

# Leonid Kotliar

LEONID KOTLIAR

Ukraine

Kiev

Interviewer: Roman Lenhovskiy

Date of interview: November 2003

*Leonid Kotliar lives with his wife Ludmila Zhutnik in a two-bedroom apartment of a modern many-storied house in a new district on the outskirts of Kiev. The apartment is modestly furnished, but one can tell that they are doing well. Leonid is a vivid, nice and very friendly man of average height with thick gray hair. He has keen gray eyes and an attractive smile. There are many books in the room: world classics and contemporary writers, Jewish writers, of his favorite are Sholem Aleichem<sup>1</sup> and Erenburg<sup>2</sup>, and books that he needs in his professional activities: literature textbooks, manuals, dictionaries and encyclopedias. Leonid Isaacovich deals in translations and writes memoirs. There are photographs of his relatives behind the glass on bookshelves. There are many pot plants on windowsills and on a number of stands. Ludmila has been a pensioner for many years and now she can dedicate herself to her favorite hobby growing plants.*

*Leonid brings family albums with photographs of his dear ones and we go back in time. He gladly tells me about the life of his numerous family members.*

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## **My family background**

My paternal grandfather Moisey Kotliar was born in Tetiyev town of Kiev province in 80 km from Kiev in the late 1860s. My grandmother, whose name I don't know, also came from this area. In the early 1890s my grandmother and grandfather got married. They were not poor: my grandfather worked at the mill and was a co-owner of it and my grandmother was a housewife. They had 6 children: their older daughter Bluma was born in the early 1890s, and Leibl was a couple of years her junior. My father Isaac Kotliar was born on 19 December 1897, Manya was born in 1903, Yeva

in 1905, and Idel was born in 1912. In those years there were fewer Jews than Ukrainians in Tetiyev and there was also Polish and Russian population in the town. They got along well. Tetiyev was famous for its sugar factories. Trade and crafts were major business activities.

My grandmother and grandfather were very religious: they went to the synagogue, celebrated Sabbath, ate kosher food and celebrated all Jewish holidays. My father's older brother Leibl finished cheder. My father also attended cheder where he studied Yiddish, arithmetic and Russian. However, he didn't finish it since he had to go to work. In 1912 my grandmother died and grandfather married a Jewish woman shortly afterward. She had a daughter named Fania, born in 1912, and in 1914 their son Samson was born. The stepmother did her best to make her husband's children leave their home as soon as possible so that her children could inherit more possessions. Bluma and Leibl moved to America from their stepmother in 1912. They lived in New York. Leibl had his own car. He delivered laundry from laundromat. We received letters from them until the middle 1920s and then correspondence became dangerous<sup>3</sup> for our family and we terminated it for good. This is all we know about them.

By the age of 14 my father learned upholstery and saddle making business and ran away from his stepmother to Kiev. There he became a seat maker's apprentice in a carriage manufacture shop. When World War I<sup>4</sup> began he was mobilized to work at the big military plant 'Arsenal' from where they didn't recruit workers to the army. My father made horse collars and harness for the needs of the army.

In 1919 a big Jewish pogrom<sup>5</sup> happened in Tetiyev. Grandfather Moisey and my father's stepmother perished. My father's sisters 16-year-old Manya and 14-year-old and their 7-year-old brother Idel escaped to Kiev. Younger children 6-year-old Fania and 4-year-old Samson were hiding in the attic. They were lucky to find a bag with lump sugar there. They ate sugar and drank their own urine and came down when the pogrom was over. Somehow they were sent to Kiev where people helped them to find their brothers and sisters.

Furnished rooms were on lease in a garret in the center of Kiev where sailors, prostitutes and likewise public resided before the October revolution.<sup>6</sup> After the revolution 28 rooms in the garret became vacant and were spontaneously accommodated by Jews escaping to Kiev from pogroms. My father and his sisters Manya, Yeva and Fania moved into this garret and their younger brothers Idel and Samson were sent to a children's home. Manya and Yeva sold coal in Podol<sup>7</sup> and later they bought a knitting machine. They knitted stockings and socks and sold them at the Jewish market near their home. I have dim memories about Yeva. She died in 1933. Manya married Mikhail Zhyvotovskiy, a tradesman, in the early 1920s. They had a son named Yefim. My father's younger Fania married Grigoriy Tverskoy, also a Jew, in the 1930s. They had three children: Mikhail, Leonid and a daughter whose name I don't remember.

My father met my mother Rachil Risman living in the garret. She and her sister Toibl escaped to Kiev from a pogrom in Makarov town in 50 km from Kiev shortly after the revolution of 1917. My parents got married in 1921. Those were trying times and they didn't have a wedding party.

My maternal grandfather and grandmother were born in Makarov town of Kiev province in the 1870s. Grandfather Leizer Risman was a tailor and my grandmother Tsyvia Risman was a housewife. My mother said that grandmother Tsyvia was a beautiful woman with full forms, made wonderful sausage and was a very good housewife. They had four children: the oldest Toibl was

born in 1888, then came Moisey, born in 1893, Ruvim was a couple of years younger and my mother Rachil was the youngest. She was born in 1900. Their family strictly observed Jewish traditions, as was customary at this period of time. Ukrainian constituted a major part of the population of Makarov, one third of the population was Jewish and the rest of residents were Polish, Russian and Byelorussian. Jews dealt in trades and crafts. They owned taverns and inns. There were a few synagogues, a Jewish hospital, cheder and a Jewish grammar school in the town. My mother's brothers finished cheder and my mother studied in the Jewish grammar school. When my mother was finishing grammar school she had a fiancé who loved her very much. I don't know why they separated.

World War I began and Moisey was recruited to the Red Army. A few years later Ruvim went to the army. My mother loved her brothers dearly. She told me that they were very kind and that they were at the front in the Carpathians. They wrote letters from the front. Moisey perished during WWI. Ruvim was wounded in 1918 and sent to a hospital in Kiev. On his way there he fell ill with typhus. Grandmother Tsyvia went to see him and contracted typhus from him. She died in Kiev in 1918. Soon Ruvim died, too. Grandfather Leizer couldn't cope with it and died in Kiev in autumn 1919 where he had escaped from pogroms.

## Growing up

I was born in Kiev on 28 January 1922. I was named after my grandfather Leizer, but my father registered me by the Russian name<sup>8</sup> of Lusia. He liked the way it sounded: my father's acquaintances in Kiev had a grandson named Lusik.

We lived in the garret around the perimeter of the house on the fourth floor. My mother, my father, my mother's older sister Tania (Toibl by her birth certificate) and I were living in a small room. My parents and Tania spoke Yiddish at home, but at times they switched to Russian. They spoke Yiddish with an accent of provincial Jews. My mother was quick-tempered, but it didn't mean that she wasn't kind and nice.

On 20 July 1924 my younger brother Roman was born into this world. He was named after my mother's brother Ruvim, but he was given a Russian name that sounded alike to not emphasize on his Jewish origin. My parents didn't observe Jewish traditions: it was a period of struggle against religion<sup>9</sup>, and authorities tried to develop atheism in us. However, my father told us how they celebrated Pesach, Rosh Hashanah, Chanukkah and Purim in Tetiyev. There were mainly Jews living in our garret, but I don't remember anybody openly celebrating Jewish holidays. There were 4-5 tenants in each of 28 rooms. There was a long corridor where many children were running to and fro. I remember older children singing rhymes:

'Away, away with monks, rabbis and priests,

We shall climb heavens and chase away all gods'.

There were two water taps in the garret. Tenants cooked on primus stoves<sup>10</sup> in the corridor and there was a toilet in the yard. When I was 12 there was a toilet installed in one end of the corridor and a year later there was another toilet installed. There was an electric bulb in each room and there was a power consumption meter. All tenants paid their fees based on their bulb's capacity. The corridor was lighted through glass door windows above the doors and there was some light

produced by stoves. Tenants of the garret hated electric irons, boilers and radios that appeared in the late 1930s since it was impossible to control the power consumption.

My father joined the Party in 1926. He wasn't interested in any Party activities, but they said at his Arsenal plant: 'You are a worker and you must be a member of the Party.' –My father was also obliged to subscribe to Party editions and study works of 'classics' [Editor's note: by classics here Lenin, Marx and Engels are implied]. Therefore, he subscribed to the Lenin's library<sup>11</sup>, an edition of works of the leader of the world proletariat in blue binding, and to the popular daily newspaper 'Pravda' [the main newspaper of the Communist party] that had a million's circulation. My father got up very early. His working day at the plant began at 7 am. He liked staying in bed later on weekends and I liked to climb under his blanket. He used to read Lenin's articles in bed and I was learning to read by book titles. However, he never finished one Lenin book. He never had enough patience.

My mother's sister Tania didn't have a profession. She worked in a diner and was a housewife. My mother got cancer and had one breast amputated. Then doctors discovered stomach cancer. She died in 1929. My mother was buried in the Lukianovskoye Jewish cemetery<sup>12</sup>. As far as I remember, there were no rituals observed. I remember a rabbi reciting a prayer in Hebrew in the cemetery. Aunt Tania replaced my mother to my brother and me. She was very kind to us and a few years later my father married her.

My maternal grandmother's brother Ieshuah lived nearby. He was a tailor. Once, when my mother was no longer with us, he invited my father, Tania, Roman and me to a seder on Pesach. Ieshuah was religious. He had his tallit and tefillin on, and opened a prayer book to read a prayer. Then he posed four traditional questions in Yiddish: what did the pharaoh do, how did Jews exude from Egyptian slavery? I found it interesting, but I don't remember any answers. We drank red wine from beautiful crystal glasses used only on Pesach. There was delicious rich chicken broth with matzah. Then we got an invitation to Ieshuah son's wedding. The bride and bridegroom were standing under a chuppah and a rabbi recited a prayer in Hebrew. Then the newly weds broke their wine glasses 'for happiness' and their guests danced the Jewish freilakh. It was all very interesting, but I didn't understand the soul of it since we didn't observe any traditions at home. My friend Aron Babichenko's father was also religious. He prayed with his tallit on and his tefillin wound around his hairy hands. Aron's grandmother lit candles on Friday evening and prayed and he laughed saying: 'Grandmother, there is no God, don't you understand?'

I went to school in 1930. Children went to school at the age of 8 then. Minister of education Skripnik thought that children had to study in their national schools. I didn't want to go to a Jewish school since Jews were always teased and at home there were talks about pogroms. I faced routinely anti-Semitism: our janitor's daughter Lida used to shout: 'Zhydovochka [kike] Rukhlia lost her tuhlia ('shoe' in dialect)... There was a Ukrainian boy named Vovka Osichnoy living in our house, his father came from Western Ukraine. He was circumcised due to his health condition and children teased him 'zhyd' [kike]. I wanted to go to a Russian school since we spoke Russian in the yard and in the street. My father decided that I had to choose myself. He went through pogroms and anti-Semitism and wanted Roman and me to assimilate. I had to take tests in a Jewish school. A teacher asked me questions in Yiddish and I pretended I didn't understand her. Then I put my fingers on the edge of the desk and she yelled in Yiddish: 'Take your hands off the desk!' I flinched, but didn't move my fingers. The teacher knew that my parents were Jews, but since I didn't

understand Yiddish she sent me to a Ukrainian school.

They registered national origin at school and my classmates knew I was a Jew, but nobody disturbed me. We were pioneers and were raised to be internationalists. In the third grade our choir sang a Ukrainian and Jewish songs in an Olympiad. When in 1936 a war in Spain [editor's note: Spain between 1936-1939 was the staging ground for Hitler's Blitzkrieg giving General Franco victory over the Republican government. The Spanish Civil War was not only a battle against fascism, but a social revolution. It involved all of Europe and the political forces of the left and the right, in the struggle to defend socialism and democracy from the forces of reaction.] began, we learned a Spanish song. We had a wonderful teacher of the Ukrainian language. Her name was Ustia Leontieva. She liked me very much. My Ukrainian teacher Ivan Lagodynskiy taught me to understand literature correctly.

In 1931 my father was appointed chief of the town trade department. He had an office with a telephone in Kreshchatik [Kreshchatik is the main street of Kiev]. It was an honorable position, but my father lacked education and was sent to a training course for district suppliers. Tania was helping him to solve mathematic problems since she had finished a grammar school. In 1932 after finishing his training my father was sent to Kozelets, a small town in 60 km from Kiev where he was chairman of the district trade department, though he was far from any commercial businesses. His main duty was to fulfill directions of the district party committee. My father rented a little room from a sewing machine repairman whose surname was Ruthstein; he was a Jew. My father rarely traveled to Kiev. The town authorities insisted that my father moved his family to Kozelets, but they didn't provide any dwelling to him. Tania didn't want to leave the apartment in Kiev. She took my brother and me to Kozelets in spring and we studied there until October holidays. We were cooped in a 10-square-meter room through summer and only in late autumn Tania took us back home.

## The famine

During the period of famine in 1933<sup>13</sup> there was a special closed food store for Party officials opened, but my father had no permission to buy food in it. They probably thought that chief of district supplies could have everything he needed. Our family never had one gram of anything from this store. I was only allowed to come there and get some milk, if there was any left. I came there with my bottle and stood in the end of the line. I felt so uncomfortable never knowing whether they would give me any or not. My father supervised a buttery and they accused him of stealing butter. I felt so hurt since we never even saw butter at the time.

In Kiev in winter 1933 there were dead villagers lying on the snow, those who came to exchange their gold or silver in a Torgsin.<sup>14</sup> Some of them were falling near the Torgsin. Our neighbors who went to work early in the morning told us about it since by the time we were going to school the corps had been removed. There were rumors that people were selling chops made from human meat. I was always hungry: we only ate some brown bread and drank tea with no sugar. We were also given a bun per day at school. My father occasionally sent us money from Kozelets, but it was not enough. Tania wound threads from skein to bobbins. She was paid little money for it and bought a glass of corn cereal at the market. She divided the corn into two portions and boiled it for Roman and me. There was no cereal left for her. In winter, when we starved, Tania packed few silver cups and spoons that she got from her mother and went to the Torgsin store. She returned

early in the morning ringing 3 kg sugar, same quantity of white flour and 6 loaves of stale corn and wheat bread. This was all she received for a heap of silver! My father's sister Yeva died of tuberculosis at that time.

In spring 1934 we went to Kozelets again. I saw a woman with a child, swollen from hunger begging for food... My father said the situation in villages was bad, but villagers from the nearest village of Beleyki dressed up and walked to a church past our house, so I don't think the situation in Kozelets district was so desperate. In summer 1934, when potatoes and millet got ripe, our neighbors and we cooked the first kander and this was the first time I ate to my heart's content. We kept a pig in Kozelets. We slaughtered it by the end of 1934 and Tania made thin sausage. I didn't know that religious Jews were not allowed to eat pork and my parents didn't observe rules at the time.

I remember that it was then that comrade Stalin said: 'We've got a better life, comrades, a merrier life!'

### Before the war

There were many Jews in Kozelets. There was a synagogue, but we didn't attend it. I believe it was closed. My friend Shurik Yaroshenko's father was a janitor in the church. Once Shurik and I went to the temple. I liked the service very much, although I was an atheist like my friend.

On 27 December 1934 my sister was born. She was named Cecilia after my grandmother Tsyvia.

In September 1935 there was a Party 'purge'. Somebody reported on my father that in 1919-20 He shipped sugar in railcars from Tetiyev sugar factories to sell it. He was accused of concealing it from the Party. But he was working at the Arsenal plant then! Beautiful churches in Kozelets were given to storage facilities and clubs. So this 'purge' was in one of these 'clubs' that used to be a church. I was very worried. There were many people in the building and I heard the process. There was a district party committee sitting at the table and the first secretary chaired the meeting. My father was telling his biography. I was sure that my father would be all right and go through this 'purge' being an honest communist, but they didn't believe him, expelled him from the Party and fired from work.

Since we had our residential permit to live in Kiev we returned to our room. My father had many friends and week after our arrival he was already making slippers in a shop. Then he went to work as saddle maker in a shop. Then he had an appendicitis surgery and he hardly survived. It became difficult for him to do his job and he went to the district party committee to talk about it. They sent him to work as a house manager.

At about 14 I wanted to change my name Lusik, but it wasn't allowed at that time. When it was time for me to obtain my passport at the age of 16 I submitted a report that I had lost my birth certificate and signed as Leonid Kotliar. They said in the militia office: 'We haven't got your document in our archives' and sent me for medical investigation. A doctor ordered me to take off and I told them the day of birth 28 January. They issued my new birth certificate where they wrote Tania as my mother since she was my father's wife.

My father's brother Idel riveted tanks at the 'Bolshevik' plant. He served in the army and when he returned home he joined the Party. They wanted to involve him in working for NKVD<sup>15</sup>, but he managed to escape. My father's brother Samson was not a Party member. He finished a textile



College in Kharkov and some educated people explained to him here that Stalin was a bandit. Samson told my father openly in 1937<sup>16</sup>: 'What is Stalin doing? How many innocent people are in camps?! And all of them are enemies of the people?'<sup>17</sup>. But my father stood his ground: 'Yes, there are mistakes, but Stalin must be there, the power must be strong'. Some people reported on their relatives for such talks. Samson told my father: 'To hell with them for expelling you from the Party!' But my father wanted to resume his membership. He wrote to the Central Party Committee. In 1938 he resumed his membership and obtained his Party membership card. When it happened I could finally submit my documents for joining Komsomol.<sup>18</sup> I couldn't do it before since they wouldn't have admitted me as a son of an 'enemy of the people'. I joined Komsomol and was elected a member of the Komsomol Committee.

At the age of 17 I already knew that 'Stalin was a bandit', but I believed that we had to build socialism. My classmates Yura Belskiy and Igor Naumyuk had 'opened my eyes' on Stalin even earlier. Yura and Igor called our NKVD 'Gestapo' and were not afraid of being reported on... I became Yura's friend in the 4th grade. He was grandson of Suboch, our Latin lecturer in Kiev University, who taught Latin in Kiev grammar school #1 before the revolution. Yura was a cultured boy and had a rich language. His father was executed as a white guard<sup>19</sup> officer before Yura was born. Yura's mother worked as a typist. Their situation was hard after they lost their breadwinner. When Yura wanted to enter a military special school and join Komsomol there were some obstacles, but he was finally admitted. Before the great Patriotic War<sup>20</sup> artillery and pilot military schools were opened. 9-10-grade students could go to study there. Some of my friends went there, but I couldn't, having lung problems.

Some of my schoolmates' parents were arrested in 1937. There was a slogan of the time: 'A son is not responsible for his father'. Only sons had to repudiate from their father's at Komsomol meetings, though this didn't always work either. Minister of education Skrypnik was also imprisoned in 1937. In 1939 our teacher of history Alexandr Vakulenko, Ukrainian, was imprisoned. He returned half year later. And we believed that NKVD was releasing the innocent.

In the 9th grade I got fond of Feuchtwanger<sup>21</sup>, they published his: 'Success, 'Jew Zeus', 'Ugly countess', 'Jewish war'. Of Russian classics I enjoyed reading Lermontov<sup>22</sup>, Pushkin<sup>23</sup>. It was my dream to become an actor and producer and I performed on all parties: I recited Yesenin<sup>24</sup>, Mayakovskiy<sup>25</sup>. I was head of a drama club at school and we won the first place at the town Olympiad in the Palace of Pioneers. We also staged performances in our corridor in the garret. I was scenery and costume designer and an actor. My brother Roman was a wonderful actor. He acted in the school theater. All girls in his class liked him. He was not tall and very charming.

There was a children's tuberculosis recreation center in the woods in Budayevka. I was predisposed to tuberculosis: my father had lung problems and his sister Yeva died of tuberculosis. Chief doctor and director of this recreation center Pyotr Mitselmakher was a Jew. He was an amazing person: everybody believed he was a hypnotist: he looked and people calmed down. He knew all children. He was loved, respected and feared a little. I met my future wife Ghita Kaplunovich in the recreation center. She was a Jew. We were both 17 and became friends. She studied in a music school in Kiev and was a wonderful pianist already. I had visited her before the war and met her parents. Ghita introduced me to her fiancé Naum, a student of Light Industry College. He often went home in Gaisin and then Ghita and I went for walks. We had warm friendly relationships.

On 17 May 1940 I finished the 10th grade. I had health problems and director of school released me from graduation exams. I had all excellent marks in my school certificate, but for mathematics. Director of school said: 'On 1 September you will start work here as senior pioneer tutor and will work until it's time for you to go to the army'. In spring 1939 a new law on military service was issued: young men of 18 years of age and school graduates were to be recruited to the army. I wanted to enter the theatrical College, but I understood that I was too young to study in the Producers' faculty and they wouldn't admit me to the Actors' faculty due to my being short. I worked at the tuberculosis recreation center as a tutor through that summer. On 1 September I began to work as a pioneer tutor in my school.

The attitude toward Jews changed before the Great Patriotic War. Our Jewish neighbor Aron Ioselevich, communist, deputy of the town council, said shortly before the war that he was persecuted, that Jews were losing their high positions and that there was a common belief that there were too many Jews. The 'Pravda' cited Goebbels' speech and quoted his words about Jews in a sympathetic manner. However, there were no comments and it was unclear whether they agreed with Goebbels or not.

I went to the army on 8 December 1940. Before departure I went to say good bye to Ghita. We boarded freight train railcars with plank beds and hay inside. This big train arrived in Riga in the Baltics<sup>26</sup> that became Soviet. I served in Panevezhis (800 km from Kiev) in a training battery in an artillery regiment. We received Red Army identity cards where it was said that I was a Jew. There was also a Karaim in our battery. His name was Mishka Sultanskiy. The rest of us were Ukrainian, Russian and Uzbek. There were over 100 military in our battery. There were 4 combat platoons in the battery. In the morning we had drilling in the frost and then our political officer or commander of the platoon conducted political classes 3 times a week. We had secondary or higher education and in a year we were to become junior artillery lieutenants. We were instructed: we shall learn the lessons of the Finnish War<sup>27</sup>, and as soon as the enemy attacks us we shall fire back and move to their territory. The war was inescapable. We expected it every minute and when we were raised at alarm at night we couldn't help thinking: 'Is it a training alarm or a war?' I was senior telephone operator. I followed the azimuth and identified the direction for cable installation. Once somebody stole my wallet with my Komsomol membership card in it in the bathroom. It was a serious matter and I reported it to my commander. Shortly afterward in March 1941 during another night-time alarm I fell under the ice, fell ill with pneumonia and was sent to Šauliai (today Lithuania) military hospital. They diagnosed tuberculosis. After the hospital I was released from military service. They wrote in my certificate that I was fit only for non-effective service at wartime. I demobilized and returned home. So I automatically lost my membership in Komsomol.

I returned to Kiev on 18 May and on 20 May I started working as a tutor at the children's tuberculosis recreation center in Budayevka. My health condition improved there: I was breathing fresh air in a pine-tree forest and we had sufficient food. I was there when the Great Patriotic War began. I was stunned when Stalin said: 'Traacherous attack...' Did he trust Hitler? Molotov<sup>28</sup> wrote before the war that there were over 100 divisions pulled to the Polish border. We all knew that the war was inevitable.

## **During the war**



On the first day of the war, on 22 June I came to the military registry office, but they said: 'You are in category 2 reserves and we will call you'. Our army was retreating, but we believed that it was just a maneuver: that we shall ensnare Hitler, encircle him and then give them a sharp blow. However, our morale supervisor said to me: 'It's a great tragedy. All planes are destroyed on land. Our troops are retreating. It's not a trap for Hitler, it's serious'. On 1 July the recreation center was closed and I returned to Kiev.

A few days before the war began my brother Roman finished the 9th grade. He was to turn 17. In the first days of July all boys from Kiev, born before 1925, were sent to Donetsk region, 500 km east of Kiev, to the mines. We bought Roman and dark blue coat before the war. I bundled it and tied with a belt. I put it over his shoulder and here he burst into tears: he had an inner feeling that we were never to see each other again.

Those boys were taken into a shaft. They took away their passports. They had to work hard and many of them ran away including Roman. He went to work as a tractor operator in a kolkhoz<sup>29</sup>. In autumn 1941 German troops came near when Roman was asleep. They knew in the village that he was a Jew. Someone woke him up and gave him a white horse. He ran away. He took a train to Tashkent in Central Asia in 300 km from home. He was sitting by a wall in Tashkent being exhausted and starved. An evacuated doctor from Kiev saw him on her way to work. He told her his story and she took him with her. When he felt better he went to the military registry office to be sent to the front. He was so thin that the commission decided he was ill. However, he stood his ground and they sent him to a military school in Ashkhabad (today Turkmenistan).

My father was very ill before the war and he was assigned to the army a few months later. He was trying to find Roman: there was a central evacuation search agency in Buguruslan (today Russia), the only one in the USSR. My father wrote there and so did Roman. In 1942 my father was demobilized; he didn't have sufficient education to serve in the rear. He came to Denau in Uzbekistan where Tania and Cecilia, Manya and Fania and their children were in evacuation. Tania and my father worked in a kolkhoz harvesting cotton. Then my father was demobilized by Party authorities and he served in a deserter search group in the mountains.

In 1943 my father finally found Roman. They began to correspond. Roman wrote about his school and invited my father to visit Ashkhabad. My father managed to travel there once and Roman told him his story. Roman was promoted to junior lieutenant and in the late fall of 1944 he was sent to the front. Their train stayed in Kiev few days. He stayed with his friends. His classmate girls arranged a farewell party for him. My father arrived in Kiev a few days after my brother left.

Roman was assigned to 146th rifle battalion. He was a Komsomol leader of the battalion. They were like commissars: they were the first to rise in attack and the others followed them. In early 1945 my father stopped receiving letters from Roman. He wrote his commander and received his reply: 'On 26 January 1945 he was wounded and left our division. He never returned to our division and none of our military had any contacts with him'. Roman never wrote anyone: he died from wounds on the way to hospital.

My father's brother Idel was taken to a fighting battalion in early July 1941. They were to fight landing units. On 17 September 1941 he got in encirclement near Kiev and perished there. My friend Yura Belskiy also perished in this encirclement. My father's brother Samson was also mobilized in early July 1941. He was wounded, but returned to his unit after he recovered and was

at the front until the end of the war.

I was mobilized on 11 July 1941, when German troops were approaching Kiev. Our district military registry office formed a unit and we marched in civilian clothes to the east. Then we came to Mariupol [700 km east of Kiev] by train, to a camp from where we were to be sent to the front. We slept on grass and had meals in shifts. There were about one hundred thousand of us in the camp. They took away our passports, but we didn't get our Red Army identity cards yet. When military representatives came from the front we were lined up. Each VUS (military recorded profession) had a number and when my number (# 50 — artillery communication operators) was called, I stepped ahead. However, when I showed my certificate issued by the hospital they left me where I was. All of my friends from Kiev went to the front. I couldn't sleep at night. I looked deep into my soul, tore my certificate to smallest pieces and a few days later I was already at the front.

From Mariupol we went to Cossack<sup>30</sup> camps near Kherson in 750 km from Kiev. On 3 September in the morning our commander ordered us to line up and said: 'It is our task to throw Germans out of Kakhovka'. We marched there day and night. On 8 September in the evening commander of the battalion sent a few Jews to the battalion headquarters. He was aware that we were getting in encirclement and didn't want Jews to be captured by Germans. Everybody knew that Germans were killing Jews. Our artillery battalion of 756 rifle regiment was not a core unit and of course our commandment left us a victim of Germans, and the remaining units retreated. After the war I got to know that sergeants of 756 rifle regiment installed a flag on the Reichstag.

Our commanding officer didn't send me to the headquarters. That night it was my turn to be on duty. On 8 September at 11 o'clock commander of the regiment called me. I was beside my battalion commander in a trench. It was quiet and I heard the voice of our regiment commander on the phone: 'The division and regiment are retreating. Your task is to back up their retreat'. The battalion commander said to me: 'Not a word about it!' He was a brave man, a real commander. He realized that we might get in encirclement. On the night of 9 September we were trying hard to hold on in the bare Pridneprovskaya steppe in 40 km from Kakhovka (450 km from Kiev). The only weapons we had were rifles and grenades. There were Germans on our left and right, driving on trucks and marching. We had small digging tools and the soil was dry and it was hard to dig trenches under the enemy firing.

### **Capture by the Germans**

About 4 o'clock in the afternoon Germans troops began to fire from mining units and a huge mine exploded nearby. I was deafened for the time being, but I didn't faint. All of a sudden I heard my commander saying: 'That's it, guys'. I couldn't believe what I heard. He didn't kill himself. He believed that we had completed our task, that we backed up their retreat and self-annihilation that military order required from us was not soldiers' business. He was the first to get up and raise his hands when our platoon was encircled. I saw 6 of us standing with their hands up. I firmly believed that only traitors of their Motherland could be captured, that a military had to fight until his last grenade or bullet and keep the last bullet for himself. This was what we were taught. I couldn't shoot myself with my rifle, but I had a grenade. I could throw it onto Germans or just drop it where I was. But then Germans would kill my comrades... All these thoughts flew by in a second. I saw my fellow comrades with their hands up... then Germans crawled near us and stood behind. A German soldier grabbed my rifle and then thrust his hands into my pockets where I had grenade fuses. I

took them out and threw away. Chief of headquarters Myslyvchenko was also captured. But they shot him with their machine guns. There were 14 of us including our battalion commander. Germans told us to get into a pit. They led away our battalion commander and this is all I know about him. There were two Germans on each side of the pit: one had a slot machine and another had a machine gun. They forbade us to move or talk. Commander of our unit Bevz whispered moving only his lips: 'Don't tell them you are a Jew. The others will not give you away'. I felt easier. He said the same to two other Jewish soldiers Ilia and Beikelman. I quickly took out my Red Army identity card and my school certificate, tore them up and dug under my feet.

A few minutes later Germans told us to move on and we covered 500-600 meters where other prisoners gathered. I thought I was living the last minutes of my life and that I would never see the sun again. I was a Jew. I was only 20. I didn't want to die. An interpreter ordered our commander to line us up in two lines. Ilia and I were together in the second line. I said: 'Ilia, we have to stand apart, if we want to stay alive' Ilia was a dark man with a black beard, a typical Jew or Georgian. A car stopped in front of our line. There was a German officer standing in it. He said in distorted Russian that from then on we were to serve the great Germany honestly. After this speech he gave an order: 'Zhydy [kikes] and communists — 2 steps ahead!' All of a sudden I looked at a soldier of our battalion (he was from Donetsk). Our eyes met and I understood that he was going to give me away. He breathed in when Bevz standing beside him pushed him with his elbow and said something to him. The soldier kept quiet. On the other side Ilia was called out of the line. My heart squeezed, but then he stepped back. The only communist among us was Davydenko, commander of a communication platoon, but nobody betrayed him or us, three Jews. Beikelman stepped ahead by himself. He didn't hope to survive with his strong Jewish accent. There were 6-7 prisoners who stepped ahead of the line. They were taken away and nobody ever saw them again.

We marched to Nikolaev. There was another lining in Berislav and again Germans ordered: 'Zhydy and communists — come out!' I stood quiet. Other prisoners pushed 2-3 of their fellow comrades out of the line. They gave them away. Nobody reported on me. However, there was the fourth time on 12 September: an interpreter and a German officer ordered: 'Russians, step out!' The Russians did. 'Ukrainians, step out!' Ukrainians did. 'Byelorussians, Uzbeks, step out!' Then came Georgians, Tatars, Armenians and Kazakhs... I was thinking of stepping ahead with Ukrainians, but I feared that they would give me away. The line was getting thinner... And then I recalled when my fellow comrades from a mine unit asked me 'What is your nationality?' and I replied: 'You guess'. They made one effort after another, but failed. And then one of them said I was a gypsy. So I decided to say that my father was a gypsy and my mother was Ukrainian. I didn't know yet that they were killing gypsies, too. There were two of us left. The other one had a big nose and bulging eyes... The interpreter asked him: 'You?' And Ukrainians were yelling: 'Judas, Judas!' Germans hit them on their heads with their sticks and they shut up. He answered: 'We are Mariupol Greeks'. Everybody laughed: 'ha-hah-ha!' Again Germans hit them on their heads and there fell silence again. I didn't wait until they asked me and said in Ukrainian: 'My father is gypsy and my mother is Ukrainian'. The interpreter translated and the German officer said: 'Ukrainian' and the interpreter took me to the Ukrainian group. Then we were ordered to disperse. The dusk was condensing. We settled down in a clearing in the woods. Then we went to sleep. The rule was simple: if one of us broke into run they would shoot everyone. I knew that I needed a legend of a biography. So I was lying there covered with my overcoat thinking. I decided to take the name of Kotliarchuk with a Ukrainian ending. -When next time they ordered: 'zhydy, come out!' one soldier said to me: 'Why are you

silent? You are a zhyd, aren't you?', but he looked like a Jew himself. I cursed at him and said: 'You are a zhyd. Just look at yourself in the mirror'. He got scared and shut up. Nobody took his side. There were 8 or 9 other checks, but nobody gave me away.

Germans convoyed us to Nikolaev. We covered over 200 km in a week and we never had anything to eat. We ate nightshade berries, corns and sunflower cake that we found beside the road... There were about 20 thousand of us. We were taken to a camp in Varvarovka village and later we went to Nikolaev (400 km from Kiev). There were about 3 dozen 2-storied buildings where workers of a plant used to live. The houses and a nearby stadium were fenced with three rows of barbed wire. We were ordered to complete construction of this camp. There were about one thousand prisoners in one building. It became warmer from our breathing. Later I got to know that in other camps prisoners were sleeping in the mud in the open air. In the morning we were given our balanda soup and then we lined up in the stadium: one thousand prisoners (5 in column, 200 lines). There were about 30 columns. Then prisoners began to die of dysentery, typhus, there were 150-200 prisoners dying every day. Nobody would go to work, but when we left the camp there was an opportunity to get some food. Once 12 of us were taken to wash car wheels in a military air force unit. Some women gave us borsch and bread from beyond the fence. Germans didn't stop them. In the evening a German cook brought us meat stew leftovers from their drivers' dinner. Each of us got 2 pieces of meat and a little gravy. Once we were taken to work at a plant in Nikolaev where we were given borsch for a meal.

5-6 thousand prisoners were convoyed to work from the camp. Once our guard took 5 of us to make wood stocks for Germans. Our German guard was about 60, gray haired and with bristles. He gave us smoke breaks, but I had nothing to smoke. During another break he called me behind a shed and asked me in his poor Russian: 'You are not a Jew, are you?' - 'No'. - 'Tell me, don't be afraid, I won't give you away... You look like a Jew very much. Wait here, I will be back in a moment'. He returned with a razor, scissors and hot water. 'You look like a Jew. I was in your captivity during World War I. People treated me well and I want to return their kindness'. He cut my hair and I shaved. I left a Ukrainian style forelock according to the fashion of the time, put on a hat that I found during the construction of our camp. The German gave me a looking glass. I looked at myself... and didn't recognize myself. He said: 'Oh, now you don't look like a Jew, good for you!' And he let me go.

Soon I fell ill with dysentery and couldn't go to work any longer. I was almost dying. A young soldier from administration of the camp gave me a handful of brown pills. I ate them and felt better next day, but I still wasn't able to go to work. Ukrainians were standing behind and I stood in their line. One of them said that Ukrainians living on the right side of the Dnieper were allowed to go home. Those who were willing to go had to come to a hut behind the lines. This was Tuesday. I understood that Germans would do the checking, but I was almost dying of dysentery and could die of typhus and I decided to give it a try. On Wednesday morning I stood in a line behind the others and then I went to the hut. There were many Ukrainians there. I came on time since everybody coming later was told to go away. Then we were taken to a white house where the commandant was sitting. We were lined in fives. I waited there all day. Prisoners went in through the front door, but they didn't come out going to the camp across the corridor fenced with barbed wire. The interpreter told us that we had to come to the desk with ceremonial step and salute. If a commandant thought you were a poor soldier he would not let you go. It was finally my turn. I came in a saluted. There was a

big map of Ukraine on my right. 2 German majors were sitting at the desk. A German soldier was writing on the left. A major asked me: 'Your name?' – 'Kotliarchuk Leontiy Gavrilovich'. – 'Where did you live?' – 'In Kiev'. – 'Profession?' – 'I finished school and was taken to the army. I have no profession'. I used the legend that I plotted on the way to Nikolaev. I said that I lived with my mother in a hostel and gave him a different address. My father died of typhus. My mother worked in a hospital. When the war began my mother was taken to the front and later I was recruited. They burst into laughter: 'Ha-ha-ha, Bolsheviks send schoolchildren to the front'. They nodded to the soldier and he gave a red sheet and said: 'Come here on Friday. You will get your pass and you will go home'. I put this sheet in my pocket, turned away, salute and hear one German saying to another: 'He looks like a Jew'. I keep marching toward the door... The interpreter yells: 'Stop!'. I turn around, make 3 steps, salute, drop my hands and try to have a smile. One German said: 'No, it's a mistake'. I turn around and head toward the door. In the end of the barbed wire corridor a Tatar man was waiting for me. He said: 'Here is 300 grams of bread and a cotton wool jacket. Give me your overcoat. Germans would take away your overcoats anyway and we will need them in winter. They won't take a jacket'. I believed him and besides, I was tempted by 300 grams of bread. I ate it. It turned out there were lots of lice in his jacket. On Friday morning I came to the white hut and stood in line. A soldier made a speech in German. He said that German commandment and Fuhrer and the Third Reich trusted us and had hopes for us. Do you promise to serve the great Germany faithfully? Of course, we promised. He called us by our names and gave us our passes. We got one loaf of bread each and another loaf for five of us. We were walking along the barbed wire corridor and there were hands stretching to us begging for bread. I gave pieces of my bread and left only a piece of 300 grams for myself. A group of us heading to Kiev went on our way. I decided to not go to Kiev, but stay in a village. Everybody in Kiev knew I was a Jew. I took a back road that was safer. I went from one village to another. Once a group of men stopped me. One of them inquired whether I was a zhyd. I said 'no', but he persisted. I said: 'Germans released me from a camp and gave me a pass. Do you think they are more stupid than you?' It was strong argumentation and they let me go.

In Dymovka village I sat on a bench to take a rest and fainted. When I recovered my conscience there were a few women standing beside me. There were Moldavians living in the village, but they spoke Ukrainian. A man invited me to his house. He brought a barber who shaved my head. When women saw how many lice I had they boiled my clothes and burned my cotton wool jacket. One woman heated some water and I washed myself. They gave me clean underwear, bed sheets, blankets and pillows. They also gave me a dry fruit compot drink and white bread. I stayed there two days. I told them I was from Kiev. Some girls were going to a camp for prisoners-of-war in Novoukrainka hoping to find their husbands or sons there. My host said: 'there is a straight road to Kiev from Novoukrainka'. On the morning of 5 November he took me to the kolkhoz yard where this group was gathering. I only had my shirt on and I was freezing. The horse-driven wagons were already leaving the kolkhoz yard when all of a sudden an old woman came running. 'Stop, stop!' — she brought me an old cotton wool jacket. There was a Ukrainian man, a former prisoner, sitting on a wagon. I told him my story on our way and added that I had nobody waiting for me in Kiev. He said: 'Why would you need this Kiev? You know how many prisoners work in surrounding villages? We shall accommodate you somehow'. We arrived in Malinovka village Yelanets district. This man had a friend there who was a blacksmith. He decided to shoe his horse. The man asked the blacksmith: 'Maybe somebody needs a guy?' He replied: 'Old man Kiryusha needs a guy'. So I got to this old man who had a bee garden and wanted a night watch. He was so happy to see me that



he didn't ask any questions. It never occurred to him that I was a Jew. I assisted the old man. We went to get fuel and I fixed his tubs, ladder and rake. The old man doted upon me. He used to say: 'Well, we shall feed a pig, go to Nikolaev, I will buy you boots and a jacket and you will get married'.

There was a district German newspaper 'New Life' hanging in the kolkhoz yard. One article said that the last Soviet plane was destroyed, Leningrad and Moscow were encircled. Another article wrote about how nice it was now to come to a store in the village when 'no ugly mug of a zhyd was looking at you'. They also wrote that those giving shelter to a zhyd or a partisan would be killed immediately. When I told old man Kiryusha that Germans had destroyed the last Soviet plane and encircled Leningrad and Moscow he replied: 'It's a lie. Germans had never won a victory over Russia. They will be running from us'. I lived with my old man until partisans made their appearance in the vicinity and commissar of the village and all prisoners were ordered to submit their passes to the village council. Then the commissar issued an order for all prisoners to go home. The old man came home crying: 'You have to leave tomorrow. 24 hours from now.' On 18 December I was to leave the village. Next day I took my pass and had lunch. The old man gave me a bag with food and found me a companion. On 20 December we came to Petrovskiy farm and knocked on the door of the first house. It turned out that there were my fellow country men living in the farm. There was Sak, an old man, a one-legged invalid living in the house, his wife and two sons. One of them Ivan, of the same age with me, returned from captivity three days before. This farm belonged to another district and they hadn't heard about the commissar's order yet. Old man Kotsupal came from another end of this settlement. He asked me about everything and then said: 'you can stay with me. We shall be selling goods. You have education, haven't you? You must have finished 10 grades.' I said: 'No, old man, I can't do this. I can repair equipment, radio or electric wiring, but not trade'. My boots were torn and old man Sak said: 'Go see Mykola, he will fix them for you'. It was time to go to sleep. My companion took off in the morning and I stayed at he farm.

In the morning I went to see Mykola. There was a prisoner staying with him. He was a Kuban cossack named Zhorka. There was another prisoner living in the settlement. His name was Ivan Doronin and he was from Leningrad. Zhorka was a master sergeant and Ivan Doronin was junior political officer, an artilleryman. Old man Sak said: 'You'll live with Fedora. She has a small girl. Her Ivan died and she needs an assistant. I went to work in the kolkhoz. Kolkhozes functioned. They kept threshing grain through the winter delivering it to the station. Old man Kotsupal taught me to make haystacks and was checking what kind of a worker I made. He liked how I made haystacks. In spring, when the snow melted we were finishing to thresh the grain. We were having lunch lying by a haystack, when he said: 'Remember how I was checking on you? I thought you were a zhyd. How could it occur to me? Zhyds do not like to work and you are hardworking. I saw Germans taking zhyds to execution. They made them sing 'Guys, start unharnessing your horses' [Ukrainian folk song]. It was so much fun!' If I had told him the truth he would have turned me in, even though we were friends.

Germans made Zhora a driver. He was driving a truck and Ivan ordered him to look for partisans. However, it happened so that partisans could shoot those who came to join them for betrayal of Motherland yielding in captivity.

I stayed with Fedora for almost a year. In early October 1942 I came from work and Fedora said: 'There is an order to send you and Ivan to Germany'. On 4 October Ivan and I went to the



neighboring village of Nadezhdovka for registration to go to Germany. After showing up in the police office we went to medical check up. Ivan went first and my only wish was to run away since I was circumcised. Ivan kept telling me that I had to escape on our way there. Where could I run in this steppe? I came in. There was a fatty doctor of about 50 years of age sitting in the room. I took off my clothes and thought: 'Well, that's it now'. He looked at me pretending that he didn't notice. He was a decent man. I put on my clothes and said quietly: 'Thank you'. He replied: 'Have a safe trip'.

Next day at 5 o'clock in the morning a policeman came for us. We threw our bags on the wagon and started on our way to the district town. The policemen followed us holding his gun. From the district town we were sent to Voznesensk where we stayed in a school building sleeping on the floor for three days. Then they put us on a train and we went to a transit camp in Peremyshl. There we were X-rayed. Then we were taken to a bathroom and they took our clothes for disinfections. We were taken for a medical check up in a big hall. There were Tatar and Chechen men who were also circumcised. I didn't dare to come to a doctor for a long while. He was sitting on a stand like a statue wearing rubber gloves. When it was my turn I shrank. He examined me without saying a word and I stepped aside.

A day later we boarded a freight train in Peremyshl and went across Poland. We saw Jews with yellow stars [Editor's note: fascists forced Jews to wear yellow stars for Jewish identification in all ghettos and concentration camps] through the windows on the way: exhausted men, women and even children. They were doing earthwork. We didn't get any food on the way. I had some food that the kolkhoz gave me: a piece of pork fat, a bottle of honey, some bread and sunflower seeds. Few days later we arrived in Germany. We arrived in Nurnberg. There was a huge makeshift toilet built on a platform. Then they gave us food that we ate right there on the platform. They poured me some good pea soup with pasta in my pot. This was the first and the last time when we had a decent meal in Germany. From Nurnberg a train took us to a transit camp in Bittingen stuffed with prisoners. We went through another sanitary treatment and then they began to count us like they would count cattle. We, a group of 300 people, were taken to Stuttgart on 15 December and were put in Sleutwitz camp in a small forest. There were long barracks for Slavic ostarbeiters. There were rooms for 24 tenants with wooden two-tiered beds in two rows and shelves between them. On the morning of 16 December we went to work from the camp. We walked for an hour. My boots fell apart and I walked barefooted. Ivan and I were taken to a joiner shop. I noticed village guys doing earthwork near the shop. I said to Ivan: I don't want to get wet in the rain. Let's tell them we are joiners'. He obeyed. Master Gaimsh came wearing a yellow robe, glasses, thin, about 75 years of age with a gray crew cut on his head. There was a joiner test to be done: Master Gaimsh placed a cut of water pipe in a holdfast vertically and gave me a file. I was to level the edges of the pipe. He said: 'That's ok'. He turned the pipe horizontally and gave Ivan a hacksaw. Ivan did what he was told and the test was over. Our German supervisor took us to the shop to sort out transmissions. He saw me standing barefooted on the dirty floor and gave me his worn boots on a wooden sole and tarpaulin upper. Soon there was a bell ringing for breakfast. We had nothing to eat and went to the yard. There were French prisoners-of-war sitting there talking cheerfully. I understood one word 'Stalingrad'. It meant that Germans were retreating and there were combat actions near Stalingrad.

This was a radiator plant. We received robes with the sign 'OST' painted with white paint on the chest. If somebody wanted to wear different clothes they had to sew on this sign. We got up at 6 in the morning. Our working day lasted 12 hours and on Saturday we worked 5 hours. Sunday was a day off, but we were often taken to do various jobs on this day. There were 3 old Germans working in our shop. Gliazer, the youngest, Shachtu, over 70 years of age and Singer, way over 80. I often assisted him since it was hard for him to bend. At first all of them gave me errands, but then Gliazer made me his assistant. We were given a loaf of bread for four of us every day. They also delivered a few containers of coffee in the evening: it was sweet and delicious and it was still warm in the morning.

There were jokes about Jews told in the barrack: that they like to shoot from rifles with curved muzzles since it was not so scary to shoot from round the corner. Once a week they gave us a free newspaper in Russian. When they introduced shoulder straps in the Red Army there was a caricature in it: 'Tsyperovich with new shoulder straps': a general of Jewish appearance looking at his shoulder straps into the mirror. They were not looking for Jews in Germany. They didn't expect to have any after all filtrations. However, whenever something happened there was an immediate question: 'And what's your nationality?'

Germans treated us differently. There were evil and cordial attitudes. They kept their distance from us. Our old Germans didn't humiliate us. Then a German man of about 30 years of age came to the shop. He kept pestering us: 'Do you know why Germans wear glasses? Because we are smart and we read a lot and it impacts out sight'. He humiliated us and tried to convince us that we were nobody and nothing...

At first we were in a common camp Sleutwitz and our camp fuehrer was Meier, a cruel bandit. He always wore an SS uniform and he started fights. There were guards with Alsation dogs in the camp. One of the guards was a Czech German and the rest of them were German. One old German man came to wake us up in the morning. He once brought me an ointment when I rubbed my foot sore. Another German was a scrapper. In the first two years we were paid 8 [Deutsch]mark per month and then they began to pay 16 [Deutsch]mark. Occasionally we managed to leave the camp to go to town, but then we had to hide our 'OST' badges to not be caught by the police. When we were lucky we could buy some bread or a pack of forshmak from rusty herring. Once some vendors came to the camp. I bought a striped viscose shirt for 1.5 marks. I washed it and wore it on Sunday. Ivan and I also bought trousers from a Serbian man for 8 marks. I wore a jacket that Joseph gave me at work, an old German man from a next-door shop. I dug up his vegetable garden in spring. His wife was a very sympathetic and nice lady. Their only son was in the army and she suffered a lot for him. Joseph's wife told me about their son. She said: 'He looks so much like you'. She gave me a jacket and a vest, a gummed coat, bridges and even a hat. A Polish man came to take photographs. He charged little for his services and I had two photographs made for me.

The feeling that I was working for Germany oppressed me and I was looking for an opportunity to do some harm. Twice I placed small nuts in the exhaust pipe and the ventilator blade broke. Both times the shop was closed for two days.

When we came to our barracks in the evening they allowed us to sing songs. Our interpreter Fritz was born in Germany, but his parents were Crimean Germans. They spoke Russian and he learned

from them. When in winter 1943 Germans were defeated near Stalingrad he ordered us to line up and said: 'Listen carefully. You cannot sing for a week. Our Germany is in the mourning. We lost 600 thousand men near Stalingrad'. Someone shouted: 'Fritz we are ready to not sing for another week'. He grasped this hint and said: 'You'll get from me now!' However, the time was changing and there were no consequences to this comment. After Germans were defeated in the Kursk battle, the regime in the camp weakened. In early 1944 the air forces of allies struck and destructive blow on Stuttgart. All laborers at the plant were ordered to clean up the ruins of one shop pulled down by blast wave. In spring 1944 air raid warnings were activated several times a day. Enterprises stopped work. There were air raid crews consisting of Germans and 10 ostarbeiters. In spring 1944 we were taken to a smaller camp that we built. There were no bugs in breezeblock barracks. A group of Polish inmates arrived to the camp. Car engineer Vinogradov had a good conduct of German and he always brought newspapers in German to the barrack. We learned about the situation at the front from these newspapers. When our troops began to advance Germans began to give us a package of good tobacco once a week. Chief of the camp began to fire us and we had to pay our fines with tobacco and he was selling it. One night in June 1944 the last and the hardest air raid occurred in Stuttgart. The town was ruining and was on fire and the world was turning upside down. My boss Gliazer began to take me to town to fix the roofs and equipment damaged during air raids.

### After the war

We greeted the beginning of 1945 with confidence that the victory was close. Soon we got to know from the French that the ally troops occupied Strasburg and that they were 100 km from Stuttgart. In March work at our plant was suspended. We were given no food and were not allowed to leave the camp. In April we worked at the construction of fortifications. The town was preparing to defense and street fighting. Soon we were locked in the camp. On the morning of 18 April the gate was wide open and there were no guards left. American planes were flying low above the roofs during the day. At night on 19 April we fell asleep before the dawn of our Liberation. In the morning the wind of freedom blew us beyond the camp wire fence. There were American troops moving along the streets on trucks. There were German prisoners in them. In the camp we took bread from food stocks and the French prisoners guarding a refrigerator gave us pork. Somebody brought a bottle of alcohol. We feasted in the camp for ten days.

Officially we were liberated by the first French army supported by American troops and there was French administration. 1 May was coming and I decided to make a parade on a truck. There was a food delivery truck parked near our barrack. I made a carton poster, drew red stars and wrote 'USSR' on the cabin. Anybody could drive this truck along the streets in Stuttgart singing Soviet songs. On 8 May my compatriot Zhenia found a radio and we installed an antenna on the roof of our barrack. Radio station 'Freedom' announced that on 8 May at 23 hours in Berlin the act of unconditional capitulation was to be signed in Berlin. Soon Moscow confirmed the announcement of European radios. Volley firing blasted the quietude in the town: the Harrison of Stuttgart made grandiose fireworks in honor of victory over Germany. I didn't even try to hold back my tears on this night of victory.

There was a center of repatriation of Soviet citizens established in Stuttgart. 5 former officer prisoners were at its head. In early 1945 they worked at the Porsche plant where Soviet sample cars were designed and manufactured. It was a sensitive plant and German troopers were going to

execute the officers, but chief engineer helped them to escape. They reached Paris and came to the office of general-major Golikov [editor's note: Golikov Philip Ivanovich (1900-80), Soviet commander, Marshall of the Soviet Union (1961). During the Great Patriotic War in 1941-43 he was commander of several armies and Bryansk and Voronezh Front forces, in 1943-50 chief of staff headquarters, in 1958-62 chief of political headquarters of the Soviet army and Navy.] responsible for repatriation at the direction of Stalin. He gave them documents, uniforms and guns and authorized them to organize a repatriation agency in Stuttgart. They needed trucks to transport people from all over the place. So the center opened a Soviet car factory on the basis of the Porsche plant where they repaired vehicles found on the roads. After the victory engineer Vinogradov authorized by the center to manage the plant offered me a job. We repaired broken cars and our guys were drivers, so we made sort of a vehicle yard as it was. At the beginning I manufactured license plates, but then I became responsible for filing documents. Sasha Pohiteluk, a Ukrainian guy, was our logistic supervisor. I went shopping with him. We lived and had meals at the plant and worked for free assiduously. American suppliers provided us, ex-prisoners, with food. There was a barrel of good non-alcohol beer at the entrance to the diner and for dinner French commandants provided us with dry red wine. I still have a certificate confirming that I worked at this Soviet car repair plant.

Germans were now suffering from lack of food and I decided to surprise Gliazer who had often supported me with a piece of bread or a pair of worn shoes. I gave him a piece of sausage and 3 kg of meat. Gliazer was astonished and thanked me.

There were suits delivered to the Porsche plant and I got a nice suit. It wasn't new, but it was ironed. I didn't know at once that these were the suits of Jews who were burned in incinerators. I knew from Polish inmates about death camps and I returned this suit. There were curtains at the plant and I ordered trousers to be made from a curtain. The girls cooking for us didn't have shoes. German women gave them some clothes, but they didn't have shoes. I found a shoe factory near Stuttgart. There were Ukrainian employees at the factory. I brought them canned meat and they gave me shoes for our girls. They also offered me a piece of leather and I ordered boots from it. They stole them from me later... In July Americans replaced French administration in Stuttgart.

I was eager to find out what happened to my dear ones and on 5 August I left Stuttgart. On 7 August our train arrived in the Soviet zone of occupation, at Galle station. All men lined up on the platform. A colonel came: 'Congratulations on your return to the Motherland!' His second phrase was: 'Do you have any weapons? Give up your weapons!' There were 5 minutes of silence. - 'Who has weapons, one step ahead!' 15 minutes passed. He dawdled about, turned around and left. Then a senior lieutenant came, we picked our bags and suitcases and went to Cerbst. There in a filtration camp they divided us into companies, platoons and battalions. A Soviet lieutenant was a company commanding officer. We lived in army tents, doing combat and political training. We went through general filtration check up in the camp. A captain asked general questions and then he began to put down our answers. He was the first one whom I officially told that I was a Jew. He asked: 'Where are you from?' - 'from Kiev'. - 'Do you have anybody left there?' - 'My aunt and a sister'. - 'Do you know that 125 thousand Jews were shot in Babi Yar?' [31](#) - 'No, this is the first time I hear about it'. - 'Do you think they could be executed?' - 'Possibly. When I left Kiev, they were at home'. Then he asked me whether Gestapo ever interrogated me. Gestapo didn't interrogate me. Then he said: 'Since you are a Jew I have to ask you this. You will serve in the army, demobilize and

then you can go to Kiev. But if you want we can send you to Poland. We allow Jews to go to Poland'. I said: 'Why would I want to go to Poland? I want to go home. I would like to serve in the army'. Later I understood that if I said that Gestapo had interrogated me and that I wanted to go to Poland they wouldn't take me to the army, but send to Gulag<sup>32</sup>. Then followed usual questions: 'When were you recruited to the army?' 'How did you get in captivity?' I talked with this captain like I would with someone dear to me. He asked me kindly about my father and brother and was sympathetic. He filled out a few sheets while talking to me.

After the filtration camp we were transferred to the camp in Bitterfelde near Potsdam. There were comfortable cottages belonging to the aviation plant. Everybody with secondary and higher education were selected to a special training battalion of 185th Red banner rifle division. They issued our Red Army identity cards and gave us carabines and our service began. They trained us to be junior commanders. When I went to town I was looking for my brother Roman. I believed that he had survived. I wrote to our address in Kiev, but received no response.

In early February 1946 we started preparations for departure and on February we left Zahna, Germany for the Soviet Union by train. We went across Poland and Slovakia and saw burned crossed the Volga covering 20 km to Pesochniy camp where they trained recruits for the army. They lived in terrible conditions, worse than prisoners. When our division arrived those boys cheered up a little. There were 2 lines of plank beds in the barracks, ground floors and there were barrels used as stoves. My friend Sasha Kostromov and I started stoves in our company and stayed on duty until morning. In autumn we were assigned commanding officers and we had draftees under our command. I received the rank of first sergeant. I didn't want to ask my political officer where I had to write inquiring information about my family. Lieutenant Borisov believed we were traitors and saboteurs. Perhaps, there were others thinking the same, but they didn't demonstrate it. I thought: 'I survived and went through a filtration camp and now they begin to ask me why they helped me in a Moldavian village?' Local people felt sorry for us, prisoners. People didn't think we were traitors of our Motherland. Perhaps, comrade Stalin was the only person who thought that we were.

On 27 November 1946 we were demobilized. I didn't know where my father and Tania were. I wrote them, but our neighbors accommodating in our room destroyed my letters. My father couldn't get his room back, though he had one son at the front and another one perished and he was in the army. His sister Manya gave shelter to my father, Tania and Cecilia. My father couldn't get a job without a residential permit.<sup>33</sup> His friends made a knitting machine for him: he knitted sweaters and Tania was selling them at the market. Only in summer 1946 my father got my letter. I sent him a photograph to prove I was alive and a certificate issued by my military unit. In June he showed my photo and certificate to chief prosecutor: 'Here is my son, he was at the front'. Only on 4 December my father moved into his room with the help of a militia officer. On 5 December I knocked on my door. Without waiting for an answer I opened the door: there was no table or chairs, there was a box by the window with a knitting machine on it and my father standing. He turned back. He didn't recognize me. He thought it was another militiaman. My father looked like an old man. He didn't have one healthy tooth left. He had suffered a lot thinking that he had lost two sons.

The next day I went to my school. Director Vasiliy Piymachok was happy to see me, but when he heard that I was in captivity, he was upset, since for official authorities I was an untrustworthy



person anyway. He offered me a job of a cashier, gave me a key to the safe with 200 rubles and a pile of school certificate forms. Director issued certificates to all who returned from the war, but lost their certificates. I lost all my documents during the war and so did many others. My family left our home and many houses burned down in Kiev. The archives of Kiev registry office was not damaged and I had my birth certificate reissued to me. Priymachok issued a new school certificate to me. As for my Komsomol membership card I didn't want to be a Komsomol member any longer.

My father went to work at the 'Leninskaya Kuznia' ('Lenin's forge') plant manufacturing river and sea boats. He was a leather worker, janitor and transmission fixer at the plant. Tania knitted clothes on her knitting machine. My father's sisters Manya and Fania and their children also returned to Kiev. They also made knitwear at home. They died in the 1980s. Manya's son Yefim Kotliar moved to Israel in the 1990s with his family. They went to Bat Yam. He often calls me and we correspond. Fania's sons Mikhail and Leonid Tverskiye and her daughter whose name I don't remember live in the USA. We keep in touch. My father's brother Samson returned from the front. Then he moved to Chernigov with his wife and their daughters Ella and Sophia. He worked there as an engineer at the textile factory. In the early 1990s Ella and Sophia and their families moved to Israel.

Shortly after I came to Kiev I went to my mother's grave, but I couldn't find it since Germans removed graves in this area. Later they made Lukianovskoye military cemetery in this location so there is no grave of my mother. Babi Yar where so many of my dear ones perished was an abandoned area where only hooligans were wandering.

In March 1947 I found my prewar friend Ghita Kaplunovich. Her fiancé Naum was at the front and got in captivity. When prisoners were released he returned home to Gaisin and Germans killed him there. I told Ghita my story and we began to see each other. In July 1947 we registered our marriage and I moved into her apartment in the center of Kiev where she lived with her parents. On 23 May 1948 our son Yuriy was born. We named him after my deceased friends Yuriy Belskiy.

Ghita Kaplunovich was born on 14 June 1922 in Kiev. She was very good at music and when studying in her music school she could play the piano wonderfully. Her father Abram Kaplunovich was chief of district health department and her mother Hanna Lopatnik was a housewife. I remember Ghita's stately grandfather Yakov Lopatnik. Before the revolution of 1917 he was manager of one of Brodskiys' [editor's note: Brodski family – Russian sugar manufacturers. They started sugar manufacturing business in 1840s. Organized the 1st sugar syndicate in Russia in (1887). Sponsored construction of hospitals and asylums in Kiev and other towns in Russia, including the biggest and most beautiful synagogue in Kiev.] sugar factories. When the Great patriotic war began he didn't leave Kiev and perished in Babi Yar in 1941. Ghita's father went to the front. Ghita and her mother evacuated to Serdobsk in the Ural. Ghita supervised music production in the theater and taught music in children's homes and schools. They returned to Kiev in 1944 and she entered the Piano Faculty of the Conservatory. She was a wonderful pianist and wanted to be a performing pianist, but there was one obstacle: her fingers did not fit. So she had to go to study at the theoretical department, but there she didn't get along with one lecturer and she quit the Conservatory after finishing her third year. Ghita convinced me to quit school and go to work at the recreation center for dystrophic children in Vorsel near Kiev. There were 40 children in my group and I worked without weekends through the summer. In August the doctor said: 'All right, now you quit your job and go to a college'. I didn't want to go to college. I thought I would be



persecuted for being a Jew and in captivity and for surviving. I believed I had to be a worker so that I wasn't in sight, but Ghita convinced me again: 'You have a wonderful talent, you can write and be a pedagog'. I entered the Faculty of Literature in Kiev Teacher's College, a reduced 2-year course. At the entrance exams I made 13 mistakes in my dictation and received a '2' [fail]. When I came to take my verbal exam it turned out that I wasn't in their lists. Mikhail Levit, a teacher of the Russian language, said: a '3' would be enough for you; veterans of the war are admitted without competition. Here is my condition: I give you back your work where I stressed your mistakes, but I didn't correct them. You will explain and correct them here. If you do it you will get your '3' and will be allowed to take your verbal exam'. I coped with this task. Then I passed geography, history, Russian and was admitted.

My father, being a Party member, had to indicate that he had relatives abroad in his application forms. Before the Great Patriotic War his brother Leibl used to write him from America, but my father didn't reply fearing persecution. After the war Leibl was trying to find out whether my father survived and my father responded. For this my father was expelled from the Party again in 1949 during the period of struggle against cosmopolites.<sup>34</sup> He swore that he would never again correspond with his brother and he kept his word: my father died for his brother Leibl. He destroyed his brother's photographs and letters. Then he resumed his membership in the Party.

In May 1949, when I was almost finishing my studies, an unpleasant incident happened. I was going upstairs with other students when chief of Marxism-Leninism department Babenko took me by my elbow: 'Comrade Kotliar, I know that you take an active part in public activities, but you do not come to our political club'. 'I would love to join you, but I have to work. I have a one-year-old baby and my wife is not well. We don't always have food at home. However, if you do me this honor I would like to come one day'. He says: 'I would like you to make a report. Many of our students have been in occupation and we need to pay attention to their political views'. I replied: 'I understand how important this is. I've also been in captivity and in occupation'. It never occurred to him. A Jew and he managed to survive? 2 days later Babenko made a lot of fuss about my being in captivity and never mentioning it. The thing is I wrote my biography briefly and even the fact that I volunteered to the front didn't fit in there. However, I had reported on my being in captivity when serving in my special unit. Director of my college got involved in this incident and we talked with him 3 hours behind a closed door. He asked me all kinds of tricky questions, but I said: 'I've been through filtration camp and answered all their questions'. As a result, director stated that he had nothing against me personally, but the circumstances... He couldn't ignore this Babenko. Usually chief of Marxism departments were from KGB. I passed two state exams in Pedagogics and Marxism with '4' marks, but they expelled me from college. Secretary of the Party committee Pohodzilo decided to help me resume my right to study in the college. He took me to the Ministry of education of the USSR. They allowed me to take other exams and I passed them with '5' marks. In July 1949 I received my diploma of teacher of the Russian language and literature, but they refused to give me my job assignment.<sup>35</sup> 'We do not trust you politically. You've been in captivity' the Ministry of education explained. I complained to the Ministry of State Control. They protected me, but I received their response to my complaint 2 months later.

I went to all kinds of offices through the summer and in September, when I visited another office in the Ministry of education I bumped into director of a village school and he employed me. On 24 September I came to school in Varovichi village of Kiev region. I worked in this school until 7

November and was transferred to the school in Seschina village where there was no electricity or radio. However, the wave of anti-Semitism associated with the doctors' plot<sup>36</sup> reached this village in 1952. Chairman of the village council read a letter issued by the district Party committee about criminal activities of Jewish doctors aiming at the destruction of Soviet people by providing wrong medical treatment and poisoning it. Later I heard rumors that Stalin was preparing a trap for Jews, but was going to present it to the world as protection of Jews from the 'just anger' of people. The only way to protect Jews from the 'just anger' of people was to deport them to Birobidzhan<sup>37</sup> in the taiga. They said that the Soviet Union was going to be cleaned up from Jews and then finally life would improve. Only a miracle could save Jews from another holocaust. And it happened: on 5 March 1953 Stalin died.

Shortly afterward chief of the district department of education assigned me as a district inspector. I didn't quite like this job. Firstly, I had to run around a lot, and secondly, teaching personnel was weak: teachers could not solve a 3rd grade problem with 3 questions. I worked as inspector for a year and then went back to school. After finishing my teachers' college I received 10% lower salary than teachers with a diploma of Pedagogical Institute. In 1956 I entered extramural department of the faculty of Philology of Kiev Pedagogical Institute. I finished it in 1959. After finishing this Institute I worked in a school in Kiev several years and then I worked in village schools of Kiev region. Ghita worked as a concertmaster in schools and clubs.

In the late 1950s my sister Cecilia married Moisey Dibner, a Jewish man. He worked as electrician in a design institute and my sister worked as a computer operator in this same institute. They had two children: Larisa, born in the early 1960s and Boris, born in 1972.

In May 1965 my district military registry office in Kiev called me to receive my awards. It was warm and we were waiting in the yard. They were calling veterans by a list until there were two of us left in the yard. I asked this other man: 'were you liberated by Americans?' He said 'Yes'. I said 'So was I'. If we had been liberated by Soviet troops we would have received our awards much earlier. I finally received two medals and sometime later I obtained my certificate of a veteran of the war and an order of the Patriotic War of II grade [editor's note: There are orders and medals awarded to him for his combat deeds and labor achievements on his jacket, including the Order of Great Patriotic War, Order of Glory, and medal for defense of Stalingrad, medal for Courage, etc. – perhaps you could put this whole part in the body of the bio, as an editor's note or just in brackets.].

Our son Yuriy finished school in 1965, but he didn't enter a college in Kiev: it was next to impossible for a Jew in Ukraine. He entered Cinematography College in Leningrad. In 1970 he finished this college and received a job assignment in Arkhangelsk, 5000 km from Kiev. Yuriy was a sickly boy and they released him from service in the army. He worked in Arkhangelsk for some time, but nobody needed a producer there and in 1972 he returned to Kiev. For 8 months he couldn't get a job in Kiev and there were no prospects for him. Soon he married a Russian girl from Siberia. Her name was Yelena Paramonova. They moved to Novosibirsk. He became senior editor of documentaries there and Yelena lectured in Theatrical School. In 1974 my wife and I moved to our son in Novosibirsk. In 1975 my son's daughter Vlada was born and a year and a half later their son Anton was born. However, Ghita couldn't live in Siberia due to the climate there and in 1976 we had to leave. When I imagined my problems with the Ministry of education in Kiev due to my Jewish identity I decided to go to Poleskoye (90 km north of Kiev). They remembered me there and

offered 5 schools. Ghita went to work as concertmaster in a club. We received a house and a garden and school paid our fees. My son often brought Vlada and Anton to spend their summer vacations with us.

## Recent years

When in 1985 perestroika<sup>38</sup> began I supported it for its glasnost' policy. They began to publish works previously forbidden and reveal information thoroughly concealed before. I translated a poem by my favorite poetess Lina Kostenko<sup>39</sup>, formerly forbidden in the USSR, into Russian. This book was published.

On 21 December 1986 I lost Ghita. She had congenital heart formation and Chernobyl disaster [editor's note: Official statistics in the USSR kept silent about the consequences of Chernobyl power plant disaster, especially the number of dying from oncological diseases. The doctors had a classified direction to show in the documents that a patient died from other than oncological disease.] had this impact on her. When we buried her, an old Jewish man came to the cemetery. He said: 'She is a Jew and there has to be a prayer recited'. He recited the prayer. Polesskoye is located within the dangerous 30-km zone within Chernobyl. It wasn't allowed to reside there due to high level radiation, but I couldn't obtain my permission for relocation for a long time. There was no gas heating. I stoked my stove with wood and breathed in radiation. I lost all my teeth in those years. I can visit the cemetery in Polesskoye on the days of remembrance the deceased. Ghita's grave is there and there is a gravestone on it. I can't go there often. Her father was buried in the Jewish sector of the town cemetery in Kiev. I had Ghita's name written on a plaque on his gravestone and I go there.

I remarried in 1988. My second wife Ludmila Zhutnik was born in Kiev in 1926. Her mother is Jewish and her father is Ukrainian. Ludmila finished Moscow College of Economics and taught economics in technical schools in Kiev. She retired almost 20 years ago. I also retired in the late 1980s and joined her in Kiev. I couldn't imagine my life without working with children, so I was head of an artistic word studio in the district children's house for many years.

In 1991 residents of Polesskoye left the town: there are empty houses with holes where doors and windows used to be. A bulldozer removed my small house due to high radiation. I received a small apartment in Belaya Tserkov (70 km from Kiev). I lived in this apartment two years and then we exchanged this apartment and Ludmila's for a two-bedroom apartment in a new district in Kiev.

In the early 1990s my sister Cecilia, her husband Moisey, son Boris and daughter Larisa and her family moved to Haifa in Israel. Larisa works as a medical nurse there and Boris is an engineer. Both of them have a good conduct of Hebrew. Cecilia and Moisey live on old age welfare. Ghita and I didn't have money to move to Israel. We couldn't afford to live without work for half year. As soon as people applied for departure they were fired. Cecilia and I correspond. She often calls me. She wants me to go visit her.

In the late 1990s Germans began to pay ostarbeiters compensation and I needed a certificate to prove that I had been in Germany. My son's friend Vitia Brentsler living in Berlin now helped me. He applied to the insurance agency in Stuttgart and obtained a certificate confirming that I was an ostarbeiter there.

Yuriy and his family live in Moscow. Yelena is a pensioner and Yuriy works as a scriptwriter. Anton is an actor in Moscow Theater for young spectators and Vlada is an English teacher. I miss them much and often travel to Moscow.

My wife and I do not go to the synagogue. We've remained atheists, but we attend Hesed where we celebrate Jewish holidays. We enjoy learning about Jewish culture.

## GLOSSARY:

1 Sholem Aleichem (pen name of Shalom Rabinovich (1859-1916): Yiddish author and humorist, a prolific writer of novels, stories, feuilletons, critical reviews, and poem in Yiddish, Hebrew and Russian. He also contributed regularly to Yiddish dailies and weeklies. In his writings he described the life of Jews in Russia, creating a gallery of bright characters. His creative work is an alloy of humor and lyricism, accurate psychological and details of everyday life. He founded a literary Yiddish annual called Di Yidishe Folksbibliotek (The Popular Jewish Library), with which he wanted to raise the despised Yiddish literature from its mean status and at the same time to fight authors of trash literature, who dragged Yiddish literature to the lowest popular level. The first volume was a turning point in the history of modern Yiddish literature. Sholem Aleichem died in New York in 1916. His popularity increased beyond the Yiddish-speaking public after his death. Some of his writings have been translated into most European languages and his plays and dramatic versions of his stories have been performed in many countries. The dramatic version of Tevye the Dairyman became an international hit as a musical (Fiddler on the Roof) in the 1960s.

2 Erenburg, Ilya Grigorievich (1891-1967): Famous Russian Jewish novelist, poet and journalist who spent his early years in France. His first important novel, The Extraordinary Adventures of Julio Jurento (1922) is a satire on modern European civilization. His other novels include The Thaw (1955), a forthright piece about Stalin's régime which gave its name to the period of relaxation of censorship after Stalin's death.

3 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.

4 World War I: World War I, military conflict, from August 1914 to November 1918, that involved many of the countries of Europe as well the United States and other nations throughout the world. World War I was one of the most violent and destructive wars in European history. Of the 65 million men who were mobilized, more than 10 million were killed and more than 20 million wounded. The term World War I did not come into general use until a second worldwide conflict broke out in 1939 ([World War II](#)). Before that year, the war was known as the Great War or the World War.

5 Pogroms in Ukraine: In the 1920s there were many anti-Semitic gangs in Ukraine. They killed Jews and burnt their houses, they robbed their houses, raped women and killed children.

6 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.'

**7** Podol: The lower section of Kiev. It has always been viewed as the Jewish region of Kiev. In tsarist Russia Jews were only allowed to live in Podol, which was the poorest part of the city. Before World War II 90% of the Jews of Kiev lived there.

**8** 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.

**9** 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.

**10** Primus stove – a small portable stove with a container for about 1 liter of kerosene that was pumped into burners.

**11** Lenin (1870-1924): Pseudonym of Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, the Russian Communist leader. A profound student of Marxism, and a revolutionary in the 1890s. He became the leader of the Bolshevik faction of the Social Democratic Party, whom he led to power in the coup d'état of 25th October 1917. Lenin became head of the Soviet state and retained this post until his death.

**12** 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.

**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** Torgsin stores: Special retail stores, which were established in larger Russian cities in the 1920s with the purpose of selling goods to foreigners. Torgsins sold commodities that were in short supply for hard currency or exchanged them for gold and jewelry, accepting old coins as well. The real aim of this economic experiment that lasted for two years was to swindle out all gold and valuables from the population for the industrial development of the country.

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

**16** 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.

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

18 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.

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

20 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.

21 Feuchtwanger, Lion (1884-1958): German-Jewish novelist, noted for his choice of historical and political themes and the use of psychoanalytic ideas in the development of his characters. He was a friend of Bertolt Brecht and collaborated with him on several plays. Feuchtwanger was an active pacifist and socialist and the rise of Nazism forced him to leave his native Germany for first France and then the USA in 1940. He wrote extensively on ancient Jewish history, also as a metaphor to criticize the European political situation of the time. Among his main work are the trilogy 'The Waiting Room' and 'Josephus' (1932).

22 Lermontov, Mikhail, (1814-1841): Russian poet and novelist. His poetic reputation, second in Russia only to Pushkin's, rests upon the lyric and narrative works of his last five years. Lermontov, who had sought a position in fashionable society, became enormously critical of it. His novel, A Hero of Our Time (1840), is partly autobiographical. It consists of five tales about Pechorin, a disenchanted and bored nobleman. The novel is considered a classic of Russian psychological



realism.

[23](#) Pushkin, Alexandr (1799-1837): Russian poet and prose writer, among the foremost figures in Russian literature. Pushkin established the modern poetic language of Russia, using Russian history for the basis of many of his works. His masterpiece is Eugene Onegin, a novel in verse about mutually rejected love. The work also contains witty and perceptive descriptions of Russian society of the period. Pushkin died in a duel.

[24](#) Yesenin, Sergei Aleksandrovich (1895-1925): Russian poet, born and raised in a peasant family. In 1916 he published his first collection of verse, Radunitsa, which is distinguished by its imagery of peasant Russia, its religiosity, descriptions of nature, folkloric motifs and language. He believed that the Revolution of 1917 would provide for a peasant revival. However, his belief that events in post-revolutionary Russia were leading to the destruction of the country led him to drink and he committed suicide at the age of 30. Esenin remains one of the most popular Russian poets, celebrated for his descriptions of the Russian countryside and peasant life.

[25](#) Mayakovsky, Vladimir Vladimirovich (1893-1930): Russian poet and dramatist. Mayakovsky joined the Social Democratic Party in 1908 and spent much time in prison for his political activities for the next two years. Mayakovsky triumphantly greeted the Revolution of 1917 and later he composed propaganda verse and read it before crowds of workers throughout the country. He became gradually disillusioned with Soviet life after the Revolution and grew more critical of it. Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (1924) ranks among Mayakovsky's best-known longer poems. However, his struggle with literary opponents and unhappy romantic experiences resulted in him committing suicide in 1930.

[26](#) Occupation of the Baltic Republics (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania): Although the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact regarded only Latvia and Estonia as parts of the Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe, according to a supplementary protocol (signed in 28th September 1939) most of Lithuania was also transferred under the Soviets. The three states were forced to sign the 'Pact of Defense and Mutual Assistance' with the USSR allowing it to station troops in their territories. In June 1940 Moscow issued an ultimatum demanding the change of governments and the occupation of the Baltic Republics. The three states were incorporated into the Soviet Union as the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republics.

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

[28](#) Molotov, Viacheslav Mikhailovich (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.

[29](#) Collective farm (in Russian 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.

30 Cossack - a member of a people of southern European Russia and adjacent parts of Asia, noted as cavalymen especially during tsarist times.

31 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.

32 The GULAG: The Soviet system of forced labor camps was first established in 1919 under the Cheka, but it was not until the early 1930s that the camp population reached significant numbers. By 1934 the GULAG, or Main Directorate for Corrective Labor Camps, then under the Cheka's successor organization the NKVD, had several million inmates. Prisoners included murderers, thieves, and other common criminals--along with political and religious dissenters. The GULAG, whose camps were located mainly in remote regions of Siberia and the Far North, made significant contributions to the Soviet economy in the period of Joseph Stalin. Conditions in the camps were extremely harsh. After Stalin died in 1953, the GULAG population was reduced significantly, and conditions for inmates somewhat improved. Forced labor camps continued to exist.

33 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.

34 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'.

35 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.

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 Birobidzhan: Formed in 1928 to give Soviet Jews a home territory and to increase settlement along the vulnerable borders of the Soviet Far East, the area was raised to the status of an autonomous region in 1934. Influenced by an effective propaganda campaign, and starvation in the east, 41,000 Soviet Jews relocated to the area between the late 1920s and early 1930s. But, by 1938 28,000 of them had fled the regions harsh conditions, There were Jewish schools and synagogues up until the 1940s, when there was a resurgence of religious repression after World War II. The Soviet government wanted the forced deportation of all Jews to Birobidzhan to be completed by the middle of the 1950s. But in 1953 Stalin died and the deportation was cancelled. Despite some remaining Yiddish influences - including a Yiddish newspaper - Jewish cultural activity in the region has declined enormously since Stalin's anti-cosmopolitanism campaigns and since the liberalization of Jewish emigration in the 1970s. Jews now make up less than 2% of the region's population.

38 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.

39 Kostenko, L. V. (1930-): Ukrainian poetess. Her poems are full of inner drama and meditations on human beings at the crossroads of national and world history.