Lev Mistetskiy

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Kiev
Ukraine
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Lev Mistetskiy is a short full-bodied man. He has a charming childish smile winning over people at once. Lev has thick hair with gray streaks. He limps slightly and walks slowly with a stick. Lev is a very sociable and friendly man. He lives with his wife Galina. They have a two-bedroom apartment, plainly furnished, in a house built in the 1980s in a new district in Kiev. The Mistetskiys have not lived in Kiev for long, but they have a number of acquaintances here. They always welcome guests in their home.

My father's family lived in Zhytomyr [150 km from Kiev]. Zhytomyr is one of the oldest towns in Ukraine. In the early 20th century it had a population of a little under 100,000 people. From the middle of the 16th through to the late 18th century Zhytomyr belonged to Poland; afterwards it was annexed to the Russian Empire. The population consisted of Russian, Polish and Jewish inhabitants. Before the Russian Revolution of 1917 1 Zhytomyr was located within the Pale of Settlement 2 and Jews constituted the bigger part of the population. In 1917 the Soviet regime stopped the Pale of Settlement. Jews settled down in the central part of the town, and so did the Russian and Polish intelligentsia. There were two-storied stone houses in the center of town. Jews dealt in crafts and trades, and there were also Jewish doctors and teachers. After the Revolution the Soviet authorities didn't nationalize smaller stores owned by Jews where members of their families worked. Most Russian and Ukrainian residents lived in the suburbs and were farmers supplying food products to the town.

There were several synagogues in Zhytomyr. Even after the period of the Soviet struggle against religion 3 and World War II there were at least five synagogues left in the town. There were cheders, Jewish schools and a yeshivah in the town before the Revolution, but after 1917 the cheders and the yeshivah were closed while two seven-year Jewish schools operated almost until the Great Patriotic War 4. There was a shochet in each synagogue. There was a big Jewish community in Zhytomyr that organized charity and provided assistance to the needy. There was a Jewish children's home, an old-age home and a Jewish hospital in town. During the Civil War 5 there were Jewish pogroms 6 in Zhytomyr made by gangs 7 or Denikin troops 8. Jewish families often found shelter in Polish and Ukrainian homes. Mama told me about the pogroms, but I don't remember any details. The local population had a positive attitude towards Jews. All townspeople could speak Yiddish, Polish and Ukrainian.

All I know about my father's family is that my grandfather's name was Abram Mistetskiy. My grandmother's first name was Sura; I don't know her maiden name. My father had several sisters and brothers, but I only knew two of them. Aizik Mistetskiy, the oldest of the children, was born in 1878. After the Revolution he moved to Kiev. I think, Aizik dealt in trade. He was married, but I didn't know his wife, and had two children: Mikhail, born in 1920, and Lisa, born in 1922. Aizik was

an atheist. I also knew a second of my father's brothers: Lev, whose Jewish name was Leib. My father, Fridel Mistetskiy, was born in 1885. I don't know how religious my father's parents were, but his two brothers were atheists. My father never told me about his childhood and teenage years. All I know is that he could read and write in Russian and Yiddish.

My mother's family lived in a village near Zhytomyr. I think, it was Korostyshev. My mother's father, Froim Weisman, was a cantor in the synagogue. My grandmother died before I was born, and I don't even know her name. There were two children in the family: mama's older sister, Tsylia, and my mama Mariam, born in 1889. Mama's parents must have been religious, particularly as my grandfather was a cantor. I'm sure they celebrated Sabbath and observed all Jewish traditions. Mama could read in Hebrew and Yiddish, as well as in Russian. She was religious. Her sister Tsylia grew fond of revolutionary ideas before 1917 and became a professional revolutionary. Mama didn't tell me about what happened to her sister. I saw my grandfather once: I remember an old gray-haired man wearing black clothes and a black hat. Grandfather Froim died in the late 1920s. He was buried in the Jewish cemetery of Zhytomyr according to the Jewish ritual.

My parents must have met through a shadkhan, which was quite customary at the time. Mama never told me about the wedding, but I'm sure it was a traditional Jewish wedding. My parents got married in the early 1910s and my mother moved to Zhytomyr where my father lived.

My older brother, Mikhail, was born in 1914. His Jewish name was Moisey. My second brother Iosif was born in 1917 and my sister Polina followed in 1921. Her Jewish name was Pesia. I was born on 21st April 1924. My parents named me Lev, Leib in Jewish. Though my father was an atheist, his sons had their brit milah according to Jewish tradition. We only spoke Yiddish at home but the family knew Russian and Ukrainian.

My father worked as a mechanic at the bicycle plant and after work and on weekends as a cabdriver transporting people and loads to earn extra money in order to support his family of six. He rented horses and a wagon and came home late at night. He worked very hard and we rarely saw him. Mama was a housewife.

After the Civil War life was hard. My grandfather and grandmother and my father's sisters and brothers were rather poor and they decided to move to America. In 1925 the family was ready to leave and we joined them. I was just a baby at the time. Mama's parents didn't want to go with us. We boarded the train, when mama's father Froim came onto the platform. He started telling mama to stay and think about her old parents. Mama burst into tears and got off the train holding me. My father got our luggage off the train and we stayed. My father's family left. We had no contact with them: it was dangerous during the Soviet period [to keep in touch with relatives abroad] 9.

I only have information about my father's brother, Lev. He was a student, grew fond of communist ideas and joined the Communist Party. He became a trade union activist and organized strikes. He was imprisoned and when they released him, he decided to come back to the USSR. Since he was a communist and oppressed for his ideas the Soviet government allowed him to return. In 1934 Lev left the USA. He was single. The rest of my father's family stayed in the USA. Lev lived with his older brother Aizik in Kiev. I don't remember what he did for a living.

Our life was miserable. When kolkhozes 10 started, my father heard there was going to be a Jewish kolkhoz 11 in Dnepropetrovsk region and that the Agro-Joint 12 was constructing houses for future

kolkhozniki. My father went there to get information and when he returned, he and mama decided to move there. The settlement we went to consisted of one street with one- storied houses on both sides. The settlement and the street didn't have names. The Joint funded the construction, and people who arrived to work in the kolkhoz where to build their own houses. They built houses from air bricks: cut straw mixed with clay and dried in the sun. Air bricks were strong and the houses were warm in winter. They had tiled or steel sheet roofs. There were two rooms and a kitchen in each house, and sheds adjoining the houses. Like everyone else we lived in tents for about two years after we arrived at this village. My father went to the construction site every day. Then we moved into the house.

Mama bought a cow and kept it in the cow shed another part of which served as a chicken house. There were 35 houses in the village. Every family had one hectare of land for a garden. We grew corn to feed the cow and chickens on one half of our land and on the other we grew potatoes, onions, beets, beans - everything the family needed. There was no store in the village. The products were supplied from Gulyaypole, eight kilometers from our village. There was also a market in this village. Mama made butter and cottage cheese, which she sold at the market in Gulyaypole. Sometimes the chairman of the kolkhoz provided the women with a horse-drawn wagon to go to the market. Sometimes mama returned home in tears, when she failed to sell what she had taken with her.

The Joint also helped to purchase agricultural equipment: tractors, a reaping machine, a winnowing machine and other necessary things. Papa took up a course for tractor operators and began to work after finishing it. Then he caught a cold, which resulted in pneumonia and finally tuberculosis. My father got very weak. He went to work as a janitor, but a short time later he couldn't do any work and had to stay in bed most of the time. Mama took up any job she could to support the family: weeding, tying sheaves, milking cows and working with the threshing machine. I remember mama standing by a threshing machine in a cloud of dust feeding in sheaves. She had a kerchief covering her head and face. She even had a band to protect her eyes from dust. Mama was the best worker in the kolkhoz. The kolkhoz sent her to different congresses where she was a delegate. They were even about to award the title of Hero of Socialist Labor to her, but this was in 1941, and mama never got this award due to the war.

We, children, tried to help mama as much as we could. At ten we went to work in the kolkhoz. Of course, we had to attend school, but we could work in the kolkhoz during vacations. We also worked in our vegetable garden. When I came home from school, mama told me which part of the garden I had to do. I hurried to have some time left to play with other boys, but mama told me that I always had to complete my task first. She brought up my older brothers and sister in the same way.

In 1932-33 there was a terrible famine in Ukraine 13. NKVD 14 officers came to villages and took away all grain stocks that peasants had made for the winter. They took it all and people were doomed to die. It was easier in towns where there were some food supplies, but in villages it was horrible. In our kolkhoz they also made the rounds of the houses taking away grain, potatoes, cereals. People starved. We survived thanks to some soy beans that we had: once mama turned a bottle of kerosene for the Primus stove over a bag of soy beans in the kitchen. The soy beans were no good for eating any longer, but mama decided to keep them and took the bag into the attic. This saved us. It was still impossible to eat them, but we used them as bait for sparrows scattering

them in the attic and opening the window. The sparrows flew in, we closed the window and hunted sparrows. Mama plucked them and boiled them with soup and some herbs.

My older brothers finished four grades of the Jewish school. My sister finished the 1st grade, when the school was closed and turned into a three- year Ukrainian school. I went to this Ukrainian school. Our teachers were Jewish, but they taught us in Ukrainian. I became a young Octobrist 15, and a pioneer [see all-union pioneer organization] 16. I remember how happy I was, when I had a red necktie round my neck. Pioneers were tutors of young Octobrists. We arranged meetings and excursions for them and helped them with their studies. This was the only school in our village. After finishing it we continued our studies in a ten-year Ukrainian school in Gulyaypole. We walked to school and it took us over two hours to get there.

In winter my friend, Haim Sokolovskiy, and I rented a room in Gulyaypole. Our parents paid 10 rubles monthly and our landlady provided meals for the money. We spent winter vacations at home. This was wonderful: we skied and skated on a frozen pool all day long. There were one or two Jewish students per class in my school in Gulyaypole; the rest were Ukrainians. I faced anti-Semitism for the first time. The word 'zhydy' [kike] began to be used after the outbreak of World War II; at my time they called us 'natsmen' - which is short for 'natsionalnoye menshinstvo' ['national minorities'] - and I often heard this word addressed too me.

I earned the amount of my rent by working in the kolkhoz in summer. Of course, I earned less than they paid adult workers, but at least mama didn't have to squeeze these 10 rubles out of her family budget. I did weeding, threshing, shepherded the cattle and delivered water to farmers in the field. I also took daily information about the kolkhoz to the district town, riding a horse. I also looked after our domestic livestock. We had a cow, chickens and one or two pigs for sale.

We didn't celebrate Jewish holidays at home. Mama baked matzah on Pesach, but this was the only tribute to traditions. There was a prayer house in the village. On Sabbath and other Jewish holidays mama went to pray there. At school we were raised atheists. I don't remember any Soviet holidays in the kolkhoz. I remember the harvest festival. After the harvest women cooked food and there were long tables in the street and people began to party. I remember lots of compote [fruit drink] - it was a delicacy for us. We sang Jewish songs. Mama loved singing and knew many Jewish songs. I inherited my good voice and ear from her.

Approximately in 1936 the USSR began to refuse assistance from the Joint, and life in the Jewish kolkhoz became more difficult. I remember arrests that started in 1936 [during the so-called Great Terror] 17. There were numbers of Ukrainians arrested as enemies of people 18. Our landlord in Gulyaypole had been a soldier in the tsarist army, when he was young. When I knew him, he was an old man and always ill. One night in winter the 'black voronok' vehicle drove to the house. [Editor's note: 'voron,' diminutive 'voronok,' means 'raven' in Russian, supposed to bring trouble.] The officers came into the house and took the man away with them. His wife was crying. I said, 'Why arrest him? He is ill. What has he done to you?' - 'Shut up! Or you will go with us, too'. He never returned to the village.

We had a nice Ukrainian teacher of chemistry and physics. We liked her and her classes. We noticed that she always had red eyes from crying. Once she couldn't hold back her tears in class. She probably knew what she was up to. One day the director came into the class and said that she happened to be an enemy of the people, a Ukrainian nationalist, and had been arrested. It's not

that we believed our director, but we couldn't help thinking: 'How come she can be an enemy of the people?' My classmate Zhenia Skrypnik was the daughter of the chairman of the Gulyaypole village council. She was a smart and nice girl. When her father was arrested, we had a hostile and suspicious attitude towards her.

Our teachers told us that enemies of the people pretended to be good concealing their real self and in reality were trying to do harm to the Soviet power. Of course, we believed it, in the same way we thought Stalin was infallible. We believed in the Communist Party. We were raised in the communist ideology. I remember reading about the murder of Kirov 19 in a district newspaper in 1934 and felt indignant about how treacherous enemies of the people were. We were raised patriots. We read books in which the Soviet regime was presented as the best ever, the most humane. We also watched patriotic movies.

We had military training at school. We usually had classes in the woods. The class was divided into two teams: we were to find and capture the other group. When we found them and surrounded them shouting: 'Hurrah! Surrender!' We had to pass sport standards to receive RWD ('ready for work and defense']. Of course, we knew about Hitler and that he invaded Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, but we didn't know that Hitler exterminated Jews. When the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact 20 was signed, we were happy that our country was not to be attacked by Hitler.

In the late 1930s Jews began to leave the kolkhoz, mainly because people were tired of listening to others saying that cunning Jews didn't want to work, but only wanted to have a good life. Jews worked very hard in the kolkhoz while Ukrainians kept saying that they were idlers. After finishing their school in Gulyaypole my older brothers and sister also left the village.

After finishing the 10th grade my brother Mikhail went to Dnepropetrovsk [regional town, 500 km from Kiev]. He worked at the metallurgical plant: he was a proofreader with the plant's newspaper. Iosif, the middle brother, finished the 7th grade and courses of electric mechanics. He worked as an electrician in our village. He was smart. There was no electricity in other villages before the Great Patriotic War, but he managed to provide electricity in our village. The kolkhoz bought a power machine and Iosif installed an autonomous power plant. Iosif went to Krivoy Rog [about 450 km east of Kiev], where he worked as an electrician in a mine. Then he was recruited to the army. After demobilization he entered the infantry school in Simferopol [900 km south of Kiev] in the Crimea. After finishing this school he stayed to serve in a military unit in this town. My sister Polina entered the Dnepropetrovsk Medical School. After finishing it she got a mandatory job assignment 21 to a village in the Dnepropetrovsk region where she worked as a medical nurse. I helped my mother at home.

After finishing the 8th grade I wanted to enter an Air Force School, but I failed; I don't remember for what reason. Then I wanted to go to a drama school, I even took entrance exams where I sang something, I remember, but they didn't want me either. I went back home and continued my studies at school. In the 8th grade I joined the Komsomol 22. I walked to the district town 33 kilometers away to obtain my Komsomol membership card at the district Komsomol Committee.

In 1940 I went to the 10th grade. My father was very ill and I had to miss school to take care of him, take him to see the doctor in hospital and take care of the cow and chickens. In January 1941 my father died. Mikhail and my sister came to his funeral. There was no cemetery in our village. We buried my father in a Jewish cemetery in a Jewish village. Iosif arrived after the funeral. Then my

brothers and sister left. In June 1941 I took my graduation exams. I was told to take two exams in fall since I had missed too many classes in those subjects.

Mama and I heard about the war on the radio. There was one radio in the village, in the kolkhoz office. Mama and I went to the cattle farm and saw a crowd of people near the office. We went there and listened to Molotov's 23 speech, in which he said that Germany had violated the non-aggression treaty and attacked the USSR traitorously. Then Stalin spoke and said that we would win.

Mama stayed in the kolkhoz. I and those who weren't subject to recruitment went to another village to dig trenches. The Germans were approaching Dnepropetrovsk. Our commanders were from the local kolkhoz management or party officials. One day they disappeared. We didn't know what to do and decided to go home. When I came home, Smoliar, the chairman of our kolkhoz came to see me. He said the Germans were already near Krivoy Rog, which was 65 kilometers away. There were Germans planes flying over us. He said I had to take the kolkhoz cattle where there were no Germans. I told mama that we had to move on. She was crying and didn't want to leave home. I convinced her to go. We packed some luggage: we were sure the war would not last long and we would be back home soon. We put the bicycle, the most valuable belonging that we had into the cellar. Mama sat in the wagon, and I and another guy from the kolkhoz rode our horses. Mama kept crying.

We moved the cattle in the direction of Dnepropetrovsk, 150 kilometers away. We didn't have saddles and riding was tiring. So we took turns to take a rest and sit on the wagon. We reached Dnepropetrovsk and were to move the cattle across the Dnieper over the bridge, when German bombers attacked the people firing at them flying on contour lines. This was the first time I saw children, women and old people being killed. We were lucky to survive. We moved on to Donetsk [regional center in the east of Ukraine, 750 km from Kiev], another 300 kilometers we had to cover. On the way we milked cows and drank milk. Occasionally we sold cows to local villagers to get some money for food. They paid 50 rubles per cow. This was little money, but we were happy to get it.

We arrived at Yenakiyevo [40 km from Donetsk] in Donetsk region where we took cows to the butchery and stayed to work in the kolkhoz. Germans were getting closer to Donetsk and we decided to move on. Evacuation began in Yenakiyevo. Mama and I took a train to Stalingrad [present-day Volgograd in Russia, 1,000 km from Moscow]. We were accommodated in the stadium in the open air. We received rationed food and blankets. From there we moved to Astrakhan [1,500 km from Kiev] in Central Asia and across the Caspian Sea by boat. There was a storm and some people died. The dead were thrown into the sea. In winter 1941-42 we reached Kazakhstan, the village of Grebenshchikovo [400 km from Astrakhan]. We were accommodated in a local house. Mama and I went to work in the kolkhoz. We received rationed food: I got 150 grams of bread, mama got 300 grams, we also received some cereals and a little fat. We had a little money with us and bought winter clothes.

In March 1942 I fell ill with typhus. I was unconscious for over a month. Mama took me to a hospital 30 km from Grebenshchikovo. I survived. When I recovered, the doctor asked me where I was going. I said I was going to my mama. He said she had passed away. She had contracted typhus from me and died in the hospital. She was buried in the hospital cemetery. They showed me the

grave - there wasn't even her name on it.

I was alone in the whole world and didn't know where my brothers or sister where. I returned to Grebenshchikovo and went to work as a librarian. Then a geodesic expedition arrived from Kiev. They were going to search for coal deposits in Kazakhstan. I asked whether I could join them and they were positive about it. I had a horse-drawn wagon to take the geodesists to their work places. Then they were to relocate to the village of Kalmykovo about five kilometers away in Northern Kazakhstan. In order to go with them I had to obtain a permit from my workplace. I took the geodesists to this village and returned to my village. The chairman of the village council, an old Kazakh man, refused to issue me the permit. He had a stamp on his desk. When he went out of his office, I wrote the permit and stamped it.

I left for Kalmykovo and became a geodesist assistant. I delivered water to them at work and cooked for them. In August 1942 I was invited to the district town. The chairman of the district council told me that it was time for my recruitment to the army, but that he was going to make me stay since the district needed educated people and I had secondary education. I remember how in lines for bread local people were muttering about those in evacuation: 'they ran away from the Germans and don't want to fight...' I said that I would join the army so that nobody thought I was a coward. The gathering point was in the town of Uralsk, Orenburg region [2,500 km from Kiev]. The chairman of the district council gave me food to take with me and I left for Uralsk. There I entered the Leningrad military communications school evacuated to Uralsk. We had advanced eight-month training. After finishing the school we went to the front. I was awarded the rank of sergeant and sent to Sokolniki near Moscow. A captain came to our barrack and read the order that I and a few others were appointed communications operators in the 15th fighting engineering brigade.

Two days later we were to get a bus to drive us to our point of destination. One of our group told the captain that he was from Moscow and that his son and wife were there and asked permission to go and see them. The captain said it was all right, but he wanted to join him. I went with them. He was a handsome man, older than me. We visited his family. I am telling you this because I met with this man several times afterward, but at that time we were in different divisions.

I was sent to Domodedovo near Moscow where I took up three-month field engineering training. There were five battalions in this engineering brigade. I was appointed chief of communications of the 73rd battalion. We got poor food and I was always hungry. Once something funny happened. My partner and I were given the task to support communications at the distance of five kilometers from each other. I found a field of green peas and turned on the radio. I put my gun aside to eat some peas, when I heard a loud radio call, which should have been much weaker at the distance of five kilometers. I looked around and saw my partner eating peas close to me.

Three months later we were sent to Lebedin, Sumy region, Ukraine [300 km from Kiev], by train. From there we covered almost 400 kilometers to the town of Kanev on the Dnieper [100 km from Kiev], to the front line in late September 1943 where we joined the 47th army. We had to carry our radios and weapons. Then we reached the front line: there was firing, bombs were falling... There was a lake and a bridge across it. We were to run over the bridge one after another. There was a German sniper on the opposite side shooting at the soldiers. He killed the soldier running before me, but I managed to cross the bridge. On the opposite side we dug trenches and got ready.

The next day the commanding officer of our company ordered me to support the installation of a bridge across the Dnieper. I was to transfer his commands to the engineers installing the bridge. They could only work at night. They had already installed about 200 meters of the bridge, but German bombs destroyed about 60 meters of the bridge and they had to stop construction. It was decided to cross the river on pontoons. On 5th October 1943 twelve of us boarded a raft that the engineers had made and moved to the opposite bank of the river. I had to continuously give information on how many soldiers managed to reach the other side.

Alexandr Popov, the commander of our platoon - a young lieutenant, who had just finished a military school - was on this raft. Ania Zimakova, our assistant doctor, was in love with him. She wanted to get on this raft with him, but they didn't allow her to. She lives in Rostov now and we correspond. Before we reached the middle of the Dnieper this lieutenant was killed. This was his first and last battle. Two of us were wounded. The Germans never stopped shooting. This was scaring. The river was stirred by shells, bombs and bullets and there were flares lighting the surrounding. When we reached the opposite bank, the commander of the platoon counted the soldiers and equipment and I transferred this information by phone. We weren't allowed to use radios since Germans could have found out our location. On this day 6,720 soldiers, 80 antipersonnel mines and 15 tons of food crossed the river.

I was the youngest radio operator and they sent me to the most difficult spots. Our division was heading to Kiev. Our tanks entered Darnitsa, the left bank suburb of Kiev, in late October 1943. I was in a tank with my radio. We crossed the Dnieper and started with the clearing of mines of the town. We were to support safe entrance of the 3rd guard tank army. We cleared the railway station of mines and then started demining the main streets of the town. I was also involved in the demining process. After the liberation of the town we moved in the direction of Vinnitsa: to Fastov, Kazatim and further on. In March 1944 our engineering brigade constructed a bridge near the village of Voroshilovka, Vinnitsa region. Then our unit was the first to arrive in Vinnitsa. During the Great Patriotic War Vinnitsa region was the area of ghettos and concentration camps: it was called Transnistria 24. Inmates of the ghettos were happy to see us. Our engineering brigade was awarded the title of the Vinnitsa Red Banner Engineering Brigade.

I didn't face any anti-Semitism during the war. There were other values at the front line: people were treated as they deserved to be. Nobody cared about nationality: whether one could rely on this person in critical situations was what mattered. Moisey Barash, commanding officer of our 15th engineering brigade, was a Jew, and senior lieutenant Dobkin, commanding officer of a company in our battalion, was Jewish, too. I never heard anybody speaking disrespectfully of them in connection with their Jewishness.

On 11th May 1944 we liberated Lipovets district, Vinnitsa region, and entered the town of Lipovets [about 200 km from Kiev]. The Germans were six kilometers away from Lipovets. I ran to the battalion headquarters to get a battery for my radio, when they told me there was no telephone communication and asked me to restore it. I went out to search for a tear. I was thirsty and came into a house asking for water. A teenage girl gave me some water and I asked her name. She said her name was Galina and asked me why I wanted to know her name. I said that we might see each other again one day and left. Of course, I didn't think we would ever meet again. I didn't know then that this morning I had met my future wife Galina. I found the tear and tried to connect the ends of the wires, but the headquarters was continuously calling, and the wires were under current. I

began to connect and disconnect the ends to send them a signal to stop calling until they finally got it and gave me some time to fix the connection. The front line was quite near.

We moved on: to Zhmerinka, Kamenets-Podolskiy ... and arrived in Western Ukraine. We marched across swamps, engineers had lots of work to do - it's hard to tell it all. In August 1944 we were near Lvov. I went to the division headquarters to get a battery. When I went in to see the chief of the brigade communications to ask for batteries, I recognized him: he was that man from Moscow, who had showed me around Moscow when I was in Domodedovo. All of a sudden there was combat alarm. He ran to his truck and I ran to mine. There was a jam of vehicles on the road, when all of a sudden German planes began firing at the vehicles. After their first attempt I jumped into a cuvette. German planes were dropping heaps of grenades, bombs. One attempt, another attempt...

When they flew away, I got out of the cuvette, went to my truck and saw this man from Moscow, dead. I called the medical nurse, she saw him and exclaimed: 'Oh, Ksendjik is dead!' This was a rare surname and I remembered it. Then she examined him and said that his heart was beating, he was alive. She asked me to bring some water, we started artificial ventilation, something else and then he got up and walked. He was shell-shocked, but if I hadn't seen him, he would have died. The army commander came to the jam spot and ordered to push empty vehicles to the side to free the way for other vehicles. The vehicles were pushed aside without looking at the dead and this man might have been left there as well. I never saw him at the front again, but I will tell you about our last meeting at this point.

I went to Moscow on business in 1985. I saw an inquiry booth and recalled his name. I remembered that he lived somewhere near the Kursk railway station. I went to the inquiry and asked the girl to find this name, but this was only his surname that I knew and she asked me his first name and year of birth, which I didn't know. I explained to her how I had come to know him and she promised to help me. She found three people with the surname of Ksendjik, one of them seemed to be the one I was looking for judging by his year of birth. She gave me his address and phone number. I went to his home. An aged woman opened the door for me. I explained who I was. She started crying. She told me their son had died, but after the war they had two daughters. Her husband was a colonel of the KGB 25; he was all right, but a few years ago he started having seeing and hearing problems. Then this Ksendjik came in and asked his wife who I was. She told him that I had saved his life. He knew that a sergeant had saved his life, but he didn't know my name. He started crying, hugged me, called his daughters, invited guests and we had dinner. Then he took me to the railway station. We kept in touch. He has passed away by now.

There were different occurrences during the war. When we were advancing near Kamenets-Podolskiy, two soldiers joined us. They wore ordinary uniforms. We asked them who they were, and they replied they had escaped from captivity and wanted to join a military unit. Our commanding officer unbuttoned the shirt on one of them: there was German underwear underneath. He shot both of them. There were SMERSH officers in each regiment [Editor's note: special secret military unit of the NKVD for the elimination of spies, lit. 'death to spies']. Their task was to identify spies at the front line, but most of the time they investigated what the military talked about and whether some of them weren't happy about the situation. They treated those like they had treated enemies of the people before the war. At the beginning of the war our army incurred big losses and many military were captured. If some of them managed to escape, they were subject to investigation by SMERSH officers. Very often those people, who had taken every effort to escape and get to their

own forces, were arrested and exiled to the north. Actually, the purpose was to develop the northern areas, and prisoners were the best option to resolve this issue. In most cases these were innocent people, but SMERSH officers just needed grounds to arrest people and they usually got them. They had their informers in each unit and you could never be sure that you weren't talking to an informer.

Let me tell you how the SMERSH officers made me their informer. In early April 1945 a captain, commander of the SMERSH, came to talk to me. I don't remember his surname. He said that he knew I was a Komsomol member and that my commanders gave me good recommendations. He concluded that the war was coming to an end while there were many enemies of the people and spies among us and that I had to help him. And that I knew how they treated those who refused to help the Soviet power. This was very clear and I was pretty sure that if I refused I would become a spy or an enemy of the people. It was clear that the war was nearing its end, our forces were in Germany and I had a chance to survive. I didn't feel like going to the Gulag 26. What was I to do? I followed him. We went to a house where the first sergeant of our company, Shevtsov, was waiting for us. He said he would give me tasks and I was to fulfill them and report to Shevtsov in secret. I agreed. The captain told me to sign a paper. So, I thought, he already had a paper that I was to help the SMERSH. I looked at the first sergeant and he nodded. So I signed the paper, but nobody gave me any tasks and a short time later I was wounded.

There were penal battalions at the front. I knew one man, who was sent to a penal battalion. Our telephone operator Vassiliev once stole some honey from a village house. For this he was sent to a penal battalion where men fought till the first wound. After hospital they were sent to an ordinary military unit. This was called 'redeeming one's guilt with blood'.

When I watch movies or read books about the war, they always say that the military attacked shouting, 'For the Motherland! For Stalin!' I never heard anything like this. We attacked shouting 'Hurrah!' I was at the very front line. We were often to demine the trenches and pass-ways for tanks. The time of attacks was kept a secret. Of course, we knew that if tanks and 'Katyusha' units were approaching this meant that there was to be an attack. So we made pass-ways for tanks; the infantry was following the tanks. We tagged the pass-ways, but always one of us had to run ahead showing the way. I also had to do this very often. Then, if there wasn't sufficient infantry, we had to run with them.

Our division moved to the Carpathians and then to Subcarpathia 27. Many local Ukrainians were joining us on the way. They were partisans during the occupation: they had to take some training before they joined us for military actions. They became field engineers, and field engineers had to be capable of installing a mine or removing it. We had to know German weapons as well. There was the saying that 'a field engineer can make a mistake only once in his life'. They also taught them to shoot and clean their weapons and how they were to act in combat action.

In the Carpathian Mountains I was slightly wounded. Some time before a shell splinter broke through my trousers, but it didn't touch me. I never patched this hole and believed it to be my talisman. We installed tents in the mountains, when the Germans started firing. A shell exploded right beside my tent. The tent was torn apart, and a stray bullet scratched me. I had a bandage applied and remained in the ranks.

Our division liberated Mukachevo in Subcarpathia. We were the first to arrive in the town. Ten days later we moved in the direction of Uzhgorod and from there to Slovakia, to a small town, the name of which I don't remember. There was a big lake that four battalions had to cross. Our unit was the first to cross it. I had my radio box on me. This happened on 25th November 1944. The water was very cold. We started about 7pm, it was dark. We had two radios. I had to speak very softly since the Germans were only 500 meters away from us. They shot flares, but this was merely all they did. They didn't expect us to dare to cross the lake. There was one horse to carry the radio on its back, given to me. When the water was stomach deep I told the others to stop fearing that the radio might get wet. I gave the radio to the soldier on the horseback.

The crossing took about two hours. I stayed on the opposite bank of the lake and our units moved about 500 meters forward. We had a special code to cipher messages. I had to tell the others, when they could start crossing and of course, my saying 'start crossing the lake' was out of the question. Other soldiers covered me with tents on all sides so that the Germans couldn't hear me speaking. One tall soldier held the antenna. I started pronouncing my message - no connection. I tried the Morse - it was all right. I sent the message for other units to start moving.

It was cold and we were wet. We were sitting there looking at the town lights. The attack was to start at 6 in the morning. We couldn't wait until it started hoping to at least get warmer. At 6 the artillery preparation began and then we attacked. There was a lot of noise, shooting, yelling. Germans jumped out wearing just their underpants or a shirt. I was to stay near Major Gurov, chief of headquarters. I carried the radio and another soldier carried the battery box. When I fixed the connection, the major went ahead with the advancing unit and I had to remove the antenna and lost sight of him. I ran forward looking for him, when a woman came out of the house I passed and pointed at the shed. I had a gun and came closer to the shed. She let me know there was a cellar in it. I opened the lid and fired my gun. There were Germans in there, shouting, 'Hitler kaput!' I yelled, 'Get out of there, drop your weapons!' I spoke Russian and he spoke German, but we happened to understand each other. They came out of there. I wounded one on his arm.

I convoyed them to the headquarters, when I bumped into the chief of headquarters. He cursed at me. I said I had captured Germans, but he said he didn't need Germans, he needed communications. He was very angry and said all others would get awards for this battle, except me. Well, I had to support communications anyway. I settled in a cemetery, hung my antenna on a tree, turned on the radio - it worked. At dawn the Germans sent their tanks and infantry on us. They wanted to throw us back to the lake. An artillery captain was beside me sending messages to the artillery and 'Katyusha' units. If it hadn't been for this radio, we would have been thrown back into the lake. It lasted all day long till the Germans went away. It was quiet. This was a hard battle and we were allowed to rest for ten days. General Moskalenko, the army commander came to our positions and ordered to award all of us. I was awarded the Order of the Red Banner [28], and the chief of headquarters could do nothing about it.

I sent a letter addressed to my brothers and sister to my village. My brothers and sister happened to write there as well. And our co-villagers helped us to find each other. There were no Jews left in the village. Before the beginning of the war there were less than ten Jewish families staying in the village. The rest were Ukrainians. One of them named Tereschenko, who moved there before the war, became a policeman. They killed all Jews in the village. Our neighbors, the Brainus family, were very poor. The father of the family went to the front. His wife and four children were hiding in

the attic, but someone reported on them. They were killed. My Ukrainian neighbors told me about it.

My older brother wrote to me. He was in evacuation. I corresponded with Iosif. He finished an infantry school and went to the front in the rank of lieutenant. By the end of the war he was in the rank of captain. He was chief of the regiment intelligence unit in the 3rd Baltic Front near Konigsberg [today Kaliningrad, Russia]. He wrote to me saying that he wanted me to serve in his unit. His division headquarters sent a request about my transfer to the commanding officer of my unit. In March 1945 our commander of battalion asked me to tell my brother that we would meet after the war since my division needed me very much. He promised to let me go to my brother's unit after the war. I wrote the letter, but it returned with the stamp: 'The addressee is unavailable'. I knew what it meant. Later I got to know that my brother perished on 29th May 1945 in Eastern Prussia. My sister was in evacuation in Andijan, Uzbekistan. She worked as a medical nurse in a hospital. Later my brother Mikhail joined her and stayed to live in Andijan. He worked as a builder.

On 15th April 1945 our company demined a front line in a village in Slovakia. The commanding officer of my company was Kuznetsov and I was his subordinate. We were staying in a house, which happened rarely since we usually made earth huts or blindages. We were happy to stay in houses or sheds, when we managed. We stayed overnight and in the morning the bombing began. Shells and bombs were falling right next to the house. The commanding officer told us to run to the nearby forest. I needed about five minutes to pack the radio antenna. He told me to follow them as soon as I could. So, I packed my radio and ran after them. The shells and bombs were exploding around me. I decided to hide in a pit and wait till the bombing was over. I saw one and ran to it, when all of a sudden I felt something burning on my left side. I jumped into the pit and saw that my left arm and leg were injured, I was bleeding and felt pain.

I was lucky that our new chief of headquarters, Major Yegorov, needed to find our company immediately. He was told that the company was moving to the forest and he was going there, when he bumped into me. Yegorov knew me from the time I was his communication operator, when we were forcing our way across the Dnieper. He jumped into the pit where I was, took off his shirt, tore it to bands and applied them to my arm and leg. He also had to tear my shirt. I don't know how much time passed till two attendants with stretchers came by. Yegorov told them to help me, but they replied, 'He is not ours'. He pointed his gun to them and said that if they didn't help me he would kill them. They put me on their stretchers and we were off while Yegorov went to the forest.

When the bombing got stronger the attendants left me in an open area and went into hiding in pits. This happened several times. I was lucky. They managed to carry me as far as the forest where our sanitary plane Po-2 was waiting for all the wounded to take them to the rear. A medical nurse applied a bandage on me. They were sending the most severely wounded in the first turn. It wasn't until evening, when I was taken in the plane that took us to Glauchau in Germany. In Glauchau they put me on a wagon driven by an old German man, who moved to the hospital with me on my stretchers on his wagon. He stopped by a building and went in to find out which department was going to take me. He asked me to hold the reigns in my right hand. All of a sudden German planes appeared in the sky dropping bombs. The horse got scared and bolted till it ran into a shed and stopped. The old man was running around calling me. I responded and he took me to the hospital.

I stayed in Glauchau for about two weeks, almost till the end of the war. From there I was moved to a hospital in Lvov. I was there on 9th May 1945, Victory Day 29. We heard on the radio that Germany had signed the Pact of Unconditional Capitulation. We were happy, congratulated each other and made plans for our peaceful life. In the evening there were fireworks. Those who couldn't walk were taken outside on stretchers to watch the fireworks. At the end of the war I had the rank of senior sergeant.

The war was over and peaceful life began, but this was not the end of military service for me. The recruits, born in 1924, were to finish their compulsory service. After I was released from hospital in September 1945 I received an assignment to the 159th artillery fortification unit in Ostrog Rovno region. I was appointed commanding officer of the communication unit. Later this unit was disbanded and I was sent to the school of aircraft electric equipment mechanics in Vinnitsa. From Vinnitsa this school moved to the town of Dubno in Rovno region. I had almost all excellent marks in this school. I knew that after finishing this school I was to go to the Prikarpatskiy military unit near Lvov. I was also to get one month leave after finishing this school. I was eager to visit my brother and sister in Andijan.

At this time the election to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR 30 took place. A party official came to the meeting in our unit. Discussion of nominee names began and this official offered my name for discussion. I'd never been elected before, besides, this wasn't the time for me to work in the electoral commission that was appointed to work for three months before the election: I had scheduled to go on leave! I said, 'Why would you want to recommend me, when I don't know you and you don't know me'. What a mess it caused! This was the first election after the war, and I refused to take part in it. They expelled me from the Komsomol, cancelled my appointment to the Prikarpatskiy military unit and sent me to serve in Chkalov, present- day Orenburg, 2,000 kilometers away. They took away my decent uniform and gave me torn trousers and a torn shirt instead, and also a coat that was too long for me.

I had to change trains in Kiev. My father's older brother Aizik, whom I had never seen before, lived in Kiev. He was over 70 years old. I decided to visit him. I went to his house, saw my reflection in the window glass and felt so very uncomfortable about my shabby looks that I just left. In Orenburg I was sent to the Air Force fighter school. I was to become a mechanic. I lived in a barrack with other cadets.

One day in 1947 I was summoned to an office on the 1st floor. I came down and opened the door. There was a KGB major in the room: 'Come here. Are you Mistetskiy?' 'Right'. - 'Sit down'. I did. 'Did you sign up to work for us?' 'I did, but a long time ago'. 'Now you will be helping us'. I was bewildered. Nobody addressed me during this time and I was hoping they had forgotten about me. The major said I was to watch and listen to the discussions of a Russian and a Ukrainian man in our unit and report to him. Of course, I would never report on people. I already heard that even if one reported on people sooner or later they also arrested informers. So my situation was miserable. I couldn't tell these two that I was ordered to watch them since I had signed a non-disclosure paper and could be arrested if they found out that I had disclosed my mission to these two. And I couldn't report on their talks either. And I plotted a way out.

When this officer called me, I started telling him stories about how one of them was seeing a girl, or how he had stolen apples from the kolkhoz garden, when he was a child. And I told about another

man how he was concerned about his mother, and about his wife and children. The major explained that he didn't need this nonsense, but that he wanted to hear about their captivity and their thoughts about the Soviet power. I told him they never talked to me about it. The major told me to try and provoke them to an open discussion and report on the results to him. I recalled how in my childhood a dog tore my pants and how I went to school and next time I met with this major I told him the stories as if they had been told by these two men. I knew I couldn't just keep silent, but rather had to tell things in order to look serious. The major got angry and said that I was either a fool or pretended to be a fool and that he didn't want to deal with me again. He made me sign a non-disclosure paper and sent me away. They never addressed me again. I never told anyone how I 'helped' the KGB till the end of perestroika 31.

In 1948 Israel was established and recognized officially [see Balfour Declaration] 32. It meant for me that Jews finally had their own state. It seemed to me that Jews would never be oppressed or abused again and that our own state would protect us. I admired those who went there to build up their own country. I couldn't move there due to my army service, but I wanted to go so much.

Also, in 1948 the campaign against cosmopolitans 33 began. Newspapers and the radio reported on them. At first I believed that these people were guilty and so did most of our people, but gradually I stopped believing. I had already seen life and began to understand things.

After a year of my service a few military came from the Air Force school in Krasnograd, Kharkiv region [380 km from Kiev]. They selected several people, including me, for their school. I moved to Krasnograd. I studied there for some time and then the school was disbanded. They sent me to finish my studies in Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania. I corresponded with my sister and brother. My brother worked at a construction site in Andijan. My sister moved to Kiev and went to work as a medical nurse. Uncle Aizik had three families living in his two rooms, and she had to rent a room elsewhere. I was rather worried about her. She was 28 years old, but was still single. She had a small salary while she needed to pay her rent and support herself. I was to demobilize in 1950. I didn't have a place to live. My uncle had no vacant space and my sister didn't have a dwelling of her own. What was I to do? I decided to stay for additional service to earn some money. I received a salary of 550 rubles. This wasn't much, but I didn't spend much either. I was provided meals and I could save a little and send my sister some money to cover her rent. I served for a year and one month before my service was over. I was promoted to the rank of junior lieutenant. I must have been worth something.

The unit had old ply-wood planes. They began to dispose of them. There was a transition to jet aircraft. I got an offer to take up training in Germany. I considered it: I was 26 years old and if I were to go to Germany and start training again, how would I be able to achieve something? And I got tired of living without a home and a family. Of course, I was rather concerned about a civilian life. I was familiar with life in the army, but I was to face uncertainty there. In the end I made up my mind, demobilized and moved to Kiev. Uncle Aizik offered me to sleep in his closet in the attic while it was warm.

Since I was a veteran and demobilized from the army I obtained a residence permit 34, which was very hard to get in Kiev. This was important since it was impossible to get a job without this permission. I stayed five days in my uncle's home and then went out looking for a job that would also provide me accommodation. I was offered a job in the aircraft hangar where I could also put a

bed and live. I was about to agree, when I met my former schoolmate Haim Sokolovskiy, Yefim in Russian [see common name] 35, who had lived in our village. He finished an infantry military school and became an officer at the front. He demobilized after the war and got married. His relatives lived in Pogrebische district, Vinnitsa region, and Yefim and his wife moved there. He went to work as a supplier and was promoted to superintendent of a storage facility.

When we met he was the director of the Zhmerinka vegetable and fruit supply office. Haim said I wouldn't find a job and accommodation in Kiev, and that he could help me with a job in Vinnitsa region. I went to Vinnitsa with him. He also promised to help my sister find a job within two or three months. I went to Vinnitsa with Haim. I was sent to attend a course of commodity experts. While I studied, my sister married Ivan Antonenko, a Ukrainian man from Taganrog. She didn't change her last name, though. Ivan was born in 1909. He had a house in Taganrog and my sister moved there in 1951. Their son Valentin was born in the same year. Their second son, Victor, was born in 1958. Polina worked as a medical nurse there as well.

My uncle Lev, who had returned from the USA, had been at the front during the Great Patriotic War. He was wounded in his both legs. He had one leg amputated in hospital and was demobilized as an invalid. Some time later he had the other leg amputated. Lev died in Kiev in 1969. Uncle Aizik died in 1954.

After finishing my course I was appointed director of cattle breeding stocks in Lipovets. When going to the office I passed a house that seemed familiar to me. I recalled how during the war a fair-haired girl had given me some water in this house. I even recalled her name: Galina. When I came into the house, I asked the woman, who had opened the door for me, whether Galina was at home. He replied that Galina studied in the Pedagogical College in Uman. This woman was her mother, Yefrosinia Drinkovskaya. When Galina came home on vacation, I went to see her. She welcomed me warmly. Galina was born in 1928. Her younger sister, Lilia, was born in 1944. They lived with their mother. Yefrosinia was a janitor. Galina and I began to see each other. Then we got married and I moved into her house. After finishing college Galina went to work as an elementary school teacher in Lipovets.

I was a commodity expert: I received sheep wool from kolkhozes and assessed astrakhan fur skins. I was a decent worker, but I often heard unfair words and suffered just for being a Jew. This always happens: if something goes wrong, they will always find a Jew to blame. Doesn't matter, whose fault it is. People began to drink after the war. They drank at work and this wasn't considered to be a violation of rules. Our director was a retired lieutenant colonel, who didn't know a thing about our business, but liked commanding and yelling. He was always drunk at work. He was hard to deal with. I finally quit. I was sent to Tulchin in Vinnitsa region. Then I worked in Yampol and other towns of Vinnitsa region. I was appointed to do work as a good specialist, and my bosses asked me to train my replacement, when I was to take another job. My wife and children moved with me. Our older son Iosif, named after my deceased brother, was born in 1953 in Tulchin, and the younger, Anatoliy, was born in Tulchin in 1957. Our youngest, Lilia, was born in the town of Aratov, Vinnitsa region, in 1960.

I was working in Yampol in 1953 when the Doctors' Plot 36 began. At that time I knew that it was all undertaken against Jews. Anti-Semitism was growing stronger and people had hostile attitudes towards Jews. There were rumors that Jews were to be deported to the Far East. This lasted two

months. On 5th March 1953 Stalin died. People were openly crying and so was I, but when Nikita Khrushchev 37 spoke about the crimes of Stalin's regime at the Twentieth Party Congress 38, I believed him at once. We knew this all, but we didn't want to believe or admit this truth. I recalled the arrests in 1937, when they imprisoned outstanding people, military commanders and party activists. They told us back then that Yakir 39 and other military commanders were enemies of the people and we believed this, until it turned out they fell victim to unjust arrests. Everything Khrushchev said confirmed what I had in mind.

I didn't join the party. When I served in Vilnius, I became a candidate to the party. I had recommendations and everything necessary, but I demobilized before I joined the party. They sent me my documents from Vilnius, but after some time I decided to stay away from the party. I am an honest man, but it was impossible to remain honest at the job I had. To report fulfillment of their plans, kolkhozes had to falsify documents. For example, kolkhozes delivered sheep wool to my office. They didn't deliver any during the month, but at the end of it they start delivering 5-6 tons per day. I could only receive 1-2 tons per day, but who cared? The chairman of a kolkhoz came to see me. He said he was to report that the kolkhoz had fulfilled the plan, and that I could inspect the wool afterward. Everybody knew about such lies, but they all kept silent. I understood and didn't like it whatsoever. I had to always act against my conscience. I decided I didn't want to join the party that accepted lies.

I faced everyday and state anti-Semitism. There were few Jews left in Vinnitsa region after the war. I was the only Jew in my town, and there were only five Jewish families in the district. There were Russian and Ukrainian people in my surrounding. I worked well and everyone recognized this, but still, they awarded the title of pace makers to others, who didn't work better than me, but they were not Jews. Of course, not all people I met were anti-Semitic and I got along well with many, but when a person came in and cursed me without any reason, just because I was a Jew - I felt hurt. If there is one scum among 100 people this is sufficient for a Jew. Even when a drunk man abuses you, it hurts. It was more difficult for me to work, being a Jew, though district and regional authorities knew and trusted me.

My wife and I saved money to build a house in Lipovets. I gave our savings to my mother-in-law, but when the construction was finished, she didn't want to give us the house. I had to sue her, and the court issued its verdict in our favor. In 1962 my family moved to Lipovets.

My wife is Ukrainian and we didn't observe Jewish traditions at home. We celebrated Soviet holidays: 1st May, 7th November [see October Revolution Day] 40, Victory Day, Soviet Army Day 41, New Year's. We always celebrated our birthdays. We invited guests and had jolly parties.

My older son Iosif entered a medical school after finishing the 8th grade. After finishing medical school he joined the army. Iosif served in Germany. He was an assistant doctor in a medical unit. My son wanted to become a doctor. After demobilization he went to take entrance exams for the Medical College in Kiev. He failed. My acquaintance's son was assistant professor in this college. I asked him for help. I just wanted him to help with an unprejudiced attitude to my son. During the Soviet period it was hard for Jews to enter higher educational institutions. We went to Kiev and met with this man. He clearly indicated to us that there was an unspoken rule not to admit Jews. My son didn't try another time. He married Tatiana Derun, a Ukrainian girl, and they moved to Anapa in the Caucasus [1,000 km from Kiev]. Tatiana was born in 1959. She finished a trade school. She works

in a store now. Iosif works as an assistant doctor. They have two children: Yelena, born in 1979, and Alexandr, born in 1985.

Our son Anatoliy moved to my sister in Taganrog after finishing the 8th grade where he entered the electric engineering faculty of the metallurgical technical school. After this school he received the diploma of an electrician and joined the army. He served in Czechoslovakia. After demobilization he moved to Kiev and went to work as an electrician with the Kiev metro. Later he went to work at a garage. Anatoliy was married three times. Victor, his son in the first marriage, was born in 1980, Vladislav, in the second marriage, was born in 1989. Anatoliy is now married for the third time. His wife Diana Voloshkova, a Ukrainian, was born in 1981. She works in an audit office. Their son Arseniy will turn three soon. They live in Kiev.

My daughter finished the Pedagogical College in Vinnitsa. She married Sergey Riabokon, a Ukrainian. They are the same age. Lilia didn't change her surname. Lilia worked as a teacher in a kindergarten. Lilia's first daughter, Svetlana, was born in 1981, and her second, Anna, in 1987. In 1992 Lilia died in an accident. Sergey's mother, who lives in Vinnitsa, is raising her daughters. Of course, my wife and I support them and send them money and gifts. It's hard to outlive one's child. This grief will never go away.

In the 1970s mass emigration of Jews to Israel began. I didn't consider moving there: my wife and children wouldn't have come with me, and I couldn't imagine my life without them. I understood people who were leaving the USSR and sympathized with them. They wanted to run away from anti- Semitism and humiliations; they didn't want to be second-rate people. I thought they were right. Once a fellow train passenger from Georgia told me he was going to Israel soon. I asked him why and he said he had a good apartment, a good job, but he didn't want anybody to call him a zhyd [kike], and didn't want to be humiliated. Most Jews were leaving for this reason.

In the early 1990s my older brother, Mikhail, moved to Israel. He had a hard life. Mikhail got married after the war. I don't remember his wife's name. His older son, Israel, was born in 1950. His second son, Valeriy, was born in 1955, and two months later Mikhail's wife died. My brother never remarried. Mikhail worked at a construction site and sent his children to a children's home because he had no time to raise them. After finishing school his older son became an apprentice to a turner at a plant and then stayed to work at the plant. He got married and had three sons. Mikhail's younger son entered the Polytechnic College in Andijan. After finishing college he went to work as an engineer at a design office. Valeriy had one son. In 1990 Uzbek people forced Russians and Jews to leave their lands. The situation was dangerous there. Mikhail's older son and his family moved to Rzhev, Moscow region. He was a highly skilled turner, but it was hard for him to support his family. His wife couldn't find a job and they had three children. I supported them as much as I could. They decided to move to Israel. My second nephew and his wife moved to Rostov where his wife came from. Later Valeriy and his family and my brother also decided to move to Israel. They live in Arad, Hadarom. They have a good life and no regrets for leaving.

I have never concealed my Jewish identity. In 1967 Israel defeated the Arabs [in the Six-Day-War] 42, and I used to say proudly that even the weapons supplied by the USSR didn't help them much. I am proud that Jews managed to turn the stone desert into a blooming garden, that this little country prospers, though it is surrounded by enemies. Of course, I wish Israel peace and quiet from the bottom of my heart. I know what a war is like and I know it from first-hand experience. The war

that is on-going in Israel today is even more horrific - it has no front line or rear and each citizen of Israel is on a fire line.

My sister Polina lives in Taganrog. Her husband, Ivan Antonenko, died in 2003 at the age of 94. She lives alone: both her sons moved to the USA after the breakup of the USSR. I have no contact with them. My sister and I write to each other and I call her every month. My wife and I used to visit her once a year before, but now I have heart problems, and my wife fell ill with bronchial asthma after our daughter died. My sister has everything she needs for life, but she suffers from loneliness very much.

I've kept in touch with my comrades-in-arms. They found me through a newspaper, and since then we have been meeting in Vinnitsa every year on 20th March, the day of the liberation of Vinnitsa. It's sad that each year there are fewer of us, veterans. Last time there were only five of us at this meeting. The rest are gone.

By the 20th anniversary of the victory over Germany I was awarded the Order of the Great Patriotic War, 1st grade. I have medals for the liberation of towns, memorial medals to the jubilees of victory. I wear my awards when I meet with my fellow veterans and on Victory Day. It's no secret that many people believe that there were no Jews at the front and that they just 'fought' in Tashkent [Editor's note: Tashkent was the town where many people evacuated to during the Great Patriotic War, including many Jewish families. Many people thought that the whole Jewish population was in evacuation rather than at the front and anti-Semites spoke about it in mocking tones.] Once I wore my orders, when a man asked me, 'What, you fought at the front?' Once a woman approached me and said that her father was killed at the front, and I was showing off with my orders. I was very annoyed. I'm sorry that her father was killed, but was it my fault that I survived? I fought honestly and never hid behind anybody's back, and I deserved my awards.

When Mikhail Gorbachev 43 started perestroika in the USSR in the late 1980s, I was enthusiastic about it. I liked it that they allowed private businesses and thought that it was to be for the good of the country and the people. It's no good, when everything is common property. When there is no owner, nobody cares about things, but in reality hardly anything changed. Many government people hindered perestroika and didn't give way to Gorbachev. This finally resulted in the breakup of the USSR. Many people say that it was better during the Soviet regime, and that they want the Union back, but I believe that the USSR was about to break up, it had existed too long anyway.

I don't agree that life was better during the Soviet regime. It's just that some people have short memory. I thought that when Ukraine became independent and people would work for themselves, life would become better, but it didn't happen. Either people have forgotten to work decently or they are not given such opportunity. Former kolkhoz farms are deserted, plants closed. Factories don't operate, land isn't farmed. When they tell me that Jews don't work I always reply that Israel stands on mountains and stones, but Israeli people feed their own country and export grain and ask for no alms while Ukraine with its black soil that nobody else in the world probably has, is starving. So, is this the fault of Jews? I think, there is no state anti-Semitism, but there are everyday demonstrations of it.

In 1992 I was given the status of a war invalid. It's hard for me to walk, my wounded leg bothers me. The military office provided me a small capacity car. I retired in 1996 and my younger son Anatoliy convinced me to move to Kiev into his apartment. He lived with his wife. My wife was very

ill, and here the hospital is close by. When we moved to Kiev, I was allowed a piece of land for a garage for my car near the house, being an invalid of the war. We constructed a garage where I brought my car from Lipovets and immediately my neighbor commented that he couldn't get a place for his garage, but I, being a cunning Jew, managed to get this space. I really think it will take more than one generation before anti-Semitism disappears from our life.

Hesed 44 helps us a lot. They deliver food packages, free medications, and that's a great support for us, pensioners. We receive little pensions, lower than the living minimum. There are also interesting lectures in Hesed, clubs, concerts, and we celebrate birthdays and Jewish holidays there. I rarely go to Hesed - it's a long way to drive, which is too much for me, but I always attend concerts of Jewish songs and music, however hard it may be for me. I like this so much. I also regularly receive and read Jewish newspapers. When I moved to Kiev, I got to know that there is an association of Jewish war veterans and I registered there right away. I try to attend all meetings there.

I would like the attitude towards Jews to change. As long as this world has existed people have believed Jews to be their enemies. May our children and grandchildren live in a world with no anti-Semitism. May they achieve everything in life by means of labor and knowledge. May they have a happy life.

Glossary:

1 Russian Revolution of 1917
Revolution in which the tsarist regime was overthrown in the Russian Empire and, under Lenin, was replaced by the Bolshevik rule. The two phases of the Revolution were: February Revolution, which came about due to food and fuel shortages during World War I, and during which the tsar abdicated and a provisional government took over. The second phase took place in the form of a coup led by Lenin in October/November (October Revolution) and saw the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks.

2 Jewish Pale of Settlement
Certain provinces in the Russian Empire were designated for permanent Jewish residence and the Jewish population was only allowed to live in these areas. The Pale was first established by a decree by Catherine II in 1791. The regulation was in force until the Russian Revolution of 1917, although the limits of the Pale were modified several times. The Pale stretched from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, and 94% of the total Jewish population of Russia, almost 5 million people, lived there. The overwhelming majority of the Jews lived in the towns and shtetls of the Pale. Certain privileged groups of Jews, such as certain merchants, university graduates and craftsmen working in certain branches, were granted to live outside the borders of the Pale of Settlement permanently.

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

4 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.

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 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.

7 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.

8 Denikin, Anton Ivanovich (1872-1947)

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

9 Keep in touch with relatives abroad

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

10 Kolkhoz

In the Soviet Union the policy of gradual and voluntary collectivization of agriculture was adopted in 1927 to encourage food production while freeing labor and capital for industrial development. In 1929, with only 4% of farms in kolkhozes, Stalin ordered the confiscation of peasants' land, tools, and animals; the kolkhoz replaced the family farm.

11 Jewish collective farms

Such farms were established in the Ukraine in the 1930s during the period of collectivization.

12 Agro-Joint (American Jewish Joint Agricultural Corporation)

The Agro- Joint, established in 1924, with the full support of the Soviet government aimed at helping the resettlement of Jews on collective farms in the South of Ukraine and the Crimea. The Agro-Joint purchased land, livestock and agricultural machinery and funded housing construction. It also established many trade schools to train Jews in agriculture and in metal, woodworking, printing and other skills. The work of Agro-Joint was made increasingly difficult by the Soviet authorities, and it finally dissolved in 1938. In all, some 14,000 Jewish families were settled on the land, and thus saved from privation and the loss of civil rights, which was the lot of all except for workers and peasants. By 1938, however, large numbers left the colonies, attracted by the cities, and most of those who stayed were murdered by the Germans.

13 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.

14 NKVD

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

15 Young Octobrist

In Russian Oktyabrenok, or 'pre-pioneer', designates Soviet children of seven years or over preparing for entry into the pioneer organization.

16 All-Union pioneer organization

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

17 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.

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

19 Kirov, Sergey (born Kostrikov) (1886-1934)
Soviet communist. He joined the Russian Social Democratic Party in 1904. During the Revolution of 1905 he was arrested; after his release he joined the Bolsheviks and was arrested several more times for revolutionary activity. He occupied high positions in the hierarchy of the Communist Party. He was a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, as well as of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee. He was a loyal supporter of Stalin. In 1934 Kirov's popularity had increased and Stalin showed signs of mistrust. In December of that year Kirov was assassinated by a younger party member. It is believed that Stalin ordered the murder, but it has never been proven.

20 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact
Non-aggression pact between Germany and the Soviet Union, which became known under the name of Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Engaged in a border war with Japan in the Far East and fearing the German advance in the west, the Soviet government began secret negotiations for a non-aggression pact with Germany in 1939. In August 1939 it suddenly announced the conclusion of a Soviet-German agreement of friendship and non- aggression. The Pact contained a secret clause providing for the partition of Poland and for Soviet and German spheres of influence in Eastern Europe.

21 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.

22 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.

23 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.

24 Transnistria

Area situated between the Bug and Dniester rivers and the Black Sea. The term is derived from the Romanian name for the Dniester (Nistru) and was coined after the occupation of the area by German and Romanian troops in World War II. After its occupation Transnistria became a place for deported Romanian Jews. Systematic deportations began in September 1941. In the course of the next two months, all surviving Jews of Bessarabia and Bukovina and a small part of the Jewish population of Old Romania were dispatched across the Dniester. This first wave of deportations reached almost 120,000 by mid-November 1941 when it was halted by Ion Antonescu, the Romanian dictator, upon intervention of the Council of Romanian Jewish Communities. Deportations resumed at the beginning of the summer of 1942, affecting close to 5,000 Jews. A third series of deportations from Old Romania took place in July 1942, affecting Jews who had evaded forced labor decrees, as well as their families, communist sympathizers and Bessarabian Jews who had been in Old Romania and Transylvania during the Soviet occupation. The most feared Transnistrian camps were Vapniarka, Ribnita, Berezovka, Tulcin and Iampol. Most of the Jews deported to camps in Transnistria died between 1941-1943 because of horrible living conditions, diseases and lack of food.

25 KGB

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

26 Gulag

The Soviet system of forced labor camps in the remote regions of Siberia and the Far North, which was first established in 1919. However, it was not until the early 1930s that there was a significant number of inmates in the camps. By 1934 the Gulag, or the Main Directorate for Corrective Labor Camps, then under the Cheka's successor organization the NKVD, had several million inmates. The prisoners included murderers, thieves, and other common criminals, along with political and religious dissenters. The Gulag camps made significant contributions to the Soviet economy during the rule of Stalin. Conditions in the camps were extremely harsh. After Stalin died in 1953, the population of the camps was reduced significantly, and conditions for the inmates improved

somewhat.

27 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.

28 Order of the Red Star
Established in 1930, it was awarded for achievements in the defense of the motherland, the promotion of military science and the development of military equipments, and for courage in battle. The Order of the Red Star has been awarded over 4,000,000 times.

29 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.

30 The Supreme Soviet (Verhovniy Sovet, literally the 'Supreme Council')
comprised the highest legislative body in the Soviet Union and the only one with the power to pass constitutional amendments. It elected the Presidium, formed the Supreme Court, and appointed the Procurator General of the USSR. It was made up of two chambers, each with equal legislative powers, with members elected for five-year terms: the Soviet of the Union, elected on the basis of population with one deputy for every 300,000 people in the Soviet federation, the Soviet of Nationalities, supposed to represent the ethnic populations, with members elected on the basis of 25 deputies from each union republic, 11 from each autonomous republic, five from each autonomous region, and one from each autonomous area.

31 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.

32 Balfour Declaration

British foreign minister Lord Balfour published a declaration in 1917, which in principle supported the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. At the beginning, the British supported the idea of a Jewish national home, but under the growing pressure from the Arab world, they started restricting Jewish immigration to Palestine. However, underground Jewish organizations provided support for the illegal immigration of Jews. In 1947 the United Nations voted to allow the establishment of a Jewish state and the State of Israel was proclaimed in May 1948.

33 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'.

34 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.

35 Common name

Russified or Russian first names used by Jews in everyday life and adopted in official documents. The Russification of first names was one of the manifestations of the assimilation of Russian Jews at the turn of the 19th and 20th century. In some cases only the spelling and pronunciation of Jewish names was russified (e.g. Isaac instead of Yitskhak; Boris instead of Borukh), while in other cases traditional Jewish names were replaced by similarly sounding Russian names (e.g. Eugenia instead of Ghita; Yury instead of Yuda). When state anti-Semitism intensified in the USSR at the end of the 1940s, most Jewish parents stopped giving their children traditional Jewish names to avoid discrimination.

36 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.

37 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.

38 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.

39 Yakir

One of the founders of the Communist Party in Ukraine. In 1938 he was arrested and executed.

40 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.

41 Soviet Army Day

The Russian imperial army and navy disintegrated after the outbreak of the Revolution of 1917, so the Council of the People's Commissars created the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army on a voluntary basis. The first units distinguished themselves against the Germans on February 23, 1918. This day became the 'Day of the Soviet Army' and is nowadays celebrated as 'Army Day'.

42 Six-Day-War

The first strikes of the Six-Day-War happened on 5th June 1967 by the Israeli Air Force. The entire war only lasted 132 hours and 30 minutes. The fighting on the Egyptian side only lasted four days, while fighting on the Jordanian side lasted three. Despite the short length of the war, this was one of the most dramatic and devastating wars ever fought between Israel and all of the Arab nations. This war resulted in a depression that lasted for many years after it ended. The Six-Day-War increased tension between the Arab nations and the Western World because of the change in

mentalities and political orientations of the Arab nations.

43 Gorbachev, Mikhail (1931-)

Soviet political leader. Gorbachev joined the Communist Party in 1952 and gradually moved up in the party hierarchy. In 1970 he was elected to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, where he remained until 1990. In 1980 he joined the politburo, and in 1985 he was appointed general secretary of the party. In 1986 he embarked on a comprehensive program of political, economic, and social liberalization under the slogans of glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring). The government released political prisoners, allowed increased emigration, attacked corruption, and encouraged the critical reexamination of Soviet history. The Congress of People's Deputies, founded in 1989, voted to end the Communist Party's control over the government and elected Gorbachev executive president. Gorbachev dissolved the Communist Party and granted the Baltic states independence. Following the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States in 1991, he resigned as president. Since 1992, Gorbachev has headed international organizations.

44 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.