Polina Levina

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Interviewer: Ella Levitskaya
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Polina Levina lives alone in a two-room apartment in a two-storied building in the center of Uzhgorod constructed before World War II. Her apartment is very cozy and clean. She has furniture from the 1960s, as well as beautiful and unusual potted plants in her apartment. She has photographs of her relatives and former pupils on the walls - they must have liked her a lot.

Family Background

My father’s parents were born in the village of Novovorontsovka [about 500 km southeast of Kiev], Kherson province, in the south of the Russian Empire. My grandfather Iosif Levin died in 1917 – long before I was born. His wife died before my grandfather did and I don’t have any information about her.

My grandfather remarried after she died. His second wife, Hana, was a short, fat and very hearty woman. She wore common clothes for a village woman, but she also wore a dark shawl. She was a housewife. Grandmother spoke Yiddish, but she talked in poor Russian with her grandchildren. I don’t know what my grandfather did for a living. I cannot say how religious my father’s parents were, but I don’t think they were very religious.

It’s hard for me to describe Novovorontsovka since we left there before I turned ten. It was a small Ukrainian village and there were only a few Jewish families there. There was no synagogue in Novovorontsovka. I don’t know whether there was a prayer house. Jews were craftsmen and workers. There were no Jewish pogroms 1 in the village and there were no wrong attitudes towards the Jewish population.

There were three children in the family. My father Abram, the oldest, was born in 1883. One or two years later my father’s brother David was born. The youngest in the family was their sister Mariam. Her name in her documents was Maria. She was much younger than her brothers, but I don’t know

when she was born.

My father never told me about his childhood. All I know is that he and his brother studied in cheder in a neighboring village and this was all the education they got. They became workers. I don't know where David worked. He married my mother's younger sister Evgenia. They met at my parents' wedding and got married shortly afterward. They had two children: daughter Vera, born in 1914, and son Alexandr, born one month after David died. David passed away in 1918. Evgenia never remarried. She dedicated herself to raising her children. She worked as a teacher in a Russian secondary school.

Vera and Alexandr were my friends before the Great Patriotic War 2. After her husband died Evgenia and her children moved to Melitopol. They visited us every summer and we often went to see them. When Evgenia couldn't come on a visit she sent her children to stay with us. They lived in Melitopol until the Great Patriotic War began. Vera was a teacher of music and Alexandr was a university student when the war began. After the war we lost track of them.

Maria's brothers helped her get a higher education. She finished a higher secondary school and Medical College. Upon graduation Maria married Terenti Kovalyov, a Russian man. They lived in Melitopol. I don't know what Maria's husband did for a living. Maria worked as a doctor. They had two children: daughter Lidia, born in 1925, and son Victor, born in 1927.

In 1938 Maria had a breast surgery in Kharkov: she had breast cancer. She stayed in Kharkov until the war began. After the war they returned to Melitopol. Maria and her husband died in the 1970s. After Maria died I lost contact with her children. All I know is that Lidia was a teacher of chemistry. She is a pensioner now. I don't know what Victor did for a living.

My mother's family also lived in Novovorontsovka. Of all my mother's relatives I only knew her mother. Her children called her 'Mother' and the grandchildren called her 'Grandmother.' Nobody called her by her name. She was a housewife.

My mother's father, Miron Shatovski, died in 1915 at the age of 60. I don't know where he was born or how he earned his living. My grandmother and grandfather were about the same age.

They had six daughters and three sons. I only know my mother's year of birth, so I will just tell you in what sequence they were born. The oldest daughter was Bertha; her Jewish name was Betia. Nastasia was born after her, her Jewish name was Nechama. The third sister was Maria, Mariam in Yiddish. The next was my mother Rosa, born in 1885. Her Jewish name was Reizl. Then came my mother's sister Evgenia, or Genia.

After Evgenia three sons were born: Aron, Semyon – Shymon in Yiddish – and the third brother whose name I don't remember. The youngest child was Anna, her Jewish name was Hana. The oldest daughter was 20 years older than the youngest.

At the time I knew my mother's sisters and brothers they communicated in Russian, but I think that they spoke Yiddish with their parents. My maternal grandmother only spoke Yiddish and I asked her to speak Russian to me since I didn't understand Yiddish.

I don't know how religious my mother's family was. At my time, my mother's sisters or brothers were not religious and did not observe any Jewish traditions. When the children grew up most of

them left Novovorontsovka. Betia, the oldest, moved to Moscow where she finished a college and worked as a chemist in a laboratory at a plant. She was single and lived in a small room next door to the laboratory at her plant. She died in Moscow in the 1960s.

My mother's second sister Nastasia married a Jewish man from Kherson and moved to her husband. I don't remember her husband's name. She was a housewife. I met Nastasia when I came to Kherson to study in college. Her husband died in the 1930s. Nastasia had two daughters, Betia and Fenia. Betia was married to Lazar Bas, a Jewish man. They had a son and a daughter. Fenia had no children. Her husband was arrested in 1937 during [the Great Terror] 3 and she never remarried. I don't have any information about Nastasia's life after the war.

My mother's sister Maria married a Russian man. She changed her last name to Treskunova after her husband. Maria had two sons, Rulah and Lazar. Lazar was born in 1910 and Rulah was a little older. They were at the front during the Great Patriotic War. Lazar was a tank man. After the war they lived in Moscow. Lazar became a design engineer; he designed tanks. He had a son and a daughter. I never met them. Rulah lost his legs in the war. He was single. I don't know when Maria died.

I know little about my mother's brother Aron. He lived with his family in the village Novaya Odessa in Odessa region. I never met his family. I think he had two sons. Uncle Aron was breeding horses. He perished during the occupation in 1941.

My mother's brother Semyon lived in the village of Shesternia, Kherson region. He was a pharmacist. I saw Uncle Semyon once in my life, in 1930, when I was twelve. We lived in the village of Belaya Krinitsa, Kherson region, about 20 kilometers from Shesternia.

My mother allowed me to visit my uncle. I walked a whole day until I got to my uncle's home. My uncle's Russian wife Olga opened the door and I entered into a room where Uncle Semyon and his three-year-old son were sitting in an armchair and his seven-year-old daughter Maria was standing beside them. They looked as if they were going to be photographed. This is how they remain imprinted on my memory.

The Germans shot Semyon Shatovski during the occupation in 1941. They killed him at home in the presence of his wife and children. His teenager son's hair grew gray then. The Germans let the rest of the family go. They evacuated to Siberia where they stayed for quite some time after the war. Semyon's wife died shortly after the Great Patriotic War. His older daughter Maria and her family live in Kerch in the Crimea. I am not in contact with her.

I never met my mother's third brother and don't know his name.

My mother's sister Anna had a sad love story in her life. She met a Jewish guy from Novovorontsovka. They were in love and were about to get engaged. After the Russian Revolution of 1917 4, when the Civil War 5 began Anna's fiancé decided to move to the USA. Grandmother didn't allow Anna to go with him. He left and Anna stayed. Anna never got married and lived with Grandmother. She was a vegetarian and a very kind person. She was very hospitable and gave whatever she could to every beggar that came to the house.

Around 1936 Grandmother and Anna moved to Uncle Aron in Novaya Odessa. When the Great Patriotic War began in 1941 and the Germans occupied Odessa, Uncle Aron, his family,

Grandmother and Anna tried to evacuate on a horse-drawn cart. They perished in an air raid. We don't even know the exact location where they were buried.

After finishing elementary school my mother went to study at the Russian grammar school for girls in Kherson. Although it was difficult for Jews [because of the five percent quota] 6 to enter a grammar school in tsarist Russia, there were exceptions made for advanced pupils and if they were successful they were even exempt from payment of the fee. My mother finished nine years in the grammar school. Graduates were allowed to work as teachers in an elementary school. My mother returned to Novovorontsovka and became a teacher in a local elementary school.

I don't know how she met my father. They got married in 1908 and lived in Novovorontsovka. I don't know whether they had a traditional Jewish wedding. After my paternal grandfather Iosif passed away my grandmother Hana came to live with my parents and lived with us for the rest of her life. My father worked in the village of Babino, some 10 kilometers from Novovorontsovka. He was a worker at a dock. My mother worked as a teacher.

My parents didn't wear anything specifically Jewish. They wore common clothes like all other residents of the village. My mother wore dark dresses or a white blouse and a black skirt – this was what she thought a teacher should look like. My mother wore her thick, dark hair in a knot.

I don't know whether the revolution of 1917 had an impact on the life of our family. We never discussed this subject in our family. I only know our life after the revolution. We were poor. Most of the residents of Novovorontsovka lived in the same way.

Growing Up

We had a small thatched-roof house that my father built from shell rock. There were two rooms and a kitchen in the house. There were a few pieces of furniture: plank beds, a table and a few chairs. There was a Russian stove 7 in the kitchen that served for cooking and heating. Water was fetched from a well in the street. There was a backyard with a woodshed and a smaller storage shed. There were few apple and pear trees and a flower garden near the house.

There were four children in the family. My older brother Lazar was born in 1910, his Jewish name was Leizer. I know that my brother was circumcised in accordance with the Jewish tradition. In 1913 my older sister Nadezhda was born, her Jewish name was Nechama. My sister Tamara was born in 1915, I don't know whether she had a Jewish name.

I was the youngest child in the family. Once my mother told me that I was an unexpected child and she tried to get rid of this pregnancy. Since abortions were forbidden, my mother lifted weights and tried a hot sauna, but it didn't work. I was born on 12th February 1918. I was named Polina and my Jewish name is Feiga.

We spoke Russian in the family. My grandmother Hana spoke Yiddish with our parents and horribly poor Russian with her grandchildren. My older brother Lazar could speak Yiddish; I don't know where he learned it. He was the only one of all the children that knew Yiddish.

I don't know whether my parents were religious. While Grandmother Hana was with us we observed Pesach, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Now I remember that we didn't observe Pesach in accordance with all Jewish rules. My mother tried to make delicious meals, but my father didn't

conduct the seder. However, we didn't have any bread at Pesach. I know that we always had matzah, but I don't know where my parents got it from.

At Rosh Hashanah our mother put pieces of apples and a saucer with honey on the table. We dipped apple into honey and ate it. At Yom Kippur our grandmother fasted a whole day, but the children ate as usual. At Purim our mother made delicious little pies with poppy seeds. I don't remember observing any other holidays. I can say for sure that we didn't have a Sukkah in the yard, otherwise I would have remembered it.

We didn't observe Sabbath either. Our mother cooked on Saturday and we lit lamps and started the stove as usual. We celebrated Soviet holidays. Our parents wore their best clothes and so did we. Our mother made a festive meal, sometimes we had guests. They were my mother's colleagues. They sang Russian folk and contemporary songs and danced at such parties.

We had very few clothes. My older sister and brother got new clothes every now and then, but my sister Tamara and I only got their old clothes.

There was a Ukrainian and a Russian school in Novovorontsovka. My mother worked in the Russian school, which was located on the other side of the village. There was a Ukrainian school near our house and the closeness must have been a decisive factor when our parents were thinking of where to send their children.

Lazar and Nadezhda finished the Ukrainian lower secondary school. At that period children went to school at the age of eight. I was very jealous about my brother and older sister Nadezhda going to school. When they were doing their homework I was always around. I tried to listen and remember what they were learning.

In the fall of 1925 our family moved to the village of Babino. Our father worked at the dock where he loaded bags with grain on barges: they were delivered via elevators. When we lived in Novovorontsovka he had to walk to work 10 kilometers every day. It was too hard for him and our parents decided to move to live in Babino. They sold our house in Novovorontsovka and bought a small one in Babino. There were only a few Jewish families in Babino.

I had both Jewish and Ukrainian friends; nationality didn't matter to us then. We were taught that we were Soviet children and belonged to the Soviet nation. Our neighbors were three Ukrainian families. After we moved there, their children and I became friends, we played hide-and-seek and 'catch me.' We didn't have any toys and played outside games. This was a happy period of my childhood.

Babino was on the bank of the Dnieper, and in summer I spent all my free time at the bank of the river. My new friends taught me to swim. I remember my sister telling me that I wasn't to die a natural death. Most likely, in her opinion, I was to drown. The Dnieper was very wide near Babino. I swam as far as the middle of the river and lay on my back. The waves brought me back to the bank. Against what my sister said, I never had any problems with swimming.

There were two Ukrainian lower secondary schools in Babino. At the age of seven I could read, write, knew adding and subtraction, so I decided for myself that I was prepared to go to school and went there on 1st September 1925. I was seven. I remember that my grandmother made me a school bag from gray cloth and a little pocket on its side for my inkpot. A teacher at school told me

to go home and come next year. I was very upset and started crying. A senior boy approached me and said, ‘Don’t cry! Here, take a slice of bread!’ Now I think how miserably poor we must have been, if I found consolation just in a slice of bread.

I went to school in 1926. We studied in Ukrainian. We didn’t have any problems with Ukrainian since it was the main language spoken in the village and we communicated in it. I wouldn’t be sure now that I was the only Jewish girl in my class. There were no negative attitudes toward me, nationality didn’t really matter.

There was no anti-Semitism in the USSR before the Great Patriotic War, authorities suppressed any demonstration of it. If someone dared to speak about someone else’s nationality in an abusive manner, he might have been sued. There was punishment for such actions and one could even go to jail.

I studied well at school. I had almost all ‘excellent’ marks. I liked mathematic and when I became a senior pupil I came to like physics. Since I was one of the best pupils in class I was among the first ones to become a pioneer 8. I remember the ceremony. There was a monument to Lenin in the central square of Babino. On 22nd April, Lenin’s birthday, we came to the square. We stood in line.

The senior pioneer tutor at school said the oath of pioneers and we repeated after her: ‘I, young pioneer of the Soviet Union, take this oath to love my motherland with all my heart, live, study and struggle as great Lenin bequeathed, as the Communist Party teaches us!’ I never forgot these words.

Then Komsomol 9 members tied pioneer neckties on us and we marched back to school following a drummer and horn player that marched ahead of our column. I felt as if everybody was watching me and marched with a straight back proud of my new status. I was very serious about becoming a pioneer. I believed that a pioneer should have only excellent marks and I got very upset when I received an occasional ‘good’ mark.

I had my pioneer duties. I became a pioneer tutor in the 1st grade. I went to my pupils during intervals, read books to them and told them about heroic pioneers. We sang Soviet songs and recited poems. I attended their class meetings and felt like an adult. They asked me to advise them on various matters, help them with mathematics or Ukrainian language. I wanted to become a teacher like my mother and when I became a tutor, this wish became stronger. I attended a choir and a dance group at school. I was a sociable girl and had many friends at school. Teachers liked me, too.

My brother Lazar lived in Kherson, in about 70 kilometers from Babino. In 1926 he finished a lower secondary school in Babino and moved to Kherson where he wanted to continue his studies. He studied at Rabfak 10 at the Kherson College of Finance and Economy for two years. After finishing the Rabfak my brother entered the Kherson College of Finance and Economy. He lived at the hostel of the college sharing a room with four other students.

In 1929 my older sister Nadezhda also moved to Kherson. She also studied at the Rabfak of Pedagogical College for two years before she entered the College. Tamara stayed at home after finishing school. She helped our mother about the house.

In 1932 a famine 11 began in Ukraine. We ate bread made of flour half mixed with absinth. We had lunch at school. We got a boiled ground head of corn. In fall 1932 crops were good, but there was nobody to harvest since people couldn't stand on their feet from hunger. Although it was officially announced that crops were poor, I don't remember that it was really so. I remember well how Tamara and I went to the field to pick up spikelets. There were guards on horses that patrolled the fields and chased away villagers picking spikelets. Actually, those spikelets stayed in the field and became food for birds or grew anew, while people were not allowed to get them.

No one in our family starved to death. I think there is some exaggeration in how they present the famine nowadays. There was a real famine in Povolzhie, in Russia. People starved terribly there while we had something to eat even if it was bread with absinth. The famine lasted until 1933 and in summer 1934 life was like it used to be before the famine.

The school where my mother worked employed younger people with a diploma while my mother didn't have higher education. She only finished grammar school. In 1933 she entered the extramural department of the Pedagogical College in Kherson where my sister Nadezhda studied. Twice a year our mother went to take exams in Kherson and for the rest of the year she received tasks by mail and mailed her homework back to the college. She had less free time and I was responsible for almost all the housekeeping.

I finished lower secondary school in Babino in 1934. I went to Kherson to continue my studies. My mother went there to take her summer exams and I went with her. I entered the Rabfak at the Pedagogical College. That same year I joined the Komsomol at the Rabfak. After a year of studying at the Rabfak I was admitted to the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics of the Pedagogical College without entrance exams since I had all excellent marks. There were five other Jewish students in our group, and there were no prejudiced attitudes toward us. All Jewish students in my group were the best students.

We were all poor at that time. I wore my mother's old coat, it wasn't even possible to determine its original color so worn it was. I lived at the hostel of the Pedagogical College and received a stipend. I shared a room with five other girls. We had meals at the college canteen; we had cards for breakfast and lunch. We cooked dinner at the hostel in the evening. I often went to see Lazar and Nadezhda. We usually met on Sunday. It was a great support for me to know that my brother and sister were close by.

In 1934 my father was offered a job at the reception in an elevator in the village of Belaya Krinitsa, located between Dnepropetrovsk and Kherson. There was a morning train from Kherson to Dnepropetrovsk, and it stopped in Babino and Belaya Krinitsa. My father commuted by this train for some time, but it was very tiring and rather expensive and my parents decided to move to Belaya Krinitsa. Tamara and Grandmother Hana were with them.

My father received an apartment in the village. A long one-storied building was divided into sections; each section had two rooms and a kitchen. The toilet and water pump were outside. This apartment was heated by wood that we bought. My parents took their old furniture from Babino there.

There was another Jewish family in Belaya Krinitsa. The local residents were very friendly. My mother went to work in a Ukrainian lower secondary school and my father was accountant of grain

at the elevator.

Shortly after they moved to Belaya Krinitsa, Tamara married a local man. His last name was Vasinov. My parents gave their consent to this marriage; they had no prejudiced attitude toward non-Jews. Tamara and her husband had a civil ceremony and a family dinner in the evening. They lived with our parents. Tamara was a housewife and her husband worked at the elevator with my father. In 1935 their son Alexandr was born.

Doctors in Belaya Krinitsa diagnosed that my father had tuberculosis. He continued to work, but he became weaker each day and had a heart problem. I remember visiting my parents on my first summer vacation in 1935. My mother went to take exams in Kherson. My father was developing dropsy. He had a huge stomach. After he returned home from work he went to bed. It took me a lot of effort to convince him to have some food.

In late August I went back to Kherson. Soon my mother notified me that my father was in hospital in Odessa. He died in this hospital in fall 1935. Only my mother was at the funeral. I don't even know where my father was buried in Odessa or anything about the funeral.

My older sister Nadezhda fell ill with tuberculosis in Kherson. Shortly after our father died our mother and grandmother decided to move to Kherson. About a month we lived with Nadezhda, then my mother received part of a house at her work. Tamara and her family stayed in Belaya Krinitsa. In 1939, when World War II began 12, Tamara's husband was recruited to the army. He perished in the war. Tamara and her son stayed in Belaya Krinitsa until the Great Patriotic War began.

My mother went to work at school in the suburb of Kherson. We received half of a house near the school. My mother was very concerned about Nadezhda's condition. She needed good food, but we lived from hand to mouth and couldn't help her. Then a miracle happened. Before the war all workers received a portion of their wages in state loan bonds. [Editor's note: The Soviet power was in bad need of money for development of its industries and issued state loan bonds in the late 1920s. People were forced to buy these bonds].

In a year the amount reached the value of monthly wages. Of course, nobody hoped to win anything from it when all of a sudden our mother won 2500 rubles! This was a lot of money at the time. Of course, Mother was forced to contribute half for the development of DOSAAF [abbreviation for the public organization 'Voluntary association of assistance to the army, Air Force and Navy'], to the orphan children fund, etc., but she still had 1250 rubles left.

Mother borrowed some money and bought a cow. She gave Nadezhda fresh milk. She believed it was the best treatment. It may be a coincidence but Nadezhda really got better. This cow was partly responsible for my mother's death: when the Great Patriotic War began our mother refused to go into evacuation since she didn't want to leave her cow.

Grandmother Hana died in Kherson in 1937. I was a 3rd-year student. I remember that I had to go to a meeting in college, but my mother asked me to stay since Grandmother could die at any instant. However, I went to the meeting. During the meeting a receptionist called me out of the conference room to tell me that my mother had called to say that my grandmother had died.

We buried Grandmother at the town cemetery in Kherson. It wasn't a Jewish funeral. The coffin was taken to the cemetery on a horse-drawn cart. Our family sat on this cart, too: our mother, Lazar, Nadezhda, Tamara and I. I don't even remember which cemetery it was.

Before graduation my sister Nadezhda married her co-student who was a Russian man. His last name was Stroganov. My sister and her husband went to work at school in Kherson. Nadezhda taught the Ukrainian language and literature and her husband was a Russian teacher. In 1937 their daughter Svetlana was born – it was a popular name at that time. In 1939 my sister's husband was recruited to the army. On the first days of the war he went to the front and perished.

Nadezhda and her daughter moved to Siberia. From evacuation she came to Krivoy Rog where I lived with my husband's parents. She went to work at school as a teacher of the Ukrainian language and literature. She still lives there, now she is a pensioner. Her daughter Svetlana is also a teacher, she teaches music. I don't remember Svetlana's last name in marriage. She has a son called Dmitri, two grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren: Anton and Ivan.

My brother Lazar received a job assignment after graduation, in the planning department of machine building plant in Kherson. He lived at the hostel of the plant.

In 1936 [during the Great Terror] arrests began and lasted until the Great Patriotic War. The husband of my cousin Fenia, daughter of my mother's sister Nastasia, was arrested and executed. I truly believed that 'enemies of the people'13 were guilty. I don't know if my mother believed this was true, as she didn't discuss this with us. If the Party said they were enemies then it was true. I still believe that there were not so many innocent people arrested. There were some, probably, but most of them were guilty, indeed.

In 1938 I finished my college and stayed to work in Kherson. I got a job assignment as teacher of physics and mathematics in a Ukrainian lower secondary school. I received 'allowances' – some money to last until the first salary. I got a room at the teacher's hostel at school. Teachers and schoolchildren were friendly with me. I began my career on 1st September. I also was a tutor in the 6th grade. There were both Ukrainian and Jewish children at school and children of other nationalities.

I met my future husband Vassili Miach at school. He was a teacher of history. He finished Odessa Pedagogical College one year earlier than I and got a job assignment 14 to this school. Vassili was born into a common family of workers in Krivoy Rog in 1914. His father, Andrei Miach, was a turner at a plant. His mother, Anna Miach, was a housewife. Vassili had a younger sister called Lubov, born in 1918. She got married in 1940 and went to Siberia with her husband. There was a big construction there.

Vassili was Ukrainian, but it was no problem with my family or me. We never segregated people by their nationality. We got married on 1st October 1938, a month and a half after we met. We had a civil ceremony at the registry office and a small wedding dinner with our families and colleagues from school. Vassili's parents treated me like their daughter from the very beginning.

In July 1939 our daughter Valeria was born. When she turned three months old my husband took us to his parents in Krivoy Rog. My father-in-law wanted us to live with them. He said he would give us a part of their garden and build a house for us. I dreamed about having a house of our own and

having more children with my husband.

I had two months of maternity leave and my mother-in-law convinced me that she would look after my daughter so that I could go to work. I went to work as a teacher of physics in a Ukrainian school and my husband got a job there, too. He was a teacher of history.

Before World War II, teachers were released from the army, but then Voroshylov 15 issued an order to cancel all privileges and make all men subject to army service. On 29th November 1939 he was recruited to a tank unit and I never saw him again. He was sent to fight in the Finnish War 16. When his service term was coming to an end, the Great Patriotic War began and Vassili went to the front. He perished near Moscow in 1942.

During the War

On 22nd June 1941 I heard on the radio that the Great Patriotic War had begun. At 12 o'clock Molotov 17 spoke on the radio. He said that fascist Germany had attacked the USSR without an announcement of the war. It was strange that I didn't feel any fear. I was sure that the war would last a few days at the most – this was what we were all told.

On 9th July evacuation began. My daughter was two years old. I decided to go to Melitopol where my father's sister Maria and her family and my mother's sister Evgenia lived. At that time Maria was at the oncology hospital in Kharkov. When the war began the clinic evacuated to Kuibyshev. Maria evacuated there, too. Her husband Terenti and their two children were still in Melitopol. Their son was in the army and their son's wife was a student. She evacuated with her college and took Evgenia with her. My daughter and I stayed with Terenti. The situation in town was so quiet that I even went to work.

In Septembers rumors began that the Germans were encircling Melitopol. The Melitopol military registry office made arrangements for evacuation of all people willing to leave their town. Even when German aircrafts damaged the railroad it was restored immediately to let trains take people away.

There was an announcement in our school that there were ten horse-drawn carts for teachers waiting in the yard of the school. I took a warm blanket for my daughter and my husband's new coat with me. Terenti gave me 300 rubles and some food products. We were told that we were heading to Ivan Dmitrievich in the evacuation hospital in Hasaviurt, Dagestan ASSR.

Our trip was long. On our way we got food from kind people. My daughter was all covered with lice. At Tikhoretsk station I asked people from another train whether my daughter and I could go with them. They said it was all right with them. There was a vocational school going into evacuation. We went to the Caucasus with them. They shared their food with us. We arrived at Babyurt station in Dagestan, 3000 kilometers from home.

We still needed to go to Khasaviurt. My daughter and I were in the last carriage in the train. We went to the toilet at the station when a button on my shoe got torn off. Then our train started setting off. I couldn't run: my shoe was unfit and I had my daughter. Our co-travelers dropped our basket from the train. We took another train for railroad employees that headed to Khasaviurt.

There I went to the hospital and the employees told me that Ivan Dmitrievich was a commissar of the hospital. A woman offered us accommodation in her house. We washed ourselves and burned my daughter's clothes with lice. On the second day I went to the military registry office and received 3000 rubles as a military's wife. I bought food products for this woman and went to hospital again.

I got Ivan's address. His family was friends with Maria's family. He helped me to get employment at the hospital. I became an attendant and received a room in the hospital for my daughter and me. I was responsible for accounting of clothing, bed sheets and laundry. The personnel and patients were good to me. My daughter went to a nursery school. She broke her leg at the nursery school and the chief doctor appointed a nurse to look after Valeria while I was at work.

There was no correspondence from my husband, but I hoped that he was alive. In March 1942 my mother-in-law wrote me saying that she had received a death notification for my husband. It was a terrible blow and only the fact that I had my daughter with me helped me to get over it.

The Germans were poisoning water reservoirs with dysentery bacillus and a large number of people fell ill with dysentery at the same time. It was not safe to stay in Khasaviurt since we used water for the hospital from the town water supply system. In 1942 our hospital moved to Buinaksk, 50 kilometers from Khasaviurt.

In Buinaksk our hospital was located on the territory of a wine factory. Paramedical workers stayed in the basement where there were barrels with wine and doctors were in the administrative building. Patients also stayed there. There were 144 beds in the hospital. My daughter and I stayed in Buinaksk until 1944.

I corresponded with my brother Lazar. He was head of the financial department in unit 37 of the district air base. By the way, he was a party member; he joined the Party at the front in 1942. Their military unit went as far as Budapest from where they were sent to Kutaisi. From there my brother sent me a telegram telling me to come to stay with him.

The director of the hospital stamped this telegram with a stamp saying 'approve resignation' and my daughter and I could go to Kutaisi where I went to work in the military unit where my brother served. He rented a dwelling for us; a plank annex. There was a sofa by one wall of the room, a stool that served as table and a chair. I worked at the logistics department of this military unit. My daughter went to kindergarten.

My brother told me about what happened to our mother and sister Tamara. Our mother didn't want to leave her cow and stayed in Kherson. At the beginning of the war my sister Tamara and her son Alexandr came to Kherson from Belaya Krinitsa. In 1942 the Germans organized a ghetto in Kherson. My mother, Tamara and her son were sent to the ghetto. The Germans allowed local residents to take some children that had one non-Jewish parent. A Russian family, the Ivanovs, took Alexandr. They had him stay with them until 1944.

When Lazar was in Budapest with his military unit he came to Kherson on vacation in 1944. He found Alexandr and took him to Moscow where my mother's sister Bertha lived. Lazar asked Bertha to keep Alexandr until the end of the war. Lazar wanted to send Alexandr to a military college. Aunt Bertha was single, and she got so attached to Alexandr that she could not part with him. Aunt

Bertha was about 80 in 1944.

I came to Moscow in 1948 and decided to visit Aunt Berta and Alexandr. She didn't open the door until I promised to her that I was not going to take Alexandr away. Alexandr had the last name of Aunt Bertha – Shatovski. When he turned 16 and was to obtain a passport he changed his last name to his father's last name of Vasinov. Alexandr finished Moscow Trade College and worked at the State Chamber of Commerce in Moscow.

He lived with Aunt Bertha until he got married. He married Nina, a Russian girl. They have two children: Inna and Veta. Veta finished a circus art school. She and her husband are gymnasts; she has her marital last name of Yablochkova. They have a son named Vladimir. Inna is also married. She has two sons, Maxim and Sergei.

Tamara and Mother perished in the ghetto in Kherson in 1942. They were buried in a common grave. I went on a boat cruise Kiev-Kherson-Kiev. When my co-travelers went on tour I went to the place where inmates of the ghetto were buried. I photographed a monument on their grave. There was an inscription: '1276 Soviet citizens were tormented to death here in 1942.' I sent this photo to Alexandr, Tamara's son.

I worked for over a year in military unit 37. Early in the morning of 9th May 1945 18 a messenger from headquarters brought the news to the military unit: the war was over. Then we heard an announcement on the radio that Germany had capitulated unconditionally. We were all happy. People in the streets greeted, hugged and kissed each other. Many had tears in their eyes. There were fireworks in the evening.

After the War

When the war was over my brother wasn't demobilized from the army. Their military unit 37 was sent to Iran and Lazar's service continued. I knew that Krivoy Rog was liberated in 1943. Since there were metallurgical plants there it was categorized as a strategic town and entrance there was not allowed. I went to a hospital in Kutaisi and told the management that I could escort their patients going back home to Krivoy Rog. So I managed to come to my husband's family. They were happy to see us. My daughter and I settled down with them.

After the war anti-Semitism was evident. Before the war we didn't even know who had what nationality; we simply didn't care. Krivoy Rog was a town of workers, the majority of its residents were uneducated and there was anti-Semitism in everyday relationships. My mother-in-law offered me to change my Jewish last name to their Ukrainian name so that nobody could find out about my Jewish identity. Of course, I didn't do it, but many at that time changed their names.

I kept looking for a job. There were only few pupils left at the school where I had worked before the war and there was no vacancy for me. I went to a construction agency hoping to get work at a construction site. They offered me a position as human resource manager.

Younger people were in the process of returning home from the front while there was lack of construction workers. Authorities mobilized older people of over 60 years of age to the construction. The work discipline was very strict: if somebody was late for work he might even have been arrested. Even if they had a valid excuse – they were older people and did not always feel fit to go to work – but they were kept responsible anyway, if they violated disciplinary requirements.

After I had to issue documents of one of such employee that was to go under trial, I went to the construction manager and said to him that I couldn't go on working at the human resource department and was ready to become a worker. He tried to talk me out of it, but I insisted and he sent me to work at a woodwork factory.

I worked at the surface gage. The factory was out of town. There was no traffic and I had to stay at the barrack hostel of the factory. My work at the gage was dangerous. There were rotating blades and shafts that pushed a unit. One had to be careful working there. Once my friend got inattentive and had her four fingers cut.

My daughter stayed with my husband's parents; she went to kindergarten. Children got food there and it was important since there was very little food we could get at that time. I spent Sundays with my daughter. Sunday was my day off.

After the war and up to 1948 there were bread coupons. There was no way to buy food in stores and I couldn't afford to buy any at the market. I received a salary of 600 rubles while a loaf of bread cost 200 rubles at the market. I gave my coupons to my mother-in-law to get bread for my daughter. I ate corn that we planted around our barrack.

At that time I began to work at a special department of the NKVD 19. The military unit where I worked before moving to Krivoy Rog gave me a recommendation to work in this special department. I shall not speak to anyone about my work in the special department. I signed a non-disclosure obligation and nobody has canceled it ever since. I remember they told me that nobody, not even my brother, was supposed to know about what I get to know at work. In 1946 I received a medal 'For the Defense of the Caucasus' at the military registry office of Krivoy Rog. The military commissar awarded it to me.

In late 1946 Lazar was demobilized from the army. He had a right to choose where he was going to reside and Lazar chose Uzhgorod in Subcarpathia 20. After the conference in Yalta 21, after the Great Patriotic War, Subcarpathia became a part of the USSR. Lazar got an assignment to the 'Subcarpathia Forestry' company where he became a financial employee.

Lazar got married in Uzhgorod. His first wife was a nice Jewish girl that moved to Uzhgorod with her family after the war. In 1947 their daughter Elena was born. My brother's wife died from air embolism when she gave birth to her second child. Her newborn baby also died. They were buried at the town cemetery in Uzhgorod. Neither my brother nor his wife was religious. Elena lives in Moscow.

My brother got married again, to a Jewish woman named Anna, who already had a child. They didn't have children together. My brother died in Uzhgorod in 1985. We buried him near the grave of his first wife. My brother's second wife died in 2000. Hesed 22 made all the arrangements for her funeral.

When he arrived in Uzhgorod my brother obtained an invitation for me to join him there. I had received an invitation and assignment to Chust, a town in Subcarpathia, some 100 kilometers from Uzhgorod. At my brother's request the manager of the Public Education Department in Chust – he was at the front with my brother – employed me in Uzhgorod.

I've lived in Uzhgorod since 1947. I liked this small, quiet and cozy town at once. There was a synagogue and a Jewish school in Uzhgorod. The local population was loyal to those that came from the USSR to live in their town. However, later their attitude toward the Soviet power got worse, in particular, when perestroika 23 began.

When I arrived there my daughter and I got accommodation in a small room with plywood walls and a cement floor. There was a water drainage grid in the floor like in the street. I used a smaller room as a kitchen. There was a brick floor there. There was no water, toilet or bathroom. I lived there till 1949 and then I received this apartment where I live at the moment.

I went to work at a Ukrainian secondary school. I was a teacher of physics and mathematics in senior classes. My daughter went to the same school. She had my husband's last name: Miach. I treated her like any other pupil at school.

There was anti-Semitism in Subcarpathia after the war. I faced anti-Semitism twice, and once it was directed at me. In 1955 I was a teacher in the 9th grade. They were nice and gifted children, I still remember these children. In this class children teased one of their classmates who was a Jew. I interfered and explained that they were wrong doing so, but I don't know whether they understood.

Later, I saw an inscription 'Polina - zhyd' [kike] on a laboratory table in my classroom. I pulled myself together to get through that lesson, but during an interval I burst into tears in the teacher's room. It was a trauma for me. I didn't try to find out who did this; besides, I don't think I would have come to know who did this. I was hurt. So, I cannot say that I didn't face any anti-Semitism.

At that time military training at school was important. It involved schoolchildren and teachers. I attended classes and was even awarded a grade in rifle shooting. I had a serious attitude to these classes like to all others.

In 1948 the campaign against cosmopolitans 24 began. I put so much trust in our government that I believed that if they said that those people were enemies of the people then it was truly so. As for the Doctors' Plot 25 that started in January 1953, I had a different attitude there. I couldn't believe that professionals that took a Hippocratic oath could be accused of such crime!

In 1948 the state of Israel was founded 26 and we should not forget that the USSR was the first state to acknowledge it. I was to make a speech to express my attitude toward this event on the radio. I said that I had a positive attitude toward it, but that I was against any war to say nothing about the war in the Middle East.

Stalin's death in March 1953 was a huge sorrow for me. He was an idol and leader for my contemporaries and me. Schoolchildren and teachers cried and were not ashamed of their tears. When Khrushchev 27 at the Twentieth Party Congress 28 denounced the cult of Stalin I didn't believe him. I don't believe anything bad about Stalin now. I still admire Lenin, any person can have his weak spots and a statesman is no exception.

I was going to join the Party after Stalin died in 1953. I had two letters of recommendation: one from a school inspector – this woman is still a party member, the Communist Party of Ukraine, and so am I. Another letter was from the director of the children's home who was a member of our school party unit. The director of our school was supposed to issue a third letter of recommendation, but she refused. She didn't explain the reason to me. So, I didn't join the Party

then. I decided that it was sufficient that I lived like a communist.

In 1970 Lenin's 100th birthday anniversary was celebrated. I went to the town party committee to obtain an application form to join the Party. They told me there that I was soon to retire and why was it that I wanted to become a communist. I didn't get a form and even cried a little when I left there. Then I thought to myself, 'Do if I really have to beg them?' and decided that no, I didn't.

I retired in 1973. In 1990, at the age of 72, I submitted my application to the party committee. Many people at that time quit the Party. There was a meeting where they were expelling and admitting people. I was admitted. I still pay my monthly party fees, visit all party meetings. It's difficult for me to do so any more now because I feel ill.

I was always involved in public activities. I was chairwoman of our trade union committee and at one time I was secretary of the town trade union committee. I had very little free time. When I came home from work I had to check schoolchildren's homework and prepare for my classes on the next day. Often in the evening my schoolchildren came to have a class with me at home. I was a class tutor and my pupils often visited me.

On weekends we went to theaters and museums. In summer we often went hitchhiking in picturesque Subcarpathia or went on tours to other towns. My daughter spent her summer vacation with her grandparents in Krivoy Rog and when she grew older I took her with me.

We always celebrated Soviet holidays at home: 1st May, 7th November 29, 9th May – Victory Day. We also celebrated the New Year and our birthdays. On Soviet holidays we went to parades with my colleagues and schoolchildren. Then there was a concert at school and then teachers and schoolchildren came to our home. We sang songs, danced and recited poems. It was a lot of fun. My daughter's friends visited her. Adults and children had parties in different rooms.

Valeria studied well at school and helped me with the housekeeping. She liked reading and spent all her free time reading. She read everything she could lay her hands on. I thought that she would go to a humanitarian college after finishing school, but she chose Odessa Communications College. She passed her entrance exams successfully and was admitted. She left for Odessa. Valeria lived in a hostel and spent her vacations at home. She had all excellent marks through all the years of her studies.

After finishing the college Valeria got an assignment for work at the Moscow Scientific Research Institute of Communications. She works there now. In Moscow, Valeria met her future husband, Sergei Sokolov, a Russian man. I had no objections against their marriage. They got married and in 1965 their twin sons, Alexei and Adrei, were born. They are married and have sons. They all live in Moscow. Every year my daughter spends her vacations with me. My grandsons also come to see me. I like to visit Valeria and her family too, but now I can't do it any longer.

When large numbers of Jews began to emigrate to Israel in the 1970s, I didn't consider it for myself. I didn't understand people that were leaving their Motherland for a different country, leaving everything behind. This was right at the time when I was to retire. My friends told me that I would get everything I needed if I moved to Israel, but I don't agree that a person can agree to receive what one hasn't earned. I cannot believe that people don't pay for the wealth they get there.

I sympathized with perestroika when it began, but not with what it led to. It led to the fall of the USSR. Everything is turned upside down now! What kind of independence is this? We are so dependable. We were not afraid of having no crops in the past since other republics came to help. What is so good about this independence? There were more possibilities to study in the past. All children could get education, while now anybody whose parents can pay can to go to university. Graduates had guaranteed jobs and received an apartment.

I was devoted to the Soviet power. I wish the Soviet regime would still exist here. You know why? For free education and medical care. Those were the biggest achievements of the Soviet power. It seems to be such anarchy now: I cannot understand what is going on.

The only thing that has improved lately is Jewish life. I know what the attitude towards Jews was like in the past and how it has changed. There is a Jewish community in Uzhgorod. They restore Jewish traditions, but not only that. In 1994 my TV caused a big fire at my home. The Jewish community helped me a lot.

In 1999 Hesed was established in Uzhgorod. They improved our life significantly. I rarely take part in the numerous cultural events in Hesed. I don’t know traditions or the language, but I read a lot. I recently read about Purim, I read the Torah from time to time. Going out is a problem for me and Hesed sends a car to take me to a cultural event.

My life has become easier since Hesed supports me. Old people receive food packages and single old people have meals delivered to their homes. I’ve never had any housemaids, but now I have a woman who comes to help me about the house. It is very important, especially after I broke my leg.

Hesed provides big assistance: they provide medications to Jewish people in hospitals and also give us money to buy medications that we need. I’ve met many kind people in my life, but Hesed is the first organization doing good that I know.

Glossary:

1 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.

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 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.

4 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.

5 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.

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

7 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.

8 All-Union pioneer organization
A communist organization for teenagers between 10 and 15 years old (cf: boy-/ girlscouts in the US). The organization aimed at educating the young generation in accordance with the communist ideals, preparing pioneers to become members of the Komsomol and later the Communist Party. In the Soviet Union, all teenagers were pioneers.

9 Komsomol
Communist youth political organization created in 1918. The task of the Komsomol was to spread 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.

10 Rabfak is an abbreviation for 'Rabotnicheski Fakultet' meaning Workers' Faculty
They were much popular in the 1970s and 1980s. They were organized with the cooperation of the Bulgarian Communist Party and their main goal was to prepare specialists to enroll in universities. The people were mostly from industrial companies. The courses lasted a number of months and people did not go to work while they were studying. The people sent to such courses had a good professional background and were recommended by party representatives. In socialist times such workers' schools were organized throughout the entire Eastern Block. Modes of instruction included both evening and correspondence classes and all educational levels were served - from elementary school to higher education.

11 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.

12 German Invasion of Poland
The German attack of Poland on 1st September 1939 is widely considered the date in the West for the start of World War II. After having gained both Austria and the Bohemian and Moravian parts of Czechoslovakia, Hitler was confident that he could acquire Poland without having to fight Britain and France. (To eliminate the possibility of the Soviet Union fighting if Poland were attacked, Hitler made a pact with the Soviet Union, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.) On the morning of 1st September 1939, German troops entered Poland. The German air attack hit so quickly that most of Poland's air force was destroyed while still on the ground. To hinder Polish mobilization, the Germans bombed bridges and roads. Groups of marching soldiers were machine-gunned from the air, and they also

aimed at civilians. On 1st September, the beginning of the attack, Great Britain and France sent Hitler an ultimatum - withdraw German forces from Poland or Great Britain and France would go to war against Germany. On 3rd September, with Germany's forces penetrating deeper into Poland, Great Britain and France both declared war on Germany.

13 Enemy of the people
Soviet official term; euphemism used for real or assumed political opposition.

14 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.

15 Voroshylov, Kliment Yefremovich (1881-1969)
Soviet military leader and public official. He was an active revolutionary before the Revolution of 1917 and an outstanding Red Army commander in the Russian Civil War. As commissar for military and naval affairs, later defense, Voroshilov helped reorganize the Red Army. He was a member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party from 1926 and a member of the Supreme Soviet from 1937. He was dropped from the Central Committee in 1961 but reelected to it in 1966.

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

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 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 NKVD
(Russ.: Narodnyi Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del), People's Committee of Internal Affairs, the supreme security authority in the USSR - the secret police. Founded by Lenin in 1917, it nevertheless played

an insignificant role until 1934, when it took over the GPU (the State Political Administration), the political police. The NKVD had its own police and military formations, and also possessed the powers to pass sentence on political matters, and as such in practice had total control over society. Under Stalin's rule the NKVD was the key instrument used to terrorize the civilian population. The NKVD ran a network of labor camps for millions of prisoners, the Gulag. The heads of the NKVD were as follows: Genrikh Yagoda (to 1936), Nikolai Yezhov (to 1938) and Lavrenti Beria. During the war against Germany the political police, the KGB, was spun off from the NKVD. After the war it also operated on USSR-occupied territories, including in Poland, where it assisted the nascent communist authorities in suppressing opposition. In 1946 the NKVD was renamed the Ministry of the Interior.

20 Subcarpathia (also known as Ruthenia, Russian and Ukrainian name Zakarpatie)
Region situated on the border of the Carpathian Mountains with the Middle Danube lowland. The regional capitals are Uzhhorod, Berehovo, Mukachevo, Khust. It belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy until World War I; and the Saint-Germain convention declared its annexation to Czechoslovakia in 1919. It is impossible to give exact historical statistics of the language and ethnic groups living in this geographical unit: the largest groups in the interwar period were Hungarians, Rusyns, Russians, Ukrainians, Czech and Slovaks. In addition there was also a considerable Jewish and Gypsy population. In accordance with the first Vienna Decision of 1938, the area of Subcarpathia mainly inhabited by Hungarians was ceded to Hungary. The rest of the region was proclaimed a new state called Carpathian Ukraine in 1939, with Khust as its capital, but it only existed for four and a half months, and was occupied by Hungary in March 1939. Subcarpathia was taken over by Soviet troops and local guerrillas in 1944. In 1945, Czechoslovakia ceded the area to the USSR and it gained the name Carpatho-Ukraine. The region became part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1945. When Ukraine became independent in 1991, the region became an administrative region under the name of Transcarpathia.

21 Reparation Aggreement at the Yalta Conference
British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, US President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin met at Yalta, Crimea, USSR, in February 1945 to adopt a common policy. Most of the important decisions made remained secret until the end of World War II for military or political reasons. The main demand of the 'Big Three' was Germany's unconditional surrender. As part of the Yalta Conference an agreement was concluded, the main goal of which was to compensate Germany's war enemies, and to destroy Germany's war potential. The countries that received the most reparation were those that had borne the main burden of the war (i.e. the Soviet Union). The agreement contained the following: within two years, removal of all potential war-producing materials from German possession, annual deliveries of German goods for a designated amount of time, and the use of German labor. Fifty per cent of the twenty billion dollars that Germany had to pay in reparation damages was to go to the Soviet Union.

22 Hesed
Meaning care and mercy in Hebrew, Hesed stands for the charity organization founded by Amos Avgar in the early 20th century. Supported by Claims Conference and Joint Hesed helps for Jews in need to have a decent life despite hard economic conditions and encourages development of their

self-identity. Hesed provides a number of services aimed at supporting the needs of all, and particularly elderly members of the society. The major social services include: work in the center facilities (information, advertisement of the center activities, foreign ties and free lease of medical equipment); services at homes (care and help at home, food products delivery, delivery of hot meals, minor repairs); work in the community (clubs, meals together, day-time polyclinic, medical and legal consultations); service for volunteers (training programs). The Hesed centers have inspired a real revolution in the Jewish life in the FSU countries. People have seen and sensed the rebirth of the Jewish traditions of humanism. Currently over eighty Hesed centers exist in the FSU countries. Their activities cover the Jewish population of over eight hundred settlements.

23 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.

24 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.'

25 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.

26 Creation of the State of Israel

From 1917 Palestine was a British mandate. Also in 1917 the Balfour Declaration was published, which supported the idea of the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Throughout the

interwar period, Jews were migrating to Palestine, which caused the conflict with the local Arabs to escalate. On the other hand, British restrictions on immigration sparked increasing opposition to the mandate powers. Immediately after World War II there were increasing numbers of terrorist attacks designed to force Britain to recognize the right of the Jews to their own state. These aspirations provoked the hostile reaction of the Palestinian Arabs and the Arab states. In February 1947 the British foreign minister Ernest Bevin ceded the Palestinian mandate to the UN, which took the decision to divide Palestine into a Jewish section and an Arab section and to create an independent Jewish state. On 14th May 1948 David Ben Gurion proclaimed the creation of the State of Israel. It was recognized immediately by the US and the USSR. On the following day the armies of Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon attacked Israel, starting a war that continued, with intermissions, until the beginning of 1949 and ended in a truce.

27 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.

28 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.

29 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 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.