

Zinoviy Rukinglaz

Zinoviy Rukinglaz

Kherson

Interviewer: Zhanna Litinskaya

Date of interview: September 2003

Zinoviy Rukinglaz lives in a five-storied apartment building near the bridge across the Dnieper River connecting the center of Kherson with a housing area called Ostrov, where his mother was born a long time ago. His two-bedroom apartment gives the feeling of decay. One can tell there has been no woman's care for a long while. I cannot say that the apartment is untidy, but it doesn't make one feel comfortable. There is an old furry cat living in the apartment. During our conversation he jumps into my lap or into his master's lap. Zinoviy, a tall gray-haired man, meets me at the door. I think, it's hard for him to talk after a heart attack that he had. He is short of breath and cannot remember many things, but he ensures me that he wants to give this interview. He wants to leave the memory of his family and he doesn't think he will have another chance to give an interview.

My parents' families lived in Kherson [480 km south of Kiev, Kherson], a young town [editor's note: Kherson is a little older than 220 years; the town was founded during the reign of Katherine II 1] in the early 20th century its population was about 60 thousand people with about 20 thousand Jewish residents]. This town was within the pale of Settlement [2], and had mild climate, fruitful soil and clean water and favorable trading conditions. Kherson stands at the spot where the Dnieper flows into the Black Sea. There are two ports: a river port and a seaport. There was also Ukrainian, Russian, Tatar, Greek and German population: it was a multinational town. There were 26 synagogues and houses of prayer, three yeshivah schools, Saturday schools for boys and girls, free vocational schools for boys and girls, few private grammar schools and vocational schools, a Jewish hospital and an elderly people home. Wealthier Jews - doctors, lawyers and merchants - lived in their mansions in the center of the town. There was well-developed commerce in the town: wholesale grain, sunflower, corn and plant oil trade.

My father's parents belonged to wealthy Jewish circles. Unfortunately, I know little about them. They died before I was born. They died in about 1920 at the age of about 70. My great grandfather, my grandfather Zelik's father, was a merchant. Grandfather Zelik owned a tea house and a tavern at the central market. My grandmother, whose name I don't know, was a housewife like the majority of Jewish women, and helped my grandfather in his tea house. My grandfather hired employees: waiters and dish wash women, etc.

I don't know how many children my grandmother and grandfather had. I only know my father's brother Abram, born in 1885. Abram got a traditional Jewish education and finished cheder and then became an apprentice of a shoemaker, but then he switched to revolutionary activities. During the revolution of 1917 [3] he was a member of the Bolshevik Party and joined the Red army. In the early 1920s Abram went to work in the VChK (the All-Union Emergency Commission for fighting the counterrevolution), and then had leading positions in the Kherson NKVD [4]. In the

early 1930s he got a transfer to Moscow. Arrests in the 1930s [5] had no impact on him, probably he was one of those who decided about the life of others. During the Great Patriotic War [6] my uncle worked in Moscow, and his family – aunt Polia, a Jew, and their children Yakov and Nastia were in the evacuation in Kuibyshev (present Samara, Russia). In the early 1950s Abram was paralyzed and died shortly afterward. Aunt Polia died in the early 1960s. Their children Yakov and Nastia also passed away a long time ago.

My father Israel Rukinglaz was born in 1881. My father told me that he had fair hair, when a child. He looked like grandfather Zelik. At the age of 4 my father went to cheder where he got a Jewish education, and his educational course ended, when he turned 10 years old. My father became an apprentice of a popular tailor in Kherson. My father happened to be a gifted apprentice, and soon he began to assist the tailor. When he turned 15, he already had his own clientele. My father designed and made clothes. At the age of 16 he made a coat for the wife of Kherson governor, and from then on the town's elite ordered their clothes from him. My father made men's and women's clothes. On Saturday my father sang at the synagogue of craftsmen: he had a strong voice and good ear.

In the early 20th century, when the revolutionary ideas seized over workers and craftsmen, my father also joined the advanced proletariat. Though he earned well and was not poor, he was attracted like many other Jewish young people by the ideas of equality and fraternity of all people propagated by the Bolsheviks: Jews referred themselves to the oppressed in the czarist Russia due to the 5% quota of Jewish admission to higher educational institutions [7], and no possibilities of being elected to state organs, etc. In 1905 there were riots in Kherson. My father organized and headed a riot of craftsmen. Fortunately for him, he didn't suffer during this period. There was a Manifest issued by the czarist government on 17 October 1905 (editor's note: this manifest granted freedom of speech, meetings and demonstrations resulted in a number of riots that were cruelly suppressed by the government) resulted in the Jewish pogrom during which a significant part of the Jewish population suffered. After 1905 my father continued his work as a tailor. He didn't join the Bolshevik Party, but he didn't give up his revolutionary convictions. My father was a very good designer and was awarded the title of Hero of Labor; I remember the ribbon with the award pinned to it.

I don't know how my parents met. They probably got married through matchmakers, according to Jewish customs. I didn't know my mother's parents. I don't even know their family name. They were born in the 1850s. I don't know their place of birth. They lived in the Ostrova that was a suburb in those years. The Ostrova was mostly populated with fishermen. My maternal grandfather Leizer made big boats for sale. Besides, he transported merchandise on his boat to Tsuryupinsk and other nearby ports or he was hired for entertainment cruises, but making boats was his major business and it made a good profit. My grandfather's family was rather well-off. My grandfather had a house, a garden and kept livestock: ducks, chicken, goats and a cow. My grandfather earned enough to pay for his children's education and save for his daughters' dowry. My grandmother was a housewife like most Jewish wives. My mother's family was religious. They strictly followed kashrut and celebrated Saturday and Jewish holidays. My grandfather didn't work on Saturday even if his clients offered him double rate.

My mother had three brothers and a sister. Her older brother Shaya, born in 1875, was a shoemaker and owned a shop before the revolution of 1917 and during the NEP period [8]. I don't remember his wife's name. Shaya didn't have his own children and they adopted an orphaned boy. Shaya and his wife died in the 1930s. My mother's brother Duvid was a craftsman. He died in the evacuation in Cheliabinks in the 1940s. His wife and their son stayed there after the war and I had no contacts with them. My mother's younger brother Ilia, born in the 1890s, got married late and had no children. His wife's name was Rosa. After the war Ilia and Rosa returned to Kherson. My father and I kept in touch with them. Ilia died in the middle 1960s.

My mother had a sister who was two years older than my mother. I don't remember her name. My mother sister's husband Shyshylovskiy dedicated himself to the revolution. During the Civil War [9] he was commander of a Jewish partisan unit in Kherson region. Once he visited his brother's family in a Jewish colony near Kherson where his family also lived: my mother's sister and her children. Somebody tracked them down and a gang attacked them. They killed my mother's sister, her husband and his brother. Their three children became orphans and my parents adopted them.

My mother Esther was born in 1888. She received an elementary Jewish education. She studied 4 years in a Jewish school. My mother could read and write in Yiddish, knew prayers in Hebrew and could read the Torah a little. She told me that grandfather Leizer taught her Hebrew and prayers. My mother was a sickly child and her parents didn't train her in any crafts. She was helping my grandmother about the house. My parents got married in 1910. I often look at their wedding photograph made in one of best photo shops in Kherson. They are wearing rich fancy clothes. They had a traditional Jewish wedding according to all rules: they stood under the chuppah in the biggest and most beautiful synagogue of the town.

After the wedding my parents rented an apartment in a house in Spartakovskaya Street near the market in the center of the town. In 1911 my mother gave birth to twins, but they died in infancy. My mother didn't have children for few years. She fell ill with tuberculosis. At that time WWI began. Fortunately, my father had a 'white card' [Editor's note: this was a release from service in the tsarist army before the revolution of 1917 issued by a medical commission that determined whether a young man was fit for military service], due to his poor sight. However, this didn't prevent him from working from dawn till night: my mother needed lots of medications and my father had to earn well to pay for them. Since my father made clothes for the town leadership, he managed to have my mother taken to a good hospital and she had all necessary medications that enabled her to set on her way to recovery.

In 1917, when the revolution began, my father joined the rebellions again. He organized another riot of craftsmen and was arrested for keeping a revolutionary red banner. My father was released after the revolution when common people came to power. Those were hard years. His former clientele had moved abroad and the red commanders didn't care about fancy clothes. In 1918, when the power switched from the Reds [10], to the Whites [11], or gangs [12], and at the time of Jewish pogroms my mother gave birth to my older brother Moishe, who later changed his name to Mikhail. In those hungry years my grandfather Leizer and my mother's mother died.

By that time my parents' family grew bigger. There were six adoptive children in the family. Before WWI my father's cousin sister whose name I don't know, became a widow and came from Siberia to live with my parents. She had two children: Yakov, born in 1900, and Agrafena, born in 1907. My

father's cousin fell severely ill and died in 1915. The children stayed in our house. When the revolution began, Yakov joined the Red army and then went to work in state security bodies. He rose to the rank of general in the course of his service. My father adopted Agrafena, Grunia, as she was affectionately called at home, and she bore his surname of Rukoglaz till she got married.

After my mother's sister and her husband perished their three children came to live in our house: Yakov, born in 1916, Grigoriy, born in 1918, and Alexandr, born in 1920. My father didn't adopt them officially and they bore their father's surname of Shyshylovskiy. In 1921 two other children appeared in our family: Katia, born in 1914, and Marcus, born in 1916, Cherniak, the children of my father's distant relative who perished during a pogrom.

My father realized that he had to do other things to care about rather than revolutionary ideas. He had to support the family. With the help of two influential people he moved into two next-door rooms and the family had the four-bedroom apartment at their disposal. Life was improving. The Soviet officials needed new suits and their wives wanted fancy clothes and coats. My father had his clients and began to earn well.

I was born on 28 December 1923 and named Zelik after my grandfather, but when it was time for me to obtain my passport, I chose the name of Zinoviy. I grew up in a loving family atmosphere. My parents did not distinguish between their own and adoptive children. I believed they were my brothers and sisters and got to know that they were adoptive children at rather mature age. I remember our rather big apartment on the second floor of a two-storied building. There was a dinner table for family dinners, a carved cupboard, a wardrobe with a big mirror and my father's desk with a sewing machine on it in the biggest room. My parents had their bedroom with nickel-plated beds: I also slept in this bed till I turned four years of age. One room was for the boys and another one for the girls. There was a pit in the basement where my parents kept kosher dishes for Pesach. There were also bottles of wine there: my father was fond of wine making. I remember that there were ten bottles and there was the year of manufacture indicated on each bottle. This was kosher wine that my father served on Sabbath and Jewish holidays.

My father always wore a kippah and my mother always wore a kerchief. They wore clothes in the fashion of this period. My father made bright fancy dresses and blouses for my mother. My parents wore traditional Jewish clothes to the synagogue. Before starting work in the morning my father put on his tallit and tefillin and prayed. However, when my father's high-level officials visited him, he took off his yarmulke to avoid any problems. The authorities began their struggle against religion [13] and they wouldn't have had their clothes made by a religious tailor, though I still cannot understand what it had to do with the quality of his work or what did they care?! There were three synagogues in our neighborhood: one big synagogue in Suvorovskaya Street for the Jewish elite, it houses a planetarium now, another synagogue nearby and the synagogue of craftsmen, it houses the 'Ukraina' cinema theater now. On Saturday my father went to the synagogue and I carried his book of prayers for him. My father sang very well. He usually recited prayers at the synagogue. On Saturday I turned on the lights and started the stove at home: according to Jewish laws I could do it before turning 13 years of age. My mother left our Saturday meal in the stove. On Sabbath we had beautiful silver candle stands with candles in them, kosher wine and freshly baked challah on the table. At the age of 13 I had bar mitzvah and put on my tallit indicating that I became a grown-up Jewish man.

I remember Pesach. My mother prepared for the holiday and cleaned the house. She changed the curtains to fancy ones and covered the tables with fancy tablecloths. My father brought matzah from the synagogue. I was responsible for taking chickens to the shochet. Grunia, her husband and their baby son visited us. My father conducted seder reclining on cushions. He put away a piece of matzah and gave a gift to one of the children who found it. Few years later my older brothers didn't sit at the table with the family: they became Komsomol [15] members and were not supposed to take part in celebrations of Jewish holidays. My mother filled their plates with traditional Jewish stew, gefilte fish, pastes and matzah and they went to eat in their room. I also liked Chanukkah, when the children received Chanukkah money and there was a smell of doughnuts with jam and potato pancakes in the house. Before Yom Kippur my father and I took a rooster to the rabbi and he turned it around my head. Then the shochet slaughtered the bird and we celebrated the holiday.

We lived in the Jewish surrounding: there were 12 Jewish families of 13 families living in the house. My parents spoke Russian in the family and only switched to Yiddish, when they didn't want us to understand the subject of their discussion. In 1930 I went to a Russian school. There was one Jewish school left in the town, but it was far from where we lived. There were children of different nationalities in my class: Russian, Ukrainian, Jewish and Greek. We got along well. However, there was one anti-Semitic incident with me. I was in the 7th form, I think. I liked geography and wanted to become a traveler, but that time I didn't do my homework. My teacher called me to the blackboard, but I told her honestly that I wasn't prepared to the class. The teacher knew that I was an industrious pupil and didn't put me a bad mark. Then she called a Ukrainian boy, but rather than telling her honestly that he wasn't prepared he began to wriggle answering something irrelevant to the subject. She put him a bad mark and when going to his desk he said that she didn't put me a bad mark because I was a 'cunning zhyd". The teacher, who was Ukrainian, called both of us to the blackboard and asked the class: 'which of them is cunning: the Jewish boy who honestly said that he wasn't ready for the class, or the Ukrainian boy who was trying to tell me a lie?' The class kept silent, but I had a feeling that they were on my side. I had a valid excuse for coming to the class unprepared. My mother was seriously ill and was in hospital and I visited her there every day across the town. In the early 1930s, during the period of famine, her tuberculosis returned and she was continuously ill from then on. I remember that she was coughing into a jar, washed her hands and boiled her dishes. She cooked for the whole family, but she was so accurate that none of us contracted the disease. During the famine in 1932-33 [15] my mother received rationed food that she shared with us.

I remember the period of famine well. I was responsible for buying bread. I usually stayed overnight in a wooden booth at the market to be the first in the line. Once adult men pushed me out of the line from the store and though I asked them to let me in they didn't. On that day our family didn't get any bread and we were hungry. The bread was sticky and gray. I had the Botkin's disease recently, and had stomach ache after eating this bread. At times we had little buns at school and one teacher who was our neighbor gave me hers.

I studied well. I became a pioneer and participated in minor pioneer activities. I had missed two years of school due to malaria that I had and I was older than my classmates. I was fond of geography and attended a geography club in the house of pioneers. Sometimes I accompanied my father to the club of craftsmen where my father attended a choir studio. I didn't have many friends. I was a homey boy and liked long family evenings, when my father was sewing and my mother was

reading newspapers or magazines aloud. I went to parades with my school mates on 1 May and 7 November [16], and there were meetings at school on these days. We didn't celebrate these holidays at home. We couldn't afford such celebrations and besides, my father spent all his time working.

From the early 1930s my father was a member of the tailors' shop 'The friends of children' that in 1937 became the 'Bolshevichka' factory. In 1937 [Great Terror] its director Roitman, a Jewish man, was arrested, and then his successor Fitelevich, a Russian man, was also arrested. My father was very concerned and couldn't sleep at night fearing an arrest since in those years many of his friends who were craftsmen and took part in the revolution of 1917 were arrested, only they were members of the Bolshevik Party and held official posts while my father remained a worker, which probably saved him from arrest. Or perhaps, the NKVD chiefs whose wives were my father's clients decided to let him be.

By the beginning of the Great Patriotic War I was the only child living with the family. Grunia and Katia had been married for a while and the older children left. Yakov studied in Moscow and Marcus entered a college in Odessa. My brother Mikhail also studied in Nikolaev Shipbuilding College. I finished the 9th form in 1941. On the morning of 22 June 1941 I was playing football with other boys in our yard. It was a bright sunny day. The windows were open and the radio broadcast Soviet songs. At 12 o'clock the music stopped and Molotov [17] made a speech. So we heard that the war began. At first nothing changed: the adults went to work and senior pupils gathered at school for civil defense training. In the middle of July a hospital was deployed in our school and we went there to assist hospital attendants. My older brothers Yakov, Mikhail, Grigoriy and Alexandr were recruited to the army. Grunia's husband Yefim Bor'ba also went to the army. She stayed with two children: Boria, born in 1930, and Sima, born in 1935. Evacuation began in July. Big industrial enterprises such as the shipbuilding plant, the instrument making plant named after Petrovskiy and light industry enterprises evacuated in the first turn and the smaller ones like the one where my father was working, were waiting for their turn. Many people evacuated by boats. The first heavy bombing happened in late July: German bombers dropped bombs in the harbor where people were waiting for their turn to board the boats. There were many craftsmen with their families. They all perished. In middle August, when fascists invaded Nikolaev [80 km from Kherson, 420 - from Kiev], panic broke up in the town: people broke into the shops taking home whatever they could grab: flour, soap, cereals. Director of my father's factory Riaboy obtained permission to evacuate the factory. It was to evacuate in three stages: equipment, engineering personnel and management and then on 13 August we evacuated along with other workers' families. This was the last train leaving Kherson. I remember that we saw German tanks moving to our town, when passing the Belaya Krinitsa station. There were 6 of us evacuating: my parents and I and Grunia with her two children. Our train consisted of freight railcars and open platforms. Our trip lasted for about a month and a half. We knew that our point of destination was Kustanai in Kazakhstan [about 2500 km from home], where the factory evacuated. We had some food with us and the management of the factory made arrangements for our meals at the stations that we stopped at. We had food coupons and the canteens had lists of the factory employees to have meals. The train was often bombed on the way and once I had my eye injured with a splinter. They removed the splinter, but my sight got much worse.

We arrived at Kustanai in late September 1941. Kustanai was a small town and there were mostly private houses in it. There were aryk canals [artificial canals] in the streets. There was a bazaar with plenty of fruit, watermelons and melons in the center of the town. Even we, residents of the south of Ukraine, were amazed at this plentiful of everything. At first we were accommodated in a school building. One month later we were accommodated in two rooms in a private house. The owners of the house were Kazakh people and they were very good to us. In December we received a letter from Grisha's wife Raisa and then she joined us with her two-year-old daughter Yeva. We didn't have enough space, but this was a common thing with all those who was in the evacuation. Raya and my mother slept on the beds in a bigger room. Raya's children slept on couches. In a smaller room Grunia and Sima slept on the bed and Boria and I slept on the planks supported by chairs. My father slept on the floor in the kitchen. He worked at the factory. The local authorities soon heard about his professional skills, and their wives soon became his clients: the wife of secretary of the regional party committee, the wife of secretary of the district party committee, etc. They paid for his work in food products: cereals, flour, meat and eggs and or family had sufficient food. Grunia and Raya worked at the factory and received workers' cards for themselves and dependents' cards for my mother and the children. I talked with my parents and we decided that I should go to work rather than going to school to finish the 10th form. In November 1941 I became an apprentice of electrician at the 'Bolshevichka' factory and half a year later I began to work independently. I worked at the factory throughout the war and joined the Komsomol there. However, my sight was growing worse and it was hard for me to work. In March 1944 the factory sent me to a hospital in Cheliabinsk where I had a surgery. I stayed in the hospital for almost three months. My mother, when she was seeing me off to Cheliabinks pretended she was feeling well and was not ill. When I was in Cheliabinsk, her health condition grew much worse, she had hemoptysis and my mother died. There was no Jewish cemetery in Kustanai – there were no Jews there before the war. My mother was buried in the town cemetery and y father recited a prayer over her grave. My doctors didn't allow anybody to worry me and I only got to know about my mother when I returned to Kustanai after my successful surgery. I went back to the factory to continue my work as an electrician.

In spring 1944 we heard about the liberation of Kherson and my father began to prepare to go back home. My father didn't wait for the permission for reevacuation. He quit the factory, and in early June 1944 we returned to Kherson. Our house was not there any longer: a bomb hit it directly and destroyed. Grunia's apartment was all right. Grunia's husband Yefim perished at the front in October 1941, Grunia managed to have her apartment back being a widow of a veteran of the war. My father went to see chief of militia Medvedev whose wife was his client before the war and obtained a residential permit [18] immediately. We were registered as tenants of Grunia's apartment. Some time later we were accommodated in the house the owners of which, Jews, were shot by fascists in Kherson. We lived in a small room and the corridor and shared the kitchen with our co-tenant. I went to work as an electrician at the shoe factory. My father also continued his work, but after my mother's death he became sickly and down. He often went to the synagogue. There was one small synagogue in Podpolnaya Street operating in Kherson. He prayed in the mornings like he used to do before, and lit candles on Friday. In December 1945 my father was paralyzed and bed-ridden. I understood that he didn't have much time ahead of him and tried to please him as much as I could. I managed to prepare a real celebration of Pesach in 1946: I bought matzah at the synagogue and Grunia cooked traditional Jewish food. This was the last time I

celebrated this holiday with my father. My father died in December 1946. There were severe frosts and I had to pay the cemetery workers a lot of money to excavate a grave. The factory provided the amount of money that I paid to the workers and also enough to buy the cerement to wrap my father's body. Old Jewish men buried him according to Jewish traditions: his body lay on the floor wrapped in cerement and they recited the mourning Kaddish over him.

I was alone Grunia, her children, uncle Ilia and aunt Rosa often invited me to visit them. Once, when visiting uncle Ilia, I met a lovely Jewish girl. I liked her at once. She was Rosa's niece. The girl's name was Gitl Berman. She told me her story on the first evening when I was seeing her to her home.

Gitl's father Moisey Berman, born in Kherson in 1885, went to work in Moldova in 1914. He was a laborer there and married Fania, a local Jewish girl. After WWI in 1918 Moldova was annexed to Austro-Hungary [ed. note: to Romania, and Moisey and his family couldn't return to his home town. Moisey had savings and opened a small restaurant in Bendery town. Moisey and Fania had three children: Miron, born in 1920, Gitl, born in 1928, and Ziama, born in 1930. Fania died in 1940. When the soviet troops came to Bessarabia [19] in 1940 Gitl's father Moisey was arrested under the charges that he house the Romanian army headquarters in his restaurant. Miron's wife Anna Palker worked with communists in the underground and he didn't suffer the arrest. During the soviet regime Anna became a Minister in Moldova. Moisey, Gitl and Ziama were exiled to the Ural. Moisey was put in a camp, and the children were taken to different children's homes. Gitl was taken to the children's home in Lialia town near Cheliabinsk [3500 km from Kiev]. Moisey wasn't kept in the camp for long. In 1942 he was released and sent to work at a military plant in Sverdlovsk. Gitl also worked at a plant, when she was in the children's home. She was short and stood on boxes to reach her machine unit. She worked 12 hours per day and was given a loaf of bread and a meal per day for her work. Gitl was selling this bread to save money. When Kherson was liberated, Moisey and his children moved to Kherson where his sister Rosa, my uncle Ilia's wife, lived. They bought a very small room on Gitl's savings.

Gitl and I fell in love with each other and I proposed marriage to her. I bought a big bed on my savings. Grisha wife's brother gave Gitl a wedding ring. He was a dentist. We had a civil ceremony in a registry office in autumn 1947. We had guests in the evening: Rosa brought apples, Grunia brought cookies, and I had tea and sugar. These made for our wedding party. We had a quiet life till 1948, when the son of the former owners of the apartment where we lived arrived in Kherson came into possession of his parents' property. He sold the house and its new owner began to pester us: he removed the stove to force us to move out, but the court decided that he had to provide accommodation to us and he bought a shed in Dekabristov Street. He helped us to repair it . We made two small rooms and a kitchen and Gitl and I moved in there.

In this shed in December 1948 our older son was born. I named him Igor after my father. My wife didn't work. My salary was 500 rubles per month. We starved with her. We could only afford to buy kishke and fat at the market. Our son stayed 5 days in the kindergarten, because he could have meals there. Gitl's father remarried after our wedding. He supported us, but in 1955 he fell ill, spent few years bed-ridden and died. Gitl had finished 5 forms in a Romanian school and 2 forms of a Soviet school. Uncle Ilia taught her accounting and in 1952 Gitl went to work at a storage facility. Her colleagues treated her well, even during the period of anti-Semitic campaigns in the early

1950s we didn't face any prejudiced attitudes, though there was terrible routinely anti-Semitism. Once, when my wife, her brother Ziama and I were going on a stroll in the park, a queer man followed us calling us 'zhydy'. I think, the passers-by enjoyed watching this scene, but nobody stood for us. In 1960 our younger son was born. We named him Mikhail after my father-in-law.

We couldn't afford much. We didn't travel on vacations. Actually, I spent my vacations trying to earn some additional money. We didn't have many friends and socialized mainly with my relatives and my wife's relatives. In 1955 uncle Abram's wife wrote us from Moscow. My uncle was severely ill. After Stalin's death and arrest of Beriya he began to have problems: he lost his job and had a stroke. He asked us to visit him to bid farewell to him. In 1955 Gitl and I traveled to Moscow on our vacation. Two months after this visit my uncle Abram died.

My brother Mikhail lived in Nikolaev after the war. After his service in the army NKVD employed him. He worked there till his retirement. In 1995 my brother died. His children live in the USA. My cousin brothers and sisters have passed away. Grunia died in the 1980s, and her children Boris and Sima live in the USA. Yakov Shyshylovskiy moved to Nikolaev after the war and became director of a big military plant. He died in the middle 1990s. Marcus and Katia moved to Moscow after the war. I saw them once in 1955 and this is all I know about them. Grigoriy and Raisa lived in Kherson. Grigoriy died in the middle 1970s.

My wife and I tried to observe Jewish traditions, whenever possible. Of course, we had to go to work on Saturday, when there was a 6-day working week. We were generally not religious, but we celebrated Pesach, Chanukkah and Rosh Hashanah as a tribute to traditions and to the memory of our parents. We had festive meals and talked about the history and traditions of the holiday. We tried to teach our sons to respect Jewish traditions, and I can say, they grew up to be real Jews. Our older son Igor finished the Ship mechanic Technical School and Kherson Construction College. He is a site manager in a construction company. His wife Tatiana is Jewish. Igor has three children: twins Vladimir and Yuri, born in 1970, and Oleg, born in 1984. Vladimir is a doctor and Yuri is a computer engineer. In the late 1990s they moved to Israel. My younger grandson Oleg studies in the Kherson Polytechnic College.

My younger son Mikhail does not do so well as Igor. He has a secondary education. After finishing school he worked at the shoe factory. The factory and other enterprises in the town shut down as a result of perestroika [20] that brought nothing good to working people. My son is a guard at a parking lot. He earns peanuts for his work. Mikhail's wife Galina is also Jewish. Their son Yevgeniy studies in the 8th form of a secondary school.

My wife and I have lived a very good life loving each other. Gitl retired at the age of 55. I worked until 1990. In 1990 I had flu and it resulted in heart problems. I had to quit work and I am often ill now. In 1988 the Jewish life progressed in our town and I began to take part in it. A Yiddish school was established. Professor Modiyevskiy and Professor Ruzberg taught it. There were about 30 Jewish activists and we wrote a request to the town executive committee [21] for the return of the synagogue to Jews. We also arranged a meeting in front of the town administration. The synagogue was returned in 1988. It housed a mental clinic before. The Jews of Kherson collected money for its repair. I installed the whole electrical part. The synagogue opened in 1989. I attend the synagogue to pray and study in the yeshivah. I often ask myself why we didn't move to Israel, when we were young, but I can find no answer. I was probably too busy having two jobs and didn't have time to

think of changing my life. I feel sorry about it now. I've always sympathized with Israel and their struggle. I am very happy that at least my grandchildren will live in their Jewish country.

In 1997 Gitl and I celebrated our golden wedding in a restaurant. Our grandchildren arrived from Israel and our relatives came to see us. We were happy. In 2001 Gitl visited Israel. She was eager to see her brother Ziam and the grandchildren. On the 10th day of her visit she had severe liver pain and she had to go to bed. When she returned to Kherson and went to hospital it turned out that she had liver cancer. On 12 October 2001 my Gitl died. I've been often ill since then. I had a 3rd heart attack recently. I socialize with old people like myself who go to the synagogue. I also attend the Day center in Hesed once a week. It means a lot to me: it means, people have interest in me. I am very grateful for their support. I don't think I would survive without their care, medications and food supplies.

GLOSSARY:

[1] Catherine the Great (1729-1796): Empress of Russia. She rose to the throne after the murder of her husband Peter III and reigned for 34 year. Catherine read widely, especially Voltaire and Montesquieu, and informed herself of Russian conditions. She started to formulate a new enlightened code of law. Catherine reorganized (1775) the provincial administration to increase the central government's control over rural areas. This reform established a system of provinces, subdivided into districts, that endured until 1917. In 1785, Catherine issued a charter that made the gentry of each district and province a legal body with the right to petition the throne, freed nobles from taxation and state service and made their status hereditary, and gave them absolute control over their lands and peasants. Catherine increased Russian control over the Baltic provinces and Ukraine. She secured the largest portion in successive partitions of Poland among Russia, Prussia, and Austria.

[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] 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.

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

[5] 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.

[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] Percent of Jews admitted to higher educational institutions: In tsarist Russia the number of Jews in higher educational institutions could not exceed 5% of the total number of students.

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

[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] Reds: Red (Soviet) Army supporting the Soviet authorities.

[11] White Guards: A counter-revolutionary gang led by General Denikin, famous for their brigandry and anti-Semitic acts all over Russia; legends were told of their cruelty. Few survived their pogroms.

[12] 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.

[13] 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.

[14] 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.

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

[16] 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.

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

[18] Residence permit: The Soviet authorities restricted freedom of travel within the USSR through the residence permit and kept everybody's whereabouts under control. Every individual in the USSR needed residential registration; this was a stamp in the passport giving the permanent address of the individual. It was impossible to find a job, or even to travel within the country, without such a stamp. In order to register at somebody else's apartment one had to be a close relative and if each resident of the apartment had at least 8 square meters to themselves.

[19] Bessarabia: Historical area between the Prut and Dnestr rivers, in the southern part of Odessa region. Bessarabia was part of Russia until the Revolution of 1917. In 1918 it declared itself an independent republic, and later it united with Romania. The Treaty of Paris (1920) recognized the union but the Soviet Union never accepted this. In 1940 Romania was forced to cede Bessarabia

and Northern Bukovina to the USSR. The two provinces had almost 4 million inhabitants, mostly Romanians. Although Romania reoccupied part of the territory during World War II the Romanian peace treaty of 1947 confirmed their belonging to the Soviet Union. Today it is part of Moldavia.

[20] 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.

[21] 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.