

# Evgenia Galina

Evgenia Galina

Uzhgorod

Ukraine

Interviewer: Ella Levitskaya

Date of interview: April 2003



Evgenia Galina lives in a two-bedroom apartment in a five-storied apartment house built in the 1970s in a new district in Uzhgorod. Her son Michael and his family live in the same apartment building. Evgenia's apartment is impeccably clean and cozy. She has many books and photographs of her close ones on the bookshelves and on the walls. Evgenia is a short chubby woman. She has bright eyes and short dark hair with streaks of gray. She speaks slowly and distinctly as if considering each and every word - this must be a reflection of her teaching career. Evgenia holds herself up with dignity, but she is very friendly at the same time. She is a wonderful housewife and likes cooking, although this must be difficult for her now. Evgenia hasn't lost interest in life.

[My family background](#)

[Growing up](#)

[My school years](#)

[During the war](#)

[Post-war](#)

[Married life](#)

[Glossary](#)

## My family background

My father's parents lived in the small village of Ivnitsa, Zhytomyr province [130 km from Kiev]. I can't say anything about Ivnitsa. I never visited this village in my childhood and my father never told me about the village or the house where he grew up. I can only guess that the Jewish population constituted some 30 to 50%. There were many similar villages in Ukraine. Ukrainian and Jewish families developed a friendly neighborhood, helped each other and respected each other's religion and traditions.

My paternal grandfather, Boruch Breizman, was born in Ivnitsa in the 1860s. I have no information about my his family. I don't know anything about my paternal grandmother either. She died when my father was just a child. I don't even know her name. My grandfather became a widower with two children. My father, Morduch, born in 1884, was the oldest child. The name Morduch was written in my father's documents. Later he was called with the Russian name of Matvey [common name] [1](#). His younger sister Sophia, Sosl in Yiddish, was born in 1886. When the mourning after his wife was over my grandfather remarried. I knew his second wife, Liebe, my father's stepmother.

Grandmother Liebe was over ten years younger than grandfather. They had five children. The oldest, Lisa, was born in 1892. My father's second stepsister, Riva, followed in 1895, then Clara, Chaya in Yiddish, in 1899. In 1908 another girl was born. She was named Sarra in Yiddish, Sophia in Russian. The youngest son, Naum, followed in 1910. His Jewish name was Nukhim. Sophia and Naum were born in Zhytomyr [150 km from Kiev], which means that the family moved to Zhytomyr sometime between 1899 and 1908. It was hard to get a job or education in the village. There were probably other reasons for moving that I don't know of.

Grandfather Boruch was a very educated and religious man. I remember my grandfather when he was an old man. He had gray hair and a big gray beard. He didn't wear payes. He wore a dark shirt and a dark jacket. He wore a hat when going out and a black kippah made of silk at home, only it wasn't a small kippah like they wear nowadays, but a bigger one that almost covered his ears. My grandfather was a melamed. I don't know if there was a cheder in Ivnitsa. Pupils came to my grandfather's home.

The family was poor. My grandfather apparently didn't earn enough to feed the family and Grandmother Liebe became the breadwinner. She was a very business-oriented woman. She began to bake bread and rolls at home. A window was kept open and my grandmother sold her bread, cakes and pastries through that window. Her business took her a lot of time and her children had to engage themselves. The older children took care of the younger ones. My grandfather was always absorbed in books. He read those Jewish books and took little interest in the surrounding. He also liked to write poems in Yiddish and Hebrew, but regretfully, they are all gone.

They observed Jewish traditions in the family. The boys were circumcised. All children got Jewish education. They didn't go to cheder; my grandfather taught them. My father and his sisters could read and write in Yiddish and knew the Torah and the Talmud. They knew all Jewish prayers by heart. Grandfather Boruch taught them the prayers and traditions. They celebrated Sabbath and all Jewish holidays. I don't know how often my grandfather and grandmother went to the synagogue in Ivnitsa. I don't even know whether there was a synagogue there at all. After they moved to Zhytomyr my grandfather went to the synagogue every day and my grandmother went there on Jewish holidays. They spoke Yiddish at home.

Zhytomyr is an old town in Ukraine. At the beginning of the 20th century it had a population of about 100,000 people. From the middle of the 16th century to the end of the 18th century Zhytomyr belonged to Poland and then it became a part of the Russian Empire. There was a significant number of Polish citizens in the town. Russians, Poles and Jews constituted the population of Zhytomyr. About 30% of the population was Jewish. There were brick houses in the center of the town. Jews were involved in crafts and commerce and some were intellectuals. The Russian and Polish population resided in the suburbs of the town for the most part. They were farmers. There were no nationality conflicts. There was a big Jewish community in Zhytomyr and several synagogues. Even after the Great Patriotic War [2](#) and the period of struggle against religion [3](#) in the 1930s there were still at least five synagogues left in Zhytomyr. There was a cheder and Jewish school in the town. The Jewish community supported the poor and handicapped. There was a Jewish orphanage and elderly people home and a Jewish hospital. During the Civil War [4](#) there were Jewish pogroms [5](#) in Zhytomyr. Gangs [6](#) and Denikin's [7](#) troops were involved in the pogroms. Local people often gave shelter to Jewish families during such pogroms.

After they moved to Zhytomyr my grandparents rented a small house in the center of Zhytomyr. Their wooden house was in the yard of a two-storied stone house where their landlords lived. There were several other wooden houses that their landlords rented out. They were Jews and preferred to lease their houses to Jewish families. After the family moved to Zhytomyr my grandfather began to work as a teacher in a state Jewish primary school. Besides he gave classes at home teaching Jewish children the cheder program. He also wrote poems that he sent to magazines and newspapers in Palestine. He even received royalties for them. It was little money, but still it helped. During the Soviet power this was out of the question and my grandfather began writing poems that he sent to newspapers before Soviet holidays. Those poems were published and my grandfather also received some money for them.

In the 1930s the Jewish school was closed and my grandfather lost his job. He continued studying and reading religious books at home, he could do it the whole day then. My grandfather couldn't get any job, so my grandmother began to sell her baked goods again. She sold it from a window in their house and her customers were the neighboring Jewish families. My grandmother worked 15 hours a day. She didn't have any time or strength left for religion. She had her hair cut short in stylish manner. She had thick wavy hair that looked very nice on her. She didn't wear a shawl.

My father started to work when he was young. He was the oldest in the family. Shortly after moving to Zhytomyr he became an apprentice to a watchmaker whose last name was Poliak. My father lived and had meals in his house. Poliak didn't charge them for education and accommodation, but my father had to work for him for free for two years. My father stayed in his shop after his training was over and worked there until he got married.

After they moved to Zhytomyr my father's sister Sophia had a row with their stepmother and left for Kiev. This happened shortly after World War I. In Kiev she married an ugly Jewish man whose last name was Katz. She didn't love him but married him to get a place to live. Sophia's husband was a shoemaker. They had a traditional Jewish wedding. Sophia had four children: three sons and a daughter. The name of her oldest son was Michael, then came Alexandr, whose Jewish name was Shaya, and the name of her youngest son was Boris. I don't remember her daughter's name. They were cheerful people. Sophia was a joyful woman, even though she had a hard life. I don't know how religious my aunt was. All I know is that they celebrated Jewish holidays. During the Great Patriotic War Sophia's sons went to the front. Michael was a marine and the two others were recruited to the front. The two older sons perished and Boris, the youngest, returned home. He lives in Canada with his family now. Sophia died in Kiev in the 1950s. Sophia's daughter lived in Kiev before the Great Patriotic War. I haven't been in contact with her. Perhaps, she still lives there.

My grandfather's daughters from his second marriage became Zionists. Before World War I they emigrated to Palestine. They took part in the struggle for the new state. They took part in the construction of a kibbutz and lived there the rest of their lives. They were single and had no children. Lisa Breizman, the older one, worked at the kibbutz, and the younger one, Riva Breizman, became a professor, a specialist in wine making. Her name is included in the 'Golden Book of Israel'. I've never met them. We've had no contacts. My father wanted to correspond with his sisters, but my mother didn't allow him to do so fearing for him, my brother and me. [She was afraid to keep in touch with relatives abroad.] [8](#) This relationship might have become an obstacle for us to enter college, and in 1936 and the following years it might have even become a reason for arrest. After the Great Patriotic War Lisa and Riva got an opportunity to see Grandmother Liebe.

They came to the USSR on tour, but they weren't allowed to travel to Zhytomyr. They stayed in a hotel in Kiev where Grandmother Liebe went to see them. We didn't go to see them since my mother was afraid for us. They came again in the 1970s after Grandmother Liebe died. They were allowed to come to Zhytomyr then. They had a wonderful gravestone installed for my grandmother and grandfather, who perished at the beginning of the Great Patriotic War. We lived in another town and didn't go to see the sisters. Both sisters passed away: Lisa died in the 1980s and Riva died in the early 1990s. We got to know about it in the 1990s after we sent an inquiry to Israel.

I don't know if my father's stepsister Clara studied at school or if my grandfather taught her. After the [Russian] Revolution of 1917 [9](#) she entered the Stomatology Faculty of Medical College in Kharkov. After finishing it she became a dentist in Zhytomyr. She lived with her parents. Clara married a Ukrainian man. I don't remember his name. I don't know whether my grandfather was against Clara marrying a man of a different religion. It's quite likely that he didn't care much being too absorbed in his books. Grandmother Liebe was very positive about her daughter's marriage. She got along well with her son-in-law. Clara's husband was a nice man and earned well. They lived together. My grandmother took care of the housework and cooking.

Clara and her husband were atheists. Clara's husband had studied in Germany. He was a lecturer at the Pedagogical College in Zhytomyr. They had a son and a daughter. I don't remember their names or dates of birth. When the Great Patriotic War began Clara's husband was arrested and accused of being a German spy since he had once studied in Germany. We never saw him again. Clara was a helpless woman in everyday life. She was used to having her mother resolve all her problems. After the war she couldn't find a job of her qualification and went to work as a doctor at school. Sophia junior raised Clara's children. Her son lives in Lipetsk, Russia [about 500 km from Moscow]. He finished a college and became an engineer. Clara's daughter moved to Israel in the 1970s. We have no contact with them.

Sophia Breizman, the youngest sister, and I were friends. I loved her dearly. She had a hard life. When she was a child and then a teenager she had to work 12-14 hours a day helping her mother. She studied at a lower secondary school, but had to quit. She studied by herself and entered Pedagogical College in Zhytomyr in 1930. After finishing it she entered the Faculty of Philology at Kharkov University. She was expelled when she was a 3rd-year student. Another student that came from Zhytomyr wrote a report saying that she was an alien element since she wrote in her application form that her parents were poor people while her mother was a shopkeeper. She meant Grandmother Liebe, who baked bread. She didn't have a store and only sold bread that she made, but who would have believed that? There was a general meeting where Sophia was expelled from university where only children of proletariat could study. Sophia returned to Zhytomyr.

When the Great Patriotic War began Sophia, Grandmother Liebe, Clara and her children evacuated. After the war they returned home. Sophia lived with my grandmother and Clara's family. She went to work as a teacher of the Russian language and literature at school. Sophia wrote poems in Russian, but she didn't have an opportunity to publish them. Only occasionally a few were published in magazines. After she passed away her sisters published a book of her poems in Israel. Her private life was difficult, too. She dated a young man that was her neighbor in Zhytomyr. They loved each other and were going to get married.

In 1937 [during the Great Terror] [10](#) he was arrested - somebody reported on him - and exiled to Siberia. He stayed in camps for ten years and she was waiting for him. After he got released he wasn't allowed to go home. He had to stay in a town in Siberia. He married a woman there. After the Twentieth Party Congress [11](#) he was rehabilitated [Rehabilitation in the Soviet Union] [12](#) and came to Zhytomyr. He came to see Sophia. They spent a few days together. He didn't dare tell her that he was married. Only at the station, when he got on a train to go back to his family, he told her. It was a blow to her. When he left, Sophia didn't want to see anyone and was depressed. A few years later her colleague, a widower who was 20 years older than Sophia, proposed to her. He had a house. Clara's children grew up and the house became too small for so many tenants. Sophia married this man for his house. They didn't have any children. She put all her feelings into her poems that were not published. Unfortunately, I don't have them. Sophia died after a lingering disease in 1986. She was buried in the town cemetery in Zhytomyr. It wasn't a Jewish funeral.

The older sisters, their husbands and brother supported my father's younger brother Naum during his studies. He also worked to earn his living. When at school Naum was the head of the aviation modeling club. Afterwards he entered Polytechnic College in Kharkov. After finishing his first year he came to Zhytomyr and married a Jewish girl that he had been dating when at school. They had a traditional Jewish wedding. During the Great Patriotic War the College evacuated to Tashkent [Uzbekistan]. Naum finished college after the war. He had the choice of where to go: either work at a defense plant in Komi ASSR or to the front. Komi was in the North and winters are very cold there with - 40° temperatures, but he went there nonetheless. After the war he came to Lipetsk with his wife and went to work. Their son, Boris, was born there.

Boris is very talented. After finishing school with a gold medal he entered Technical College of Physics in Moscow. Even before finishing his studies in college he entered post-graduate school. He became a professor. His works were published abroad, but he wasn't allowed to travel since he was a Jew. After the collapse of the USSR Boris went to the US to hold lectures in 1987. He stayed there. His family joined him in the US. Naum died in Lipetsk in 1992.

My mother's father died in 1905 when my mother was a child. All I know about him is that his name was Meyer Benderski. My maternal grandmother Pesia-Feiga was born in the village of Romanivka [210 km from Kiev, 60 km from Zhytomyr]. I knew my grandmother's two sisters: Leika and Hava. I don't remember their last names. Leika lived in Zhytomyr and Hava lived in a village near Zhytomyr. They were both married. Leika had twelve children: eleven sons and a daughter. Hava had two daughters; Ida and Tania. During the Great Patriotic War nine of Leika's sons perished at the front. After the war she used to say that she had one and a half sons left: one of her sons lost his legs at the front. Leika's daughter lived in Podolsk near Moscow after the Great Patriotic War.

After getting married my grandmother lived in Zhytomyr. She had four children when she became a widow. My mother, Basia, was the oldest. She was born in 1896. The second daughter, Freida, was born in 1900 and the youngest son Leibl in 1903. The last daughter, Mirra, was born in 1905 after grandfather died. A brother of my grandmother's father, Avrum- Faivish, lived in the village of Romanivka. He had four children. They were a wealthy family and he took my mother into his family. My mother's younger sisters, Freida and Mirra, stayed with my grandmother. Their brother Leibl went to the family of grandmother's sister Hana, whose husband was a tailor. He taught Leibl his profession.

My grandmother's uncle, Avrum-Faivish, owned a food store. His family helped him with work at the store. His wife was a very nice woman. She treated my mother like her own daughter. There was a grammar school for boys and another one for girls in Romanivka. All children of my grandmother's uncle studied in grammar school and he also paid for my mother's studies. However, my mother quit this school after finishing her 7th year. When I asked my mother why she didn't complete her studies she said there was a lot of work to do about the house and in the store and she felt like helping the family.

My mother told me that there was a big pogrom in Romanivka once. My grandmother in Zhytomyr got ill and my mother had to go there. At that time Petliura's [13](#) gang came to Romanivka. Avrum-Faivish's daughter and wife managed to find shelter while he and his sons failed to hide away. Petliura bandits beat him and his sons very hard and hit the oldest, Ruvim, with a sable. It wasn't a deadly wound, but there was a lot of blood around. That's the only pogrom my mother told me about.

My grandmother remarried. This happened at the time when my mother was still staying with my grandmother's uncle. There was a widower by the name of David Rakhlis who lived in Zhytomyr. His son's name was Motl. David was a glasscutter. David and my grandmother had known each other since they were children and David always liked my grandmother. He came to see her father, Nuchim-Faivish, to ask his consent to the marriage. Nuchim-Faivish had ten unmarried daughters. He said David could marry any of them, but if he wanted to marry a widow, my grandmother, he would have to pay back the amount that my grandmother's father gave her as a dowry. David didn't have the money and left. He began to save money and when he had the necessary amount he came to see Nuchim-Faivish again. David paid the money to my grandmother's father and married my grandmother. My grandmother went to live with him. David cared a lot about my grandmother. When she got osseous tuberculosis David paid for her to get medical treatment. When she couldn't walk he carried her around regardless of his neighbors teasing him about it. My grandmother recovered.

David had a big house with seven rooms in the center of Zhytomyr. There was a front and a back door in the house. My grandmother moved into this house with Freida and Mirra. David's son Motl lived there, too. In the early 1920s Motl emigrated to the US. We had no contact with him. My grandmother kept a cow and chicken in a shed in the yard. She didn't have housemaids. Freida and later my mother helped her about the house.

When my grandmother fell ill with tuberculosis they decided to have my mother married off as soon as possible so that she didn't have to depend on her relatives in case her mother died. This was in 1921. Romanivka was a Ukrainian village - there were few Jewish families. My grandmother turned to shadkhanim, matchmakers, that offered her to have my mother marry my future father. My grandmother called my mother to come to Zhytomyr where she announced that my mother was to meet a man. My mother met my father. They liked each other. My mother was a quiet, shy and pretty girl. My father was twelve years older. My mother didn't want to marry him. She cried and begged her mother to let her be, but my grandmother insisted that my mother obeyed her. My father was a decent man and had a profession. They got engaged and my mother stayed in Zhytomyr. They had a traditional Jewish wedding about a month later.

## Growing up

After the wedding my mother and father rented a dwelling for some time, but then grandmother talked them into moving into David's house. They got a room of their own. Grandmother had her room and so did David. Mirra lived in the room that had an entrance from the front door. When she got married she lived there with her husband and son. Freida also had a room. There was a dining-room and two kitchens in the house. After Motl moved to the US one room and a kitchen were leased to a Jewish family. David also charged my parents rent. He gave the money to my grandmother for housekeeping and she returned the amount to my mother.

My father found a facility that he wanted to rent for his clock shop, but it turned out to be cold and wasn't appropriate for work. Besides, my father would have had to pay taxes on it. He went to work at another clock shop. He was very skillful and had a lot of work to do. When he returned home from work he continued working. He got orders from owners of clock shops that had nice facilities with fancy signboards, but they couldn't do the work. Those owners paid my father 50% of the cost of their orders. My father was a strong man, but the fact that he had to sit all the time had an impact on his health condition. My mother was a housewife. My father wanted to provide for the family and thought that he could afford to have my mother take care of the house and family.

My brother, Abram, was born in 1923. He was circumcised as required by the rules. I was born on 2nd March 1925. My parents named me Genia. At school I was called by my Russian name of Evgenia. Our parents loved us and created an atmosphere of love and respect in the family. There were no conflicts at home and they didn't tell us off or punish us. The most serious punishment for us was to hear that our father didn't approve of something we had done.

My father was an intelligent and advanced man. I don't know where he learned music. He had a Jewish friend that was a tuner. My father and his friend often played the violin and this tuner's daughter accompanied them on the piano. My father also read a lot. He read books in Yiddish that my grandfather had left him. We had many books at home: most of them were books in Yiddish and Hebrew. My mother and father went to see Jewish performances at the theater. The Jewish Theater from Kiev often came to the town on tour and my parents went to see their performances.

We spoke Russian at home. My father and mother spoke Yiddish sometimes, but they only communicated in Russian with my brother and me. My grandmother spoke Yiddish. She could speak a little Ukrainian, but she was illiterate and couldn't even write. I can speak a little Yiddish, but I cannot read or write in Yiddish.

My grandmother and David were very religious. My parents were religious, too. Of course, my father couldn't observe all Jewish traditions since he had to work on Saturday, but David didn't work on Saturday. There was a mezuzah on each door. The family followed the kashrut. My grandmother had a twig tray where she put meat to have all blood flow down to make it kosher meat.

David and grandmother went to the nearby synagogue on Sabbath and Jewish holidays. My brother and I went with them after we turned seven. Women sat on the second floor of the synagogue. My grandmother had the most expensive seat in the synagogue.

We celebrated Sabbath at home. My mother started cooking on Friday morning. There was a Russian stove [14](#) in the kitchen. My mother left food for Saturday in the oven to keep it warm. She was a great cook. She was especially good at making challah and gefilte fish. On Friday evening

the table was covered with a white tablecloth. My grandmother lit the candles. On Saturday nobody did any work at home. David and my grandmother visited our numerous relatives. Even if it was a long distance my grandmother never took a tram on Sabbath. She walked, although she had problems with her legs. On Friday I turned on the light at home in the evening - children are allowed to do this. On Saturday Grandmother Liebe came to see us. Grandmother Pesia-Feiga was always angry that Grandmother Liebe visited on Saturday wearing no kerchief. She used to say, 'This grandmother with her hair cut is here...'. Grandmother Pesia-Feiga always wore a dark kerchief. I still have it. My grandmother left it to my mother and my mother gave it to me before she died. My parents went to the synagogue on Saturday evening after my father returned home from work. They also went to the synagogue on Jewish holidays. My father had a good voice and often sang at the synagogue.

The family started preparations for Pesach in advance. The house was thoroughly cleaned. It was a lot of fun. Grandmother's children brought flour into the house. We made matzah for four families: for David and my grandmother, for Leibl's family, for Mirra and her husband and for us, and after Freida got married also for her family. We baked matzah in our Russian stove. The women kneaded the dough, my father made holes and Leibl watched the oven. Everybody was busy. We made matzah for one family, then another. My grandmother sent me to the shochet to have him slaughter the chickens. There was a long line at his slaughterhouse before the holidays. The shochet slaughtered the chickens and my grandmother cut them into pieces at home. All everyday utensils and crockery were taken to the attic and fancy crockery and utensils that were only used at Pesach were taken down. We had chicken broth, boiled chicken and gefilte fish made. My grandmother had a copper mortar where we crushed matzah to add it to the chicken broth. We also ate matzah with milk. My grandmother made matzah meal - matzah flour - to bake strudels and cookies. There were two poor Jewish families living in our neighborhood. After the cooking for Pesach was done my grandmother always sent me to bring them fish, chicken, strudels - a little of everything that we had - for a meal. I also brought them some matzah. My grandmother did this on all holidays. She couldn't stand the thought that there was somebody who couldn't afford a decent meal.

My grandmother, David, Freida and Mirra's family had their own first seder and we conducted it separately from them. My mother put a white tablecloth on the table. She put bitter greenery, a saucer with salty water and hard boiled eggs on the table. There was also food: gefilte fish, chicken and potato and matzah puddings. There were silver glasses for wine. There was always one extra glass for Elijah the Prophet [15](#). I remember what a problem it was for me to wait until it got dark. I was hungry and even more so sleepy, but we had to wait until the first star appeared in the sky. Our father taught my brother to ask the four traditional questions in Hebrew that a son is supposed to pose to his father. [Editor's note: according to the rules the youngest child in the family must ask these questions, the so-called mah nishtanah.] My brother didn't know Hebrew and he just learned them by heart. I don't know how the seder ended since I always went to sleep before it was over.

At Yom Kippur all adults fasted. Even when my grandmother was severely ill at her old age she still fasted at Yom Kippur. My brother and I began to fast at the age of 13-14, but my mother was still worried about us when we didn't have anything to eat for a whole day. At Purim my mother made hamantashen and honey cakes. There were lots of pastries made at Purim since it was a tradition to take treats to relatives and friends. Sweets and pastries were put on a tray and covered with a



white napkin. Children made the rounds of the houses. Of course, we couldn't help trying these delicacies. At Purim Purimshpils in disguise came to houses showing their short performances. They also got treats and some change. At Sukkoth David made a sukkah in the yard. We decorated it with ribbons and greenery. We had meals in it throughout the holiday. Grandfather David recited the prayers in the sukkah. There was always a big dish with fruit on the table. We, children, also played in the sukkah when adults were busy doing their own things.

In 1932 there was a famine [16](#) in Ukraine. My grandmother and David didn't suffer from it because my grandmother's sister Hava lived in a village. She had fields where she grew grain and vegetables. Hava always sent her some grain and food products. Hava supported all relatives. We didn't starve, but there wasn't enough food anyway. My grandmother always gave us some food. If we didn't have enough food we had boiled millet or something else.

Freida got married in 1932. David tried to convince my grandmother to postpone her wedding. He said it was going to be difficult to make food for the wedding, but my grandmother insisted that there was a wedding. Freida and her fiancé were engaged for a year and then they got married. They had a wedding in the house of my grandmother and David. A rabbi conducted the ceremony. There was a chuppah in the house. There were long tables in the big dining-room for the feast. After their wedding Freida and her husband stayed to live in David's house. I don't remember her husband's name. He was a product supplier at the shoe factory. Freida was a housewife. David didn't charge them for living in his house. My grandmother cooked for them.

Freida's son Michael - his Jewish name was Meyer - was born in 1933. Freida, her husband and son were in evacuation during the Great Patriotic War and after the war they returned to David's house. Later their son bought this house for them. Before the war Freida and her husband observed all Jewish traditions and celebrated holidays, but after the Great Patriotic War they just celebrated Jewish holidays. Freida and her family lived in Zhytomyr all their life. Freida's husband died in 1967. After her husband died Freida had a stroke. She became helpless and didn't understand what she was doing. My mother felt sorry for her sister and took her to live with her. Freida died in Zhytomyr in 1972, three years after my mother died. She was a helpless woman and after my mother's death the youngest sister, Mirra, nursed her. Freida was buried in the Jewish section of the town cemetery according to the Jewish tradition. I had no contact with her son.

My mother's brother, Leibl, married a Jewish girl from Zhytomyr in 1924. I don't remember her name. They also had a Jewish wedding. Their daughter Lisa was born in 1925. After Lisa was born Leibl's wife became ill. Lisa and I were close friends. Before the Great Patriotic War Leibl's family celebrated Jewish holidays. Leibl perished at the front in 1942. His wife and daughter were in evacuation and from there they returned to Zhytomyr. Leibl's wife died in the 1960s. Lisa finished Medical College in Ivano- Frankovsk. She worked as a doctor. Lisa got married. She has two daughters and three grandchildren. Lisa and her family moved to Israel in the 1970s. They live in Rehovot. Lisa is a pensioner now.

Mirra, the youngest in the family, was David's favorite. They were of the same kind. Mirra yelled and cursed, but David forgave her everything. He even bequeathed his house to her. Mirra got married in 1927. Her husband's last name was Haitin. He was an engineer. Her son Leonid was born in 1929. Mirra's husband died of a heart attack in a recreation center before the war. She never remarried. Mirra died in Zhytomyr in the 1980s. Her son lives in Germany.

## My school years

My brother Abram started school in 1930 and I in 1932. We studied in a Russian secondary school. Boys and girls studied together. I was a sociable girl and had many friends at school. There were Russian and Jewish teachers in our school. Quite a few of my classmates were Jewish, too. I never faced any anti-Semitism at school. I don't believe there was any before the Great Patriotic War. My best friend was the daughter of a Christian priest. She was my classmate and lived nearby. My other friends were: Stasia, a Polish girl, Maria Frolova, a Russian girl and Sonia Milman, a Jewish girl. There were no specific attitudes towards Jewish children at school.

My favorite subjects at school were Russian and Ukrainian languages, literature and chemistry. My brother was fond of mathematic and physics. I became a pioneer when I was in the 4th grade. There was a plain ceremony in the vestibule at school where a bust of Lenin was installed. We recited the oath of pioneers and had red neckties tied around our necks. I cannot say that I was an active pioneer. I took part in parades on Soviet holidays and attended pioneer meetings. I didn't become a Komsomol [17](#) member at school since I finished the 9th grade in 1941.

The arrests that began in 1937 [during the Great Terror] didn't have an impact on our family. Some of our acquaintances were arrested. My father was worried about them. He was smart and understood what was going on. I remember when my father's acquaintance, who was a pharmacist, was arrested my father kept saying, 'What did he do? What was his fault?' My father didn't like Stalin. I remember him saying that in the early 1920s Stalin was fighting with Lenin for 'the stool' to sit on and my mother was horrified to hear this. Of course, our parents tried to avoid discussing these subjects in the presence of children, but we lived in the same room and often heard such discussions. I didn't quite understand what it was about at that time, but I recalled them many years later.

There were classes of military training for boys at school. Girls were trained to be medical nurses. We were taught to provide first aid to patients, apply bandages, immobilize an arm or leg. There were also political classes. We were told that the world bourgeoisie wanted to destroy the USSR and that we had to fight for the cause of Lenin and Stalin when we grew up. Religiosity was almost a crime. Pioneers and Komsomol members were told to fight about religiosity of their politically backward parents. My brother was a Komsomol member and had a hard time at home. We still celebrated Jewish holidays while at school he was told that it was in conflict with the title of a Soviet citizen. Also, people were stimulated to speak Russian rather than their native language: Yiddish, Ukrainian or any other.

When my brother was twelve my father asked Grandfather Boruch to teach Abram Yiddish. My grandfather taught him so he would be able to read, but my brother didn't want to continue his studies. Abram told our father that nobody in his class was learning Yiddish and that he didn't want to study it either. My grandfather once mentioned to my father that he was sorry that Abram gave up Yiddish since he was good and quick in his studies. Abram didn't have a bar mitzvah. My father dreamed about his bar mitzvah, but my brother didn't agree to do it.

When my brother became a Komsomol member our parents had matzah made for Pesach at a different family's place. My mother went to their house to bake matzah that she brought home wrapped in a white sheet. Once she met my brother when she was carrying matzah home and was very happy expecting that he would help her to carry it home, but my brother refused to help her.

He said he would do any other work: fetch water or chop wood, but he wouldn't carry matzah for anything in the world. However, my brother always participated in the celebration of Jewish holidays. He took part in the seder and posed the four traditional questions to our father. We didn't celebrate Soviet holidays at home, but we took part in celebrations at school.

### **During the war**

My brother finished school with a silver medal in 1940. He had the right to enter a college without taking entrance exams. My brother wanted to study in Moscow. He entered the Faculty of Mathematics in Moscow University. He lived in a hostel. Our parents supported him with some money and my brother received a stipend. He had all excellent marks. He passed his exams in late 1941 and we looked forward to his arrival home, but we didn't see him. On 22nd June 1941 we heard on the radio that Germany attacked the USSR and the war began.

We left Zhytomyr on 27th June 1941. My brother was sent to study in an artillery school in Podmoscoviye. Grandmother Pesia-Feiga, Freida and her son, Mirra and her son and our family evacuated from Zhytomyr. David refused to go with us. He said that he had seen the Germans during World War I and didn't think they could do Jews any harm. My grandmother was afraid for her children and grandchildren and decided to go with us. David evacuated from Zhytomyr a month later when he came to understand that the Germans and the fascists were two different pairs of shoes. He found my grandmother and joined us in Kuibyshev region. My father's relatives also evacuated. Grandmother Liebe, Clara and her children and Sophia left about a week after we evacuated.

We traveled in cattle transportation carriages. We had little luggage since we were allowed to have one small suitcase each. There were no benches in carriages. Travelers slept on the floor. We didn't know where we were going. We didn't have any food and tried to buy some food at stations. Our train was bombed on the way, but fortunately, we got out of it. I don't quite remember how long our trip lasted, but it seemed an eternity to me.

We reached Stalingrad [about 1,000 km southeast of Moscow]. There was an evacuation agency in the town. Grandmother, her daughters and grandchildren decided to go to Kuibyshev region and we decided to stay in Stalingrad. We got accommodation in a school building before we went to live with a family in their house. My father, mother and I lived in a small room. The owners of the house gave us some utensils, bed sheets and blankets. I went to the 10th grade at school. My father went to work in a clock repair shop. We stayed there until German troops began to approach Stalingrad in 1942. The Volga River was covered with ice and we crossed it to get to the opposite bank. We settled down in the village of Nikolevka and in a month we moved on to Kamyshin. From Kamyshin people were evacuated on tanks. We were taken to the nearest railway station where we boarded a train. We didn't know where it was heading, but we didn't care as long as it took us further and further away from the Germans.

We arrived in Pavlodar in Kazakhstan where we heard an announcement that there was a train to Middle Asia and that all people willing to go could travel on this train. We thought that it wouldn't be so hard to live through the winter in Middle Asia and chose to go there. Our trip lasted for about a month. There was no water or toilet in those freight carriages. When the train stopped at a station all passengers ran to the toilet. Local residents brought some food to the station. Many people fell ill and had lice. Many were dying and their bodies were taken off the train at stations.

We finally reached Tashkent [2,600 km from Kiev] where we stayed overnight at the railway station. There were many people ill with spotted fever. They were lying on the floor and benches in the railway station building.

The next morning we got accommodation in the house of an old woman. It was a small pise-walled house with two rooms and a kitchen. We lived in one room. My father went to find out about a job. It turned out they needed a clock repair man badly. My father got a room to make into a shop. He went to get tools in some town. My mother fell ill with spotted fever at that time. She was taken to hospital. I was left alone with no money or food. The old woman taught me to pick turtle eggs in a sand pit in the suburb of the town. The old woman made me fried eggs every day. I visited my mother in hospital every day. Finally my father returned. He brought the tools that he needed and had a shop equipped. My mother returned from hospital.

My father received no money for his work as yet and my mother sold our bed sheets at the market. She was very weak after her illness and somebody snatched her purse. My mother returned home in tears. Later my father began to receive money and we could buy food. I went to work as an attendant at the hospital. However, I had to finish my studies at school. I studied in the 10th grade in Tashkent and was thinking of resuming my studies at school, when somebody told me that there was a Pedagogical College in Tashkent where they admitted students that had finished nine years at school. There weren't too many young people that wanted to study and they were admitted without entrance exams. I entered the Faculty of Physics and Mathematics and finished it before the end of the war. There were Russian, Crimean Tatar, Kirghiz and Jewish students in my group. There was no segregation regarding nationality. In June 1945 I received my diploma.

During the war following the kashrut was out of the question. We ate what we could get or buy per food coupons. However, my parents celebrated Pesach. My mother sold bread that she made at the market and bought flour to make matzah. We didn't eat any bread at Pesach. My parents fasted at Yom Kippur. I don't remember anything about celebrations of other Jewish holidays.

Since we left Zhytomyr we had no information about my father's relatives. My father wrote inquiries to a search service. When we were in Tashkent my father received a response saying that his parents were in Tashkent. There was their address in this letter. We were very happy to hear about them, but when my father found them he became very sad. Grandmother Liebe, Clara and her children and Sophia told my father that Grandfather Boruch refused to evacuate with them. When the war began he was about 80 years old. My grandfather felt tired of life. He said he wasn't going to leave with them. My father was very sorry that we hadn't taken my grandfather with us. My father believed that he would have convinced grandfather to join us. After we returned to Zhytomyr we got to know that the Germans had conducted mass shootings of the Jewish population and our grandfather perished at the very beginning. There are several common graves in Zhytomyr, but we don't even know where my grandfather's grave is.

## Post-war

I remember the feeling of joy on 9th May 1945 [Victory Day] [18](#) when we heard on the radio that the war was over. People hugged and kissed each other in the streets. There were fireworks in the evening. We returned home to Zhytomyr. My grandmother, Freida, Mirra and their children were already home. David died in evacuation in 1944. My grandmother died in Zhytomyr in 1952. She was buried according to the Jewish tradition in the Jewish cemetery in Zhytomyr.

During the war we corresponded with my brother Abram. After finishing artillery school he went to the front. My brother was a mathematician and was very good at calculations that were necessary for artillery troopers. At 23 he was promoted to captain. Thank God he wasn't wounded at the front. He was slightly shell-shocked once, but it had no negative impact. After the war he returned to Moscow to continue his studies at university. His lecturer of mathematics, Berezanskaya, who was the author of a school textbook in mathematics, also taught at the postgraduate school where she took Abram after he graduated. He began to work at university and simultaneously studied at the postgraduate school.

In 1948, during the campaign against cosmopolitans [19](#) Berezanskaya lost her job - she was of the retirement age, as they explained to her - and my brother got a [mandatory job] assignment [20](#) to work in a village. He worked as a teacher of mathematics in a school in Kaluga region. He came to Zhytomyr on vacation and married a local Jewish woman that he had known before the war. His wife Rachil, nee Gotfrid, was an English teacher at school. Rachil followed Abram to Kaluga region and they worked at school. Their daughter, Alla, was born in 1953. Rachil's parents took the girl to Zhytomyr. Their twins, Alexandr and Boris, were born in 1956. My brother's assignment was over and they returned to Zhytomyr. They lived in a room in Rachil's parents home.

My brother couldn't find a job in Zhytomyr and went to work in a village in Zhytomyr region. He rented a room from an old woman. My brother sent his salary to Rachil in Zhytomyr. In due time an affiliate of Kiev College of Light Industry was open in Zhytomyr. The director of this affiliate liked my brother and employed him. Besides working at college he gave private lessons in mathematics. Abram had a good reputation as a teacher of mathematics, whose students entered colleges with no problems. Later he worked in senior classes at school. Alla finished Kiev College of Public Economy. The boys also got education. Alla got married in Zhytomyr in 1970. They had a Jewish wedding with a chuppah at home. There was Jewish food and music and guests danced Jewish dances.

My brother didn't want to go to Israel. He had three heart attacks and was very ill, but he understood that his children and grandchildren had no future in the USSR. In 1990 his family and Rachil's father moved to Israel. My brother's condition has improved significantly and his children are very happy to live there. They work. Alla has two children. They like Israel very much. Alla's older son volunteered to serve in landing troops. After his service in the army he entered a college. He is a 3rd-year student. Alexandr got married when they were in Zhytomyr. He went to Israel with his wife and daughter. They have a son that was born in Israel. He goes to school. Boris married an immigrant from the USSR. She is a nurse and has a son. Now she and Boris have another son. My brother and his wife are happy. They have loving and caring children.

We lived in our house after we returned to Zhytomyr in 1945. My parents didn't observe Jewish traditions as strictly as they used to before the war. We celebrated Pesach, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. We didn't celebrate Soviet holidays.

My father went to work at a clock repair shop. I began to look for a job. At first I got a job at a museum and then I went to work at school. I was a teacher at a primary school before I began to teach mathematics at a secondary school. There were many Jewish children at school. There was no anti-Semitism.

The struggle against cosmopolitanism that began in 1948 didn't have an impact on us. My father was very upset about what was going on. He burned newspapers with articles about Jewish doctors that were accused of murder. He said that our people were vilified. About the Doctors' Plot' [21](#) that began in January 1953 my father said it was a lie. I believed him.

Stalin died in March 1953 and it was a tragedy for many people. It wasn't such for our family, but we tried to hide our feelings. Thanks to my father the speech of Khrushchev [22](#) at the Twentieth Party Congress wasn't as shocking for me as it was for many of my acquaintances. There are still people that don't believe that Stalin was guilty. I understood that Stalin was a cruel and powerful man who didn't stop doing evil. After the Twentieth Party Congress we all hoped that life in the country would change for the better, but there was anti-Semitism and a ban on religion, although the constitution guaranteed freedom of faith to every citizen. Any person could be accused of Zionism or even arrested for attending the synagogue.

### Married life

I got married in 1953. My husband's mother was my mother's friend. My husband, Vladimir Galin, was born in Zhytomyr in 1929. His Jewish name was Volf. He didn't remember his father, Moisey Galin, who starved to death in 1933. Vladimir was the only child in the family. Vladimir's mother had no education. She was a seamstress at the garment factory. She was paid peanuts for her work, although she was an advanced employee. They were very poor. My mother-in-law was a strong healthy woman. She could have remarried, but she didn't want her son to be raised by a stepfather.

During the Great Patriotic War they were in evacuation in a distant village in Siberia. Vladimir went to work as a cart driver in a kolkhoz [23](#) at the age of twelve. After the war they returned to Zhytomyr. Vladimir finished a cinema school in Kiev, but he didn't like this profession. He went to the army and served in Uzhgorod [800 km from Kiev]. When his service term was over his officer offered him to continue on additional service. We met when Vladimir came to Zhytomyr on his first leave. When he left we corresponded and we got married when he came on the next leave. I was rather worried that I was four years older than he, but we lived in harmony. We had a civil ceremony in a registry office and in the evening we had a small wedding dinner. After the wedding I followed my husband to Uzhgorod.

Vladimir served as an ensign until he retired. His management valued him highly. When he retired he went to work at the regional military registry office. When in the army my husband joined the Party - it was mandatory.

At first we rented a very small room without windows or stove. Later my husband received a room and his mother came to live with us. Our son Michael was born in 1954. We named him after my husband's father. My mother-in-law helped me a lot and my mother came to visit us to help me. Shortly before my husband retired in the 1960s he received a two-bedroom apartment. My mother-in-law was confined to bed. She stayed in one room and the three of us shared the other one. After my husband retired we received a three-bedroom apartment, which was quite a surprise for us.

I couldn't find a job for a long time. I was told there were no vacancies at school. I was about to leave for Zhytomyr when I got a job in a kindergarten. At the end of each academic year I went to the district education agency to ask them for a job at school. The management at the kindergarten

valued me. Finally I got an offer for a vacancy of a primary school teacher. I worked at this primary school until I retired.

We spoke Russian at home, but when we didn't want Michael to understand the subject of our discussion my mother-in-law and I switched to Yiddish. I had fluent Yiddish while my husband didn't know Yiddish. When my mother-in-law died I began to forget the language since I didn't practice it. Only when Hesed opened in the 1990s I got a nice opportunity to communicate in Yiddish. I enjoy speaking the language.

I cannot say that we raised our son Jewish. It was difficult at the time. My husband was a military and a member of the Party. He couldn't celebrate Jewish holidays or go to the synagogue. My mother-in-law and I celebrated Pesach at home. We didn't eat bread at Pesach. My mother-in-law made matzah or potato puddings. Those were hard years and we rarely had chicken or gefilte fish. My mother-in-law made matzah at home. Michael knew the traditions to be followed at Pesach. We celebrated Soviet holidays at home: 1st May, 7th November [October Revolution Day] [24](#), Soviet Army Day [25](#) and Victory Day. We also celebrated New Year. I always tried to cook something nice and prepare a small gift for every member of the family. We had guests in the evening. We enjoyed this celebration; it was a lot of fun.

Before my parents died we spent all vacations in Zhytomyr with them. Our son also spent his vacations with his grandparents. My father died in 1961. Shortly before he died he asked me to write to his sisters in Israel asking them to send him a tallit. A few days before his death my father received a parcel with a tallit. I don't know how it came that KGB [26](#) officers allowed this parcel to get delivered. They were checking all mail. They probably didn't understand what was in it. We buried my father according to the Jewish tradition in the Jewish cemetery in Zhytomyr. My mother died in 1969. We buried her according to Jewish traditions near our father's grave.

When Jews began to leave the country in the 1970s we didn't consider departure. Many of our friends left and we sincerely wished them to be happy, but we didn't dare to take this decision. Perhaps, we should have, but it's too late to change our life now.

Our son finished school and we thought where he should go to continue his studies. It was next to impossible for a Jew to enter a college in Ukraine due to strong anti-Semitism. It was also very hard to get job for Jew. My father's brother Naum advised Michael to go to Lipetsk. In Russia there was no segregation regarding nationality. I went to Lipetsk with Michael. My son entered the Machine Building Faculty at the Institute of Steel and Alloys. He passed his exams with excellent marks and became a student. After finishing this institute Michael got a job assignment at the machine building plant in Uzhgorod. He was an engineer there. During perestroika [27](#) the plant was closed.

Michael got married to a Jewish girl in 1980. His wife Inna, nee Rozenbloom, was born in Uzhgorod in 1958. Her mother, Tsylia Rozenbloom, is a doctor and her father, Moisey Rozenbloom, is a teacher. Inna finished the Mechanical Faculty of Optical Engineering College in Leningrad. She got a job assignment at the machine building plant where she worked as an engineer until perestroika. Now Inna works in the department of culture of the town administration. Michael and Inna have two sons. Leonid was born in 1982 and Dmitri was born in 1988. My older grandson is a 4th-year student at the Medical Faculty of Uzhgorod University. My younger grandson is at school.

When Michael lost his job he had a hard time. He couldn't provide for his family and we couldn't help it. At some point he worked for an entrepreneur. When Hesed was established in Uzhgorod in 1999 Michael was offered to become its director. Since then he has worked in Hesed. In 1996 my husband died. It was an irreplaceable loss for me. He did so much for me, so much! Even when he was dying he was thinking about me, saying, 'How are you going to live?' We buried my husband in accordance with Jewish traditions at the Jewish section of the town cemetery in Uzhgorod. Our son recited the Kaddish over his grave.

Perestroika didn't only bring trouble into our household. It also changed the attitude toward Jews in the society. State anti-Semitism mitigated. The Iron Curtain [28](#) separating us from the rest of the world fell. We got an opportunity to travel abroad or invite our friends to visit us. We couldn't even dream about that in the past. In 1996 I visited my brother in Jerusalem. I was afraid to travel to Israel due to my health condition, but my nephews and his sons insisted and I decided to visit him. We traveled a lot and I liked it there. I was happy to see my brother since there were only the two of us left of our big family. I admired the country so much! It's a blooming garden on stones created by beautiful and wonderful people.

Jewish life has changed a lot since the collapse of the USSR. Older people returned to their roots that they might have forgotten otherwise and young people learned many new things. Hesed does a lot for us. I like to attend concerts and lectures in Hesed. Everybody can find something interesting to do there. How wonderful are the celebrations of Jewish holidays in Hesed! Chanukkah and Purim were particularly interesting last time. At Chanukkah ten cars with huge chanukkiyahs with electric bulbs on top drove around town. There were crowds of people watching this show. The cars drove at low speed and the colorful chanukkiyahs seemed to be floating in the dark. There was an escort of traffic police clearing the way for the vehicles. At Purim there was a nice performance of Purimshpils staged by the local drama theater in the Philharmonic building that formerly housed a synagogue. Young people probably saw professional actors performing Purimshpils for the first time in their life. This was a beautiful, bright and brilliant show. Other Jewish holidays are also celebrated in a beautiful and interesting way.

Young people return to Jewish traditions. In our family the restoration of Jewish life started with my older grandson Leonid. He began to study Jewish traditions, religion and Hebrew at school. Leonid is the president of the Jewish youth club Gilel. He goes to the synagogue. Michael and my younger grandson Dmitri go to the synagogue with Leonid on Sabbath and Jewish holidays. At home they celebrate Sabbath and Jewish holidays. I join them for the celebration. My daughter-in-law lights candles and we say a prayer. I feel happy, it's as if I've returned to my own childhood.

## Glossary

### **1 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.

## **2 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.

## **3 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.

## **4 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.

## **5 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.

## **6 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.

## **7 Denikin, Anton Ivanovich (1872-1947)**

White Army general. During the Russian Civil War he fought against the Red Army in the South of Ukraine.

## **8 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.

## **9 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.

## **10 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.

## **11 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.

## **12 Rehabilitation in the Soviet Union**

Many people who had been arrested, disappeared or killed during the Stalinist era were rehabilitated after the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956, where Khrushchev publicly debunked the cult of Stalin and lifted the veil of secrecy from what had happened in the USSR during Stalin's leadership. It was only after the official rehabilitation that people learnt for the first time what had happened to their relatives as information on arrested people had not been disclosed before.

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

Ukrainian politician, member of the Ukrainian Social Democratic Working Party, one of the leaders of Centralnaya Rada (Central Council), the national government of Ukraine (1917-1918). Military units under his command killed Jews during the Civil War in Ukraine. In the Soviet-Polish war he

was on the side of Poland; in 1920 he emigrated. He was killed in Paris by the Jewish nationalist Schwarzbard in revenge for the pogroms against Jews in Ukraine.

#### **14 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.

#### **15 Elijah the Prophet**

According to Jewish legend the prophet Elijah visits every home on the first day of Pesach and drinks from the cup that has been poured for him. He is invisible but he can see everything in the house. The door is kept open for the prophet to come in and honor the holiday with his presence.

#### **16 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.

#### **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 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.

#### **19 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'.

## **20 Mandatory job assignment in the USSR**

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

## **21 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.

## **22 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.

## **23 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.

## **24 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.

## **25 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'.

## **26 KGB**

The KGB or Committee for State Security was the main Soviet external security and intelligence agency, as well as the main secret police agency from 1954 to 1991.

## **27 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.

## **28 Iron Curtain**

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