Non-Jews called her Fania. I think my grandparents were born some time in the late 1850s – early 1860s. Of their all relatives I only knew my grandfather's sister Hana, whose family name was Leschiner, and her husband Samuel. They lived in Zlatoustovskaya Street in Kiev. Iosif was a tall handsome man with a big beard and right black eyes. My grandfather wore a hat to go out and a kippah at home. My grandmother was short, slender and had fine features. She must have been beautiful, when she was young. She had gray hair that she always covered with a dark kerchief. My grandmother wore long dark skirts and long-sleeved blouses like all other Jewish women in the town.

I am not sure about what my grandfather did for the living. I would think he owned a small store or a shop before the revolution. The Soviet regime must have expropriated his property. At least, I know that my grandfather spoke rather disapprovingly about the Soviet power. My grandmother was a housewife like all married Jewish women. My grandparents had seven children. Jewish families usually had as many children as God gave them. However, the infancy mortality rates were high. My father Moishe, born in 1888, was the oldest. As for his brothers and sister, I will just tell their sequential names. Three daughters were born one after another following my father: Sophia -- Sosl in Jewish, the oldest one, then came Shiva and Yeva – Hava in Jewish. Son Solomon was born in 1902, Anatoliy – Nafthole in Jewish, was born in 1904. Rachil, the youngest daughter, was born in 1909. They were all addressed by their names in the family while their non-Jewish neighbors used their Russified names. [Common name] [7]

Jews in Pavoloch were religious and observed Jewish traditions. On Sabbath and Jewish holidays they dressed up to go to the synagogue. Women wore their best outfits and silk shawls. My father's parents celebrated Sabbath and Jewish holidays at home and raised their children to be Jews. Grandfather Iosif was a rather secular man. He read religious and fiction books, was interested in politics and subscribed to newspapers. He was well-respected in the town. Before the construction of railroad to Skvira [140 km from Kiev] my grandfather went to Kiev to convince the authorities to construct the railroad via Pavoloch and managed to make them accept his point of view. My grandfather was a very decent and fair man, the man of his word and duty.

I know very little about my father's childhood. I know that he and the other children got some education. At least, my father could read in Hebrew and Yiddish and read and write in Russian. He

was smart and talented. My grandfather sent him to learn the tanner's vocation and my father managed it well.

My maternal grandfather Isroel Pogrebinskiy came from the district town of Skvira, while my grandmother Itta was born in Pavoloch. I don't know their dates of birth or my grandmother's maiden name. My grandfather Isroel was a shoemaker, and my grandmother was a housewife. I don't think my mother's parents were as wealthy as my father's parents.

My maternal grandfather Isroel was more religious than my grandfather Iosif. He spent all his free time praying or reading religious books. He strictly followed all Jewish religious rules. The family observed Jewish traditions, followed kashrut, celebrated Sabbath and Jewish holidays. My grandfather attended the synagogue twice a day in the morning and in the evening.

There were five children in the Pogrebinskiy family. I've never seen my mother's older brother or sister. Mama's brother Moisey Pogrebinskiy moved to the USA in 1905 and settled down in Chicago. He was a tailor. Mama's older sister also moved to the USA. Her family name was Reuzman, but I don't remember her first name. Mama's sister Riva lived in Pavoloch. My mother Tsylia Pogrebinskaya was born in 1890. The next child in the family was mama's brother Ovsey. All children received Jewish education. They could read and write in Yiddish. The boys attended cheder and the girls studied with visiting teachers [melamed] at home, or their parents and brothers educated them. They corresponded with their brother and sister in the USA in Yiddish.

I don't know how my parents met. Usually young people married either those whom they knew in Pavoloch or the ones from the neighboring villages and towns. Mama told me that my grandfather Iosif was very unhappy about his son's choice. He was better off than my grandfather Isroel and was against my parents' misalliance. My grandfather went to visit his sister Hana in Kiev to allow his son some time to decide against this marriage, though grandmother Feige was on her son's side. She said: if they love each other, let them get married, as long as this will make them happy. I think my grandfather finally gave his consent to his son's marriage. When he got to know more of my mother, he came to loving her dearly. My parents got married in 1916. They had a traditional Jewish wedding: it couldn't have been otherwise at the time. The marriage was registered at the synagogue book and the rabbi conducted the ceremony under the chuppah.

After the wedding my parents moved to the house my father had bought. It was a spacious wooden house with 3 rooms and a kitchen with a big Russian stove [8]. One room served as my parents' bedroom, another room was mine and the 3rd room was a living room. Mama was a housewife. My father earned well.

During the revolution and the Civil War [9] there were Jewish pogroms [10] in Pavoloch. There were flocks [Gangs] [11] robbing Jewish houses and capturing and beating their Jewish victims, even killing some of them. Mama told me how she used to take shelter in a Ukrainian house holding me tight. Fortunately, none of our family suffered from pogroms.

After the revolution in 1917, when the Pale of Settlement was eliminated, my grandfather Iosif, my grandmother and their children moved to Kiev in 1918. My grandfather bought an apartment in a nice brick house in the center of the city, in 47, Artyoma Street. By the way, this street led to the Babi Yar [12], but I'll talk about it later. My father's brothers and sister got married in Kiev. They

stayed to live in their parents' apartment with their families installing partitions to divide the rooms. My father's sisters were housewives. Sophia and her husband Mikhail Gohvat had one son. Shiva, whose family name was Shkolnik, and her husband had two sons: the older son was born in the early 1920s, and Boris, the younger one, was born in 1925. Yeva's husband was Iosif Solovey, a doctor. Their daughter's name was Maria. Rachil, the youngest daughter, was married to David Lembert. Their daughter's name was Emma. My father's brothers Solomon and Anatoliy also had families, but I don't remember their wives or children's names.

My parents stayed in Pavoloch. My father worked and was well respected in the town. My father provided well for the family.

I was born in 1918 and was named Evadiy – it's an old Jewish name. [Editor's note: 'Evadiy' is used in Slav languages, not only in Jewish families, but it is not a very common given name in our days. Probably in Evadiy Rubalskiy's homeland he knows only Jewish families using this name.] One of my deceased relatives must have had this name, and I was named after him according to Jewish customs, but I don't know. All I know is that this relative was a scientist: my mother always told me to try to be like that man, whom I was named after. My sister Shiva was born in 1921.

I didn't study Hebrew. My parents spoke Yiddish to one another at home and spoke Russian to me and my sister. I could speak and understand Yiddish. My sister only knew Russian and Ukrainian.

The family celebrated all Jewish holidays, but I think they did it as a tribute to traditions. They went to the synagogue on holidays and then celebrated at home according to the rules. When a holiday was over, they continued to live their routinely Soviet life.

We celebrated Sabbath and Jewish holidays at home. I was too young and cannot remember any details. On holidays my parents dressed up to go to the synagogue. Mama wore a kerchief at home and a fancy shawl to go to the synagogue. Jewish women of Pavoloch did not wear wigs, but they did cover their heads with kerchiefs. My sister and I stayed at home, when our parents went to the synagogue. When they returned home we started the celebration. I remember the festive atmosphere of the holiday at home. I enjoyed it and didn't know that our life was to change dramatically in a short while.

April 1923 was dramatic for our family. In Pavoloch some gangsters brutally killed chairman of the executive committee called Ispolkom [13] – Varich, his wife, son and brother. The Soviet authorities sent an GPU [14] punitive unit to Pavoloch. The unit surrounded the town, gathered all people in the square and captured three hostages, who were wealthy and respected people in the town: Chernukha, an Ukrainian man, Leskowski, a Polish man, and my father. At first they captured another Jewish man, but then decided to replace him with my father. They said they were going to kill the wealthy bourgeois before anybody else. The hostages were accused of taking no action to prevent the murder of the Varich family. It didn't even occur to them that the village was big and the hostages lived on the other end of it and did not know about the attack on the Varich family. There was no investigation or trial. The hostages were sentenced to death and executed. I remember that my father asked permission to say farewell to my mother and me. I remember how the crowd handed me from one another above their heads to where my father was. I understood there was something terrible going on, but I did not know what it was about. Then the hostages were executed. Few hours later an order to keep the hostages alive was received from Kharkov

[before 1934 Kharkov was the capital of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, in 1934 the Government of the USSR decided to move the capital to Kiev. All governmental structures moved to Kiev as well], but it was too late. In 1990 all three hostages were rehabilitated. Their relatives were notified that they had been shot illegally. I don't remember how my father looked or how he dressed. I don't even remember his face. Mama had my father's photo before the Great Patriotic War, but I did not find any after I returned from the front. All I remember about my father is the feeling of reliability and strength that I had, when my father was with us.

When my father was executed, I was 4 and my sister was 2 years old. My father was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Pavoloch. Mama decided to move to Kiev where my father's parents lived. Mama bought an annex built over a shed in the yard in Franko Street in Kiev. Our family lived there before the war. There was a toilet and a pump in the yard and no other comforts. It got so cold inside in winter that the water in the bucket froze during the night.

It was hard to find a job at that time. There was a labor registry office for waiters and cooks near our house and numbers of people lining up before its front door. The office only provided jobs on a temporary basis: employers preferred hiring people for a week or a day rather than have them on a permanent basis.

Mama had no profession, but she had to provide for the two children. Grandfather Iosif gave her some food or money, but this was not enough. Mama got lucky: our neighbor's son was director of a labor registry office and the woman must have asked him to help the widow with two children. He helped mama to get a job at the shoe factory. I remember that mama prayed at home every evening begging the Lord to help her keep her job. Mama was a reliable and industrious employee, but nevertheless she lived in constant fear of losing her job.

Mama didn't go to the synagogue, when we lived in Kiev, but we celebrated Jewish holidays. Grandfather Iosif and grandmother invited us to celebrate holidays with them since we could not afford to celebrate at home. My grandparents loved me dearly since I was their first grandson. They also felt sorry for my sister and me since we'd lost our father. My grandfather loved my father and was proud of him, and his death became a tragedy for my grandfather.

On Jewish holidays my grandfather, his children, their husbands and wives and their children went to the synagogue. They returned home to have a festive lunch. My grandmother was a very good housewife and cooked delicious Jewish dishes. There was a dining room in their house where the family sat at a big table. I remember Pesach. There was a glass for Elijah ha-nevi in the center of the table, and all members of the family were to drink 4 glasses of wine during the seder. My grandfather conducted the seder according to the rules. Then the family recited a prayer and sang merry songs. On Chanukkah my grandfather gave my sister and me some delicacies. This is all I remember about holidays - my memory fails me - but we celebrated other holidays as well.

In 1928 I went to the first form of a Russian general education school. There were other Jewish children in my class. Our teachers or schoolmates had no prejudiced attitudes toward us. We had friends and nobody cared about the nationality. I don't think there was any anti-Semitism before the war [the World War II], at least, I didn't face any. I had Russian and Ukrainian friends and my mother never told me that I should have had only Jewish friends. I studied well. I became a young Octobrist [15], and a pioneer [16] at school. Then our class was transferred to the Ukrainian school

near our house. I don't know what this transfer was caused by, I was young and could not be possibly bothered about such things. The only difference between such schools was the language of teaching. I had no problems with the Ukrainian language. In the 7th form I joined Komsomol [17]. After finishing the 7th form in 1934 I had to go to work to help mama. I knew how hard it was for her to support the whole family.

In 1932 horrible famine [18] began in Ukraine. It also continued the following year of 1933. This was a terrible period of time. People were starved, many villages lost all residents to the famine. The situation was not so hopeless in Kiev. Crowds of desperate hunger-swollen people rushed to Kiev. They were happy to get any job to earn for food. I remember a street artist selling his pictures in the street not far from our house. He painted on asphalt and passers-by dropped coins to him. I also remember a beggar who sang nicely. There were numbers of homeless children, dirty and shabby – they must have also come from villages. They spread typhus in the town. There was a big house in Bolshaya Zhitomirskaya Street in Kiev – its tenants were doctors and the house was called the 'doctors' house'. There was central heating in this house and homeless children stayed in the basement of this house. They had lice and entertained themselves pushing lice inside apartments through keyholes. This house became the source of typhus which promptly spread all over the town.

My grandfather went to work in the store where bread was distributed by cards. He supported us well. Sometimes I came to his work. My grandfather pretended he was tearing off my bread coupon [Card system] [19] giving me some bread in return. I rushed home to share it with mama and my sister. There was also a Torgsin store [20] where food products or clothes were sold for foreign currency. I remember mama taking our silver cutlery to the store. She and I brought home a bag of millet that she received in exchange for the silver. We boiled the cereal and it lasted for quite a while. I don't remember for sure, but maybe my mother's brother and sister sent mama some money from the USA. At least, however negative the Soviet authorities were about people having relatives abroad or corresponding with them [Keep in touch with relatives abroad] [21], mama never terminated correspondence. Of course, she was taking a risk, but even during the terrible prewar period of arrests [Great Terror] [22] she managed all right.

Our neighbor was a plumber and a superintendent and he taught me what he knew about the job. My first job was at a construction site. I learned fast and soon I could work independently. I was even appointed a crew leader soon.

During the period of Stalin's persecutions in 1936 and afterward I was old enough to remember the details. There was a big brick apartment building to which the shed we lived in belonged. There were many arrests going on. Deputy director of the Opera Theater Linetskiy, who lived in this house was arrested. However, he was released a short time afterward. They must have failed to find evidence against him. Baranov, another neighbor, who worked as assistant to the minister, was also arrested and I never heard about him again. Baranov was a very decent man. Despite his high position he never wanted an office car to pick him up at home. He went to work by trolley-bus. I knew him since I was a child and could never believe that he was an enemy of the people [23]. Many tenants of this house were arrested. Almost every morning we heard that another of our neighbors was arrested. There were many high military and governmental officials living in our street and there seemed to be no end to arrests. Some people committed suicide to avoid arrest.

Many members of parliament were executed. They were honest people devoted to the Soviet power. They were rehabilitated later, after the Twentieth Party Congress [24], but for the majority of them this happened posthumously. However, one didn't necessarily have to be a high military or governmental official to be sent to the GULAG [25]. Some people wrote reports on their neighbors or acquaintances [many common people in the USSR sincerely tried to support the authorities involved in this unprecedented campaign related to struggle against the domestic 'enemies', they wanted to contribute into it by identifying and detaining such 'enemies of the people', and unconditionally believed in honesty, justice and infallibility of this regime]. A routinely row might have resulted in an arrest. Anybody could be called 'enemy of the people' and arrested on false charges. My papa sister Shiva Shkolnik's husband was arrested. His family could hardly make ends meet, but he was arrested and his arresters demanded that he gave them his money and gold. Of course, he never had any, but they took him to interrogations where they beat him mercilessly. He was released some time later, but not all of those who were arrested were as lucky as him. There were on-going meetings and people demanded to execute all enemies of people calling them traitors. Perhaps many people believed this was true: we were raised to have blind faith in the party and Stalin.

In 1935 my father's mother Feige died. She was buried in the Kiev town cemetery. That same year my grandfather Isroel fell severely ill. He was taken to a hospital in Kiev. I remember that he had an incurable disease. My grandfather died in 1936 and was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Kiev. My grandmother lived in Pavoloch with her unmarried daughter Riva. My mother convinced my grandmother and sister Riva to move to Kiev after my grandfather died. I don't know how my mother managed, but she bought them an apartment on the ground floor in a house not far from where we lived. My mother's younger brother Ovsey also moved to Kiev.

There was no state anti-Semitism before the war. Demonstrations of everyday anti-Semitism were punishable. There was an article in the Criminal Code under which abuse of the national dignity was subject to prosecution.

On 13th November 1939 I was recruited to the army and sent to study in Kalinin, Donetsk region [about 500 km from Kiev], in reserve artillery regiment 19. We took a military oath and then batteries of our regiment were sent to join the armed forces in the Finnish front [Soviet-Finnish War] [26]. In late February 1940 I was sent to Vladimir (Ukraine) with a small group of other military. In Vladimir the commandment was forming a light artillery regiment to be sent to the Finnish front. In March 1940 we moved to the front. On our way we heard about execution of a peaceful agreement between the Soviet Union and Finland [12 March 1940]. We arrived at the Karelian Isthmus near Leningrad where our regiment joined the 24th rifle division. We were reequipped and became howitzer-artillery regiment 246. This division, one of the oldest in the Soviet army, was formed from partisan units in summer 1918. It was awarded the Order of the Combat Red Banner [27] and named 'Iron' for the seizure of Simbirsk during the Civil War.

We were sent to Leningrad. In April 1940 the division was preparing for the 1st May parade in Leningrad. We rehearsed at nights and during the day we could walk and tour the city. It was an interesting time. Leningrad is history itself.

We knew that fascism was booming in Germany and that Hitler's armies attacked Poland in 1939, but it never occurred to us that Hitler or anybody else could attack the USSR. We had been told

that we were the strongest in the world and that our victorious army could only defeat enemies on their own terrains. We never had a bit of doubt about it. After the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact [28] was executed nobody even thought that there was such a possibility of an attack on the USSR.

After the parade our division moved to the border with Estonia near Pskov where we had advanced training. We were told that despite a peaceful agreement between the USSR and Estonia was breaching it. One day at dawn we crossed the border to Estonia [Occupation of the Baltic Republics] [29]. We were marching across historically Estonian lands, but there were no conflicts with the locals. Vice versa, they helped us as much as they could. Estonia was very different from the USSR: there were nice roads, well-maintained villages and towns, plenty of food products and goods in stores. We stayed there 2 months before we moved to Western Belarus. There was evident tension on the border with Belarus. Our border guards captured German diversionary/survey groups, German planes broke through the border every day. Since I was a construction man, I was ordered to the construction of the Grodno fortifications. [near the present Poland - Belarus border, 370 km from Kiev] There was a group of 90 men who had construction qualifications formed. We arrived at a town, the name of which I don't remember, located in 30 km south-west of Grodno. There were few armies working on the site. Two artillery/automatic gun battalions (9 & 10) made a permanent garrison of fortification site 68. Border unit 89 served to provide guard of the border. The fortifications were to be particularly strong and long-lasting, but there was a long time before they could be finished. There were 275 fortifications to be constructed, but only 85 of them were partially completed. If we had finished the construction it might have not allowed Germans to come to the territory of Belarus so easily.

At night of 20 - 21 June 1941 the situation around us raised much concern. At night on 22 June few additional guards, including me, were appointed. My duty was off at 2 o'clock in the morning and having transferred the post to another guard I went to bed. At 4 o'clock in the morning we were awoken by powerful artillery bombardment. Shells were flying into the rear over our heads. We were close to the near-border stripe line: one and a half hours later German units broke through the border guard covering forces and came close to where we were. One of commanding officers ordered us to retreat while he stayed keeping firing at Germans to help us leave. He must have perished. We were armed with rifles and didn't have bullet stocks. We could not retreat running back: there was mass barrage of fire. I didn't even notice that I was wounded in my arm at once. Fortunately, I had good 'rush-run' and crawl techniques. I got to a forest where nurses gave me first aid. Germans were very close and we could hear their shouting. Slightly wounded military were told to walk to a hospital in Grodno. When we got to Grodno, a bombing began. We continued on our way in the evening, but this time we headed to Lida, but we could not stay there either since Germans were moving fast and we had to move on to Orsha. Finally I got some medical care in a hospital in Dubrovka village near Orsha. When I was released from hospital a month later, I was allowed one-month leave and was told to go home. I went to Kiev. My dear ones were still there and were happy to see me. They knew I served at the Belarussian border and didn't even hope to see me alive. I stayed at home until 5 August. My arm still hurt, but I went to the medical commission from where they sent me to a gathering point. From there I was sent to 722 rifle regiment of 205 rifle division. Germans were approaching Kiev and our division was fighting on the avenue of approach to Kiev. I was appointed a communications operator in a company. On 7 August 1941 our division and landing troops passed to the offensive and recaptured Zhulyany, a

suburb of Kiev [today it's a district in Kiev], the Zhulyany airport. This was our first success since we had only retreated before. We often had hand-to-hand fights and there were dead bodies all around. We fought for each street and each house. There were selected German divisions opposing us and they received additional forces of aviation, artillery and flame throwers. We held out till 18 September, when we were ordered to retreat. [Kiev was occupied 19 September 1941.] We marched along the streets and there were patrols on the sides. We must have marched along a passage in the mine minefield. Civilians were also leaving the town. Our division was the last one to take leave covering the retreat of other units. We crossed the bridge over the Dnieper and field engineers blasted it behind us. We reached Borispol, the first town east of Kiev, when we found out we were encircled by Germans. We had to fight through the encirclement. We managed to break through the encirclement in Borispol all right, but it was to become harder for us.

The battle near Ivankovo lasted all day through. Sailors of the Dnieper fleet and Kiev militia were fighting with us. We fought furiously knowing that we had to get out of the encirclement. In the evening we managed to get through the encirclement. We had few wagons and trucks. Severely wounded patients rode on them and those who had slight wounds had to walk. I was slightly wounded in my neck. On our way we beat down German covering forces. Our crossing a swamp was extremely hard. Any of my fellow comrades perished in bogs. There was roar of battles around us. A tank commissar took the responsibility for our crossing. We used anything we had at hand to keep us on the water: barrels, truck sides, logs, etc. to make a makeshift bridge across the swamp. We crossed the swamp and a river and reached the town of Berezan [about 40 km from Kiev]. There were no more divisions or regiments and we gathered into units. Berezan was on fire. The Germans thought they had captured Berezan and moved on leaving just a garrison to guard the town. We had an impetuous battle and liberated the Soviet prisoners-of-war. Near the railway station we managed to seize a German mortar and mines and we started shooting moving to the east. There was no unbroken front line at the time. To break through the encirclement we had to split into smaller groups. A pilot major took command over our group of 60 people. We had one objective and that was to join our major forces. On our way we crushed the defense lines of the enemy and destroyed their communications lines. At one time we acted jointly with partisans. Locals supported us greatly informing us on where the German troops were staying, giving us food and lodging. A local guide helped us to cross the front line on 14 October 1941 west of Trostyanets, Sum'ska region. We came to the area occupied by the 1st rifle guard division of the 21st army. We covered about 500 km in the rear of the enemy. This was just a beginning. There were many battles ahead of us. I told you so many details about these initial battles since these were our first lessons of war. However, they had a significant historic and strategic meaning for the further course of the war. The Hitler's commandment was convinced that the German army would defeat the Soviet army with the first strike, seize crossings over the Dnieper and would have no obstacles on the way to the mainland of the country. However, the defense of Kiev lasted 73 days. The German commandment of the 'South' group incurred great losses near Kiev. Their losses constituted about 100 thousand people. The myth of the 'blitzkrieg' [German for 'lightning war', was the original strategy of the German army during World War II], an instantaneous war, was dissipated. The Germans were to delay their attack on Moscow for over a month and this was a big advantage for preparations to the defense of Moscow. The fascist commandment had to remove their best forces (2 armies and 25 divisions) from the Moscow strategic direction. In Kiev the Territorial army [People's volunteer corps during World War II; its soldiers patrolled towns, dug

trenches and kept an eye on buildings during night bombing raids. Students often volunteered for these fighting battalions] was formed. The defense of Kiev made a big contribution into the future victory over the enemy. The defenders of Kiev fulfilled their duty. There is nothing to blame them for. 62 thousand people were awarded medals 'For defense of Kiev'.

After crossing the front line a bigger part of our group, including me, was sent to reserve regiment 21 in Zolochiv, Kharkov region. About a month later we were sent to the 1st Guard rifle division. When we arrived to the point of destination the 1st Guard rifle division left the area to the Kaluga rifle division. I was assigned to the 323rd rifle regiment. I was given a communications squad into my command. We were to ensure communications in the 76-mm regiment batteries. On the severe winter of 1941-42 we had hard battles in Kursk and Kharkov regions. Our main task was to cut the Kursk-Kharkov highway. In late February 1942 our 81st rifle division was assigned to the 38th army where a mass of maneuver was formed to break through the line of the enemy's defense near Kharkov. The 81st rifle division had battles for 2.5 months without intervals. Our soldiers and officers fought to the end and went into attacks. The division was successful, but there were significant casualties. By summer 1942 the casualties in our division constituted 60% for privates and over 70% for officers. In May 1942 the Kharkov advance began. It ended unsuccessfully for our armies. [28 May 1942] During the wearisome battles the 81st was assigned to the 9th army. The enemy accumulated significant forces in the area of the 9th army and blew a strike from the sky. Germans intended to advance to the far rear of the South-Western Front and the 57th army of the Southern Front. We marched to the vicinity of Balakleya. This was an exhausting march and we wore ourselves out. The army trucks delivered us to the battlefield. We were to make passages for the encircled Soviet forces in the vicinity of Balakleya. Then we were ordered to retreat in the direction of Northern Caucasus across Voroshylovgrad, Rostov, Stalingrad regions.

We were ordered to avoid battles. We were to cross a highway or a railroad track (I cannot remember which one) near Morozovskaya village. When we approached Morozovskaya, there were Germans already. We had to walk along the front line to another settlement, 25 km from Morozovskaya - 25 km of walking in the heat, when our road was barred by a powerful tank wedge of the army of General Kleist. It divided the division into two parts. We only had rifles. The two parts of the division had to act on their own. The situation was very hard. Our division Commissar Kuzmin (he perished in Stalingrad) ordered us to change the direction and retreat with the 57th army. We were moving to Stalingrad in separate groups or alone. Those were anguished days. In Millerovo town we notified the military commandant that we were heading to Stalingrad. In Stalingrad we headed to the gathering point at the elevator. We slept the night on the ground. In the morning we told our story and were ordered to move to Frolovo station to join the 38th army. Of course, we had to follow the order, but we also wanted to find the gathering point of the 81st rifle division, which we got very used to. We had friends there and friends at the front are like family. We found out that the gathering point of the 81st rifle division at Sadovaya station in pioneer camps not far from Stalingrad. There were just 47 survivors in our 323rd rifle division, but only three of us reached Stalingrad: Poretskiy, battery commander, senior lieutenant (he died in 1975, lived in Saratov), first sergeant of the battery from Donbass (I've forgotten his name), and I. General Tolbukhin [30], the 57th army commander, ordered the remaining part of the 81st rifle division to merge with the 244th rifle division, and we were assigned to it. Our 102nd communications battalion was given the number 666th as a separate communications battalion of

the 244th rifle division. The 666th special battalion that I was so attached to fought till the end of the war within the structure of this division, and the battalion finished the war in Bulgaria. Unfortunately, I was not with them there. I was wounded and then assigned to a different army in 1942.

We fought in the south of Stalingrad, in Krasnoarmeysk, Volgograd region. This area had a strategic significance for the operative area of Stalingrad. The area was elevated and made an excellent observation point. Our battery was defending the town. Soon Stalingrad became a battlefield. [31] Our division was assigned to the 62nd army and we fought in the town with this army. I was a gun layer for a 76-mm front mortar in the first rows of rifle units and fired by direct laying. Our division was one of the first units to arrange transportation of the wounded to the opposite bank of the Volga on the rafts made by field engineers. We also hauled food and ammunition there. In the middle of September we were cut off the rear supplies of our regiment. My commanding officer ordered me to find a passage, when it got dark, to move our 3 mortars and the wounded from out of the barrage of the enemy. 2 other fellow comrades were to assist me. We fulfilled the task and came to the army 62 commandment point near the harbor. The battle was going on. Our cannons were camouflaged by the wall of a high ruined building. Few people were at the cannon and the others stayed in the nearby one-storied building. All of a sudden German planes attacked us. We had to go back to our unit and deliver a sealed letter containing an order and some food to the regiment commander. However, there was no way for us to fulfill this task. Germans cut off our passage, and there were already units of the 10th NKVD [32] divisions in defense on this site. They did not allow us to go through the passage to where our units were since our units might confuse us for the ones who wished to surrender and shoot us. Division 244 finished its combat actions in Stalingrad on 20 September 1942. Of over 4 thousand people at the beginning of combat operations it had 288 people left at the end, including maintenance and logistics people. The division came to the eastern bank of the Volga to re-staff. Other divisions were crossing the Volga to replace the ones that had left. Field engineers prepared rafts for the crossing. Fascists were trying to break through to the crossing area. The bank was in ruins after bombardments. There were broken railroad carriages all around. When I was getting on a raft, I was wounded in my legs and my right shoulder by a grenade. I crawled back to the nearby brick storage facility of the railroad station. There were other wounded inside waiting for evacuation. There was no medical aid available. We lay on the floor for the rest of the night and the following day: the Germans were firing on the bank continuously. In the evening a ferry arrived to pick the wounded. I realized that I would have to wait long till it was my turn to be taken to the ferry, if ever, and I decided to crawl closer to the ferry, when I bumped into our political officer Viziakin and the first sergeant from Donbass, the ones that we came to as far as Stalingrad together. They helped me to get to the ferry, we crossed the Volga and from there I was taken to the medical unit of the 13th Guard division where I got the first medical aid. From there I was taken to the hospital in Leninskiy settlement. This hospital was evacuated to the hospital near the Elton Lake. This hospital was deployed in some wooden barracks and medical tents near the station buildings. This location was not a good idea for a hospital: railroad stations were priority targets for the German Air Forces. German planes bombed the hospital and there were new casualties. I was taken to the hospital in Engels town near Saratov. I took a passenger train to Saratov. The railroad station units sent me to hospital #3631 in the school building near the 'Combine' plant. I had to walk to the hospital from the railway station suffering from terrible pain in my wounded legs. I was kept in this hospital till 31 October 1942. When I was released, I was assigned to the battalion for recovering military in

Saratov. From there I went to a military camp in 40 km from Saratov where marching companies were formed to be sent to the front. I was assigned to Guard artillery battalion 122 of the 51st Guard rifle division (former artillery regiment 817 of the 76th mountainous rifle division of the 21st army that was later renamed to the 6th guard army). This division was one of the oldest national formations of the Red army formed at the initiative of Lenin [33] in December 1920. During the Great Patriotic War 32 military of the division were awarded the title of the Hero of the Soviet Union [34] 13 people were awarded the full set of the Order of Victory [35] . A street in Stalingrad was named after this division. After the Stalingrad battle our division relocated to the vicinity of Yelets town in early March 1943.

We were preparing for the attack on Oryol town. By this time the situation in the central part of the Soviet-German front line was unfavorable for our forces. The enemy reinvaded Kharkov on 16 March 1943 and was advancing to Belgorod and Kursk. This advance resulted in a 30-35 km breach at the junction between the Voronezh and South-Western fronts where German armies flew in intending to join the Oryol grouping in Kursk. Due to this severe situation our army was ordered to relocate from the Central front to strengthen the Voronezh front. We had to keep the important Belgorod direction and get prepared to strike powerful counterblows, shield Kursk and support deployment of the 1st tank army. We moved in the direction of Kursk. We were to cover 150 km. The weather was nasty: there were frost and snowstorms. We had to march at night and take a rest during the daytime. Besides, we had to move in minor groups hiding from the German air and land intelligence. It was a rare luck for us to find an earth hut or a house to take a day's rest.

Our battery occupied the firing positions shielding the Moscow-Simferopol [Crimea] highway. Few days later two batteries of our regiment, including the 9th battery that I was assigned to, were transferred into the operative command of the 52nd Guard division to reinforce its defense. We were engaged in the construction and improvement of fortifications until 5 July 1943 [German counter-offensive called Operation Zitadelle started 5 July 1943 in the region of Kursk], and also, surveyed the defense facilities of the enemy. It was important to establish interface between our units, particularly, to set up the anti-tank defense. The units received additional forces, weapons, equipment and training. I was a communications operator and was to support reliable communications between the firing positions and the command post at the distance of over 3 km between them. About half of this area was a field and the rest was a forest. We ploughed a trench in the field and installed the cable in it. In the forest we hung a barbed wire that is stronger than the cable on the trees. We never had sufficient cable and saved it to provide communications during attack operations. When we were in defense and had more time at our disposal, we replaced cable with barbed wire. We established an interim telephone unit on the border of the forest in order to reduce time for fixing the communication lines in case of damage. We had to support reliable communication during the action. The fascist commandment accumulated strong forces to break through our defense line. They particularly focused on tank and air force units. On 5 July 1943 the Kursk battle [36] started. The German fascist units went in attacks and fire and death flooded our trenches. About 700 tanks headed to the combat positions of our army: they were heavy 'Tiger' tanks and 'Ferdinand' mobile units. Hundreds of enemy's planes stroke their deadly blows on our land forces. The artillery roared non-stop. The forces of the 6th Guard army conducted continuous blood shedding battles trying to restrain the tank onslaught of the enemy. The Hitler's commandment was convinced about a prompt breakage of the defense of the Soviet

forces, but the enemy was out of counting. Our artillery stroke accurate and powerful blows and the enemy incurred heavy losses of tanks and staff. Between 5 and 25 August our 122nd Guard artillery regiment eliminated 111 tanks, including a significant number of Tigers and Ferdinand units, other plant and forces of the enemy, in the Kursk-Oryol battle.

I joined the Communist Party before the battle. I had become a candidate to the party in Stalingrad. I was eager to become a member of the party and sincerely believed in its ideas. I was unaware of many things then...

We were advancing in the direction of Poltava, outflanking Kharkov from the west. We liberated strategically important settlements in Belgorod region and a number of settlements of Sumsky region. We were advancing in the direction of Poltava (stopped in about 16-20 km from the town). Our survey units discovered a minor German garrison in Poltava and reported this to General Vatutin [37], Commander of the Voronezh front. He ordered to prepare an operation to liberate Poltava on 23-24 September. When everything was ready, General Vatutin ordered to transfer our area to the 5th Guard army and retreat to restaff after severe battles people needed a rest and we had to replace the equipment and start preparations for the liberation of Kiev. This was the middle of August. We appreciated the opportunity to take a rest: we had been at the front line all this time and were exhausted, but this was not to happen. Our army was assigned to the reserve of the Staff Headquarters and a month later we relocated to the vicinity of Toropets, Velikiye Luki of Kalinin region [Russia]. We had to knock the German troops out of Severnyy Val, a strongly reinforced line of defense 250 km wide with reinforced field fortifications, a number of pillboxes, wire entanglements and mine fields. We were assigned to the 2nd Baltic Front. There are many forests and lakes and swamps in the vicinity of Severnyy Val, and tanks could not go through this area. His was a job of rifle and artillery units. The woods and lack of roads made it hard for the artillery to maneuver, and nasty weather delayed the air forces from supporting the advance. We had to conduct combat operations in the conditions of total absence of roads in the vicinity of Nevel - Velikiye Luki. Trucks could not move through this area and soldiers had to deliver shells to combat positions located at quite a distance on the shoulders. German troops deployed in this area had an extensive experience of conducting combat operations in wood-lake-swamp locations. Dozens of lakes between hills and swamps in the woods made the main obstacle for us. On the night of 1 January 1944, when the lakes were covered with strong ice, we undertook a sudden attack on German troops. Almost all winter of 1944 we were advancing to the north despite the lack of roads, surmounting half-frozen swamps, forest blockages, smashing the enemy's support posts. We belonged to the 2nd Baltic Front. The German troops were taking every effort to stop our advance. Before spring we liberated the Nevel railroad junction, the highway to Velikiye Luki, and approached Novosokolniki. For participation in severe battles and provision of continuous communications, replacement of damaged wires under severe artillery and machine gun fire in the north-west area near Nevel town, in the 15-20 km wide corridor, called the 'Nevel' bottle', 'Throat', continuously fired at by the enemy, I was given an award. At this time the Order of Victory was established. I was the first one in the 51st guard rifle division (and probably the first one in other units) to be awarded this Order. Besides, I was to be granted a 10-day leave. The 21 November 1943 issue of our division newspaper published an article about me entitled 'Rubalskiy, the Hero communications operator'. However, Kaladze, Commanding officer of the 51st guard rifle division, declared that I could not be awarded the Order of Victory since the division did not have an overall

success in breaking through the defense line of the enemy, and besides, he had not even seen this Order yet. I was awarded the Order of the Great Patriotic War [38] of Grade I.

In spring the situation grew quieter. By the end of May 1944, having left our location to another army, we completed a 50km march to the forest areas north-east of Vitebsk, and were assigned to the 1st Baltic Front. We were preparing for attacking the enemy in Belarus. It was important since Belarus allowed access to the Baltic Republics, Eastern Prussia and Poland. Belarus was invaded by German troops of the famous 'Center' army, consisting of about 65 divisions, 95 thousand cannons and mortars, 900 tanks. [Rear Section of the "Center" Army Group included the Vitebsk and Mogilev regions, the major part of the Gomel Region, the eastern districts of the Minsk Region and some districts of the Polesye Region. As it was the central zone of the Soviet-German front, it was essential to act efficiently for the Soviet troops.] German troops were engaged in the construction of this defense line for 3 years and we were to destroy it in the shortest possible time. By summer 1944 everything was ready for the attack. We were to cross the Zapadnaya Dvina [Also called Daugava, the main river in Latvia, starts in Belarus and reaches the Baltic Sea near Riga.], smash German troops in the vicinity of Vitebsk and advance to Polotsk. Our 51st Guard rifle division was to break through the defense line in the area of the Sirotin resistance joint. One regiment of our division outflanked the Sirotin joint across a swamp and stroke a blow from the enemy rear. The German garrison was smashed: they could not imagine one would be so daring as to cross the impassable swamps. This was a successful maneuver and it made the way to the success of other units of the 6th Guard army. Following the German troops we approached the Zapadnaya Dvina. We started cutting wood to make rafts. Some time later our pontoon units caught up with us and started working on installation of pontoon crossings. So we crossed the Zapadnaya Dvina by joint efforts. After breaking the defense line and crossing the Zapadnaya Dvina advanced to Polotsk that was a gate to the Baltic area. We liberated Polotsk and pursued the retreating fascists across Lithuania and Latvia. The enemy was retreating, but it resisted. In August-early September 1944 the forces of our front approached the Riga Bay intending to cut the Baltic grouping of the 'Nord' army off the Eastern Prussia. [Editor's note: the 1st Baltic Front got to Riga Bay 31 July and Soviet troops already reached the Eastern Prussia border 17 August 1944.] There was a fatal threat hanging over the selected fascist units. Realizing this, the German commandment threw 7 tank divisions to the defense line. They stroke a severe blow in the direction of Yltava supported by infantry divisions. This blow was stricken on the 51st army, and there was a strong threat of breakage of the defense line on the most vulnerable site of the front line. Our army made a 149 km march within the shortest possible time to close the gap on the approach to Yltava. We managed to stop the advance of German troops. The Germans installed many mines in this area and we incurred significant losses. In October 1944 the offensive in the Memel direction started. We were to come to the Baltic Sea and cut the fascists off the astern Prussia. We covered 100 km in two days and came as far as north-west of Siauliai [Lithuania]. There was a combat survey to be conducted. We were to capture retain support posts of the enemy and bring in a prisoner for interrogation. I was to install reliable wire communication. Our army managed to advance 6 km breaking the first defense line of the enemy. The breakage was competently done by young recruits, our guys, of the 1926 year of birth.

We hardly had any time to consolidate our grip, when at dawn Germans threw their 5th tank division on us. This was my last battle. I was severely wounded, a bullet hit me in my elbow joint

and went through. I was taken to the evacuation hospital and from there I was sent to a hospital far away in the rear in Kirov region. My military units sent a request for me, but my doctor said that the war was over for me. He released me from the hospital with the prescription 'fit for non-effective service'. In the middle March 1945 I was at the front again and participated in the liberation of Königsberg [39]. These were the last battles, but they were severe. Germans had built reinforced fortifications in the woods; it was a whole underground town. Later we all went to take a look at these masterly fortifications and admired them. At that time we had learned our lessons and captured the Königsberg fortress on 16 April 1945. We were advancing across the territory of Germany. On 9 May 1945 we heard about the complete and unconditional capitulation of Germany. This was the end of the war. I spent all these years at the front line, in continuous battle operations. I only took rest, if I can call it so, in hospitals. My combat awards are my proof that I had made my contribution into our victory over the enemy: an Order of the Great Patriotic War of Grade I, an Order of Victory, two Orders of the Red Star [40], order For Courage, medal for Valor, medals for defense of Kiev, for defense of Stalingrad, for seizure of Königsberg, for seizure and defense of a number of towns. My awards are the best proof that there was no anti-Semitism during the war. We did not segregate between nationalities. All that mattered was what kind of person was beside you. It often happened at the front line that your life depended on how your comrade acted.

There were SMERSH officers of NKVD units in all regiments during the war [SMERSH is the abbreviation of 'Smert Shpionam' ("Death to Spies" in Russian), special secret military unit for elimination of spies. SMERSH is actually the Ninth Division of the KGB, originally created into five separate sections. The first section works inside the Red Army]. Their function was to capture spies, as one can see from the name, but they actually monitored the army and each individual. It was the same at peaceful times, when NKVD kept the life of each individual under control. I witnessed four executions in our regiment: a first sergeant, a lieutenant and two privates. They remained behind the regiment during a march and were convicted of desertion, though I'm sure that there was no such intention. They must have been just worn out, but they were shot after the SMERSH officer issued his verdict. Later the commandment set an order to grant them life, but the SMERSH officer replied that they had been executed: and that was that. When we set feet in other countries, the SMERSH officers got engaged in dealing with our prisoners-of-war. We never blamed those who had been captured by the enemy: we knew how it could happen. Often people were captured when they were lying wounded in the fields: and who was to blame that our nurses had failed to take them to hospitals? Anything could happen. However, those prisoners, who had had their portion of hardships in fascist camps were convicted of having surrendered and were sent to the GULAG in Siberia.

We had ambiguous attitude toward Germans. We did not kill those who surrender, but did not blame those who would. As for the peaceful population, we were sorry for them: they had suffered a lot. We even provided them food at special points.

We stayed in Prussia. [Eastern Prussia had been a Part of Germany up to the end of World War II, when it was divided between the USSR and Poland.] The Soviet government ordered to disassemble equipment at plants and send it to the USSR. This area was to be annexed to Poland. The Polish commandant protested against removal of the equipment claiming that it was to be left in Poland, but our Soviet commandant replied very politely that he had no such order. Germans

had been removing everything from the USSR and now it was our turn to take away everything they had. And that was it. He also put pressure on us to expedite the removal. He wanted us to have all equipment removed as soon as possible. Since I had a construction specialty I had to stay and work on equipment disassembly. There were two leather tanning factories, a tank repair plant and another plant that had produced tin boxes before the war and had been converted to manufacture shell cases during the war. They had good equipment and high technologies. I was glad to see an electric wench manufactured in Kharkov at one plant. It meant we could manufacture good equipment as well. Germans had removed it to Germany and now we were taking it back. German equipment units were very good. We disassembled them and loaded them into trains. We did not take any trophies. We were forbidden to take anything from German houses. Specialists from the USSR arrived to work on the production structure, develop drafts of production lines to assemble equipment in place. Here were 5 of them and they were awarded the ranks of majors for Germans to think they were our military. Those specialists were to supervise the disassembly and equipment loading. Actually, only 1 or 2 of them did this job, and the others made the rounds of abandoned German houses looking for trophies. We found it wild: we never took any trophies. I did not bring anything home. The only thing we took - and that was for the regiment - was German vehicles. When retreating, the German troops drowned in the sea or left on the seashore about 300 vehicles: Opel and Mercedes cars, manufactured in 1945, they were brand new vehicles and they served us well.

I worked on disassembly of plants for one year. Our officers told me to stay in the army, but I was tired of this army life and was eager to go home, but nobody waited for me there: my family had perished. Since August 1941 I had no information about my family. I was trying to find out their whereabouts through the evacuation quest agency in Buguruslan. Despite the general mess, this organization worked accurately recording those who were in evacuation, but they replied they had none of my family on their records. This happened, when people evacuated on their own and left no information with official offices. I was hoping they had survived. When Kiev was liberated [6 November 1943] I wrote to our address until I finally received a reply from our neighbors. They informed me that my mama, sister and grandmother decided against evacuation. My grandfather remembered Germans from the time of World War I and believed they might persecute communists, but not Jews. They stayed and followed the commandant's order to walk to Babi Yar on 29 September 1941. Besides my grandfather, mama and my sister Shiva, who finished the 1st course of the Food Industry College in June 1941, my maternal grandmother Itta Pogrebinskaya, mama's sister Riva Pogrebinskaya, grandfather Isif's sister Hana Leschiner and her husband perished in Babi Yar. In Pavoloch fascists executed all Jews in the number of 2500 people. There is a common grave where those people whose only guilt was that they had been born Jews were buried. There were only 3 survivor girls, the rest of them were shot. There were no Jews left in Pavoloch except the Ruzhinskiye husband and wife. They've passed away. There is only a Jewish cemetery and the mass shooting site in the village. There are no living Jews left there.

I returned home in 1946. My relatives' families were also affected by the war. My father's brother Solomon Rubalskiy perished at the front in 1942. My father sister Sophia Gohvat's son disappeared at the front in 1944 and her husband Moisey Gohvat died in evacuation in Siberia in 1943. Mama's younger brother Ovsey Pogrebinskiy participated in battles during the defense of Kiev. In September 1941 his unit was encircled. Ovsey was going across the woods looking for partisans. In

a village he was captured by policemen. They gave him a spade and ordered to dig a grave. They killed him then. My paternal relatives uncle Anatoliy and aunt Rachil living in Kiev told me his story. My father's sisters Shiva and Yeva and their families moved to Kharkov after the war. Shiva's younger son Boris Shkolnik entered the Kharkov Medical College in evacuation in Siberia. After the war the College moved back to Kharkov and so did Boris to continue his studies. The family followed him and later Yeva's family joined them.

Our annex where we resided before the war was not ruined, however strange it may sound. I moved in there and went to work as a construction plumber in a construction trust. Here was a lot of work to do: Kiev was severely ruined. At first we were to restore the utility lines and the buildings and later we started new construction. I made a big contribution into installation of gas supply lines in Kiev. There was my portrait on the board of honor of our trust. I was the best specialist. In order to fill the gaps in my theoretical knowledge, I entered the course of foremen at the Construction College and finished it successfully. I had all excellent marks in all subjects in my graduation certificate. This course gave me more than any college itself: there is a lot of theory in colleges, and this training course was for the people having practical skills and its objective was to improve actual skills and abilities of practical work.

My aunt introduced me to my future wife Feiga Dudina. Feiga was born in Belaya Tserkov [150 km from Kiev] in 1921. It was a small town with the prevailing Jewish population before the war. The family moved to Kiev. Feiga had a younger sister named Raisa, born in 1925. Their father's name was Isaac Dudin, but I don't remember their mother's name. After finishing a Russian general education school Feiga entered the extramural Union Law College [the college was in Moscow, its students studied by correspondence and had exams twice a year]. After finishing the College she became a lawyer. Her younger sister studied at the Architect Faculty of the Kiev Engineering Construction College. She married engineer Mikhail Bot, a Jew. In 1954 her daughter Marina was born. Raisa died in Kiev in 2000. I don't know whether their parents were religious, but my wife and her sister were atheists.

We got married in 1947. We had a very ordinary wedding considering the hardships of this period of time. We registered our marriage in the registry office and in the evening we had a modest dinner with our closest relatives. At first we stayed in the annex and later I received an apartment from the construction trust where I was working. Later this shed and the annex were removed. In 1948 our daughter Ludmila was born. Our second daughter Inna was born in 1953. My wife and I spoke Russian at home. I had forgotten my Yiddish, and my wife had never known it. We didn't celebrate Jewish holidays at home. We were both atheists and besides, I was a member of the party. We always celebrated Soviet holidays: 1 May, 7 November [41], the Soviet army Day [42], Victory Day [43], New Year and our family members' birthdays. Sometimes we visited my father's sisters Sophia or Rachil or my father's brother Anatoliy on Pesach. I wouldn't say they were religious, but they celebrated the major Jewish holidays as a tribute to traditions.

Our daughters grew up as all other Soviet children. They studied in a Russian general education school, were young Octobrists, pioneers and Komsomol members like all other children. They were not raised religious. My wife and I believed religion and traditions to be vestige of the past, something that modern people did not need whatsoever.

In 1948 trials against cosmopolitans [Campaign against 'cosmopolitans'] [44] started. There were articles published in newspapers every day about another 'rootless cosmopolitan', activists of science or art, and of course, they were all Jews. At that time the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee [45], organized during the war and providing a big support to the country was routed. All members of the committee, and some rather outstanding people among them, were sentenced to death or long-term imprisonment in the GULAG camps. Solomon Mikhoels [46], a popular actor and chairman of the committee was not put in trial. In Minsk, where he went on business, he was hit by a truck 'accidentally'. I don't know about the others, but I understood there was actually no accident and that this was all plotted. Of course, these processes inspired negative feelings about Jews in the people, who did not do any evaluation or comparison and preferred to blindly believe everything the newspapers published. Anti-Semitism was growing. It gradually emerged on the state level. I think it reached the peak during the period of the 'doctors' plot [47] in January 1953. The central newspapers published the letter of Doctor Lidia Timoschuk entitled 'Murderers in white robes'. It stated that the Kremlin doctors whose patient was Stalin were trying to poison him. Stalin was an idol of the Soviet people. Nobody doubted the Timoschuk's statements. I didn't believe that what this newspaper published was true. During the war I was in hospitals and I saw how devotedly the doctors worked and how they took every effort to bring their patients to recovery, but the majority of people were convinced that newspapers were publishing the truth. This caused aggravation of anti-Semitism. To abuse a Jew was almost a patriotic deed. Of course, this was particularly hard for Jewish doctors. People refused to visit them or have them in hospitals and demanded other doctors. Jews could not find a job or enter colleges. It's hard to say what this would have brought the society to, if Stalin had not died on 5 March 1953. Now I understand that his death was probably our rescue, but at that time Stalin's death was a common grief. People did not hide tears and I cried, too. The speech made by Khrushchev [48] at the 20th Congress of the party in 1956 revealed the truth for me about Stalin and his accomplices' crimes. The collectivization [49], when the most skillful and experienced farmers were called kulaks [50] and exiled to Siberia, prewar arrests and postwar trials over cosmopolitans, the doctors... It's hard to name all of them. Some people still believe that we had won the war thanks to Stalin and that our forces went in offensives with his name. It is true, we went in attacks with the words: 'Hurrah, for Stalin!', but it was not Stalin who defeated fascism, but the people despite Stalin. How many mistakes had been made and perhaps they were intentional actions rather than mistakes. We might have won with significantly fewer casualties if it had not been for these misdeeds of Stalin. Since 1936 he was gradually executing the best commanders, the elite of the army. New commanders had no experience. At times general were appointed as commanders of regiments and when they arrived in place, their acting predecessor in the rank of captain transferred the office to him. Then it turned out that all high ranks in this regiment had been executed by Stalin's order. There were many such cases. Many army units were in camps at the beginning of the war and there was no communication with them. The Hitler's army was significantly more numerous than our army. German soldiers were armed with machine guns and we had antediluvian rifles of the World War I type. Stalin failed to figure out the direction of the major blow of Hitler. Hitler's tactic was to seize the capital and then the country was to be his, but Stalin believed that Hitler's priority was Ukraine, and he made another mistake. His next mistake was fortification areas. It was not beneficial for us to build weapon emplacements along the new borders of the USSR - Belarus and Western Ukraine. These areas were annexed to the USSR in 1939. [Annexation of Eastern Poland] [51] They formerly belonged to Poland where the railroad track was 7 cm narrower than in

the USSR. [In Europe, the standard gauge is 143.51 cm. In the USSR, among other reasons in order to prevent a fast railroad offensive from abroad, the standard gauge was 152 cm. In many of the ex-Soviet countries this system is still in use.] So, we had to replace the railroad track and build bridges and reconstruct the roads. This was to take a long time. Then came our army food stocks and weapon stocks. The government decided on their location. They had some located farther than the river Volga and others for the western direction. The government's rationale was that our army was not to retreat, but advance and then we would just march from one stock to another while we retreated and Germans captured our stocks. At best our units managed to eliminate them to leave nothing to the enemy. The next mistake was the tank corps formed in 1932. They did not justify themselves. After the war in Spain [Spanish Civil War] [52] they were disbanded and the combat power of the army reduced. Stalin did not trust the intelligence. Our intelligence agent in German Richard Zorge [53] informed Stalin that Germans were planning to attack the USSR on 22 June 1941, but Stalin called this information a misinformation of the British intelligence and believed Zorge to be a double agent. We are still unaware of many things, but even this information is sufficient.

I cannot say that our life improved during the Khrushchev rule, and there was no more anti-Semitism in our life, but it became easier from the moral point. There were no more demonstration trials, executions and there was a feeling of having more freedom. Anti-Semitism began to decline, but then it became visible again. It was hard for a Jew to get a job. Even if there was a vacancy, when a Jew came for an appointment, they demanded his passport. There was a 'nationality' line item in passports, the so-called '5th line item' [Item 5] [54]. When they looked at this item, they declared the vacancy was already gone. However, I never faced this problem. Construction people were valued well and besides, many people knew me, but once I faced this problem all right. I was to be officially transferred from one trust to another. One morning I went there to submit my documents, when they told me there was someone else employed and there was no vacancy for me. "When did it happen - at night, if yesterday night there was still a vacancy?" Anyway, this was not a problem for me: I got employed by another trust on that same day, but it was more difficult for others, particularly if they were office workers. Of course, employers never spoke out that they were not employing Jews, but it was all clear anyway.

After finishing school my older daughter Ludmila finished a course of training and worked as a registry clerk in the airport. She got married young. I don't feel like talking about her husband. I was against their marriage, but my wife wanted her daughter to get married. We had lots of arguments about it till we divorced after living together 21 years. Since then I've lived alone. My daughters and I keep in touch and Ludmila remained Rubalskaya after getting married. Her son Mikhail, born in 1968, also has the last name of Rubalskiy. Inna, my younger daughter, entered the Plumbing Faculty at the Kiev Construction High School after finishing school. After finishing it she was to continue her studies in the Kiev Engineering Construction College, but she failed to enter it and went to Lvov where she entered the Faculty of Land Engineering at the Forestry College. In this college Inna met her future husband Lev Sytnikov, a Jew. He was from Kiev and they were the same age. They got married after finishing the college and returned to Kiev. In 1978 their son Yevgeniy was born. Inna went to work as a plumbing engineer.

In the 1970s mass emigration of Jews to Israel began. Before this time only few individuals were allowed to move to another country. I had a negative attitude toward it and was not going to leave

my country. I had grown up here and my friends were here, my dear ones were buried here and I defended this land on battlefields. However, I also believed it was wrong to treat those who wanted to move to Israel escaping from anti-Semitism as if they were enemies and traitors. Every person has to live his own life and has the right to decide how and where to live it. At that time these people needed a letter of reference from work to obtain a permit to leave the country. This was a mandatory document that they had to enclose in the set of documents to be submitted to the OVIR [Office of Visas and Registrations]. This letter of reference was to be issued by a general staff meeting. These meetings turned into general trials where people were abused and called traitors. It was particularly hard for members of the party since they also had to attend party meetings besides a staff meeting. People at my work had loyal attitudes. I remember a party meeting where a letter of reference was to be issued to an employee of the trust, an invalid, who had one kidney. There were angry speeches where employees were covering his name with mud. But then chief of the personnel department took the floor. He said that the situation for this man was hopeless. His family was leaving and he could not be left behind, being so severely ill. Then the attendants voted unanimously for the issuance of a letter of reference to him. This was how it went.

In 1978 I reached my pension age. Men in the USSR retired at the age of 60. I worked on engineer positions, was a foreman and then a site superintendent. I was valued at work and I stayed until 1986, when I finally retired.

In the late 1980s General Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU Mikhail Gorbachev [55] initiated perestroika [56], the new policy of the USSR. I was still a member of the party. There was a meeting where the staff voted unanimously for the policy. I believed this was another promise of a better life. Yes, the situation has improved, there is a Jewish life and people are no longer persecuted for their convictions or religion. However, the break up of the USSR [1991] that the perestroika ended up with, reduced it's achievements to zero. There was a strong and powerful state, and there are only small, separated and poor countries left in its place, even though they are called independent. Could any of these small states have won in World War II? No way. Strength is in unity. Everything bad that there was in the USSR should have been eliminated, but we should have stayed together. It is my point of view. The government is responsible for it all: it could cancel bad laws and put good ones in their place. Besides, I think it was wrong for Ukraine to refuse from weapons [in 1991 an agreement was signed under which Ukraine undertook obligations to eliminate its nuclear weapons]. It shouldn't have destroyed it. Each country must have weapons to defend itself. After the breakup of the USSR I left the party and I did not join the Communist Party of Ukraine.

My daughters moved to Israel. Ludmila and her family reside in Holon and Inna lives in Sderot. Ludmila's son Mikhail served in the army. He deals in car business in Israel. Ludmila works in a tourist company. Inna works at a plant. She is deputy director for the product quality. Its' a good position and she is well-paid for it. My son-in-law also earns well. Inna's son Yevgeniy served in the Israel army 3 years and retired in the rank of captain. Now he is a 3rd-year student of the Polytechnic College in Beer-Sheva. He studies to be a mechanic engineer in the future. My daughters call and visit me. We keep in touch. I visited Israel in 1996. I had been ill before I traveled to Israel. I had a UVS check up, which discovered a tumor in my gall bladder. The doctors suggested an urgent surgery. Our doctors here are very good. They do masterly surgeries, but there are hardly any post surgery conditions. The patient goes to a ward and then it becomes a

matter of survival. If one fails to survive – well, that’s too bad... So I requested a delay and went to visit my daughters in Israel. I had a medical examination there and the doctors said there was no tumor, but just a stone in the gall bladder. They decided against removing it, and it still does not disturb me.

I also toured the country. Israel is a beautiful country and their standard of living are much higher than here, but it’s still not for me. You cannot talk to anyone. In the morning everybody goes to work. In the evening they come home, we have dinner, talk for about an hour and then it’s again time for them to go to bed since they have to go to work in the morning. Everybody works or studies and they have no time. Besides, the climate in Israel is not good for me.

When Ukrainian declared its independence, many Jewish organizations were established here. Hesed [57] is very important for us. It provides food products and medications to us. I live alone and have meals in the Hesed canteen, though I can also cook for myself. They do not provide food packages to me. I receive a sufficient pension, they say, but if you deduct allowances for my awards, there will be about \$50 of pension like everybody else’s and it’s impossible to live on this pension.

I chaired the council of veterans of the 6th Guard in Kiev during 27 years. For few years I’ve been a member of the council of veterans in the Jewish cultural society of Ukraine. I attend their meetings and meet with friends. These meetings of Jewish veterans are always interesting. Occasionally I make reports and tell them about what I had lived through. I read many military memoirs, analyze and think about things. I receive Jewish newspapers and magazines and read them with interest. I’ve remained far from religion, but I attend events in the Hesed, when they invite me.

Glossary:

[1] 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.

[2] 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.

[3] 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.

[4] Jewish collective farms: Such farms were established in the Ukraine in the 1930s during the period of collectivization.

[5] 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.

[6] 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.

[7] 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.

[8] 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.

[9] 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.

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

[11] Gangs: During the Russian Civil War there were all kinds of gangs in the Ukraine. Their members came from all the classes of former Russia, but most of them were peasants. Their leaders used political slogans to dress their criminal acts. These gangs were anti-Soviet and anti-

Semitic. They killed Jews and burnt their houses, they robbed their houses, raped women and killed children.

[12] Babi Yar: Babi Yar is the site of the first mass shooting of Jews that was carried out openly by fascists. On 29th and 30th September 1941 33,771 Jews were shot there by a special SS unit and Ukrainian militia men. During the Nazi occupation of Kiev between 1941 and 1943 over a 100,000 people were killed in Babi Yar, most of whom were Jewish. The Germans tried in vain to efface the traces of the mass grave in August 1943 and the Soviet public learnt about mass murder after World War II.

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

[14] GPU: State Political Department, the state security agency of the USSR, that is, its punitive body.

[15] Young Octobrist: In Russian Oktyabrenok, or 'pre-pioneer', designates Soviet children of seven years or over preparing for entry into the pioneer organization.

[16] 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.

[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] 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.

[19] Card system: The food card system regulating the distribution of food and industrial products was introduced in the USSR in 1929 due to extreme deficit of consumer goods and food. The

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

[20] 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.

[21] 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.

[22] Great Terror (1934-1938): During the Great Terror, or Great Purges, which included the notorious show trials of Stalin's former Bolshevik opponents in 1936-1938 and reached its peak in 1937 and 1938, millions of innocent Soviet citizens were sent off to labor camps or killed in prison. The major targets of the Great Terror were communists. Over half of the people who were arrested were members of the party at the time of their arrest. The armed forces, the Communist Party, and the government in general were purged of all allegedly dissident persons; the victims were generally sentenced to death or to long terms of hard labor. Much of the purge was carried out in secret, and only a few cases were tried in public 'show trials'. By the time the terror subsided in 1939, Stalin had managed to bring both the Party and the public to a state of complete submission to his rule. Soviet society was so atomized and the people so fearful of reprisals that mass arrests were no longer necessary. Stalin ruled as absolute dictator of the Soviet Union until his death in March 1953.

[23] Enemy of the people: Soviet official term; euphemism used for real or assumed political opposition.

[24] 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.

[25] 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.ú

[26] Soviet-Finnish War (1939-40): The Soviet Union attacked Finland on 30 November 1939 to seize the Karelian Isthmus. The Red Army was halted at the so-called Mannengeim line. The League of Nations expelled the USSR from its ranks. In February-March 1940 the Red Army broke through the Mannengeim line and reached Vyborg. In March 1940 a peace treaty was signed in Moscow, by which the Karelian Isthmus, and some other areas, became part of the Soviet Union.

[27] Order of the Combat Red Banner: Established in 1924, it was awarded for bravery and courage in the defense of the Homeland.

[28] 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.

[29] Occupation of the Baltic Republics (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania): Although the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact regarded only Latvia and Estonia as parts of the Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe, according to a supplementary protocol (signed in 28th September 1939) most of Lithuania was also transferred under the Soviets. The three states were forced to sign the 'Pact of Defense and Mutual Assistance' with the USSR allowing it to station troops in their territories. In June 1940 Moscow issued an ultimatum demanding the change of governments and the occupation of the Baltic Republics. The three states were incorporated into the Soviet Union as the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republics.

[30] Tolbukhin, Fyodor (1894-1949), Soviet Commander, Marshal of the Soviet Union, Hero of the Soviet Union. During the Great Patriotic War he was chief of headquarters of a number of fronts, army commander, Commander of the Southern, 4th Ukrainian and 3rd Ukrainian Fronts. In 1945-47 – Commander-in-Chief of the Southern Group of Forces, since 1947 – Commander of the Transcaucasian Military Regiment.

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

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

[33] Lenin (1870-1924): Pseudonym of Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, the Russian Communist leader. A profound student of Marxism, and a revolutionary in the 1890s. He became the leader of the Bolshevik faction of the Social Democratic Party, whom he led to power in the coup d'état of 25th

October 1917. Lenin became head of the Soviet state and retained this post until his death.

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

[35] Order of Victory: highest Soviet military decoration, established on 8th November 1943. It was awarded to members of the armed forces high command for successfully conducted combat operations, involving one or more army groups, and resulting in a radical change of the situation in favor of the Soviet Armed Forces.

[36] Kursk battle: The greatest tank battle in the history of World War II, which began on 5th July 1943 and ended eight days later. The biggest tank fight, involving almost 1,200 tanks and mobile cannon units on both sides, took place in Prokhorovka on 12th July and ended with the defeat of the German tank unit.

[37] Vatutin, Nikolay Fyodorovich (1901-44), Soviet military commander, Army General, Hero of the Soviet Union. During the Great Patriotic War he was Chief of Staff of the North-Western Front, since 1942 Commander of the armies of Voronezh, South-Western and the 1st Ukrainian Fronts. Died from wounds.

[38] 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.

[39] Königsberg (since 1946 Kaliningrad): 6 April 1945: the start of the Königsberg offensive, involving the 2nd and the 3rd Belorussian and some forces of the 1st Baltic front. It was conducted in part of the decisive Eastern Prussian operation (the purpose of this operation was the crushing defeat of the largest grouping of German fascist forces in Eastern Prussia and the northern part of Poland). The battles were crucial and desperate. On 9 April 1945 the forces of the 3rd Belorussian front stormed and seized the town and the fortress of Königsberg. The battle for Eastern Prussia was the most blood shedding campaign in 1945. The losses of the Soviet army exceeded 580 thousand people (127 thousand of them were casualties). The Germans lost about 500 thousand people (about 300 of them were casualties). After WWII, based on the decision of the Potsdam Conference (1945) the northern part of Prussia including Königsberg was annexed to the USSR (the southern part was annexed with Poland)

[40] 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.

[41] 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.

[42] 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'.

[43] 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.

[44] 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'.

[45] 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.

[46] 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

[47] 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.

[48] 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.

[49] 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.

[50] 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.

[51] 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.

[52] Spanish Civil War (1936-39): A civil war in Spain, which lasted from July 1936 to April 1939, between rebels known as Nacionales and the Spanish Republican government and its supporters. The leftist government of the Spanish Republic was besieged by nationalist forces headed by General Franco, who was backed by Nazi Germany and fascist Italy. Though it had Spanish nationalist ideals as the central cause, the war was closely watched around the world mainly as the first major military contest between left-wing forces and the increasingly powerful and heavily armed fascists. The number of people killed in the war has been long disputed ranging between 500,000 and a million.

[53] Zorge, Richard (1895-1944): a Baku-born German, spied for the Soviets during World War II, warning them that the Germans intended to attack on 21st June, 1941. Zorge was later assigned to Japan where he was executed when they discovered that he was a spy. A monument to Richard Zorge has been erected in Samad Vurgun Street in Baku, Azerbaijan.

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

[55] 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.

[56] 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.

[57] Hesed: Meaning care and mercy in Hebrew, Hesed stands for the charity organization founded by Amos Avgar in the early 20th century. Supported by Claims Conference and Joint Hesed helps for Jews in need to have a decent life despite hard economic conditions and encourages development of their self-identity. Hesed provides a number of services aimed at supporting the needs of all, and particularly elderly members of the society. The major social services include: work in the center facilities (information, advertisement of the center activities, foreign ties and free lease of medical equipment); services at homes (care and help at home, food products delivery, delivery of hot meals, minor repairs); work in the community (clubs, meals together, day-time polyclinic, medical and legal consultations); service for volunteers (training programs). The Hesed centers have inspired a real revolution in the Jewish life in the FSU countries. People have seen and sensed the rebirth of the Jewish traditions of humanism. Currently over eighty Hesed centers exist in the FSU countries. Their activities cover the Jewish population of over eight hundred settlements.