

# Arkadi Yurkovetski

Arkadi Yurkovetski

Uzhhorod

Ukraine

Interviewer: Ella Levitskaya

Date of interview: June 2003

Arkadi Yurkovetski and his wife Raisa live in a cozy and clean 2-room apartment in a standard 1970 building in a new district of Uzhhorod. There are family photographs on the walls and on bookshelves. Arkadi is a stout broad-shouldered man. He has thick hair with streaks of gray.

Arkadi had a serious surgery recently. His wife's loving care helps him to recover. He seldom goes out, but he is on the way to recovery. Arkadi and his miniature wife make a beautiful couple. For both of them it is a second marriage and they've been happy together for quite a number of years. Arkadi's children from his first wife live in Uzhhorod and often visit their father.



My father's parents lived in Tomashpol, Vinnitsa region [220 km from Kiev]. My grandfather's ancestors came from Poland. Our family name of Yurkovetski is of Polish origin. I don't know my grandfather's place of birth. My grandfather Duvid-Ber Yurkovetski was born in 1860s. He was a tall handsome man with a thick black beard. My grandmother Sosia Yurkovetskaya was also born in 1860s. I don't know her maiden name. I don't know her place of birth either. I remember my grandmother as a thin short old lady wearing a long dark dress and a dark kerchief covering her head. My grandfather was a tinsmith. He was called a 'steeplejack'. He made tin roofs. My grandfather was a high skilled tinsmith. My grandmother was a housewife as was customary in Jewish families.

Tomashpol was a district town and it kept its status after the revolution of 1917 [1](#). Jews constituted about 70 % of its population. The rest of its population was Ukrainian and Russian. Tomashpol was a quiet green town. There were fruit trees and flower gardens near every house. In spring apricot, apple and cherry trees were in blossom that made a pretty sight. In May lilac bushes were blooming – they were lovely and made a bright memory of my childhood.

Jews got along well with other residents and respected their faith. People's virtues were highly valued and people didn't care about nationality. Jews in Tomashpol dealt in crafts: they were tailors, shoemakers, hat makers, barbers, tinsmiths, saddle makers, etc. Most of bakers were Jews. The Russian and Ukrainian population made farmers. There was a big market open in Tomashpol on Sunday. Farmers from neighboring villages brought their food products to sell at the market. Jews didn't trade at the market.

Jews lived in the central part of the town. There were streets populated only by Jewish families.

There were few synagogues in Tomashpol before late 1920s. I remember two of them not far from our house. One was big and another one was smaller. It was a long one-storied building with a basement from where the Torah was brought. On holidays children carried the Torah. Later, when Soviet authorities began their struggle against religion [2](#), the synagogues were closed. The bigger one was disassembled brick by brick and the remaining synagogues were turned into storage facilities. The Christian Church was also closed at that period. When the synagogues were closed Jews got together in a prayer house on Saturdays and Jewish holidays. Only neighbors knew that Jews had their prayer house there. There was a chazzan and a rabbi. There were always a sufficient number of Jews for a minyan. They prayed in a small room with windows facing the yard. There was an elementary Jewish school in the town. I remember director of this school Berzhycher. The school was closed in 1938. I believe there was a Jewish community in the town before the revolution, but not at the time of my childhood.

My grandfather built a house for his family. This house is still there. Nobody lives in it and its doors and windows are planked. There is nobody to take it in possession. I would rather give it to somebody to prevent it from destruction, but there are hardly any Jews left in Tomashpol. It was a one-storied house built from oak logs. It was a solid and warm house with 6 rooms and a kitchen. There was a big Russian stove [3](#) in the kitchen. It served for cooking and heating. There were smaller stoves in the rooms. They were stoked with wood or coal. Coal was bought at Vapnyarka station, 100 km from Tomashpol. Coal was transported on horse-driven wagons and stockpiled in a shed. Water was fetched from a well in about 600 m from the house. Only after World War II water supply piping was installed in Tomashpol. There were fruit trees near the house. There was a wood and coal shed and a small toilet booth in the backyard. We didn't keep any livestock since there was no extra place. Land was expensive in the center of the town.

My grandmother had twelve children. I knew all of them. Most of them moved to England or USA before the revolution of 1917. I know that my father's older brothers Zalman and Benuamin lived in London. I have no information about my father's brothers or sisters that resided in the USA. After the period of NEP [5](#) it was even dangerous to mention that one had relatives abroad to say nothing of corresponding [6](#) with them. I can tell the names of those that remained in the USSR. The oldest was Unchl. Then came son Moshe and sister Polia, her Jewish name was Pesia. There was another brother, whom I've never seen. I have no information about him. In 1901 my father Efim was born. His Jewish name was Chuna. Unchl was the oldest of all children and my father was the youngest. Unchl was about 20 years older than my father.

My father's parents were religious and they raised their children religious, too. My grandfather always prayed with his tallit and tefillin on every morning before going to work. At home my grandfather always covered his head with a kippah and going out he put on a black cap. He wore his work clothing on weekdays and had a black suit with a long frock coat of fine wool and a black hat that he wore to the synagogue on Sabbath and holidays. After the sons turned 7 my grandfather took them to the synagogue with him. All boys had bar mitzvah at the age of 13. My father and his brothers finished cheder. I don't know whether they studied anywhere else. I don't know where my father's sisters got their religious education. My father could write and read in Hebrew and Yiddish. They celebrated Sabbath and Jewish holidays at home. My father didn't tell me any details. They only spoke Yiddish in the family.

The family was poor and all of the sons went to work at a young age. My grandfather trained his sons Unchl and Moshe his profession. They worked with grandfather until they got married and had to provide for their families. At the age of 15 my father sent me to a local Jewish barber for training. My father told me that at the beginning this barber made him a baby sitter of his child and only a year after he began to train my father. His training lasted for two years. Before the revolution of 1917 he worked as a barber at his tutor's shop. After the revolution my father went to work as a barber at the service center in Tomashpol.

After World War I there were Jewish pogroms [7](#) in Tomashpol that lasted until the end of the Civil War [8](#). They were made by gangs [9](#) that came to villages to rob and kill. The locals gave shelter to Jewish families. The locals had Christian icons at the entrance to their houses and bandits didn't come to their houses as a rule. Of course, there was risk to local families since if bandits did find any Jews in their houses they killed owners, too, and burnt their houses. There were more pogroms during the Civil War. A Petlura [10](#) gang killed my father's brother whose name I don't know. Denikin [11](#) gangs also robbed and burned Jewish houses and killed Jews.

My father told me that when Tomashpol residents heard about the revolution of 1917 they didn't quite know what it meant for them. Since my father's family was poor the revolution didn't change their situation. As for wealthy farmers, most of them were sent in exile to Siberia. After the revolution a Jewish kolkhoz [12](#) 'Giant' was formed in Tomashpol. They grew cattle and wheat.

My father, his brothers and sisters were religious. They had Jewish weddings with a rabbi and a chuppah. They were religious through their whole life. My father's brother Unchl married Surah, a Jewish girl from Tomashpol. Unchl was a tinsmith and his wife was a housewife. They had five daughters: the oldest one's name was Rosa, the next one was Lubov – her Jewish name was Liebe. As for the others, I don't remember their names. Moshe also married a Jewish girl from Tomashpol. Her name was Polia, and its Jewish analogue was Pesia. Moshe was one of the best tinsmiths in a crew. His portrait was on the Board of Honor. Pesia was a housewife. They had no children.

My father sister Polia's marriage was prearranged by matchmakers. Her husband Moshe Malah lived in Miastkovka village [present-day Gorodkovka, 180 km from Vinnitsa, 280 km to Kiev] Kryzhopol district Vinnitsa region. He curried leather for a shoe factory. He worked at home. He had a shed with barrels with chemicals for leather in the yard. Polia moved to her husband in Miastkovka. She was a housewife. They had three children. Their older son Grigori was born in 1921 and then Shlome was born in 1926. In 1930 their daughter Dora was born. Unchl, Moshe and their families lived with grandmother and grandfather. My father and mother also lived in this house after they got married.

My mother's parents came from Tomashpol. My grandfather Shymshn Treistman was born in 1860s. My grandmother Zelda Treistman – I don't know her maiden's name – was born in 1870s. My grandfather was short and thin. He didn't have payes, but he had a short gray beard. My grandfather went to synagogue on Sabbath and Jewish holidays. He wore his black suit and a hat on this occasion. My grandfather wore a kippah. He was a cabinetmaker. He had his shop in his house. He had woodworking machines at home. My grandfather taught me to operate a machine. My grandfather made window frames, doors and pieces of furniture. When there were no orders in Tomashpol he went to neighboring villages to take orders. My grandmother was a housewife. She was a short fat woman wearing a dark kerchief, long dark skirts and dark shirts. She had a kind

smiling face. My mother's parents lived in a small wooden house in a Jewish neighborhood in the central part of Tomashpol. My grandfather's shop was in the biggest room in the house. It had the front door entrance. The living quarters consisted of three rooms and a kitchen with a back door entrance. There was a woodshed and a toilet in the backyard. There were 3 daughters and two sons in the family. My mother Polia, the oldest, was born in 1902. Her Jewish name was Perl. I don't know her sisters' dates of birth. The next child was Ida and then came Ulia. Brother Zisl was born in 1912. Chaim, the youngest, was born in 1921. My mother's family was religious. They celebrated Sabbath and all Jewish holidays. I don't know where my mother or her sisters got religious education. My mother could read and write in Hebrew and Yiddish and knew prayers by heart. I think she probably studied with a private teacher that was customary at the time. I remember my mother reading prayers in Hebrew to our neighbors at Yizkor, the age-old custom of remembering the souls of the departed. [Editor's note: the interviewee is talking about Yahrzeit] They listened to her and cried. My mother's brothers studied at cheder. The family spoke Yiddish at home. My mother and her brothers finished a Ukrainian lower secondary school in Tomashpol.

My parents' wedding in 1925 was prearranged by matchmakers. They had a traditional Jewish wedding with a chuppah at my father parents' home. A rabbi conducted the wedding ceremony and made an entry in the synagogue roster. My mother moved into her husband parents' home after the wedding. My mother was a housewife. My father was a slim man of average height. He was always clean-shaven. He wore a kippah at home and a cap to go out. My mother always covered her head with a kerchief after she got married. My father prayed at home with his tallit and tefillin on every morning before going to work.

My mother's sisters married Jewish men and lived in Tomashpol. Ida's husband whose last name was Dolburg dealt in book sales. They had two children: daughter Lilia, born in 1936, and son Vladislav, born in Uzhhorod after World War II. Ida was a housewife. During World War II Ida's husband was at the front. He took part in the liberation of Hungary and Austria. Ida, her daughter and grandmother Zelda were in evacuation in Tashkent. After World War II Ida's husband got work assignment in Uzhhorod. His family also moved to Uzhhorod. Grandmother Zelda died in Uzhhorod in 1959. In 1970s Ida's husband died. They were buried at the Jewish cemetery in Uzhhorod in accordance with Jewish traditions. After her husband died Ida, her daughter, her son-in-law and granddaughter moved to New York, USA. Ida died in 1990. Her son Vladislav and his family live in Israel. My mother's second sister married a man whose last name was Tkach. I don't know what her husband did for a living. Ulia had two daughters. I've forgotten their names. During World War II she and her family were in a ghetto in the town of Bar near Tomashpol. Her husband died in the ghetto. After the war she moved to Vinnitsa with her daughters. In 1970s they moved to Israel. They lived in Tel Aviv. Ulia died in Israel in 1994. My mother's brothers were single. Her older brother Zisl worked in a bank. He was recruited to the army in 1939. He perished at an unknown location during World War II. Chaim was also recruited to the army at the age of 18. He was still on service when World War II began. He was sent to the front immediately. Chaim perished in the vicinity of Vyborg in 1943.

I was born in 1929. I was named Arkadi. My Jewish name is Avrum. My younger brother Igor was born in 1935. His Jewish name was Itzhok. We were both circumcised in accordance with Jewish traditions on the 8th day after we were born. We only spoke Yiddish at home. Yiddish is my mother tongue. I said my first words in this language. My parents were religious and were raising my

brother and I religious.

There were 4 families residing in our house. My grandmother and grandfather lived in one room. My father's brother Moshe and his family were in another and our family lived in the 3rd room. Unchl and his family had two rooms and one room was a common living room. In the morning all men got together for a prayer in this room. My grandfather uncle Moshe and uncle Unchl put on a tallit and tefillin to pray. Nobody could come into the room at that time. The rest of the time children could play in this room and women could do their needlework. There was a big common kitchen and a big stove in it. All families followed kashrut and celebrated Sabbath and Jewish holidays. On Friday morning my mother went to buy live chicken at the market. I took it to a shochet. We had chicken broth and a chicken on Sabbath. Mother filled chicken neck with fried onion and flour. It was delicious. In summer and spring, when fish was inexpensive mother made gefilte fish. She usually cooked for two days. She left ceramic pots with cholnt in the oven overnight and the food was still hot on the next day. On Friday mother also made challah bread for Sabbath. We met Sabbath when father came from work in the evening in Sabbath eve. Mother prayed and lit candles. After the prayer we all said 'Shabbath Shalom'. Our father said a blessing over food and we sat down to dinner. We were poor and our mother always tried to make something delicious on Sabbath and Jewish holidays. Our father didn't go to work on the next day. Saturday was a working day during the Soviet period, but my father always switched shifts with his barber colleagues to have Saturday a day off. On Saturday morning our father went to synagogue. Women went to synagogue on Jewish holidays. When the synagogue was closed my father went to a prayer house. When he came home he read from the Torah to my brother and me and told us stories from the Bible. Nobody did any work on Saturday. Our Ukrainian neighbor came to light a lamp or stoke a stove in winter.

Preparations to Pesach began in advance. Our mother and the brothers' wives baked matzah. All utensils required for baking matzah were kept on the attic. Women made and rolled dough and made little holes with a wheel roller. There was enough matzah made for 4 families to last through 8 days of the holiday. It was stored in linen bags and kept near the stove to be dry. Utensils and crockery for Pesach were taken down from a big box in the attic. Our mother cooked traditional food. I took poultry to a shochet. Mother made chicken broth with small pieces of matzah. She made gefilte fish and matzah and potato puddings. She also baked strudels, cookies and honey cakes from matzah. Our father There was plenty of food made for this holiday. Our father didn't work through 7 days of Pesach. Jewish barbers switched shifts with non-Jewish employees to stay off work through religious holidays, they succeed all the time. They was religious and always observed traditions. Although Soviet authorities persecuted religion common people respected each other's faith. On the first day of Pesach our father and mother went to the synagogue. In the evening father conducted the first seder. Our mother covered the table with a white tablecloth with embroidered lions and quotations from the Torah. She put a saucer with salty water, hard-boiled eggs and bitter greeneries on the table. There was also other food cooked for Pesach on the table. Our father wore white clothes and a kippah. My brother and I also had white shirts and kippahs on. Our mother wore her only fancy gown and a silk kerchief. Everybody had a silver glass of wine to drink. We were supposed to drink 4 glasses of wine each during seder. There was an extra glass for Elijah the Prophet [13](#). The back door was open for him to enter the house. I posed my father traditional questions in Hebrew. I didn't know Hebrew, but I learned them by heart. Then we recited prayers and sang traditional songs. On other days of Pesach we visited relatives and had guests at



home.

At Rosh Hashanah our parents went to the synagogue in the morning. They returned from there high spirited and wished us a happy year to come. On this day we dipped apples in honey and ate them. Before Yom Kippur we had a kapores ritual conducted at home. My parents fasted from the first evening star on one day to the first star on another. Children fasted for half day after they turned 5 years of age. When they turned 10 they fasted 24 hours like adults. Shofar played at the synagogue. In the morning of Yom Kippur our parents went to the synagogue and prayed there a whole day until the first evening star. We also celebrated Sukkot at home. My father and his brothers made an annex to the house with a folding roof. Ordinarily this annex was used as a storeroom. On Sukkot the roof was folded. There was a grid left that we decorated with branches and ribbons to turn it into a sukkah. It made a beautiful sight and I have bright memories of it. There was a table installed inside and we had meals in the sukkah through the holiday. Our father also recited a prayer before each meal. We also celebrated Purim at home. Our mother cooked traditional food. My brother and I wore our fancy clothes. At Purim shelakhmones gifts of food were traditionally given to neighbors and relatives. At Chanukkah our mother lit one more candle in her bronze chanukkiyah each day. Guests gave children Chanukkah gelt. Our father told us the history and traditions of all holidays.

I remember the period of famine in 1932-33 [14](#). Our parents starved leaving whatever food they could get to me. They had to sell things to survive. My father's clients paid him with a loaf of bread, couple eggs or a bottle of milk for his work. Many people were starving to death. Every now and then grandfather received \$10-20 from his children living abroad. It wasn't much, but it helped. We could buy food or clothes at a Torgsin [15](#) store in Tomashpol. Grandfather shared this money with the rest of the family. These stores were liquidated some time in 1935.

We were rather poor. I remember that our father bought 200 grams of sugar candy and they lasted for about a week. I envied other children that had a bicycle, but of course, I couldn't even mention my desire to have one to my parents.

Arrests that began in 1936 [16](#) had an impact on our family. In 1937 our father was arrested after somebody reported on him. He was kept in prison in Vinnitsa for two months. They wanted to know where our father kept gold. They came to search the house, but of course, they didn't find anything. We were very poor. Our father was interrogated every day. They finally released him, but very few prisoners were blessed with such lucky ending. Many people disappeared for good. I don't know what were the charges against them. People didn't ask each other questions. We just noticed that some disappeared every now and then. They were arrested at night and then nobody saw them ever again. They were common folks and I believe they were innocent, but the new regime didn't quite like them.

In 1937 my father's older brother Unchl died. He was buried at the Jewish cemetery in Tomashpol according to Jewish traditions. His wife Surka [short for Surah] and their older single daughters kept living in grandfather's house. Uncle Unchl's three younger daughters were married and lived with their families in Moscow. Grandfather Duvid-Ber Yurkovski died in 1938. He was buried at the Jewish cemetery in Tomashpol according to Jewish traditions. Many people came to his funeral. They respected and liked grandfather a lot. My father recited the Kaddish over my grandfather's grave. In 1940 my mother's father Shymshn Treistman died. He was buried at the Jewish cemetery

in Tomashpol according to Jewish traditions.

I went to Ukrainian lower secondary school in 1937. I spoke fluent Ukrainian. There were many Jewish children at school and in my class. There was no national segregation. There was no anti-Semitism in Tomashpol. I had Jewish and Ukrainian friends. I still correspond with many of them. Many live abroad and some passed away. I liked mathematics and geography, but I was a success with other subjects as well. I became a Young Octobrist [17](#) in first grade. We were grouped in 'stars' – 5 pupils in each group. My group was responsible for watering flowers in the schoolyard. In the 4th grade I became a pioneer. There was no ceremony. Our class tutor told those who wanted to become pioneers to raise their hands. Then they selected those that were more successful with their studies. I was one of those. During an interval on the next day we had red neckties tied and that was all. I didn't have any pioneer chores. We read books about heroic pioneers and wanted to be like them.

In June 1941 I finished the 4th grade. On Sunday 22 June 1941 our mother came home from the market rather worried. She said that Germany attacked the USSR without declaring a war and that German planes were already bombing Kiev. There was a radio at the market square. There was confusion in the town. In few days Jewish refugees from Bessarabia [Today this is the Moldovan Republic. It used to belong to the Russian Empire prior to World War I and was attached to Romania during the interwar period. The Soviet Union regained Bessarabia as a result of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact in 1939] began to move via our town. They were walking or riding wagons along the Dnestr River. There were wealthier people among them wearing richer clothes. They didn't tell us anything, but we understood that we had to move on. Many residents of Tomashpol were already on the move. Authorities made necessary arrangements for evacuation of communists and leadership. My father's older brother Moshe and his wife evacuated. During World War II they were in Saratov region. Grandmother Sosia and Surka and her daughters Rosa and Lubov stayed in our house in Tomashpol. They refused to evacuate. Our father hired a horse-driven wagon and the four of us left the town. It was next to impossible to take a train in Zhitomir. There were crowds of people willing to get on a train. Our father decided to go to Dnepropetrovsk [420 km from Kiev] and from there go to the east by boat. There were wagons and carts jamming on the roads. There were caravans of them on all roads. When we were approaching Dnepropetrovsk there were German troops all around. Carts and wagons were turning back home. We didn't reach Tomashpol, though. We came to Miastkovka where my father's sister Polia lived. We stayed with her. Miastkovka was bombed, there were many wounded. In 2 day Germans came to the village. I remember Polia's neighbor was severely wounded. Hospitals were closed. There was no way of getting any medical assistance. My mother approached a German officer explaining to him that there was a wounded woman in the house. German doctor came to the house and provided medical assistance to the woman. He visited her every other day to change bandages and give her medications. It is true – things like this did happen when Germans were helping Jews knowing of their identity.

We stayed in Polia's house for about a week and then we walked back to Tomashpol. We had nothing to lose. My brother was 6 years old and I was 11. We covered the distance of 20 km between Miastkovka and Tomashpol. When we returned we found our house with broken windows and doors and empty rooms. The robbers ignored grandmother and Surka or her two daughters that were in the house. Residents from neighboring villages robbed Jewish houses. However, we

didn't have much of interest to robbers. Our Ukrainian neighbor Sichkar guarded our house telling others to stay away from his neighbor Yurkovetski's house. Our neighbors brought us some clothing and we began to settle down.

There was a German commander office in Tomashpol. Germans appointed a Ukrainian and Jewish senior men. There was Ukrainian police. There was a Jewish community established that included a Jewish senior man and his assistants responsible for keeping order in the ghetto and making lists for work or concentration camps. In late July 1941 Germans ordered all Jews to come to live in 2 central streets in Tomashpol. Our house was within the boundaries of the ghetto. There was another family there was a husband, a wife and two children. The husband Shymon Ryzhi was a hat maker. They were staying in uncle Moshe's room. The ghetto was not fenced with barbed wire then. There was security guard with dogs and inmates of the ghetto were not allowed to leave the ghetto, but there were no restrictions for non-Jewish population: they could walk freely in the town and in the ghetto. Some Ukrainian policemen were even crueler than Germans. They were afraid of Germans and wanted to please them to survive. Some of Ukrainian residents that knew our family brought us some milk or bread knocking on our door late at night.

There were poster announcements in Ukrainian and German on the houses. They said 'Work gives freedom' and contained instructions on gathering points to go to work. People decided that they would be paid for work. There were 126 of young men and women that gathered on the first day at the given point. Policemen convoyed them to the Jewish cemetery and shot all of them. Before they were shot they were ordered to excavate trenches. Policemen threw dead bodies in those trenches. Those Ukrainians that brought us food told us about this shooting. They said the earth was stirring for 3 days at this location. There were wounded that were buried alive. Inmates of the ghetto were in panic. We were convinced that shootings would continue, but this was the only mass shooting in Tomashpol. In 1980s there was an obelisk installed on this common graves. There is an engraving on it 'To Tomashpol citizens that were brutally shot by German invaders on 4 August 1941': it doesn't mention that they were all Jews. Well, this is a known fact, anyway. On the anniversary of this shooting people from all over the world came to honor the memory of the departed.

After this shooting the German commander told chairman of the Jewish community that he had to gather people to install posts around the ghetto and fence it with barbed wire. There was a gate guarded with armed policemen. They ordered us to wear rectangular stars on our clothes. If they caught someone without a star they shot him or her immediately. There was a curfew in the ghetto. Almost every week the Jewish senior man, his assistants and policemen selected groups of inmates for concentration camps. We never saw them again.

My father was hiding in the basement of our house since the day of mass shooting. He only came out at night. My mother began to wash clothes for Germans from the commander office: Erwin and Theo. They brought dirty underwear and soap and came to pick it on a next day. It goes without saying they didn't pay for this work. Once my father somehow came out when they were in the house. They grabbed him saying that he was a communist and a partisan hiding in our house. My mother was trying to tell them that he was her husband, but they didn't believe her. They took him to the commander's office. I ran after them. They turned back and shot at me several times, but missed. It was Sunday and the locals were in church. Germans took my father to the central square asking people whether they knew him. They said that yes, they knew him and he had never been a



communist. They kept our father in the commander office for few hours and then released him. He had to come to register at the commander's office every evening. In a month the Germans left and were replaced by Romanians, which battled on the party of Germany.

Before Germans left something that I could never forget happened. All inmates of the ghetto were ordered to come outside. Ukrainians were ordered to watch standing by the fence around the ghetto. There was a cart and a 500-600 l barrel on it. Germans harnessed Tomashpol rabbi Moshe and ordered him to pull the cart. He was a tall handsome man of average age. Policemen called him 'Black beard'. He couldn't move the cart. I can still remember how he raised his hands calling to God 'If You can see me. You know that I've never sinned and I was faithful to You. How can you allow them to harness me like a horse?' At that moment there was a sound of a gun machine and Moshe fell to the ground dead. Germans took him away and buried him. Jews and Ukrainians cried after him.

There was an old Jew named Nuchim-Tsygele living in the ghetto with his old wife. He was over 80 years old. He had a big gray beard. When the ghetto was under Romanian command Nuchim began to teach 10-12 boys of about my age. He taught us to read and write in Hebrew. We also studied religion. Every morning and evening we came to Nuchim to pray. I can still remember Hebrew that I learned with Nuchim. Once I asked him whether he could explain how God could allow harnessing Moshe to pull the cart and then shoot him when he was so religious and begged to God to rescue him. How could the God allow this to happen? Nuchim replied 'When they mow grass they also mow occasional flowers'. I remembered what he said. My father always prayed at home and read the Torah. Jewish men didn't get together for a prayer or minyan. This was not allowed. It was impossible to celebrate any holidays in the ghetto so poor we were, but we never forgot about a day of holiday.

In winter 1941 my paternal grandmother Sosia died in her sleep. The Jewish cemetery was beyond the ghetto and Jewish families were not allowed to bury the departed there. Policemen picked the dead and buried them in common graves. We don't know where our grandmother was buried.

Life was easier during the Romanian rule. They didn't shoot inmates of the ghetto. They were more interested in money. At least once a month officers from the Romanian commander's office demanded gold and money from the chairman of the Jewish community threatening to send inmates to a concentration camp if he didn't pay them. Jews paid as much as they could to buy off the commander. Romanians subjected inmates of the ghetto to all kinds of tortures. People died of hunger and diseases, but at least there were no shootings. Once a week inmates of the ghetto were allowed to go to the market for two hours to buy some food. We exchanged whatever belongings we had for food. Then my father obtained permission to work at home on Sunday. He had clients that paid him with food products or Romanian money. Uncle Unchl's widow Surka baked bread for Romanians. They had a bakery making bread for them, but it wasn't as delicious as Surka's baking. They brought her flour and she made two bags of bread for them every day. For this they gave her one loaf of bread. A Romanian officer, Belocon, and two soldiers came to our house waiting for Surka to bake the bread. Before World War II Belocon was a teacher. He was a kind man. While waiting he taught me Romanian. My father went to the commander's office to shave the commander. When he took a razor in his hands for the first time the commander said to him 'Now I am in your hands'. From then on he only talked Yiddish with my father. There were many Jews in Romania and Romanians living among them knew Yiddish. My father shaved the

commander every other day and each time he received two loaves of bread from him. My father had an official permission to walk out of the ghetto.

I went to work. I had to shepherd a herd of cows that belonged to the Jewish kolkhoz before the war. There were few other boys working with me. We received one loaf of bread for all of us. Once in 1942 we were taking the herd home late in the evening. It was very cold. One calf went into the river and a Romanian soldier told me to get it out of the water. I lost my shoes in the river. When I came home I had high fever and talked deliriously. There were no doctors or medications in the ghetto. I was ill for a long time, but I survived.

In March 1944 Soviet troops began their victorious march. Farmers that came to father on Sunday brought us news. Once, when my father was shaving the commander he said that Romanians were leaving the ghetto in few days. Then German retreating troops marched across Tomashpol. Few of them stayed overnight in our house. One of them said that Germany had lost this war. He said he was a shoemaker and had three children. He spoke negatively about Hitler. We understood that our liberation was near. Inmates of the ghetto were afraid of murderous actions that Germans or Romanians might take before leaving, but it didn't happen. On 16 March 1944 Soviet troops entered Tomashpol. All Jews came into streets. They were happy about liberation. Of 5 thousand Jews that were in the ghetto at the beginning of the war only about a thousand survived. Our happiness was spoiled by a tragic accident. There was a young couple that were in love in the ghetto. I don't remember the name of the young man. He was a son and assistant of Chatzkel' Portnoy, a blacksmith from Tomashpol. The girl came from a neighboring village. They were together during occupation. They were going to get married after liberation. They were a beautiful couple. They both came out to meet the Soviet troops. A Russian officer came to them and said that while he was at the front this guy was hiding away with Germans and now he wanted him to give his girl to him. The boy replied that he wasn't in the ghetto by his own will and he didn't think it was worse to be at the front than here. The officer asked 'Well then, you don't want to give her to me? He took out his gun and shot the boy. He took the girl with him. We were terrified. Women burst into crying. They said 'Germans were killing us and now Russians continue to kill us. Who can we believe then?' After the Soviet troops left the boy was buried at the Jewish cemetery.

We kept staying in our house. Surah and her daughters and Moshe with his wife – they returned from evacuation – also lived in this house. Moshe died in 1960s. He was buried near the grave of grandfather Duvid-Ber at the Jewish cemetery. His wife moved to her sister in Kiev. Surah and her daughters lived in Tomashpol. She died in 1970s. I have no information about my cousin sisters. My father's sister Polia, her husband, daughter and younger son were in the ghetto in Miastkovka during World War II. Her older son was at the front. When Soviet troops were advancing Grigori was at some different location. He requested permission of his commanding officers to be transferred to the Ukrainian front to come to liberate his home village of Miastkovka. He obtained such permission. Grigori and his orderly were among the first that came to Miastkovka riding their horses fighting with Germans. After liberation of Miastkovka he stayed with his parents few days and then joined his military unit moving toward Romania. At some point they stopped and Grigori asked his commanding officer to give him a leave so that he could go and visit his parents. On his way he came to see us in Tomashpol. Then he went to Miastkovka with his orderly. They took a lot of self-made vodka from his parents and went back to the military unit where they drank and ate food that Grigori brought from the village. One of Grigori's fellow officers got drunk and shot

Grigori. After the war Grigori's friends sent his documents and his photograph to his parents and told them about the circumstances of his death. We don't even know where he was buried. His younger son Shlome was mobilized to the front after he was liberated from the ghetto. He perished in April 1945. Polia, her husband and their daughter Dora moved to Odessa. Polia and her husband died in Odessa in 1960s. Dora was married to a man whose last name was Shor. They had two sons. She worked as an accountant at the Odessa Mechanical plant. Her husband died in 1970s. Dora, her sons and their families moved to the USA in 1970s. Now they live in San Francisco.

I went to the 6th grade of a Ukrainian school. My brother went to the 1st one. There was no anti-Semitism in those years. There couldn't be any demonstrated by people that were helping us in the ghetto. I joined Komsomol [18](#) in the 8th form. I cannot say that I was eager to become a Komsomol member, but everybody was admitted and so was I. After finishing the 8th grade I had to support the family. I became my father's apprentice and in half year I began to work by myself. I also attended an evening higher secondary school. I finished the 10th grade with only two 'good' marks. The rest of them in my certificate were 'excellent'.

My father continued attending a prayer house on Sabbath and Jewish holidays after the war. He prayed at home every day, read Torah and the Talmud. We celebrated Sabbath and Jewish holidays at home. Of course, we couldn't afford such festive meals as we had before the war, but even if we only had soup with no meat and potato pudding at Pesach there was always matzah at home. Our mother sold bread that we received per bread coupons to buy matzah flour. She baked matzah at home.

In 1950 I went to serve in the army. I was sent to an 'initial military training unit' in Chernovtsy. Since I had secondary education and beautiful handwriting I was taken to serve in staff service of a division where I served 3.5 years. There were 8 clerks and I was the only Jew among them. We stayed in a room at the headquarters. I never faced anti-Semitism during my service. I got along well with my fellow comrades. I had awards for excellent performance and studies. I was allowed to leave the unit after 18:00 hours. Twice a year on I was allowed a 10-day leave: on 1st May [Labor Day] and 7th November [19](#). My parents were very happy about it.

In 1953 I received a cable from home that my mother was severely ill. I got a leave. When I arrived home my mother had already had a surgery. She had breast cancer. She had one breast amputated and was feeling better. I went back to my military unit in two weeks. Shortly afterward I got a telegram that my mother died. This happened in April 1953. My mother was 51 years old. I went home. It was cold and there was snow on the ground. I got to Vapnyarka station by train. From there no transport drove to my town due to snowdrifts. I went to a military unit and explained my problem. They gave me skis and I skied 20 km to my town. I followed power supply lines to not get lost. I reached Tomashpol in the evening the following day. My mother had been buried by then. They didn't have hope that I would come and decided not to wait until I came. I cried bitterly feeling so bitter that my mother was buried when I was not there. She was buried according to the Jewish tradition near her father's grave. My father recited the Kaddish over my mother's grave. I stayed at home few days before I went back to my military unit.

The period of struggle against cosmopolites [20](#) and of doctors' plot [21](#) was not so visible in the army. I remember Stalin's death on 5 March 1953. There was a mourning meeting in our military unit. We all sobbed and combat officers had tears flowing down their faces. I cried, too. There was

mourning in the town, there were lowered red flags with a black band hanging from them. Only in 1956 after Khrushchev [22](#) spoke at Twentieth Party Congress [23](#) I got to know what a terrible tyrant Stalin was. But back in 1953 we sincerely mourned for him.

In 1954 I demobilized from the army. I couldn't go back home. My father remarried a year after my mother died. His second wife's name was Zelda, of course. I understood that my father and brother needed some support at home and I didn't blame my father. Zelda was a very nice and kind woman. However, it hurt to see another woman in my home. I went to my mother's sister Ida in Uzhhorod. I went to work as senior commodity expert at the Association Enterprise of Deaf People where I worked 10 years. I also finished an extramural department of the Trade Technical School in Uzhhorod. It is now called Commercial College. After I received my diploma I went to work as logistics manager at the Mechanical Plant in Uzhhorod. I worked there until I retired.

In 1957 I got married. My Russian wife Rita Shumkova was born somewhere in Russia in 1938. I met her at my friend's wedding. Rita worked at the same plant as I. Rita was 18 and I was 27 years old. Her father Alexandr Shumkov was a front-veteran. Her mother Maria Shumkova was a housewife. Rita had an older brother and two younger sisters. Her brother was at the military. He served in Kamchatka [about 9000 kms on northeast from Kiev]. Rita's one sister lives in Moscow and another sister lives in Kirovograd [Ukraine, on 250 kms to the east of Kiev]. After the war, when Subcarpathia [24](#) was annexed to the USSR Rita's father was transferred to Uzhhorod. His family moved there with him. Rita's parents approved of our marriage while my father was against my marrying a Russian girl. However, I couldn't change anything. Our older son Ilia was born in two months after we got married in 1957. I couldn't allow my son to have no father.

We lived with Rita's parents. When my older son turned 5 I received a 2-room apartment from the plant. In 1963 our son Pavel was born. We had everything we needed for life at least, by the standards of that period of time. During my service in the army I distanced myself from observing Jewish traditions and from religion. I was an ordinary Soviet person and I didn't have to change any habits when I married a non-Jewish wife. Religious habits were not appreciated at the time. We celebrated Soviet holidays at home and at work. We enjoyed meeting with friends. I had Jewish, Ukrainian, Russian and Hungarian friends. I never bothered about nationality. I've always valued human virtues. We spent vacations visiting my father in Tomashpol. He was very happy to see us, but he couldn't accept my wife into his heart only because she was not a Jew.

My younger brother finished a higher secondary school in Tomashpol. He studied very well. He only had one 'good' mark, the rest were excellent. His single good mark was for the Ukrainian language. They didn't want to award a gold medal to a Jew for his successes in studies. My father was very upset and even complained of school authorities, but it didn't help. My brother successfully passed his entrance exams to the Mechanical Faculty of Zaporozhie Machine Building College. When he finished it I asked him to arrange for a job assignment in Uzhhorod. I wanted him to be near. My brother came to work at the machine building plant in Uzhhorod. Igor is a skilled employee. He was promoted to Deputy Technical Manager and then he became a Technical Manager. He met Rosa Babiak, a Slovakian girl. They got married shortly afterward. My father was more indulgent to their marriage than to mine. They had two daughters: Svetlana, born in 1970, and Marina, born in 1974. They are married and my brother is a grandfather already. My both nieces married non-Jewish men. Svetlana's family name is Ivanova. She has two daughters: Christina and Ekaterina. Marina's family name is Dobrotenko. Her daughter's name is Veronica. My both nieces finished the Faculty of

Russian Philology in Uzhhorod University. Unfortunately, teachers of the Russian language and literature are in no demand now. Svetlana couldn't find a job. She finished a hairdresser's school, but she still couldn't get an employment. Now Svetlana is an au pair for two old sisters in Portugal. Her husband also plans to go to work in Portugal. Marina looks after her little daughter at home. Igor and his wife are pensioners.

My sons finished a Russian secondary school. They were not raised religious. I tried to spend as much time with them as possible. On weekends we walked, went to the cinema and theater. In 1969 my wife and I divorced. We happened to be different people. It had nothing to do with nationality issues. However, I've kept in touch with my sons. Sometimes I spent vacations with my boys. When my older son was 17 Rita remarried. Ilia moved in with me. I often met with my younger son as well.

After finishing school Ilia entered the Faculty of Physics and Mathematic of Uzhhorod University. Upon graduation he worked as a schoolteacher of Mathematics. Afterwards, he entered the Faculty of Producers at the Theatrical College in Leningrad. After finishing it my son went to Yakutia at the Far North where he worked as producer in a theater. My son got married back in Leningrad. In few years my son returned to Uzhhorod where he worked as producer of the Puppet Theater and later he went to work as Uzhhorod TV producer. In 1990 he moved to Israel.

My younger son Pavel finished the Faculty of Russian Philology in Uzhhorod University. He worked as deputy director at school and in the evening he lectured at the University. In 1990 he moved to Israel with his older brother. Ilia had a theatrical studio in Israel and Pavel was his assistant. In 1993 Ilia and Pavel returned to Uzhhorod. They've kept their Israeli citizenship and obtained a residential permit for Ukraine. My older son owns a store in Uzhhorod. My younger professes Judaism. Pavel finished the Faculty of Judaism in Kiev Solomon University [25](#) and a course at the University of Israel in Kiev. Now he lectures 'Traditions of Israel' in our Jewish community and few other towns in Subcarpathia. He also conducts seders at Pesach. Pavel had a brit milah ritual as an adult in Israel. [circumcision] Since his mother is Russian he is not a Jew. In a couple of months he will become a ger [conversion to Judaism] and rabbis from Israel will arrive to take his exams. My son has excellent knowledge and I am quite confident in him. Pavel teaches Jewish traditions and religion to Jewish young people. There is quite a number of children whose mothers are non-Jewish and they wish to become gers. They wish to adopt the Jewish religion. My sons are married to Ukrainian women. They have four children in each family. Ilia's older daughter Natalia was born in 1978. Natalia finished the Faculty of Philology of Uzhhorod University. She is a housewife. His second daughter Polina, born in 1986, is a student of the faculty of International Relations of Uzhhorod University. Thomas, born is 1992, goes to school and the youngest Efim, born in 1996, will go to school this fall. Pavel's older son Alexandr, born in 1982, followed into his father's footsteps. He studies in Kiev and is going to become a rabbi. Alexandr had brit milah, and is going to become a ger too. Ilia, born in 1988 and Yulia, born in 1990, go to school, the youngest Ida is the same age as Efim.

I continuously asked my father to move to Uzhhorod. In 1965 my father and his second wife came to live in Uzhhorod. They bought an apartment in a small house near where we live. My father was a pensioner. He spent much time at home reading the Torah and the Talmud. My father and his wife celebrated all Jewish holidays and I joined them at such celebrations. I often went to see them. My father went to pray at a prayer house in Uzhhorod.



I remarried in 1976. I met my second wife Raisa, a Jew, in Vinnitsa when I was visiting my mother's sister Ulia. Raisa was born in Kryzhopol Vinnitsa region [270 km from Kiev] in 1938. Her father Froim Gitman was Human Resources Manager at the District Supply Association. Raisa's mother Anna Gitman whose Jewish name was Hana, was director of a kindergarten. During the war Raisa's father was at the front and Raisa and her mother were in evacuation in Siberia. After World War II their family settled down in Vinnitsa. After finishing school Raisa enrolled to the Faculty of Industrial Economy at the College of Finance and Economy in Kishinev. After finishing this College she worked as an economist in Kishinev. She got married and had a son Michael. In 1970 Raisa divorced her husband and came to visit her parents in Vinnitsa. Aunt Ulia introduced us to one another and we began to meet. When I returned to Uzhhorod I understood that I couldn't live without Raisa. I called her in Vinnitsa and just said one word 'Come here'. She came with her son. I was renting a room. We received two rooms in a hostel and later we received a two-room apartment. This is where we live now. Raisa's son lived with us. My sons liked Raisa and I tried to make a good father for her son. Michael got married and went to live with Raisa's parents in Vinnitsa. After they died he stayed in their apartment with his family. Now Michael is going to move to Germany with his family.

My father liked Raisa immensely. He was happy that I married a Jewish wife. He enjoyed talking Yiddish with Raisa. We had a civil ceremony and then a chuppah at home at my father's request. There were only closest family members at our Jewish wedding. In 1980 my father's second wife died and my father came to live with us. At Sabbath Raisa lit candles and prayed over them. We began to celebrate Jewish holidays at home. My father conducted seder at Pesach. Every morning my father prayed at home with his tallit and tefillin on. My father also spent a lot of time reading the Torah. On Sabbath and Jewish holidays my father went to prayer house. I joined him on Jewish holidays. One year before he died my father stopped going there – he was too weak for this activity. My father died in 1993 at the age of 92. We buried him according to Jewish traditions at the Jewish section of the town cemetery. I recited the Kaddish on my father's grave. Then I went to recite the Kaddish for my father at the synagogue and I will do it for a year, as required.

In 1970s Jews began to move to Israel. I didn't consider moving abroad. My father couldn't move to Israel due to its climate. Besides, I had to pay off the amount of alimony for my children, which I didn't have available. Actually, I had a good job, a place to live and I didn't face any anti-Semitism. Many of my friends left Uzhhorod at that time. Even my childhood friends left Tomashpol. They reside in Australia, USA and Israel. When my sons moved to Israel, I did think that my wife and I might follow them one day, but when they returned everything settled down. Of course, I do not blame people that they want to move to another country for a better life. My wife and I supported our friends and helped them with departure arrangements. We were happy to hear that they were doing all right. We also felt sad about separation with friends whom we probably would never see again. Nobody could know that a time will come when we can travel abroad or invite friends here. This all became possible when perestroika happened. I was skeptical about perestroika that started in 1980s. I didn't believe that things could change in the USSR. Perestroika brought us freedom to correspond with friends abroad without KGB [26](#) censoring each letter and we got freedom to travel abroad without obtaining approval of Party officials or profess any religion. There were books published and one could read them without fear of arrest or imprisonment. Private businesses were allowed. Of course, there were not only positive changes. Life became more expensive.

The Jewish life began to revive during perestroika. Jews got an opportunity to attend prayer house and celebrate Jewish holidays without hiding. There were Jewish performances and concerts at theaters. When Ukraine gained independence in 1991 it gave more opportunities to the development of Jewish life. Hesed was established in Uzhhorod in 1999. This organization has become a part of our life. Hesed takes care of all Jews: from babies to elderly people. Regretfully, I got severely ill at that time and couldn't take an active part in Hesed work. However, my wife Raisa has become a volunteer in Hesed. She still works there. She helps Jewish old people. Hesed does much to revive the Jewish life. There is a school for adults and children at the synagogue in Uzhhorod. They teach us to pray and tell us about Jewish traditions and holidays. My brother, my sons and I go to this school. We also go to synagogue on Sabbath and on Jewish holidays. I feel the need to do so.

## GLOSSARY:

### **1 Russian Revolution of 1917**

Revolution in which the tsarist regime was overthrown in the Russian Empire and, under Lenin, was replaced by the Bolshevik rule. The two phases of the Revolution were: February Revolution, which came about due to food and fuel shortages during 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.

### **2 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.

### **3 Russian stove**

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

### **4 Great Patriotic War**

On 22nd June 1941 at 5 o'clock in the morning Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union without declaring war. This was the beginning of the so-called Great Patriotic War.

### **5 NEP**

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

## **6 Keep in touch with relatives abroad**

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

## **7 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.

## **8 Civil War (1918-1920)**

The Civil War between the Reds (the Bolsheviks) and the Whites (the anti-Bolsheviks), which broke out in early 1918, ravaged Russia until 1920. The Whites represented all shades of anti-communist groups – Russian army units from World War I, led by anti-Bolshevik officers, by anti-Bolshevik volunteers and some Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries. Several of their leaders favored setting up a military dictatorship, but few were outspoken tsarists. Atrocities were committed throughout the Civil War by both sides. The Civil War ended with Bolshevik military victory, thanks to the lack of cooperation among the various White commanders and to the reorganization of the Red forces after Trotsky became commissar for war. It was won, however, only at the price of immense sacrifice; by 1920 Russia was ruined and devastated. In 1920 industrial production was reduced to 14% and agriculture to 50% as compared to 1913.

## **9 Gangs**

During the Civil War in 1918-1920 there were all kinds of gangs in the Ukraine. Their members came from all the classes of former Russia, but most of them were peasants. Their leaders used political slogans to dress their criminal acts. These gangs were anti-Soviet and anti-Semitic. They killed Jews and burnt their houses, they robbed their houses, raped women and killed children.

## **10 Petliura, Simon (1879-1926)**

Ukrainian politician, member of the Ukrainian Social Democratic Working Party, one of the leaders of Centralnaya Rada (Central Council), the national government of Ukraine (1917-1918). Military units under his command killed Jews during the Civil War in Ukraine. In the Soviet-Polish war he was on the side of Poland; in 1920 he emigrated. He was killed in Paris by the Jewish nationalist Schwarzbard in revenge for the pogroms against Jews in Ukraine.

## **11 Denikin, Anton Ivanovich (1872-1947)**

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

## **12 Jewish collective farms**

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

### **13 According to the Jewish legend the prophet Elijah visits every home on the first day of Pesach and drinks from the cup that has been poured for him**

He is invisible but he can see everything in the house. The door is kept open for the prophet to come in and honor the holiday with his presence.

### **14 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.

### **15 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.

### **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 Young Octobrist**

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

### **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 October Revolution Day**

October 25 (according to the old calendar), 1917 went down in history as victory day for the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia. This day is the most significant date in the history of the USSR. Today the anniversary is celebrated as 'Day of Accord and Reconciliation' on November 7.

### **20 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'.

### **21 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.

### **22 Khrushchev, Nikita (1894-1971)**

Soviet communist leader. After Stalin's death in 1953, he became first secretary of the Central Committee, in effect the head of the Communist Party of the USSR. In 1956, during the 20th Party Congress, Khrushchev took an unprecedented step and denounced Stalin and his methods. He was deposed as premier and party head in October 1964. In 1966 he was dropped from the Party's Central Committee.

### **23 Twentieth Party Congress**

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



## **24 Subcarpathia (also known as Ruthenia, Russian and Ukrainian name Zakarpatie)**

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

## **25 Jewish University in Kiev**

established in 1995.

## **26 KGB**

Committee for State Security. The basic organizational structure of the KGB was created in 1954, when the reorganization of the police apparatus was carried out. It was a highly centralized institution, with controls implemented by the Politburo through the KGB headquarters in Moscow. The KGB was a union-republic state committee, controlling corresponding state committees of the same name in the fourteen non-Russian republics. (All-union ministries and state committees, by contrast, did not have corresponding branches in the republics but executed their functions directly through Moscow). The KGB also had a broad network of special departments in all major government institutions, enterprises, and factories. They generally consisted of one or more KGB representatives, whose purpose was to ensure the observance of security regulations and to monitor political sentiments among employees. The special departments recruited informers to help them in their tasks. A separate and very extensive network of special departments existed within the armed forces and defense-related institutions.