Iosif Gurevich

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Iosif Gurevich and his wife Ludmila live in a two-bedroom apartment in a five-storied 1970s building in a new district of Uzhgorod. They have a similar way of speaking and are both nice and friendly. Iosif and Ludmila make a wonderful couple. They are caring and loving partners. The first thing that attracts a visitor's attention in their apartment is the large number of books. Iosif has always been fond of reading. After he retired he got the opportunity to spend as much time reading as he wished. He collected books with a great fondness. There is a selection of books by contemporary writers in his collection. Iosif is a man of average height. There is something boyish and naughty in his eyes and smile. He has a wonderful sense of humor. When he was telling me stories about his childhood and about the provincial town, where he spent his childhood, I couldn't help laughing. Iosif has not left his home since his heart attack. He suffers a lot from lack of communication with the outer world. During the interview he had heartaches several times. I offered him to postpone the interview, but he refused. Iosif willingly spoke about his family. There are pictures of his family and his wife's family on the walls and the bookshelves. Iosif knows many poems by heart. He recited some to me.

My family background

My father's family lived in a village, six kilometers from the small town of Konotop [in Sumy region, about 300 km from Kiev]. I don't remember the name of the village. It was an old Ukrainian village where several Jewish families lived. The Ukrainians were farmers and the Jews were tradesmen and craftsmen for the most part. There was no synagogue in the village. On Saturdays and Jewish holidays Jewish men went to the synagogue in a neighboring village, two kilometers from their home village. All Jews in the village observed Jewish traditions and followed the kashrut. There was

also a shochet in the village. Both poor and rich families celebrated Sabbath and Jewish holidays. If a boy was born to a Jewish family all Jewish men came to the brit milah ritual on the 8th day. Boys had their bar mitzvah at the age of 13. Jews and Ukrainians got along well and helped each other. Every Jewish family had Ukrainian friends that came on Saturdays to light the lamp and stoke the stove. There were no pogroms 1 in the village.

My paternal grandfather Tevel Gurevich was born in this village in 1864. My grandmother Frida was born in 1865. I don't have any information about her place of birth or her maiden name. My father didn't tell me anything about his family.

My grandfather owned a mill before the Revolution of 1917 2. All members of the family worked at the mill. My father told me that it was a good source of income for the family. He didn't tell me anything about their house, however, and I've never been to the village where he lived. They were an ordinary Jewish family, did their business and lived according to all Jewish laws. They were religious, went to the synagogue, celebrated Jewish holidays and followed the kashrut. They spoke Yiddish at home. They were real Jews.

I remember Grandfather Tevel well. He was a tall broad-shouldered man with a beard and payes. He wore a black silk yarmulka at home and a hat outside. On weekdays he wore casual peasant's clothes. When he went to the synagogue on Sabbath and Jewish holidays he put on a long, black jacket. He was very strong, even in his old age. From what I remember he was never ill and never complained that he was tired or not feeling well.

My grandmother was a short, good-humored Jewish woman. She always had a nice smile and a kind word for other people. I remember her wearing long, dark clothes. On hot summer days she wore blouses with a high collar and long sleeves. She didn't wear a wig, but always had a kerchief on her head. Like all other women in Konotop, she went to the synagogue on Jewish holidays.

My grandmother gave birth to ten children. Only seven of them survived. The oldest, Shaya, was born in 1888. Then came two daughters: Esfir, born in 1891 and Bertha, born in 1893. Ilia followed in 1895 and Chaim was born in 1896. My father Samuel was born in 1898, and Iona, the youngest, followed in 1899.

All children had classes at home with a melamed. They learned to read and write in Hebrew and Yiddish, prayers, the Torah and the Talmud and Jewish traditions. All, except for Ilia, only finished two years at the Ukrainian elementary school in the village. My grandfather provided a better education for Ilia, though. Ilia finished a lower secondary school in Konotop and went on to studied in an accountant college. I was acquainted with all my father's brothers and sisters. They were nice and decent people. All sons worked at their father's mill, and the daughters helped my grandmother about the house.

After the Revolution of 1917 the Soviet authorities began to put a lot of pressure on my grandfather. He had to pay high taxes. The only reason why they didn't expropriate his mill was because he didn't hire employees. During the period of the NEP 3 the family business improved. This lasted until 1923 when the Soviet authorities did expropriate the mill. The family had nothing to live on any more. It was impossible to find a job in a small village, so they moved to Konotop, where it was easier to find work and support the family.

After moving to Konotop my father's older brother, Shaya, worked at the state-run grits facility. He was a tall and beautiful man. He had a Jewish wife and three children. When Shaya lived in Konotop he was religious. He observed Jewish traditions and went to the synagogue. Before the Great Patriotic War 4 his family moved to Moscow. Shaya couldn't go to the synagogue or celebrate Sabbath there. The Soviet authorities persecuted religion, although the constitution of the USSR stated that religion was each individual's private business. However, it was officially considered that religion was alien to Soviet people. Shaya and his family celebrated Jewish holidays at home. He died in Moscow in 1969. Shaya's grandchildren, my nephews and nieces, live in Moscow now.

My father's sister Esfir got married in Konotop. She and her husband moved to Leningrad. I don't remember her husband's name. Esfir had two children. She was a housewife. During the Great Patriotic War Esfir and her children were in the blockade of Leningrad 5. Her husband perished at the front and her children starved to death. Esfir was the only survivor. After the Great Patriotic War she moved to Moscow and lived with Shaya's family. Esfir died in 1970.

My father's sister Bertha was single. She lived with her parents in Konotop and helped my grandmother about the house. Bertha died in Konotop in 1971.

My father's brother Ilia was married and had a son called Ilia. He lived in Kursk with his family and worked as chief accountant at a big sugar factory. Ilia wasn't religious and didn't observe Jewish holidays. My uncle had tuberculosis which caused his untimely death. When I was 13 I went to a pioneer camp in a pinewood near Konotop where my father rented a house for Ilia. The air in pinewoods was good for him. Ilia stayed there the whole summer and then my father took him back to Kursk. Ilia died in 1938.

I have no information about Chaim. I only saw a picture of him. My father didn't tell me anything about him. I also know very little about my father's younger brother Iona. He was mentally ill. He died in a mental hospital in Kiev in 1939. My father went to his funeral in Kiev. Iona was buried in accordance with Jewish traditions in the Lukianovka Jewish cemetery 6 in Kiev. In 1960 this cemetery was destroyed and a TV tower was erected on the site. We got no notification and couldn't remove Iona's ashes to another cemetery.

Jewish life in Konotop

My grandparents on my mother's side came from Konotop. My grandfather, Arkadi Simonovski, was born in 1870. I don't remember my grandmother's name. I just know what my mother told me about her. My grandmother was born in 1871 and died in 1924, the year when I was born.

Konotop was a small patriarchal town. I remember the town from the time when I was a child. The population was 35-40,000 people. Konotop and its outskirts stretched for a distance of about 3 x 3 kilometers. There was a big railroad station, four kilometers from town, and a big military airfield and an aviation regiment. There was a small cinema in the main street, shops, a pharmacy and a fire brigade. We often went to the cinema where we listened to music in the hall before the screening of a movie. A violin, a grand piano and a saxophone player were in the foyer of the cinema. A circus came on tour to our town. It performed in the park. Our whole family went to see the circus.

In the evenings and on Saturdays and Sundays the residents of the town liked to go for a walk in Konotop. There were mainly one-storied houses and just a few two-storied ones in the center of the town. The Jews didn't have their own neighborhood; their houses were scattered among Ukrainian houses. There were Jewish doctors, teachers and lawyers. There were wealthy Jewish tradesmen during the NEP period. The majority of Jews were craftsmen and many worked at the plant. There were two big plants in Konotop: a big mechanic plant for the manufacturing of mining equipment and a locomotive repair plant at the railway station. At 7 o'clock in the morning the factory sirens woke up the town. There was also a siren at lunchtime and at the end of the working day.

There was a synagogue on the outskirts of Konotop, not far from our house. Once my father took me to the synagogue. It was a two-storied wooden house. There were also Torah scrolls there. I was surprised that women were sitting on the balcony. This was the only time I was at the synagogue. There was a cheder near the synagogue and a Jewish school. The cheder and school were small. The Soviet authorities persecuted religion. Fewer and fewer Jews sent their children to the cheder and the Jewish school. The language of teaching at higher educational institutions was Russian. Jewish parents wanted their children to have fewer problems in the future. If they studied in Jewish schools they had fluent Yiddish but poor Russian, which might have become a problem for their further studies.

There was no anti-Semitism and Ukrainian and Jewish families lived next to each other without having any conflicts. There was a shochet in town. The Jews bought chickens at the market and took them to the shochet. Poor Jews were deeply religious while wealthier people with education hardly ever observed Jewish traditions. My mother's family was like that.

My mother

Grandfather Arkadi owned a crockery store, which was expropriated. He became either a shop assistant or a commodity manager at another store, I don't exactly remember. All those events had their impact on my grandfather and he died at the end of 1925. My grandmother was a German teacher in a Russian grammar school for girls in Konotop. There were only male teachers at the grammar school for boys while there were many female teachers in the school for girls. My mother told me that they had male teachers in mathematics, drawing and religion for Christian children when she was in school. The rest of the teachers were women. After the Revolution of 1917 the grammar school was closed.

My grandparents had five children. The oldest, Riva, was born in 1898. The second one was my mother Elizaveta, born in 1900. Then came Nyunia, born in 1903. The fourth daughter was Rosalia, born in 1905 and the youngest, Sonia, followed in 1908.

My mother's parents weren't religious. They didn't even speak Yiddish at home. None of my mother's sisters knew Yiddish. They spoke fluent Russian. They didn't observe any Jewish traditions at home. I know for sure that they didn't celebrate Sabbath. I cannot say for sure whether they celebrated Jewish holidays or not, but I don't think they did. None of the daughters was religious. I knew all of them and my mother, who didn't observe Jewish traditions, wasn't an exception in her family. They were all raised that way.

My mother and her sisters received secular education. They finished Russian grammar school where they learned to play the piano and sing. Riva was the only one that continued her education.

She moved to Kiev where she finished a college. Upon graduation she married a Russian man. After her marriage she finished another college. I don't know if she worked. She left her husband some time before the Great Patriotic War. He became a drunkard. They didn't have children. My father visited her in Kiev. That was before Riva divorced her husband. My father stayed there one day and returned home. He said that Riva suffered a lot from her husband's behavior. She stayed in Kiev and perished in Babi Yar 7 at the beginning of the war.

My mother's sister Nyunia lived in Konotop. She was married, but had no children. Nyunia worked as a typist at the Statistics Department. She was in evacuation in the Ural during the Great Patriotic War and returned to Konotop after the war. She died in Konotop in 1956. She was buried in the town cemetery.

My mother's younger sisters, Rosalia and Sonia, were very young when their parents died. When my mother got married she took them into our family. They lived with us until they got married. They married two Jewish brothers, Isaac and Evsey Shmerkins. Shortly after the wedding the two families moved to Priluki, a small town [about 150 km from Kiev]. The sisters were skilled typists and their husbands were qualified bakers. They were wealthy; our family wasn't. Before the war my mother and I visited them once. Our visit lasted three days. After my grandmother died my mother was like a mother to her sisters and they loved her dearly. They were very happy when we came to see them. They spoke about their life with my mother, tried to entertain and feed us well. When we were leaving they gave us presents and some money. After the Great Patriotic War both families settled down in Lvov. Rosalia had a daughter: Esfir. In 1991 Rosalia, her husband and daughter's family moved to Australia. She died in Australia in 1992. Sonia and her husband had a son, Arkadi, named after his grandfather. He finished Lvov Polytechnic College and got a job assignment to a heating power plant in Simferopol, Crimea. Sonia died in Lvov in 1985. After her death her husband moved to their son in Simferopol where he died in 1995.

Growing up

My parents met when my mother studied at grammar school. There were often balls arranged at their school. My father used to come to these parties in a horse-driven carriage. He was a handsome and well-dressed guy and managed to impress my mother, although they were different in many respects. There was a romantic story in my mother's life. During the Civil War 8, after the Revolution of 1917, Germans came to Ukraine. I guess this happened in 1919. A young German officer and my mother fell in love. He wanted to take her to Germany. When my mother's father heard about it he tied my mother to the table. The Germans left and my mother stayed in Konotop. Perhaps, my mother married my father to forget what had happened back then.

My parents got married in 1923. I don't think they had a traditional Jewish wedding. I believe they had a civil wedding. Well, at least my religious grandfather Tevel never once came to the house. Grandmother Frida often came to see us, but my grandfather didn't. I guess, he must have had a good reason for that.

My mother became a housewife after she got married. My father did badly paid manual work. My parents were poor. They rented a small 15-square-meter room in a one-storied house with two porches and entrance doors on the outskirts of town. There was a small river in this neighborhood where I liked to play when I was a child.

I was born on 11th March 1924 and I was named Iosif. My father insisted that I was circumcised in accordance with the Jewish traditions. My maternal grandfather Arkadi liked me a lot and was happy that there was a man in the family since he only had daughters. My mother told me that my grandfather never let go of me. Somehow there were no notes made at my birth, so my grandfather registered me in April 1925. Therefore, all my documents, including my birth certificate, state that I was born on 5th April 1925. Perhaps, my grandfather saved my life unintentionally because I was only recruited to the army at the very end of the war. My brother Arkadi was born on 11th March 1932. On the 8th day after his birth he had his brit milah. I remember that my grandfather Tevel came to our house and watched the process through the window. After the circumcision all attendants sat at the table where it had been carried out and had a meal. My grandfather was standing by the window and didn't come into the house.

Grandfather Tevel died in 1933 during the time of the famine in Ukraine 9. I remember his funeral. I was nine years old then. My father took me to the room where my grandfather was lying on the floor covered with a black blanket. The mirror was also covered with black cloth. My father and I left our shoes at the threshold and entered the room barefoot. There were relatives and neighbors in the room and the women were sobbing. My father didn't take me to the cemetery. My grandfather was buried in accordance with Jewish traditions in the Jewish cemetery in Konotop. My father recited the Kaddish. He couldn't sit shivah because he had to work.

Grandmother Frida always came to visit us on Jewish holidays. She gave my brother and me Chanukkah gelt on Chanukkah and brought hamantashen on Purim. She also visited us on ordinary days. My father's older brother Shaya took grandmother to his family after grandfather died. When he moved to Moscow with his family in the 1930s my grandmother refused to go and went to her daughter Esfir in Leningrad. My grandmother died during the blockade of Leningrad in 1941. She remained religious throughout her life. I know this from Uncle Shaya.

Soon after my brother was born we moved into a brick house for four families across the street from our old house. The Russian stove 10 was stoked with wood since coal was way too expensive. We didn't have much furniture: a table, my parents' bed with nickel-plated balls on four posts; I slept on a squeaky wooden bed and my brother Arkadi slept in his cradle. There were self-made rugs on the floor. My mother kept the room very tidy. She got very angry when my father didn't wash himself immediately after he came home from work. He didn't feel an urge to do so and that drove my mother mad.

My father was an ordinary man who grew up in a Ukrainian village. He had Ukrainian friends when he was young. He was kind and sociable. He didn't have any profession. All he knew was how to grind grain, which didn't require any intellectual efforts. He worked as a loader, joiner and mechanic. He was almost illiterate. My father wanted to go to a drivers' school, but failed at the exams because he had only studied at school for two years. My mother was different. She got a good education, liked to read and knew a lot about music. My father found it boring and unnecessary. However poor we were my mother tried to keep up with her standards. She made her own clothes. Even though she wore dresses made from cheap fabric or altered from old clothes they were always up-to-date. Her clothes were impeccably clean and ironed. My mother raised my brother and me while my father was always at work. My father liked drinking since his colleagues drank at work. He often came home drunk. Of course, my mother, my brother and I were very unhappy about it. He liked to dress up and have a stroll in the town. That's the kind of man he was,

and, what could one do about it?

There was no running water in Konotop. We fetched water from a water pump about 400 meters from our house. I fetched water in buckets on a yoke. There was a period in the early 1930s when water was sold. Aunt Bertha and my grandmother were hired to sell water. There was a shed in the street with taps in front of it. My grandmother and Aunt Bertha were sitting inside the shed. A bucket of water cost 1 kopek. We used the water for cooking and minor washing. We went to the sauna to wash ourselves.

We bought food at the market. My mother had to work miracles to feed our family of four. We had all necessary clothes and enough food; the only time when we didn't have enough food was during the period of the famine in 1932- 33. My mother boiled potato peels and goosefoot grass then. Those were hard years. Many villagers traveled to towns looking for food and work. They were dying in hundreds. Several times a day a horse-driven cab drove across the town picking up corpses.

Our religious life

We only spoke Russian in our family. My father sometimes addressed my mother in Yiddish, but she always replied in Russian. I didn't learn any Yiddish. I wish I knew Yiddish. My mother wasn't religious. We didn't observe any Jewish traditions or celebrate holidays. My mother used to say, 'I don't need matzah. I'd rather have a dozen cakes'. My grandmother always brought us some matzah on Pesach. On Jewish holidays my father always went to his older brother Shaya where my grandmother lived. My mother didn't let my brother or me go there because she believed that we didn't need to be involved in those outdated celebrations.

My father had all religious accessories at home: tefillin, tallit and a prayer book. Early in the morning, before he went to work, he prayed. He never taught my brother or me how to pray. Perhaps, he didn't do it because my mother was against it. On holidays he went to the synagogue. Once my father took me to the synagogue. I remember something round-shaped in the middle and Jewish men going around this round-shaped something. [Editor's note: Iosif must be talking about the festival of Simchat Torah when the men walk around the bimah 7 times with the Torah scrolls in their hands. The round-shaped something is the bimah.] There were also Torah scrolls. I was surprised that women were sitting on the balcony. This was the only time I was at the synagogue. I wish I had been there more often.

The Orthodox synagogue and Orthodox Christian and Catholic churches were closed during the period of struggle against religion in the 1930s. This was happening all over Ukraine. I remember how bells were removed from cupolas. There was a crowd standing in front of the church shouting communist slogans. They looked like cheering each other. Then a few people from the crowd climbed ladders by the walls to the cupola of the church. It took them a while to throw a rope loop upon the top of the cross. They managed at last and again the crowd cheered. One end of the rope was thrown down and tied to a hook on a trailing line fixed on a truck. People got down, the engine started and the truck began to move slowly. The cupola and the cross fell down. The crowd was overwhelmed with joy, but this wasn't all. A few young men climbed the bell tower, ripped off a copper bell and dropped it onto the ground from the height of about 15 meters. The bell fell to the ground and broke. The crowd cheered again. A red flag was installed on the bell tower. We, boys, were cheering along with the crowd. Long afterwards I remembered what I didn't seem to notice

back then: a bunch of old Christians standing aside, watching everything with an expression of horror. They crossed themselves, whispering prayers. Old men held their hats in their hands like they do at a funeral.

There was a kolkhoz 11 and a mill on the outskirts of town. Some time in 1938 my father became a miller. He was good at this job. He had earned little before, and in the kolkhoz he didn't get any salary at all. Only in the fall, when the crops were milled, did my father receive some grain and money. Collective farmers had no rights and didn't even have passports, but my father was an employee there. He built a shed and kept pigs in the yard of our house. We sold pork and ate it. We could afford to buy some clothes, and I remember, I also got a suit and white fabric shoes that I had to rub with chalk.

My school years

My aunt Bertha submitted my documents to the Jewish school in 1931. Since I hadn't reached the age of 7, according to my birth certificate, I wasn't admitted. The following year my mother took me to the Russian school. This was the only Russian school in Konotop; the rest of the schools were Ukrainian. Boys and girls studied together. There were about ten Jewish children among my 30 classmates.

I had many Jewish and Ukrainian friends. I didn't face any anti-Semitism, but I heard the word 'zhyd' [kike] from senior pupils. In my family we were raised to make no difference between nationalities.

I was fond of literature at school. We had a very nice teacher of Ukrainian and Russian literature. I read a lot and knew many poems by heart. I still read poetry and make notes if I like something in particular. I was a good pupil. I was also fond of history. I didn't really like mathematics that much. We didn't have any books at home except for textbooks. I borrowed books from the town library. I was very fond of sports, too. I went in for football, gymnastics and acrobatics. Physical culture was well developed at the time. There were skid-pans, bars and a football ground in every yard.

We celebrated Soviet holidays at home and at school. We celebrated 7th November [October Revolution Day] 12, 1st May, Lenin's birthday. There were parades and amateur concerts at school that my parents came to watch. My mother cooked something delicious. We didn't have guests since we were poor and besides, there wasn't enough space. Only relatives visited us occasionally. On 1st May we went to a forest by bus. We took food with us and arranged a picnic in a nice spot. We ate and sang Soviet songs such as 'For Motherland, For Stalin' and danced. I remember that the first toast was always to Stalin.

I became a pioneer at school and felt very honored. I had a red necktie and believed that everybody around was staring at me. In summer I went to a pioneer camp in the pinewood. We lived in wooden barracks. Every evening we made a pioneer fire and sang patriotic songs. We were told about the current situation and capitalist schemes. We were taught to be patriots of the Soviet Union. We played military games. In the evenings we sometimes had dancing parties. I danced with a girl for the first time in this camp. When I finished the 8th grade I joined the Komsomol 13, but there was not ceremony. Everybody was admitted and it was a common process.

The arrests that began in 1936 [during the so-called Great Terror] 14 didn't involve our family. My father was either a joiner or a loader and Soviet authorities weren't interested in him, although they sometimes did arrest workers like my father if somebody reported on them. I remember posters on the walls saying, 'Be watchful - an enemy is near!' Some of my classmates' parents were arrested, but their children continued their studies and nobody mentioned to them that they were children of 'enemies of the people'. I remember the 'Black Maria' driving in our street, and my parents sighing with relief whenever it passed by. [Editor's note: 'Black Maria' was the name for the dark vehicles of the NKVD 15 in which arrested people were driven off from their homes to their first interrogation. They were vans with small barred windows painted black.]

I watched all movies in the cinema before the Great Patriotic War. They were simple Soviet films like Tractor Drivers, Volga-Volga and If War Comes Tomorrow. My favorite film was The Great Waltz. It was miraculous: the music, actors and clothes - I admired it all. There was no theater in Konotop. There were radios that looked like big black plates on the walls in the houses.

The 8-year Jewish school in Konotop was closed in 1939. Many children came to study in our school. There were several of them in my class. It was difficult for them to study since they had very poor Russian.

The war begins

In 1939 we heard that Hitler had attacked Poland. We were taught at school that our army was the strongest in the world. It never occurred to anyone that Hitler would dare to attack the USSR. We weren't interested in the international situation at that time. This was the time when we experienced love and affection for the first time, and we were far from thinking about what was happening in the rest of the world.

22nd June 1941 was a Sunday. We were on vacation from school. I finished my 9th year at school and was planning to enter a college in Kiev. We thought that while on vacation I would go to my mother's sister Riva in Kiev to choose a college. That morning my mother went shopping and I was still sleeping. My mother came home without any goods and said that Germany had unleashed war on the USSR. We were patriots and believed Stalin and the Party. Stalin said that we would beat the enemy on his own territory. So, why worry? People believed that the war wouldn't last long. Nobody hurried to evacuate. Only two plants were evacuated from Konotop. Workers' families and equipment left on two trains. Then people began to evacuate.

My grandmother and Bertha went to Esfir in Leningrad. Thousands of refugees from Belarus moved through Konotop. There were Jews and Russians among them. There was also cattle evacuated, but we didn't even consider evacuation. After the war I got to know that the Germans shot 12 Jewish families in Konotop and the rest of the Jews managed to evacuate. My father worked until the last minute. I saw Bachmach, a town 25 kilometers from Konotop, being bombed. There was such a huge ball of fire that it could be seen in Konotop.

When my friend and I went to a bookstore to buy textbooks for the 10th grade, the Germans began to bomb Konotop. A German plane dropped a bomb that hit a fuel storage facility on the outskirts of town. Beams from the storage facility flew 100 meters up into the air. Then German planes attacked an airfield in Konotop and there was a battle between planes. The Germans were firing at our planes. They were small wooden planes while the German Messerschmidt fighter planes were

armed. We watched it from the street. There were no people in the streets. I ran back home and asked my mother what we were going to do. She told me to go to my father, who was at work, and ask him.

There were many villagers that brought their grain to be ground. The farmers understood that the Germans were near and that they needed to have stocks of flour. I said to my father that we had to leave town immediately or we would all perish. My father and I went to the chairman of the kolkhoz to ask for a cart and horses. The chairman told my father to take all we needed. My father harnessed two horses into a cart and we rode home. On the way we went to pick up my mother's sister Nyunia. Her husband was a doctor and went to the front. My mother, my 8-year-old brother and Nyunia sat on the cart. My father reined the horses and I rode on my bicycle beside the cart. We rode 250 kilometers to Kursk. I don't remember how many days our trip lasted, but I don't think we covered more than 50 kilometers per day. When we were going past some town, Germans troops were landing, but we managed to escape. We didn't have any money. We only had some clothes. We stopped at a market to sell some clothes and buy some food. We were taken to the militia department. My father was charged of speculation, but we were released later.

What we saw on our way to Kursk was terrible: crowds of people on vehicles and carts running away. In Kursk we went to my father's brother Ilia, but he wasn't there. We were told that they had evacuated. We had evacuation papers for the town of Ruzaevka, in the Mordova Soviet Socialist Republic near the Volga River [about 700 km from Kursk], that we had obtained in Konotop and decided to head there. I don't remember how we got there. In Ruzaevka we were accommodated in the evacuation agency, which was the cultural center and stuffed with people. There were no chairs and people were sitting on their luggage. We got a meal: porridge. We were sent to a village that was also overcrowded. We returned to Ruzaevka and heard an announcement about a train going to Middle Asia and all those willing to move there had to come to the registration office. We decided to go because we didn't have any warm clothes with us and the climate in Middle Asia was warmer. The train we boarded was a train for cattle transportation. My aunt got in touch with her husband at the evacuation agency. His hospital was deployed in Tula region. She received an invitation letter from him and moved there.

The four of us went to Middle Asia. Our trip on that cattle train lasted 28 days. It was a very hard trip. There were lice and women cut their hair. It was dirty. There were no toilets. We arrived at Gorchakovo station in Fergana valley, 500 kilometers from Tashkent [Uzbekistan] and 3,500 km from home. We went to Margilan station. This was in October 1941. We were accommodated with an Uzbek family in a village. We lived upstairs in a booth of 2,5 x 2 meters. We had to find work. There was a cattle base at the station that bred and slaughtered cattle for the front. My father and I were laborers there. Later I found a job as a postman at the local post office where I worked for about two months.

I was a patriot and so were many other young people. I went to the military registry office and told them that I was born in 1924 and wanted to serve in the Air Force. Young people born in 1924 were to be recruited in 1942. I was sent for medical examination and was registered for military service. After a month I was sent to Kharkov Infantry School, deployed in Namangan. Although I went in for sports I had rheumatism. About 80 of us came to the school. There was another medical examination that I failed to pass due to my health condition. I returned to Margilan. Two weeks later I was ordered to come to the registry office again. There was a train full of recruits from the

neighboring location. We were sent to the Far East. We arrived at Boretz Kuznetsov station in Primoriye [over 5,000 km from Margilan]. We were accommodated in huge storehouses where we stayed overnight. On the following day commanding officers from various military units came to 'buy' us for the infantry, tank units, Air Force and Navy. Three people - one officer and two first sergeants - 'bought' me. They argued and asked me about my education, until I was finally taken to the Pacific Navy. I served in the Navy in the Far East from 1942-1947. All this time I sent my requests to be taken to the front.

I came to the Navy in September 1942 when combat action near Stalingrad began. We were punished and put into the guardhouse for asking to go to the front. They asked us, 'Who's gonna stay here?' We got little food and had no warm clothes. It was cold in fall and winter and the only clothes we had were our uniforms. At the end of my guarding time I couldn't get downstairs because I was so cold. I joined the Communist Party in 1943. It was simple during the war: the soldiers submitted their application to the deputy political officer. There was a meeting on that same or the following day where they were admitted to the Party, even if they hadn't been candidates before. At that moment I believed that it was a duty of every decent man to be a member of the Communist Party.

I have bright memories of Victory Day 16, 9th May 1945, when we heard that Germany had capitulated and the war was over. Soldiers and officers hugged and greeted each other. There was a meeting and then a festive dinner. We were happy and thought about our plans for the future. However, the military men of the Pacific Navy had to postpone their plans for two years. When the war with Germany was over in 1945, the war with Japan 17 began. Our fleet took part in combat action. It was strange, but I didn't have any fear during the battles. I had a feeling deep inside - it's hard to describe it - that I was invulnerable. Fear came some time after a battle when we recalled our fellow comrades that had perished. I have a medal 'For Victory over Japan' and the orders 'Combat Red Banner, grade III' and 'For Courage'. I demobilized in 1947. Upon demobilization I received a diploma 'For Faultless Service in the Pacific Ocean Navy'.

I didn't face any anti-Semitism in the army. I lived with people of various nationalities for five years and we were friends. We were like a family. Basically there was no anti-Semitism before and during the Great Patriotic War. Besides, it seems to me that in extreme situations people have different values. What mattered was one's personality and not nationality. There were several Jews in the Navy. We were friends for a long time after the war. I had friends of various nationalities.

My first love was my classmate Nadia Volkova, born in 1925. She had a Jewish mother and a Russian father. Her mother was the director of a kindergarten in Konotop and her father was a doctor. During the war he worked in a big hospital. Nadia was a nice girl. I cared about her a lot. We went for walks on the outskirts of town after classes and kissed. At the beginning of the Great Patriotic War Nadia and her mother evacuated to Mordovia. From there she went to the Radio Operator School in Moscow in 1942. The school trained radio operators for partisan units. We corresponded. Nadia studied in Moscow for six months. When she finished this school I received her last letter, in which she wrote, 'We'll probably never see each other again'. This was true. Nadia was sent to the Kharkov partisan unit and perished. I don't know any details of her death. She was awarded the title of 'Hero of the Soviet Union' posthumously. There are photographs of all Heroes of the Soviet Union from the town at the railway station. There are about ten photographs and one of them shows Nadia in her field cap. She sent this picture to me in the Far East.

During my military service I hardly ever wrote letters to or received any from my family. Mail services were unreliable. Letters hardly ever reached their addressees. I knew that my father went to the army a month after I was recruited. He was a driver at the border with Iran. My father served there until the end of the war. My mother and Arkadi stayed in Margilan. At the end of 1942 my mother fell ill with enteric fever and died in hospital in December 1942. I can't imagine how my 10-year-old brother Arkadi survived. He worked at a kolkhoz until May 1945. After demobilization my father found him and took him back to Konotop. Other people lived in our room. My father didn't feel like telling them to move out and he found a small room where he lived with my brother.

My father went to work at the mill. My brother didn't go to school during the war and was too old to do so after the war. He went to study at a vocational school to become a tool joiner. After finishing this school he went to work at the tool shop at the Konotop plant of mining equipment. My brother enjoyed this work. He got more money than the engineers there.

Post-war

My father married an elderly Jewish woman whose husband had perished at the front. My father wasn't religious after the war. He and his wife celebrated Jewish holidays, but only formally. My father died in 1973. My brother and I buried him in the Jewish cemetery in Konotop in accordance with Jewish traditions. His second wife also passed away.

My brother married Rosalia, a Jewish girl from Konotop in 1956. They had a common civil ceremony in a registry office and a small wedding party for relatives and close friends in the evening. Their daughter Elizaveta, named after my mother, was born in 1957. Some time afterwards a big plant of electronic microscopes was built in Sumy and the chief engineer of the Konotop plant was appointed director of this plant. He asked my brother to work there. My brother and his family rented an apartment in Sumy and lived there until my brother received an apartment of his own. Their daughter got married and moved to Lvov with her husband. Her daughter Yana, my brother's granddaughter, was born in 1977. Elizaveta died in an accident in 1980. She was 23. She was buried in the cemetery in Konotop.

My brother and his wife moved to Konotop and raised their granddaughter. Arkadi, his wife and his granddaughter emigrated to Germany in 1990. They live in Dortmund. Yana got married and works. My brother and his wife are pensioners now. We correspond with them. I'm very concerned about my brother. His wife is very ill and doesn't have much time left. She needs to go to a mental hospital. If my brother loses her his life will be difficult. Apart from losing a close person, he will have language problems because he doesn't know German.

I wanted to continue my studies after my demobilization. I couldn't obtain permits to go to Moscow or Leningrad and didn't want to return to Konotop. In evacuation I had met a boy from Lvov, two years older than I. He had finished his first year at the Faculty of History at Lvov University. He told me a lot about Lvov. I corresponded with him and he suggested that I went to Lvov upon my demobilization. I obtained a permit to go to Lvov. I visited my father and brother in Konotop and went to Lvov.

My mother's sisters Rosalia and Sonia lived in Lvov. During the war they worked at a military hospital in Lvov and they stayed in this town after the war. I lived with Aunt Rosalia for about a month. I didn't have a profession but had to go to work. I could play volleyball and swim very well. I

had been trained in the Navy. I got a job as a PE teacher at a vocational school. The management of this school sent me on a three months' course of advanced training at Lvov College of Physical Education. I was offered to enter this college, but I was thinking of some other profession than a PE teacher. I went to the Mechanics Department at the Food Industry Technical School. I became a 2nd-year student since I had finished nine years at secondary school. This technical school trained specialists for alcohol and yeast factories. Three years later I became a mechanical technician. I got a job assignment at an alcohol factory in Lvov region in 1950. I became chief mechanic and then chief engineer at this factory. I met my future wife, Ludmila Volosova, in Lvov. She came to work in Lvov upon her graduation from Odessa Food Industry Technical School.

Married life

My wife is Russian. She was born in Kazanka, Nikolaev region in 1922. Her father, Klimenti Volosov, was a farmer before 1917. They were a wealthy family and had a house, cows and horses. They had three children: Ludmila's older brother, who perished at the front, Ludmila and her younger sister Valentina. When the Soviet regime was established Ludmila's father was declared a kulak 18. The family was forced to leave their house. They destroyed their belongings. They had no place to go and lived under the threat of being sent into exile in Siberia. Ludmila's father had a distant relative in the district town. He was a manager in an office. He issued them some ID certificates - villagers had no passports - and they managed to go to Krivoy Rog. Nobody knew them there and it was easier for them to get lost in a bigger town. Her parents lived there all their life. Her father worked at a plant and her mother was a housewife. Her brother was recruited to the army when he was a 2nd-year student at a College. He served in the army two years and when it was his time to demobilize the Great Patriotic War began. He was in Belarus on the first days of the war and perished there. Ludmila's family was in evacuation in Tashkent. After the war they returned to Krivoy Rog. Ludmila entered the Production Faculty at Odessa Food Industry Technical School. After finishing this school she got a job assignment at a plant in Lvov where we met.

We got married within a month. My family didn't have any objections against me marrying a non-Jewish girl, and Ludmila's parents treated me like a son. We didn't have a wedding party. It was a hard and miserable time. We had a civil ceremony. In the summer we went to my relatives in Konotop on vacation, and then we visited Ludmila's parents in Krivoy Rog.

In 1953 the director of our trust offered to send me to the reconstruction of the alcohol plant in Uzhgorod. The plant was located in the suburbs of Uzhgorod. The director of this plant was recruited to the army and I was appointed director of the plant. We completed the reconstruction of the plant and I continued to work as its director. When the former director came back I stayed at the plant as chief mechanic. Uzhgorod was a small and pleasant town. It was much smaller than it is now. It was a quiet and clean town. People were calm and never in a rush. Subcarpathia 19 is a multinational region. There are Romanians, Hungarians, Czechs, Ukrainians, Moldavians, Russians and Jews. There were many Jews in town before the war. Many Jews perished in Subcarpathia during the Holocaust. They were taken to concentration camps in Germany.

There was no anti-Semitism in the area before the war. Other nationalities treated Jews with respect. They were only suspicious about those that came from the USSR. Subcarpathia joined the USSR after the Great Patriotic War as a result of the Yalta Conference 20. Teachers, engineers, doctors and other professionals came to Western Ukraine from Eastern Ukraine. Later, when the

local population got an opportunity to study at universities, they expressed their negative attitude towards the 'eastern people' from the USSR. One could hear things like, 'Did you get an invitation to come here?'

We rented an apartment. Some time later all alcohol plants were closed due to lack of resources. My wife and I got job offers from other towns, but we didn't want to leave Uzhgorod. We got used to living there. I went to work at the design office for local industries. There were about 25 employees in this office. I began as an engineer and was promoted to chief engineer. Later I was appointed director of the design office. I graduated from the Extramural Heat Engineering Department of Lvov Polytechnic College as a professional heating engineer. A few years later I was called to the regional party committee that told me that I was appointed chief engineer of the Regional Department of Local Industries. I worked there until 1968. Then 'UkrNIIstromproject [scientific research institute of design and construction], an affiliate of Kiev Institute, was established in Uzhgorod. I became the director and worked there until I retired in 1985. My party membership was expressed through the payment of monthly fees and the attendance of party meetings. I didn't have any responsibilities as a party member and I wasn't eager to have any.

I don't remember much about the trials against the 'cosmopolitans [during the campaign against 'cosmopolitans'] 21 in 1948. They involved scientists and people in the arts. Of course, it was strange to read in newspapers that such honored people happened to be 'enemies of the people', but back then I believed it was true. When articles about doctors being poisoners [Doctors' Plot] 22 were published at the beginning of 1953, I had doubts they were true, but those were just doubts. Some people believed it so much that they refused to consult Jewish doctors.

In March 1953 Stalin died. My wife and I were at work at the alcohol plant. All employees got together in the hallway near a radio. All people were crying. My wife was the only one that had no tears for Stalin. She couldn't forget all the disasters that her family had to go through. Stalin was my idol. I grew up believing in his impeccability. I couldn't imagine life without him. I couldn't imagine what would happen to our country or to each of us.

When Khrushchev 23 denounced the cult of Stalin and spoke about his crimes at the Twentieth Party Congress 24 I couldn't believe it for a long time. It's hard to change one's ideology. I had to break with my inner beliefs to believe Khrushchev. Now I understand that Stalin brought many disasters to the country, but I also know that he achieved victory in the war. It's another question how he did that. Of course, there were frightening times: arrests, famine, Stalin's repression and camps... We didn't understand it at the time. In 1954, before the Twentieth Party Congress, I was on vacation in a recreation center in the Crimea. My neighbor was older than me. He was there with his family. He probably went through hardships himself. He told me that Stalin was a terrible tyrant, that he locked our country from the rest of the world. I argued with him stating that Stalin won the war and that if it hadn't been for him we would become slaves. I still think so. I accepted what was said at the Party Congress, but it took me some time to believe it.

We didn't celebrate any religious holidays at home. Both my wife and me were atheists and didn't feel the need of religion. We celebrated Soviet holidays and our birthdays. We had guests, danced, sang and enjoyed the good food. Our favorite holiday was Victory Day on 9th May. We had survived the war, lost our close people and felt like it was our personal holiday. Most of our friends were Jews that came from the USSR. It just happened so. We spent vacations with friends. Sometimes

we went to the Crimea or the Carpathian mountains. On every vacation we visited my father, my brother and my wife's parents. My wife and I have lived a good life together. In 2000 we celebrated the 50th anniversary of our wedding. Unfortunately, we have no children.

In the 1970s Jews began to move to Israel. I didn't blame those people, but we never considered departure. I had a job that I liked and we have a lot of friends. I've never faced any anti-Semitism. Ukraine is my motherland. The history of Ukraine is as close to me as Jewish history. Besides, my wife isn't Jewish and I was afraid of prejudice towards her in Israel. Maybe I was wrong, but it's too late to think about it now. Many of my friends and acquaintances left in the 1970s or sometime later. We've been in touch. They have a good life in Israel. Some of them have passed away already.

In the middle of the 1980s perestroika 25, initiated by Mikhail Gorbachev 26, began in the USSR. I was enthusiastic about it and believed in it. The Iron Curtain 27, separating the Soviet Union from the rest of the world fell, and that was a good sign. I believed that things would keep improving. Unfortunately, life's not always as we want it to be. The good beginning didn't continue. Still, the main achievement of perestroika was glasnost [openness]. We lived under the Soviet regime for 70 years, a whole epoch in history. After the collapse of the USSR in 1991, the Communist Party of the USSR ceased to exist, and I automatically stopped being its member.

Ukraine is different now. It's hard to say how things will develop. The mentality of the people has to change. It's not that easy. Every individual must develop his personality now, while we were always taught that a person is nothing without a collective. Every individual must do his work honestly to have a positive effect. The attitude towards Jews has changed. I think there is no anti-Semitism on a state level. It happens in everyday life, but not as often as it used to happen, and is demonstrated by older people. Young people probably don't know what it is about. Young Jews have no problem entering a higher educational institution or getting a job. It's a person's skills that count and nationality doesn't matter. Jews can openly go to the synagogue and observe Jewish traditions. Young people are proud of their origin. I've seen many such examples among the children or grandchildren of my acquaintances. The Jewish way of life has revived. Young people get closer to religion and Jewish traditions. I think one can see more young people in synagogues nowadays.

Hesed was established in Uzhgorod in 1999. This organization does a lot to revive Jewish life. They also take care of old Jewish people. Unfortunately I'm in no condition to go to the synagogue or Hesed. I would be very interested to meet people and attend various activities. I like reading Jewish newspapers. Volunteers from Hesed bring them to me. I know more about Jewish traditions and holidays now. I wish I had been raised in a family where Yiddish was spoken. My wife and I have had heart attacks and my wife has also had a stroke. Hesed employees clean our apartment, do the laundry and bring food and medication. We have small pensions and this is a big support for us. We are very grateful to them.

Glossary

1 Pogroms in Ukraine

In the 1920s there were many anti-Semitic gangs in Ukraine. They killed Jews and burnt their

houses, they robbed their houses, raped women and killed children.

2 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 WWI, 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.

3 NEP

The so-called New Economic Policy of the Soviet authorities was launched by Lenin in 1921. It meant that private business was allowed on a small scale in order to save the country ruined by the Revolution of 1917 and the Russian Civil War. They allowed priority development of private capital and entrepreneurship. The NEP was gradually abandoned in the 1920s with the introduction of the planned economy.

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 Blockade of Leningrad

On September 8, 1941 the Germans fully encircled Leningrad and its siege began. It lasted until January 27, 1944. The blockade meant incredible hardships and privations for the population of the town. Hundreds of thousands died from hunger, cold and diseases during the almost 900 days of the blockade.

6 Lukianovka Jewish cemetery

It was opened on the outskirts of Kiev in the late 1890s and functioned until 1941. Many monuments and tombs were destroyed during the German occupation of the town in 1941-1943. In 1961 the municipal authorities closed the cemetery and Jewish families had to rebury their relatives in the Jewish sections of a new city cemetery within half a year. A TV Center was built on the site of the former Lukianovka cemetery.

7 Babi Yar

Babi Yar is the site of the first mass shooting of Jews that was carried out openly by fascists. On 29th and 30th September 1941 33,771 Jews were shot there by a special SS unit and Ukrainian militia men. During the Nazi occupation of Kiev between 1941 and 1943 over a 100,000 people

were killed in Babi Yar, most of whom were Jewish. The Germans tried in vain to efface the traces of the mass grave in August 1943 and the Soviet public learnt about mass murder after World War II.

8 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.

9 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.

10 Russian stove

Big stone stove stoked with wood. They were usually built in a corner of the kitchen and served to heat the house and cook food. It had a bench that made a comfortable bed for children and adults in wintertime.

11 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.

12 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.

13 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.

14 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.

15 NKVD

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

16 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.

17 War with Japan

In 1945 the war in Europe was over, but in the Far East Japan was still fighting against the anti-fascist coalition countries and China. The USSR declared war on Japan on 8 August 1945 and Japan signed the act of capitulation in September 1945.

18 Kulaks

In the Soviet Union the majority of wealthy peasants that refused to join collective farms and give their grain and property to Soviet power were called kulaks, declared enemies of the people and exterminated in the 1930s.

19 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.

20 Reparation Aggreement at the Yalta Conference

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

21 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'.

22 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.

23 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.

24 Twentieth Party Congress
At the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956 Khrushchev publicly debunked the cult of Stalin and lifted the veil of secrecy from what had happened in the USSR during Stalin's leadership.

25 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.

26 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.

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