

Albert Tsessarskiy

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Russia

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Interviewer: Svetlana Bogdanova

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Albert Tsessarskiy is a tall, handsome man.

He is a hospitable, amiable and charming host. Everybody who has ever talked to him cannot help noticing his charms. He agreed to be interviewed in spite of being really busy. He holds a lot of lectures on the recollections about war times.



He is writing a story now. He is an interesting and captivating story-teller. He is modest. He can tell about the feats of his friends for hours, but he would briefly mention his accomplishments.

He lives with his wife in a 3-room apartment of a brick house constructed in the 1970s in one of the central Moscow districts. There are a lot of books in the apartment: modern and classic fiction.

There is a large wall portrait of the host in one of the rooms. It was painted by one of Albert's friends.

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- **My family background**

My parents were from Vapnyarka. It is a small town in the vicinity of Vinnitsa [about 200 km to the south from Kiev]. I think my maternal grandparents were also born there. As far as I know, my father's ancestor came from Poland to Vapnyarka and settled there. The deputation of Polish Seym and the ambassador came to Russian tsar.

My ancestor accompanied them. He was a chief cabman. The entire delegation was interned in the bounds of Vinnitsa, and ambassador was taken to Moscow and decapitated in accordance with the tales of my family. I do not know the first name of that ancestor. All I know that his last name was Tsessarskiy.

It was a Polish surname. He started the lineage of my ancestors who came from the town out of Vinnitsa. The whole delegation from Poland lived and died there. I remember another family story.

My paternal relatives immigrated to different places. One of the relatives was a gifted musician. He became a conductor by the court of the emperor of Austria.

Once, Persian governmental delegation came there. Persian shakh invited him to become the head of the court. Father took the offer. At that time father lived very moderately in Odessa [1](#). The family was very poor and all of a sudden father got the invitation from the head of the court to visit his country.

Mother saw father off to the ship. When he passed Istanbul, which was on the way, all agencies were reporting that there was a coup d'état in Persia and all governmental people were murdered, including the head of the court. Father came back to Odessa from Istanbul.

My parents told me that my paternal grandfather was a teacher in cheder Vapnyarka. His name was Abram Tsessarskiy. He was very religious. He was fond of Talmud treatment. People came to him to ask for advice and judgment during different social and family arguments.

He was a clever, talented and hilarious person with a great sense of humor. All his precepts were funny. He was never morose. Grandfather died before I was born. I do not know when it happened exactly. My maternal grandmother died earlier than grandpa. There is nothing I know about her. I do not even know her name.

My father Benjamin Tsessarskiy was born in Vapnyarka in 1888. He became orphan at a young age. He was raised by his only elder brother, who lived in Odessa at that time. Elder brother painted and plastered walls. I remember him a little bit. His name was Solomon Tsessarskiy.

He was so huge that he could paint ceilings without using a step ladder. After the Revolution 1917 [2](#) he was an organizer of the trade union of painters and plasterers. He had a good actor's talent. He played the part of Sholom Aleichem [3](#) in amateur performances.

He was a good-humored man. I do not know when he was born. He died in 1940. I do not know anything about his kin. Father finished cheder in Vapnyarka. Then he finished Realschule [4](#) in Odessa, but he was not involved in commerce. Like most modest poor people he started repairing watches.

My mother, nee Novokovskaya was also from Vapnyarka. I had never seen my maternal grandparents. All I know is that grandfather's name was Lev Novokovskiy. I do not even know grandmother's name. There is a family legend about her. There is a version that her ancestors came from Italy to Ukraine.

One of them was Padvá. They immigrated in early 19th century from Italian Padua and the clerk mistakenly put the name of the town they came from instead of the last name. Grandmother's husband was Novokovskiy. He died at a young age. I do not know what he did for a living, but they were rather rich.

There is another interesting family story. Vapnyarka was mostly populated by Jews. Grandmother decided to build a train station in Vapnyarka. She had enough money and energy for that. The rail roads belonged to the state, so she had to get the permit from the emperor to execute the project.

My mother said that grandmother asked for audience with the emperor Nikolay II, [5](#) and filed a request. He received her and talked to her for a while. She told him about the design of the train station. He signed the authorization letter. When she got up to leave he asked: «Oh, and what is your nationality?». When he heard that she was a Jew, he was about to change his mind, but it was too late, the authorization had been given and he could not cancel it. The train station was built and it is still there. Of course, there is no plaque saying who gave cost and took effort in building the train station. I remember that there was a grandmother's portrait in our place in Odessa. She looked stately. She was a very beautiful woman.

Mother's name was Esfir. She also remained an orphan at a young age. Her father died at a young age and then her mother died. I do not know exactly when. Mother was a young child in the family. She had 2 sisters- Sonya and Raya. It turned out that my parents knew each other in Vapnyarka and fell in love.

When grandmother was dying she asked them to get married. When grandmother died, sisters left for Odessa, where mother met father. At the beginning of the century there were Jewish pogroms [6](#) and elder sisters left abroad. Sonya left for London and Raya for Brazil. Sonya had a very moderate living in London. She found a job there. She sent an invitation letter to mother and found a job for her at a shoe factory.

Mother left for London and father stayed in Odessa. He and his buddy illegitimately left the city in the hold of the ship heading for England. They even did not have the documents. The captain of the ship noticed them, but it was too late and he took them to England. Father lost his fellow.

He did not know the language, besides he did not tell mother that he was going to London. He thought that he would come to London and see mother right away. That was the way it happened. He was roaming along the city, being hungry and saw mother all of a sudden.

She was in the cab on her way from work. They got married in London in 1907. Father said that there they added another letter 's' in his last name- Tsessarskiy. Usually that surname was written only with one letter 's'. Then it turned out that father was of drafting age.

It was declared in Russia that those people who avoided the army would be considered deserters. Thus, parents came back to Odessa. Shortly after that father was mobilized. He had served in tsarist army for three years and he was demobilized by the outbreak of World War One.

Father worked as a repairer of watches. He had a small shop-a booth, where he had been working from dawn till night. I remember that he repaired watches at home. He must have been a good expert as he always had a lot of work to do. The family had lived in a constant feeling of fear.

Mother was a housewife. When NEP [7](#) was cancelled and expropriation commenced, father was arrested for 3 times as they thought that he had some precious things that should be requisitioned. But he did not have anything, so he was held at the police station for couple of days and released.

Father took after grandfather and had a literary talent. I remember he made interesting critics when he was reading some literary pieces. He understood and felt the phrase. He composed verses, but they remained unpublished. Father was a religious man. He observed Jewish rites the best way he could.

I remember that on the balconies of the houses, where a lot of Jews used to live, sukkaths were installed. Father tried doing that as well. He took me to the synagogue. He did not go there regularly, just on Sabbaths and holidays. He wore secular clothes. He did not realize his talent. He was capable in many ways.

He was very good at mathematics. He was distinguished by that. E.g. he could calculate in his mind very well. Now, those calculations can be done on computer, but at that time people were astound by the fact that as he could do it very quickly in his mind.

For instance, he did such a trick- we took domino in both hands, showed it and hid it right away. He told us the number of scores in a jiffy. He had a beautiful tenor voice. In general, he could have become great, if not for vicissitudes of fortune.

Mother was not religious. She was secular. First she started working as a janitor with skimpy wages. She was not educated, but she was very active. She went abroad for 3 times. It is not clear where she found money for it. First she went to England.

When my sister was born, mother decided that she should be educated in France. Having taken some things, she and my sister left for Bordeaux. The sister was given to the boarding house at the age of 4. They had stayed there for half a year and came back to Odessa.

The third trip was to Brazil. My sister told me that mother decided to visit her sister Raisa. Mother took my little sister and they went there. Raisa married a minister of finance there. They lived in a luxurious place. My sister recalled that when they came there they felt as if they were unwanted guests.

Raya came to us in a silken lingerie and mother rushed to give her a hug, but aunt pushed her away. «Do you remember!» - cried out the hostess. In a week my mother and sister left the place. Sister does not have pleasant recollections from that trip.

Soon Brazilian minister of finance shot himself because he was involved in embezzlement. We did not keep in touch with our relatives from London and Brazil since 1920s as the Soviet regime disapproved of those who kept in touch with relatives who lived in capitalistic countries [8](#).

We were supposed to fill in the paragraph regarding connections abroad in every employment, admission and military form. I wrote that I had relatives abroad, but I did not keep in touch with them. I do not know about their fate.

Father did not want to leave anywhere. He mostly stayed in. My parents had three children. The first girl Luba died young, and then my sister Alexandra was born in 1908 and I was born in 1920. My sister was very beautiful.

• Growing up

I was called Albert. It was like a joke. My elder sister's name was Alexandra, but everybody called her Shurochka [tender name for Alexandra]. When I was born mother wanted to have a son and she decided to call me Alexander. «How come, - everybody said - you have a daughter Alexandra!». At that time there was a popular cookie in Odessa «Albert and Maria». So, mother

named me Albert.

Mother and father got along very well, though they were rather poor. They had such vastly different characters! Of course, our energetic and brisk mother was the head of the family. They rarely spoke Yiddish, they mostly spoke Russian. We lived in Odessa on the third floor of a 3-storied stone house, located in the place very close to the center.

First, we had couple of rooms. Then things changed and we were left only one room and a half. Our apartment was turned into communal [9](#). We had a lot of neighbors. Most of them were workers from publishing houses. A large Russian family was our neighbors. I remember that mother marked Orthodox Easter with them for some reason and baked Easter cakes.

We always had matzah in the house. Mother always cooked casseroles and tsimes from that. Even now I can't live without matzah. Besides, mother was born in Purim. The date of this holiday is not fixed, so she did not know the exact date of her birthday. She always marked it on Purim. That is why I always associate Purim with my mother's birthday.

I would like to say couple of more words about my mother's character. When father was arrested for the third time and was asked to give the gold which we did not have, everybody thought that father would be killed. He was taken out and threatened that he would be shot if he did not give away gold.

I was either 9 or 10 and I remember what happened. Mother stood out. She rushed to the head of NKVD, Zaydenburg. Mother did her best for father to be released. She made friends with that Zaydenburg and moreover, when she came to Moscow, where Zaydenburg lived, she stayed with his family. He liked my mother a lot. She was a charming person.

Father was apolitical. He had never expressed his opinion on politics. For some period of time he was a 'lishenets' [editor's note: After the revolution of 1917 people that had at least minor private property (owned small stores or shops) or small businesses were deprived of their property and were commonly called 'deprivees' [derived from Russian 'lishit', 'deprive']].

Between 1917 middle of 1930s this part of population was deprived of civil rights and their children were not allowed to study in higher educational institutions. Communists declared themselves to protect the interests of the oppressed working class and peasants and only representatives of these classes enjoyed all civil rights.]

He was in Odessa deprived of the right to vote and elect as he was a private entrepreneur. I remember that in Odessa there was a big board on Chernomor Boulevard by the monument to Pushkin. There was a full list of deprivees, who lived in Odessa. My father Benjamin Tsessarskiy was included in that list. I did well at school, but I was not admitted to Komsomol [10](#) because of that.

It is difficult to say who impacted my character more. I think that not only my family had influence on me. We, boys and girls, practically stayed on the street. There was a small saw-mill in the neighboring yard. I remember how we, guys, built a hut from the waste wood of the plant.

We organized commune there. It meant that all of us snatched the products from home, took them to the commune and shared in equal pieces. In general, I was a convinced communist. The formula itself 'liberty, equality, brotherhood' was so close to my heart that I thought that there could not be anything higher than that.

In fact, Odessa was a Jewish town. About 80 percent of population were Jews. Odessa even before revolution was out of the Pale of Settlement [11](#). There was a large stratum of Jewish population. I remember two synagogues in Odessa, but there were a lot of them.

One Brodski synagogue [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 and Odessa] was at Pushkin street. It was very beautiful.

I remember when father took me to the synagogue for the first time, I was surprised that women were separately upstairs, at the gallery and men were downstairs. There was a beautiful cantor who had a tenor voice. It was not the main choral synagogue.

The main synagogue was far from our house, closer to the maritime boulevard. There was an Orthodox church close to our house, located at Bazarnaya street. I remembered the toll of the church bell. I recall the bell toll and the clatter of the trams coming from Rishelyevskaya street and turning towards our house. Rishelyevskaya was the center of the city.

Then it was renamed Lenin Street. Now it is called Rishelyevskaya again. The street stretches from train station to the opera theater. I remember guys running on the street. Our Bazarnaya Street was paved with pebble. Mother was very irritated by the tar on my clothes. But that tar was all over as carts were lubricated with tar.

There were a lot of carts on the street heading to the market. Tram was the most frequently used transport, but people preferred walking. There were cabs. But we did not use them, as we were poor. Once mother put me to droshky (sulky) and the cabman drove me along Pushkinskaya Street.

When I was a child, there were few cars. I saw only one in Odessa. It was a big event for us, boys, when it was driven along the street and of course we did not find that transport dangerous.

Mother was a housewife, but she could not tend me as she was not patient enough to take care of me. I was on my own, spending most time in the street. As far as I remember at the age of 5 or 6 I was given to the group of children headed by German governess.

Besides, mother said that the first words spoken by me were German, as my nanny was a German. I felt the language and my knowledge in the German group got better. I gradually studied the language at school and at the institute.

My preparation for school was even good for the 2nd grade. Some teachers taught me as well as kin and acquaintances. I went to the 2nd grade in 1930 of Russian 10-year school. Repressions [12](#) commenced. Something was happening at school.

The school headmaster Vyshnevetskiy was fired as 'peoples' enemy' [13](#) and was supposed to be exiled. I remember when I was sitting in my classroom; the headmaster came in every classroom, said goodbye and asked to think kindly of him. He came in our class. He was a tall, handsome Jew with a cane.

He said: «I would like you to grow up as true people. Think kindly of me». He vanished. Then I was told that he had been shot. There was a new headmaster in our school. He was a hard-core communist. He was obnoxious. He wore breeches, military double-breasted jacket and pince-nez. The entire school hated him.

Senior students locked him in the classroom by putting a swab on the handle on the opposite side. He had stayed there for 2 days. He was not let out. Then militia came and terrible things were happening! He was freed and he shortly left school. The instigators got away with that. There was no trouble. There were reprimands, parents were called, but nobody was expelled from school.

A lot of people from Odessa used to like Trotsky [14](#). When Trotsky was exiled abroad (he took a steamboat), there was an incident and a friend of our family told us about it. Our pal was KGB guy. He was sent to the place, wherefrom Trotsky was interned. The whole quay was patrolled.

Trotsky was walking up the ship's ladder and his hat was carried away with the wind. One of KGB guys took his hat and gave it to Trotsky and another KGB guy took Trotsky's hat. Both of them were shot- one for keeping something from Trotsky and another one for giving Trotsky a hat.

I had a lot of friends at school. All of them were of different nationalities- Jews, Ukrainians, Russians. There was a large caboodle of friends and nobody ever came up with the nationality issue. My bosom friends were 3 boys – Jews Kisa Averbuch, Dusya Marder and a Russian Oleg Shepelyov.

Kisa and Dusya went to navy school institute having finished school. When the war was unleashed they were sent in the vicinity of Moscow as marines. Oleg Shepelyov was close to them in evacuation. He was starving. Then he told me that Dusik found him and saw how indigent he was.

When Dusik left, Oleg found a wad of money on his table. Dusik left everything he made as an officer. In couple of days he perished. Kisa Aberuch died shortly before him. There were a lot of Jews in my class. We sang and danced to Jewish songs.

There I learnt how to dance Jewish dance Freilichs with all 'frills'. It was very organic to me. Then my wife's father, a Russian man, a very good composer, asked me to show how to dance Freilichs. He wanted to feel the Jewish melody. I showed him the dance and sang Jewish melodies.

The headmaster of our school Grigoriy Markovich Radzinskiy was a Jew. When he was at the lead, there was no anti-Semitism. He was a communist and internationalist. I was a pioneer [15](#). I was not worried for not having been admitted to Komsomol, I took part in social life all the same.

I was given all kinds of tasks and responsible assignments: organize talent contest, issue wall newspaper, organize a tour. The director told me once: «You know Abik, when you finish school and enter the institute, you can join Komsomol as it would not be important there that your father was a deprivee». At school everybody called me Abik, not Albert.

I was not an excellent, but a good student. I did not 'see' books until the 4th grade. I loathed reading! I was next to impossible to make me read a book. There were book 'peddlers' (book seller) The peddler brought all kinds of books in the bag, took all of them to the floor so that people could choose what they wanted.

Almost all book peddlers were Jews. One book peddler came to us. He was a lean stooped elderly Jew. He could hardly carry the bag with the books. Father said: «Well, let's try». He hurled all the books on the floor. First I took no interest. Then all of a sudden I saw I book with an interesting cover- rapid river and ice-floe.

There were men with rifles and jumping dogs on the one side of the river and a woman with a baby in her hands was trying to cross the river. It was the novel written by Harriet Beecher Stowe «Uncle Tom's Cabin». I started reading it. Since that moment I had become a bookworm.

I even read in the tram hanging on the footboard (there were no automatic door that time) When I was in Odessa I came to liking Sholom Aleichem. I should say he was one of my favorite writers. I read his books in Russian translation. My uncle Solomon always played Sholom Aleichem.

He was the one who plied me with love for that writer. They staged performances in the clubs crowded with people. I understood the humor of Sholom Aleichem owing to my uncle, who felt it really well.

I was in a drama circle at school and read a lot in the team of the fiction reader. When I was very young, I met a very interesting family- the Lazurskiys. Once mother took me to the sea. There was a performance in some sanatorium. It turned out that it was the team of artistic reading of Odessa circle of scholars.

They were reading a play sitting at the table. They did it so wonderfully that no decorations were needed, things were clear. My mother was so active that she came up to them when the performance was over and said: «I would like you to take my son in your team. He is a gifted boy».

I was appointed a meeting at the place of professor Lazurskiy. He was the professor at the chair of Russian Language in Odessa University. He was a Russian man, captivated by Russian classics. He was fired from the University at that time as he was apolitical.

He taught Russian Lev Tolstoy's [16](#) children for two years. Thus, Ukrainian, Russian cultures mixed up in me. I went to the 7th grade. I remember when I came over to them they asked me to recite something. I recited a monologue written by Lermontov [17](#). When a child is reciting anything of the kind, adults burst into laughter. All of them were laughing, but I was admitted. They said I would be given the roles of adolescents, not old people.

It was the year of 1937. I finished school and I wanted to enter theatrical institute. But I was advised not to do that as I ought to acquire a serious profession so that theatre would be just a hobby. I decided to go to Moscow and enter IFLI (Institute of Philosophy and Literature).

I dreamt to become a writer. I passed exams, walked around the institute and was dawned that I it was not something that I needed. I had my documents on me. I thought that I should be closer to people and entered the 2nd Medical Institute, Therapeutic Department. When I was taking exams,

there was no anti-Semitism. Professor Topchan, a Jew, was the rector. At that time it was not important that he was a Jew. First, I lived in my sister's place. Then I moved to the hostel.

Sister lived in Moscow before I came there. She got married in Odessa. Her husband Jacob Itskovich got a mandatory job assignment to Biysk, where he worked as a chief engineer of cold storage facility. Then he was transferred to Moscow and worked as a chief engineer of the ministry of food industry. He was a talented person. He designed and later was the head of cold-storage facility, which is still there.

I felt the dreadful year of 1937 in my sister's house. The head of ministry, where my sister's husband worked, was repressed. The neighbors of my relatives were responsible workers in food industry. When he was arrested all neighbors of the brother-in-law gathered in his apartment and thought how to rescue him.

They decided that they would write a letter to Stalin explaining what a good person and loyal communist he was. It was decided that everybody would come back in the morning and sign the letter. Nobody came in the morning, but my brother-in-law wrote a letter and sent it to Stalin.

After that my sister packed his things and rusks. All of us were aware what was ahead of him. But my brother-in-law was not touched. Later on we found out why. In the 1920s he went to America with the group of engineers to study cold-storage facilities production.

Some White Guard was nagging on them, cursing Soviet Union etc. My brother-in-law was a patriot. He turned to that guy and slapped him. That fact was revealed as there was a stooge in the group. The story was written in the personal record of my brother-in-law and it saved him.

Then they read that case to him. It was a horrible time. There were meetings at our institute where Komsomol members were demanded to reject their repressed parents. It was abominable. I remember I made friends with one student. We went for a stroll and I saw her home.

Once she came up to me and said: «I think, you should not keep friendship with me, as this night my father was arrested». He was arrested and shot and nobody knew the reason for that. I kept on being friends with her, but most of my fellow students turned back on her.

We did not believe that it was the state politics. We thought that local officials were mistaken and the leadership of the country was misinformed. We found all kinds of reasons for that, but we could not picture that it was the politics of the state. Even at that time I was a convinced communist.

Gradually I was getting to understand what kind of party elite it was. It was degeneration. People were far from the ideals, which inspired us. I saw their real value when after the War [18](#), I came across with them at work.

We had a wonderful team of teachers at the institute. I was very fond of histology, the science of cells. The head of histology chair was Boris Lavrentiev. He was one of the founders of neurohistology.

He was deputy rector of the institute, where all medical branches were combined. He was an original man. He was internationalist. He knew foreign languages and loved foreign culture. On his jubilee we did not give him the books written by Stalin, but by Shakespeare. He was happy.

- **During the war**

Our teachers were great experts, professionals. They were beyond politics. Our Komsomol Committee [editor's note: Komsomol units existed at all educational and industrial enterprises. They were headed by Komsomol committees involved in organizational activities] consisted of romantic people.

I joined Komsomol at the institute. It was natural. I was not involved in social work. I was fond of theatre. There was so-called peoples' theatre in the culture house of medical workers. I played some parts in the performances there and I was a success.

On the 19th June 1941 I got an official invitation to the troupe of that theatre. I was in my fourth year. In three days the war was unleashed. Things were predetermined. What kind of theatres was I to think about! I ought to be in the lines.

I had a premonition that our country was imminent with a catastrophe. I was flatly against the non-aggression treaty between USSR and Germany signed by Ribbentrop and Molotov [19](#). I was really perturbed that a good Poland was invaded for no reason and a better part of it had been annexed [20](#).

I was so displeased when some famous entertainer was mocking Poland and its political leaders during one of his performances. Poland was breathing with culture, literature, music. It was close to me and I could not comprehend how people could have acted and talked like that towards Poland.

Then there was a Finnish war [21](#). I was thinking how we could have dared attacking somebody else's country for the sake of improving our territory, but I was afraid to share such thoughts with anybody. I was rampantly against that war, but there were a lot of people who went to that war as volunteers.

One of my pals perished there and I could not get why on earth did he go there?! But life went on. I was young. I had my friends, hobbies, theatre, girls. I met my wife-to-be at the institute. Her name was Tatiana Triodina.

There were four close school friends. All of them entered one institute and lived in one hostel. First, I met a friend of my future wife, Zhanna. She studied French. I was perplexed that among our students one fluffy girl was reading Three Musketeers by Dumas during the recess. Zhanna's fate was very interesting.

Her father Joseph Koffman was the organizer of the counter revolutionary uprising in 1918. When the rebels were being arrested, he managed to escape abroad. There he finished the institute, worked. He fell in love with a budding singer in Paris.

He got married. She gave birth to 2 children. He was mendaciously called in Moscow as if offered a job. He was arrested immediately and exiled to the north. His wife dropped everything and left for USSR. He lived in an exile in the construction area of some canal. He was in charge of some concrete laboratory.

Construction manager got an assignment to construct canal Moscow-Volga and invited Zhanna's father who had been released by that time, to be in charge of the same laboratory in Dmitrov [30 km from Moscow]. He and his wife decided to take daughters there. They lived in France and studied at Catholic convent.

Zhanna was a convinced monarchist. Mother went to Paris to bring her daughters. Our embassy helped to abduct the girls and mother took them to Russia by train. Zhanna's elder sister talked her into fleeing to Paris on their way. And again Mother asked the embassy to help her out.

The girls were found and taken to Russia. Then Zhanna talked her sister into escaping to Paris via Finland. They skied to Leningrad. They were caught there and taken back to Dmitrov. When Zhanna came to the medical school she gradually turned into a convinced communist. She and her sister were arrested in 1948.

They had spent years in dreadful camps. I wrote all kinds of letters to protect her. I was writing that she was a communist. After Stalin's death in 1953 she came back and obtained a one-room apartment in Moscow. Now she lives in France. When she comes to Moscow, she takes part in the demonstrations of the communists.

It turned out that Zhanna, whom I met, had a friend Musa. I liked Musa very much. She was a Jew, born in Georgia. I started courting her. Then I noticed her friends and one of them took my heart. It was my future wife Tatiana. Both of us joined scientific circle of histology.

I recall when I was in the 3rd year, we were sitting at one desk in the library and reading books. The librarian came up to us with a carnation in a glass and put it between us. How could she see that we were in love with each other? It must have been noticeable.

On the 9th of May 1941 we got married. I was well accepted in Tanya's family. It was a wonderful intellectual family. I loved my wife's parents. There were no talks of my nationality, wife's father did not understand what anti-Semitism was about.

Wife's mother Olga Triodina was noble. She was very attached to me and we got along very well. Wife's father Peter Triodin was chief health officer of construction site out of Moscow – Volga canal. Besides, he composed music. I was moved by it. His opera 'Silver Prince' was on in Bolshoy Theatre [22](#), then it was recorded and it was broadcast on the radio. They lived in Dmitrov. We often went skiing there or to play tennis. After wedding we got a small room in the hostel on the 6th floor, facing the wall with mice.

I remember the outbreak of war. I was on my way to the hostel from my sister's place. I saw window wide open and heard people crying: «Notification of the government!» and put their wireless sets on the window sills. I was listening to Molotov's speech [23](#) when I was in the street: «War».

I dashed to the hostel, where military enlistment office was located. Many of my fellow students rushed to the military commissar. He was called. He looked like he had not slept the whole night. He asked: «Where are you going?» «Well, we are from the hostel of the medical institute!». «No, we are not drafting doctors for a while. We will call you when needed.».

Next morning I darted to the Komsomol Committee of the Institute. There were couple of more students. They were sitting and writing applications to be sent to the front. They were in pencil, on some scraps of paper. The Secretary of Komsomol Committee Lenchka Yankelevich took all those applications and put them in her kerchief, which was on her head. Shortly after I had written the application, we were called off from our practice and we expedited the full course of our medical school.

On the 2nd of July I was called to the Central Komsomol Committee. There was a sentry by the door, who asked my last name. He had a bed sheet in his hand. He was ransacking it and then he drew a piece of paper. It was mine. The hall was overcrowded with young people- students and sportsmen.

I came to the office I was indicated. There were militaries and civilians. They browsed through the list, found my name and asked whether I had not changed my mind. Then I went next door. There was a pretty lieutenant woman. There was a note book in front of her.

She asked my first name, patronymic and last name and put all that data in her notebook. Then I said: «Well. What is next?» I was waiting for some interview. «Nothing, doctor, you are included in the USSR NKVD squad of special purpose.» I asked what special purpose implied.

She said she had no idea. «You would go where they tell you. Your squad would be formed in couple of days on Dinamo stadium. Come there at certain time». That's it. People from that squad were included in reconnaissance and diversion partisan groups and squads.

The camp of our squads was on the shooting range of Dinamo stadium out of Moscow. Soon I was allowed to go and take final exams. I lived with my wife in the hostel for a while. The exams were taken perfunctory. The war was in full swing, and people were worried with other things.

That was the way my military life had started. Wife was not mobilized, though she also filed her request to be drafted in the squad where I was to serve. In 2 days, she was expelled as they thought that husband and wife should not serve together. Tatiana was very upset about it.

Before war mother came to Moscow from Odessa and lived with my sister. Soon she and her sister were evacuated in Kazan and father stayed in Odessa. Right on the eve of occupation his neighbors took him to Middle Asia.

The squad, where I started my army service was called «Separate motorized rifle squad of the special purpose squad». First, our squad did not study. I was assigned as a doctor there. I was conferred the title of doctor of the 3rd rank, i.e. captain. The squad was three quarters intelligent.

The future guerillas, who were pictured like men with beard, but in fact they were 20-year old men. They were in the lines and were just turned into partisans and diversionists. There was a large group of sportsmen in our squad. They were record-holders in Russia and in the world.

They were physically strong and well-trained guys. But there was only one gun for the whole squad. To boot, some of its mechanisms was malfunctioning. Besides, we had carbines, rifle, pistols and grenades. All of us were clad in military uniforms. We had to be trained from rudiments.

Germans were close by, Mozhaisk [about 109 km to the west from Moscow] was captured. It was assumed that Moscow would be attacked from there. Hitler himself came to Mozhaisk. We received an assignment in the vicinity of Mozhaisk, in forest. General Morozov was the commander of the squad consisting of 32 people.

We were supposed to be disguised in the dugs-out. In the event that Germans broke through in Moscow, we had to let them move forward a little bit so that we would go to the nearest rear positions and start attacking.

We started digging the dugs-out. It was very hard for me. The sportsmen helped me settle the medical dug-out. When we were disguising in the earth and it was clear that Germans were about to break through to Moscow, I was given a truck to go to Moscow very quickly to take the medicine at the warehouse.

I was driving along Minsk high way. There was not a single soldier on the whole, it was clear. The closer I was getting to Moscow, the more tanks I saw. It was the 16th of October 1941. I was approaching Kuntsevo, where I was on my training in the hospital. I saw the patients being evacuated and put in the carts.

When I came to Moscow, I did not see a single policeman, not a single traffic light- so people could go in any direction. Streets were in ashes. Moscow was panic-stricken. I went straight to the warehouse. They did not give the medicine saying that I asked too much considering that there should be much less medicine for 32 people of our squad.

I was trying to explain that it was for a long period of time. Besides we would be receiving local people who fled from captivity. They did not agree and told me to come back in the morning to get what I needed. We came to the warehouse early in the morning.

The director of warehouse was missing and the warden said: «Take as much as you want!» We loaded up the whole truck with things that we needed. I came to the hostel to say good-bye to my wife. She was almost the only one who stayed in the house. Almost all people were gone.

We agreed if Moscow was taken, she would leave with the last soldiers of Red Army. I came back Mozhaisk. I saw Siberian divisions entering adjacent villages. Moscow had been saved for those 2 days. German battalion were in the dugs-out on the opposite bank of Moscow river. It was cold- the beginning of sever frosty winter.

Germans installed a gun in the belfry. Local people were trying to cross iced Moscow river and they were shot. What were we to do? Everybody knew that we were digging there, but we were supposed to do that surreptitiously. Morozov made a decision. For Germans not to cross the river we were supposed to picture ourselves as a military unit.

The 32 of us were to make a sentry service. Each of us was to be in one tenth. The ten of us were walking along the bank. We were changing shifts every 2 hours. We could not stand more, as the frosts were severe. Germans were lightly dressed and had thin rubber boots.

We were in ship skins and in felt boots that is why Germans did not step out of the huts, having been taken by them on the opposite bank. When locals were trying to cross the river, Germans

were shooting them. It was dreadful. The villagers were taking babies in the toboggans, holding the elderly.

Germans were shooting at them. They also made attempts at night. In the morning we saw the murdered, lying on the ice. We gave food to those who managed to cross the river and evacuated them to the East. We took the murdered and stacked them in the forest.

We could not bury them as we had small spatulas of combat engineers and it was impossible to break iced earth with them. We left a note with the name of the deceased on the corpses hoping that in due time somebody would bury them. It lasted until December.

I remember that on the 5th of December, one of our soldiers rushed in our room with a grey piece of paper and cried out: «Doctor, look!» This is Stalin's order on counterattack of our troops in the vicinity of Moscow. It was such a great piece of news! We joined the acting army and moved towards the west.

When we crossed Moscow river following escaping German battalion I saw the frozen bodies of Germans. One of them had a brassier on his head and his eyes were frozen.

I was told to come back to Moscow right away as the squad of 32 people was not supposed to have a doctor. Then I found out that in January 1942 the group under commandment of the Hero of the Soviet Union [24](#) Dmitriy Medvedev came back from the rear of the enemy.

Medvedev was the leader of the partisan movement in Bryansk oblast, Western Ukraine and many other parts of USSR, occupied by Germans. My fellow student Alexander Feinstein was with them. He told me everything and took me with Medvedev, He managed to get me transferred to his squad, which was being formed at that time.

Medvedev was NKVD worker. His career was not easy. His father was a Jew, 'vykrest' (convert from Judaism). He left his family and lived close to Bryansk, in the town of Bezhits. He had 3 sons and all of them worked for NKVD.

Dmitriy Medvedev was a big-hearted man. He was against certain methods, used in NKVD. He was fired from there for three times and was the director of some warehouse before the very outbreak of war. When the war was unleashed he came to Lubyanka and asked to send him to partisan squads in Bryansk forests, which he knew very well.

Authorities had been considering the issue for three days. Finally he was approved. He collected a group of people and went there. He had conducted some successful operations there and founded partisan movement. When the war was over I went to Bryansk Museum of Partisan Movement.

There is a lot of good information about Medvedev in that museum. When he came back to Moscow, he was awarded with Lenin's Order, [25](#). He met Marshal Zhukov [26](#), asked for his advice regarding organization of the guerilla movement. Stalin held speech on the necessity to form guerilla squads.

Squads were formed from volunteers. The commander was announced and all names were listed. There were 80 men. I was given an assignment out of the 80 people to select those who were healthy. No politics, just health criteria. If a volunteer was healthy, he could join and that was it.

There were 400 volunteers and I had to select 80 men. People were anxious to join the squad. Some of them cheated me trying to look healthy. It was hard for me to select the right ones as I was not experienced. When the squad had been formed we started training.

Nobody knew anything about the forest life, how to walk in azimuth Medvedev taught us that. In May 1942 our first group came to the rear of Germans. We jumped with parachutes from the planes. We had the first training jump out of Moscow, then a military jump in the rear of the enemy.

Before war I would not have thought that I would jump with parachute. We were berserk! In the war times there were no fear and no doubts. The first group landed in Ukraine, but by mistake we jumped in open steppe, not in the forest. There local people informed Germans of that immediately.

The entire group was encircled and exterminated. Only one man survived. He went reconnoitering. We did not have information about group until the surviving reconnoiterer came to another partisan squad and told the story. Then the commander ordered to be landed in the Western Ukraine and start reconnaissance and 'undermining' activity there.

We had one passenger plane on us. Only 12 men could go on one trip. On the 10th of June 1942 I was unexpectedly called by Medvedev and told: «Doctor, you were to go with me in the last group. You have to take off now. Reconnoiterer and radio operator was in one of our groups to be landed in the Western Ukraine. He landed on the stamp.

He had an open hip fracture. You will assist him». It was my first flight to enemy's rear. I did not know what our squad was supposed to do. I was to treat people. I remember that Medvedev came to see me off at the aerodrome.

General lieutenant of the command #4 Sudoplatov, who was in charge of the foreign reconnaissance and partisans divisions came there as well. He looked like a mild and intelligent man. He shook my hand and said: «Well, doctor, find your place in the squad». My wife in Moscow did not know anything about me. Shortly before taking off I dropped a post-card in the mail box.

We flew to the military aerodrome. The plane took off at night. The planes were not in the high altitude and anti-aircraft planes could easily reach them. We were heavily shot along the front line. We were ready to jump off, but we did not have to, things settled down. I did not feel well.

I had the problems with equilibrium and was giddy. We were on the small plane. When we got in the air pits, I was about to faint. We managed to cross the front line and we had to jump following the signal fire. I recall, when we were to jump, the accompanying officer opened the door of the cockpit and said: «Hey, guys, see you. For the Motherland, for Stalin!» The words «For Stalin!» were not associated with that man. He was like a symbol.

When I overstepped the threshold of the plane, it was a pitch dark night and I saw no signal fire as they were far away. I remembered that to turn the parachute I was to pull one strap and the parachute would look like a sail. I did that, but then my head was swimming and I dropped everything.

I thought –be as it may. Within the first minutes when the parachute fell – all straps got twisted – because I had a bag with medicine, food and a gun. It took me 10 seconds or so to put things in order. We were told before: «Hide parachute immediately».

Well, I was not thinking of that! Finally, I took off all things from me and saw somebody approaching towards me with a torch. I was inexperienced. The man noticed me, too. I hid behind the tree. He also hid. Then he asked in Ukrainian : «Who are you?»

I was asking him : « And who are you?» He said: «Are you a doctor or not?» I replied: «Doctor». «Well, let's move faster and go to the wounded! I have been looking for you for 2 hours». He was also asking «How is Moscow?» «Still there». And suddenly I started remembering: «Oh God, I have been told 100 times that I should not talk to anybody without a password». The password was the derivative of the commander's name. I told him:

- Bear.
- What?
- Bear.
- What kind of Bear? Are you crazy?
- Password is «Bear»!
- Oh! I forget!

So it was the way we wretched reconnoiterers were acting. I was taken to the dug-out, where the wounded was staying. It was the first operation in my life. When I came up to him I saw: dug-out, dark, the wounded was lying and the splinters of bones were showing up from his leg through torn pants.

He was told, «This is a doctor. He came from Moscow» He said: «Why are you lying?» I came up to him and said: «That's right, I am a doctor». It was hard for me to treat his wound as that dug-out was like a cellar: dark and dank. Earth was strewing from the top, so I was holding waterproof cape from one end and another guy was holding another end.

I had to work only with one hand. The dug-out was lit with pocket flashlights. There was nobody to assist me. I had to operate without narcosis. He was a brave man. When I was about to put a metallic splint which I brought from Moscow, he said: «Are you nuts? My bone is knitting.

I have to go to Kiev to be disguised as a criminal, who escaped from a Soviet prison and what would I say if they found your metallic splint?» I had to bury that splint. I cut 2 branches and made 2 splints out of them and attached them to the leg of the wounded.

I had to spend about 2 weeks on the East of Ukraine, not far from Chernobyl [60 km from Kiev] before our squad got together. It turned out that a local warden informed Germans about us. On the 27th of July we were besieged by punitive squad and we had our first battle.

The total number of people was 100, i.e. 80 men from our squad and the group which met us. The punitive squad consisted of 200 or 300 men. It was dawn. We were encircled. Germans did not expect that our group to be there. We were armed. All of us had guns and grenades.

The melee started! The entire camp was being shot. Germans were using dum dum bullets, therefore the wounded had terrible wounds- comminuted fracture of upper limbs, severest abdominal wounds. I had to operate on spot. There was no way to go.

The tent, where I had to operate was strewn with the fragments of dum dum bullets. We defeated Germans. About 30 men were killed. We lost only one man 7 or so were wounded. We buried one our perished comrade. After war I came to his grave.

The children from Chernobyl told me that they took flowers to our monument. We had to move forward. We had to take wounded and asked to send a plane from Moscow. The transportation was a mere ordeal for the wounded – as there was a lot of joggling on the forest roads and hassocks.

Every time we came across a tussock, I heard the wounded cry. My heart was about to stop at that moment. We were carrying the wounded in hands via cut logs, meanwhile Germans were looking for us as they knew where we headed. We ran out of products taken from Moscow.

We snatched a semi-dead horse in the forest, cut and started eating it raw, as we could not make fire in the forest. It was abhorrent, but we had to do that. Then more trouble started- beriberi, scurvy. I treated everybody with the infusion from birch buds. It was repulsive and guys did not want to have it.

Finally we found a place for a plane to land. The plane was sent, but we chose the wrong site for a plane. The plane landed and stuck in marsh and we could not have found it out beforehand as there was snow on the top of the marshes. We had to burn the plane and the crew stayed with us.

We were moving forward. The pilots were with us and now they were looking for a possible landing ground. Finally in a month, we found a good meadow. At that time there was a terrible genocide of Jews in Western Ukraine. Those dreadful killings of Jews were happening, when our squad was there. We were the witnesses, but we could not leave the bushes not to reveal ourselves.

Once our reconnoiterer saw a 6 or 7-year old Jewish boy on his way from the town. He was shivering and stark. His name was Pinya. His whole family was shot, but he managed to escape. The reconnoiterer took him in hands and brought in our squad. We put Pinya on the plane with the wounded and sent him in Moscow.

I tried to find him after the war. I found out that he was in the orphanage first, then he finished vocational school, then his traces were lost. Later on, we managed to save another kid. It happened in Rovno [about 900 km to the South-West from Moscow]. Jews were taken to the fusillade.

One mother was carrying a 4-month baby. She was the last. She tripped and fell down. Germans shot her. The girl was covered with mother's blood. When the column left, our underground guys rushed there, took the girl, washed her and gave her a shelter. The local people helped. The girl survived.

After the war we tried to find her. There is a Russian TV program, where people are looking for the reported missing. We informed of the children who were saved. That girl let know of herself. She did not know anything about her fate. She thought that she was Polish, as these were Polish people

who helped her survive.

She is married, has 3 children. We are still looking for Pinya. I had to go through one of the sorrowful moments in my life on our way to Rovno. The local population was aware of Soviet partisans (we were clad in Soviet army uniforms). They also knew that there was a doctor among the partisans and they often asked for help. I went to the villages, accompanied by two gunned soldiers.

Once we had to go through the hamlet, which was half- Jewish. There were 3 of us. I thought that we would be given food in the village. When we were approaching the village, we noticed that it had been besieged by German soldiers. We counted them. There were about 200 men. We were observing from the hill. There was a large shed in the center of the village.

The gates of the shed were locked. Germans were fussing around it and pouring out something by the shed. We understood that the shed with people would be burnt! There were only three of us. What could we have done? We had only one pistol and 2 guns on us.

That feeling of being helpless and no way to do anything was the most terrible thing having happened to us. No sound was coming from the shed. Even when it was set on fire, there was no noise. The whole Ukrainian part of the village was brought together and made watch the execution.

The minutes of stillness of the burning shed full of people were horrible. There were 6 or 7 Jews in our squad. Not only the Jews, but all other partisans were strongly against extermination of Jews by Germans.

Our squad was given two tasks. The first one was to capture the regional center and continue liberation process from there, but then we were given another task- to go to Rovno, where the administration of the occupied Ukraine was located. We were supposed to perform reconnoitering and diversion activity there.

The task was given by a special department of foreign reconnaissance of the ministry of internal affairs. At that time we did not know that our reconnaissance had something to do with the preparation for the Stalingrad battle [27](#). We were to observe the railroad ways and find out when Germans would start moving new groups from West to East.

Such messages were sent to Moscow. Only after war we found out that it was one of the elements of the preparation of the counterattack of our troops in the vicinity of Stalingrad. There were 10 radio-operators in our group. Every day we had 2-3 sessions with Moscow. There were great many reconnoiterers in different occupied towns of Western Ukraine.

In a month or two we started getting a lot of messages. We could not ask for planes any more, as they were positioned far to the West, and the plane could hardly reach any place within a short night. After that we had a lot of battles and we had to take all our wounded with us. We had a mobile hospital.

There was no place to leave the wounded as we did not have the rear and it was too dangerous to leave them in the village. Within the whole period of time only 3 wounded died as there were in the lethal condition. Many people got better even swifter than in peaceful times.

We lived in the forest, slept on earth, even during winter time. We put feet closer to the flame and head to the trunk of the tree. Sometimes we stopped only for 2-3 hours. Germans were constantly chasing us. We had to change the position of the camp very often.

During the entire period in the forest people did not catch quinsy, influenza or rhoenite. But when we had stayed in the village for 2 weeks, things set off. Many came to me saying: «Doctor, I have a sore throat and a running nose!» What a remarkable situation it must have been in the forest.

Besides, there were no cross infections. Each wounded had its own cart and there was no contract. Sanitary requirements were rigidly observed. Medvedev was stern. We built a bathhouse in the forest. We used branches to build the walls. Simmering water was poured on the stones to produce the steam.

The most terrible thing was that when Germans were retreating, they started to spread typhus barracks. People suffering with typhus came to us. Even the seams of their clothes were teeming with lice. Where was a crackle, when their clothes were being burnt in fire. We took drastic measures. There was only one case of spotted fever in our squad, but the patient recouped.

For the first year and a half I was the only doctor in the squad. There were two more medical assistants. Then Vera Davydova, who studied in our institute, was sent to the squad. Local doctors also came to help. Finally there were 10 doctors. Our squad grew. There were about 3000 men. It was one subdivision.

It was hard as we had to be prompt, mobile and uniform. We started budding off squads. In 1943 Jews were sheltering in the forests near by Rovno to escape fusillade. There were a lot of Jews- old people, kids, women, youth. We could not travel with them. It was a slow-moving category.

Thus, Medvedev made a decision to take the Jews to Byelorussia, where it would be easier for them to hide on dense marshy area. There were a lot of guerrillas. We formed a rather big Jewish group. We sent our partisans to accompany them. Some of the Jews stayed with us.

Those were young people who were apt for the battles and willing to fight. There were a lot of good and brave guys among them. There was such a lad Golub. He was truly distinctive in the battle. He was very loved and appreciated in the squad. He was a great guy.

There was one thing which perturbed me. I brooded on it a lot. When thousand of people were taken to the execution place, there were guarded only by couple of policemen and nobody made an attempt to run. I was asking: «Why it happened? If people scattered, three quarters of them would have remained alive»

They told me: «It was an inner despondence, feeling ourselves liked chased down preys». When doctor Mashitskiy and his family were taken to the squad, I found a bottle with strychnine with him «Why!?» - «If Germans had captured us, the whole family would have taken strychnine».

He did not want to give me that bottle no matter how many times I repeated that he was among ours and we would be protecting him. It took me a lot of efforts to make him give me the bottle. That strychnine was buried 2 meters deep. He was so scared! I remember he had two children – 5 and 7 year old.

They lived in the hut. Children are children. They were crying and frolicking. When I came in the hut I saw him stopping their mouths. I said: «What are you doing?» He was afraid that we would be mad because children were a bother.

Ukrainian nationalists did not fight Germans. For the two years I had been there, I did not know a single case when they were struggling against Germans. They were constantly fighting with us. They shot from behind, laid ambushes. About 60 percent of our casualties were coming from Ukrainian nationalists, the so-called fighters for the Independent Ukraine.

When I was a guerrilla in the bounds of Moscow, the local population took us as their own. I did not smoke, but like other fellow soldiers I got the ration of the cigarettes, so I gave them to local guys. They were so happy with that. There was one case in the vicinity of Mozhaik. There was a severest battle and 2 soldiers survived.

Clad in the uniform they were hiding in the haystack. One local woman Vasilisa Sergeyevna, whom I knew very well after war, went to fetch some hay and heard a voice from the stack: «Auntie, there are two of us. Please bring us some clothes so we can change as we cannot leave this place». She brought them her husband's clothes.

He was in the lines at that time. The soldiers changed their clothes. They were saved by that woman and broke through the German rear via our squad. Things like that happened often. Our troops were besieged. Those who managed to break through came to us. We gave them food and water.

Then they were sent to the collection depots by Moscow. Local people in Western Ukraine behaved in different ways. There was a hunger in the northern part of Western Ukraine. Poor people treated us better than those who lived in the southern part. They considered us to be enemies.

Now they are talking about their merits, but I know for sure that it was not like that. The fragments of the grenade thrown at me by a Ukrainian nationalist are still there. Moreover, they were not merely trying to do away with the representatives of the Soviet regime, but ethnic groups as well. I saw them trying to exterminate the Poles, who lived there. They were using axes, not the rifles. A cart with those gangsters came in some Polish hamlet and they slaughtered people with axes.

Once we were passing by one hamlet on our way from the patients. Suddenly I heard the cries: «Doctor, doctor!!!» We saw a cart with people fleeing from the hamlet. A sobbing woman darted out and cried: «Rescue my son. Husband has been cut, they sona was about to!»

Those people were Poles. I went there and I saw a boy with his face butchered by the hatchet. I did what I could- sutured the wound. I did not go to that hamlet. Many years have passed and I had a chance to speak to in the group of workers in Moscow. The hall was full of people. I was talking about the war and suddenly a woman from the back of the hall cried out: «Doctor!!!» She rushed to me across the hall. It was the woman from the hamlet. I asked:

- What about your son?
- Survived and became an engineer!

We nabbed those gangsters-nationalist and took them in the camp. I remember one of them. A hulky man with neck like the bull's. He was caught in Polish hamlet. He was taken to us and shot later on. Ukrainian nationalists, living in the villages, gave away all local Jews.

We acted in Rovno, Lvov [about 1000 km to the south-west from Moscow], Lutsk and Vinnitsa. There was headquarters of Hitler's troops in Vinnitsa. We disclosed it. I should say that local people with the exception of the rich ones, who mostly lived on the south of the Western Ukraine, were very helpful and compassionate.

Especially indigent people, who lived from hand to mouth, helped us a lot. God Gracious, there were such poor villages! They burned chips to get warm and survived for the sake of kitchen-gardens. Rich thought us to be enemies. Most of our supplies were coming from German trucks.

When Germans were taking grain, meat, product to be sent to Germany, which started starving, we were bombing them. I recall there was a 200-liter barrel with spirit. It was very important for us not just for the sake of drinking, but to get warm in the forest during wintertime; 50-100 per man...ooh!

Nobody let himself drink more. The barrel was enough for the whole year. There was no binge. There was a man, responsible for the barrel of spirit. It was handed out only as per order of the commander.

Even if I needed it for medical purposes, I was given spirit only as per order of Medvedev. Often we were starving. There was time when we had been eating the 'gruel' consisting of flour and water, for a month and a half. We picked up berries in the forest. It was hard.

We had been in more than 80 battles for 2 years. We had not lost a single battle, but we had a lot of casualties. Everybody participated in the battles. The cook took a rifle and started shooting. The sanitary unit was also involved in battles, though in accordance with the international convention medicals were not supposed to fight.

There was no other way-out. Once we were trying to undermine German echelon with tanks. We had 2 wounded, whom we took aside, but Germans started approaching suddenly. I had to fire at them other than that they would have taken the wounded. When we had German captives as a result of the battle, I had psychological problems.

They were shot as we could not carry them with us. Once I was to cross examine one German officer (I spoke German a little bit) who was cooped up. I came up to see how he was doing. He understood that he was doomed. He was walking back and forth behind the partition and mumbled one and the same: «Heil, Hitler, Heil Hitler!»

Either he was trying to plea for rescue or he was trying to fall asleep with those 'incantations'. The most terrible reminiscence was when I was interrogating another captive. He was an artisan guy, but a hard-core stickler of Hitler. What could we do?! He was shot.

I had another function in the camp- make forged papers and documents for our reconnoiterers. I was the one only who knew how to type on the typing machine with the German font, but it was of paramount importance for the leading reconnoiterer Kuznetsov [editor's note: Nikolay Kuznetsov (1911-1944) is the legend of Soviet reconnaissance.

In the period of Great Patriotic War was involved in the actions of guerilla squad in Western Ukraine under the lead of D. Medvedev. He was a cover agent picturing himself as a German officer. He exterminated and kidnapped a lot of outstanding Germans from Hitler troops. Was killed by Ukrainian nationalists] to get the documents.

He was not involved in processing of the forged documents. I was the one who was doing it. Those documents worked out OK and there was a certainty that things went smooth. I typed on the trophy German typing machine. There were cases, when I had to go to Kuznetsov for a secret meeting to update his traveling documents.

In Moscow he was given the officer's book for the name of lieutenant Paul Zibert. One year passed. He frequently showed up in the town as if he came back from the front being on the trip regarding supplies. We decided to 'promote him in the rank'. It was necessary to type in a new title- - captain- in his officer's book.

I was really worried. I was afraid to make a mistake while typing in a new title. It was of a lethal danger. I had been typing that word on the blank piece of paper. When I put a new Kuznetsov's officer's book in the typing machine, he turned back and I typed in the word. A lot was written about Kuznetsov, but there was a lot of slander.

He was depicted as dashing and fortunate... Nothing of the kind. They wrote that he was a womanizer and got a lot of attention from women. He was a common guy from Ural, though he was very gifted, smart and was fluent in the language. He was born in a hamlet in Ural. His father was a peasant.

At school he had a very good teacher of German language. I met her after the war. She said that he was extremely inquisitive and had a great penchant to the languages. He had an excellent command of German language by the 7th grade. At that time a group of German experts came to the plant in the town where he lived.

They needed a man who knew German. Nikolay was recommended. He was given odd jobs at design bureau, where Germans worked. He communicated with them and improved his knowledge.

Then he was hired by NKVD. Of course, he was a man of the talent. I do not know whether he was a good actor, but he had a stern inner discipline and could control his nerves. He took a lot of courageous actions. People mostly knew that he had murdered certain people or kidnapped certain people.

If considering only the acutest military actions he had taken, they seem to have lasted for a month or a month and a half, but he had been in the reconnaissance for a year and a half. Everyday he had a routine job: «what these people are saying, what those people are saying».

He heard a phrase of one of the officers and cogitated on that. All things spoken were summarized, analyzed and reported to Moscow. Nobody mentioned that, but it was the most important thing. He was a very brave man with a very strong will. I had to operate on him. Kuznetsov was wounded with the fragment of a grenade, he flung at a German general.

We had one ampoule with Novocain and we decided to use it only for the commander. Medvedev ordered to give it to Kuznetsov. He knew that there was only one Novocain. Kuznetsov refused from it. I cut him without narcosis. He neither moaned nor gritted with his teeth. He just was sitting and looking aside as if it was not happening to him. Such an ability to go oblivious inwardly is a rare quality of people.

Local people who escaped from the captivity, came to us. Somebody from the headquarters talked to them and put a special entry in the note-book: who, wherefrom, contacts etc. For the entire period 8 stooges were sent to us. Six out of them were divulged and one of them managed to escape and bring the punitive to us. It was a severe battle.

It lasted for 24 hours or so. Two regiments of special trained punitive squads were sent to us. They were experienced in fighting with partisans in France. They were re-positioned here. Germans decided to do away with us. It was a hard battle and we managed to win it in the end. We took 80 carts with ammunition, provision and three cannons.

The spy infiltrated in a very cunning way. He rescued one Jewish lady and dentist from fusillade. Then he made contact with us, sent the lady to us and came on dates with her to the village where we were positioned. She considered him to be her savior. Soon our underground agents said that he systematically called on Gestapo and was spying on us via that lady. We shot him. He even confessed himself. It was a cruel war.

During war I managed to send letters to my wife for 10 times via reconnoiterers, who were crossing the front-line. In one of my letters I wrote that I regretted of not taking my favorite book "Hamlet" translated by Lozinskiy. Good thing about it was that there were two columns one in English and another – Russian translation.

On the 8th of March 1943 we had true gifts released from the plane- the letters from our loved ones in Moscow. The headquarters in Moscow took good care of us, kept in touch with them and re-sent their letters by plane. My wife Tanya sent me a book by Hamlet. I was reading the book right by the fire and somebody behind my back started reading in English. It was Grisha Shmuylovskiy, a magnificent connoisseur of English literature. I asked him how he knew about Shakespeare and he said that he had studied at the Institute of Literature and Philosophy.

He wrote a paper about Hamlet by Shakespeare. He found a lot of interesting things, being left out of focus by many people. Then Maxim, the actor from Moscow Theatre, Grisha and I decided to make an amateur performance of Hamlet right by the fire. Grisha said that he would have the part of Ofelia as in Shakespearian times men also played ladies' parts.

I was to play Hamlet and Maxim Polonius. It was very funny as Grisha was not entitled to take off his gun, and Hamlet was talking to Ofelia with a gun: "Go to the convent". We were persecuting Gauleiter Erich Koch.

Nikolay Kuznetsov and our whole squad were after him. The reconnaissance informed that Koch was on the point of leaving to the aerodrome to fly to Berlin. The road to the aerodrome was through empty fields with rare bushes. Medvedev decided to send a group there to wait for the motorcade of Koch and shoot them.

Grisha was to participate in that operation. They were missing for 3 days. Koch did not go to the aerodrome, but that had been in ambush without even raising their heads and drank water from the tracks of bovine hooves. When they came back, Grisha gave me the essay, he wrote there. Shortly after that Grisha perished. He was to bring in our squad a messenger with a very important message.

They were caught in the ambush and Grisha said to the telephone operator: «Go, I will cover you». He was shooting and suddenly a Ukrainian nationalist showed up from the tree and fired at Grisha. His head was injured. His body was taken to our squad. Half of his head was missing. I was taking it real hard as we made friends. He was a very talented man. His grave is in Transcarpathia.

Those struggles to the state independence of Ukraine, even now are desecrating the tombs of our soldiers. Even Kuznetsov's grave is desecrated though Ukraine has been independent for 14 years. They have a hard living. Even now they consider those who liberated them to be occupants and guilty of all their troubles.

I was severely wounded in late February 1944. We were moving towards the West to meet Kuznetsov by Lvov. He was reconnoitering there. When we were positioned not far from Lvov, in one of the nationalistic villages as it turned out as we were attacked by «banderovtsi» [28](#) at night.

Our sanitary unit was on the edge of the village. The hut, where the sanitary unit stayed, was the last in the village. The hostess of the hut came in, lit a kerosene lamp and left. Hardly had she left, rushed two armed men in the hut. Then I understood that she gave them a sign.

One of them looked at me. I was in the officer's uniform so he shot. I got up, took my Mauser. They dashed outside having seen the weapon in my hands. They started firing at the hut. I was the only one from the medicals who was armed. I crashed 3 windows and shot back.

I could hear a large battle in the village. There were wounded by our hut. In wee hours of the morning I saw a large rifled group creeping to the hut with the wounded. I was afraid that they might break in. I do not know what dawned on me, but I cried out from the window in Ukrainian: «Who are you?» He replied: «Ours» «Ours who?» «Andriy».

I told them to creep back to the forest because the Red ones had slaughtered almost everybody. By chain he sent the message to everybody that they should retreat to the forest. They were creeping back and I was shooting at them from the pistol. I was shooting and thinking what a guile thing to do.

Then I found out that I missed. It turned out that the group which attacked us was a SS subdivision, formed by Germans from Ukrainian nationalists, before Germans were retreating. Then we took the documents. While I was running from one window to another, I was too excited and did not notice that my leg was askew.

I had a splintery fracture of ankle joint. About 30 men were killed in that battle. Our comrade- great and brave, the favorite of our squad Dorpeg Abrodoimov perished. I was wounded. Recently, my comrade, who also took part in the battle, was in that village. Local people told him that there was a battle there and partisan doctor, viz. I, had been killed.

Medvedev was seriously wounded. Then he was even carried in the cart, could not get up and had to give orders while lying. During the civil war he had a fissure in the spine. Forest life was hard, massages did not help. I was on the crutches. Medvedev and I were taken in a cart out of the front line.

Then a truck was sent from Moscow and we went there by truck. It was a long trip. We had crossed all semi-devastated Ukraine. It was horrible. Skeletons of houses were everywhere. Old people lived in dug-outs. They went to the curbs of the roads and looked at us.

I did not think that there would be time when we would have all that restored. I was rendered first aid in the hospital. I had to wait for the bones to knit. It was late autumn 1944. I came back to my wife from the hospital. We lived in the hostel. Mother and sister came back to Moscow from evacuation.

It took me a long time to walk on the crutches and I met the victory day on crutches as well. I did not find out about a victory day by radio, as it was out of order in our hostel. There was the embassy of France in front of our hostel. I saw there was a feast there and everybody was crying: «Victory!» People dashed to the Red Square.

They acted on the spur of the moment. There were banners and posters. How could they have found all that? They lifted up the militaries, who were in the square.

• After the war

After war I had military awards. I got 2 Great Patriotic War Orders of the first class [23](#), Medal of the Partisan of the Great Patriotic War of the first class [30](#), Medal for Defense of Moscow [31](#). There are also some jubilee orders and medals.

In 1946 father did not go to mother in Moscow from Middle Asia right away. They rented a room. I asked municipal authorities to give a room for my parents, but nothing changed. Veterans of war were treated differently at that time. There were millions of people, nothing was being built and it was next to impossible to get lodging.

In 1947 mother died from cerebral thrombosis in Moscow. It happened like a bolt from the blue. I came to her, brought her soup and cutlets, cooked by my wife. The last words my mother spoke: «Eat well». She fell asleep and never woke up. She was buried in city Vostryakovskoye cemetery, in the Jewish sector.

It was a secular funeral, though one old man came over and said that he would read a prayer. Father said that he wanted him to pray. After mother's death father lived in sister's place and died from heart attack in 1953. He was also buried in Vostryakovskoye cemetery next to the mom.

When the war was over my wife and I lived in the hostel. Here in 1947 our daughter Natalia was born. Wife worked in Moscow children's hospital and I was taking care of daughter while I was unwell. My wife came home at lunch to feed us.

When I got well, I was invited to Moscow theatre named after Ermolova. I worked as a doctor and I was an actor part time. I played roles in couple of performances there by 1947.

The director of the theater suddenly died. When a new one came, the atmosphere in the team changed for worse dramatically. It was the time of all-in-all baiting of Jews, the so-called anti-cosmopolite campaign [32](#) and I felt biased attitude towards me. I quitted the theatre.

Once I was called in the administration of the institute and told to move out from the hostel within a day. My wife, our little daughter and I left the hostel. We had no place to stay and I went to the secretary of Moscow Council and was turned down rather roughly.

First my wife and I rented a room. It was expensive and we could not afford it. Then my wife's relative suggested that we should move in her place. We lived in her kitchen. Then I started working in the system of Moscow health care and I was given a small room in the basement.

Then the municipal department of health care gave me two rooms in a large communal apartment. When I was working for another organization, I was given a separate 3-room apartment in the newly constructed house. It is in the yard of the house I am currently living.

When I left the theater I went to work for the system of Moscow health care. I was to make a hard choice regarding a direction. I did not want to work in the office or in the operating room. The country was being swiftly restored and I did not want to be kept aside.

I began to work in the field of the hygiene of the labor and occupational diseases. The industry was being restored and such occupational diseases as radiation sickness and all kinds of toxicosis were very serious. The lethal rate was very high and the labor conditions were terrible.

I took an interest in that. First I worked in the district, then I was invited for a position of the chief industrial sanitary doctor of Moscow, in charge of military medical institutions. There were 3500 plants in Moscow. Many people came to the devastated city from evacuation, There were 2000000 workers among the evacuees.

I had a lot of tasks to do. I traveled throughout the country, visited construction sites in the remote corners of my country. I actively worked with scientific and research institute of occupational diseases by the Academy of Science of USSR, was the member of the academic council, deputy editor-in-chief of the specialized magazine.

I was always focused on the issues, though it was hard as many of them were secret. Sometimes I was in rather unpleasant situations because of that. When the delegations from America or England came over and asked how many of our patients were afflicted with silicosis, I had not right to tell anything.

So, I had to dodge and it was very difficult. Once I was charged with infringement of 23 items of secrecy. The head of Moscow health care department had been laughing for a long time, but he reprimanded me as he was supposed to react somehow.

Health care system was very influential under conditions of Soviet power. E.g. we not a single project was approved without our visa. We were the experts in all industrial construction projects in Moscow and all over the country. I remember foreign delegations were envious of us because it was not like that in their countries.

When I came to the plant, the director knew if he did not fulfill my instructions his work would be considered by the board of the party control and the sanctions might have been very rigid. Our science was leading in the field. Very many standards introduced by us were the most rigid in the world. It was good and there were much less occupational diseases.

Though, I saw the system rotting. Within Moscow I was involved in large organizational issues and saw the injustice of the system. The party was turned into a red tape apparatus. The rations received by all party bonzes, close distributors, were abominable.

Party leadership assigned dull people to the leading positions either because of the bribes or nepotism. The system of health care in Moscow was headed by a totally illiterate instructor of the municipal party committee, who was a medical assistant by education, but we had to fulfill his orders. It was a dice system. But it was killing as any dying system. It was dreadful when some untalented people were at the lead of everything, even spiritual.

When I was working in the theatre, I was offered by the local House of Culture to be the head of the drama studio. It was the time when we were living in the basement. We were meeting with the guys from the studio in our place to have a talk and to conduct rehearsals. I and a producer Voinov were in charge of the studio.

He was responsible for staging, I – for literary part. Young people attended the studio and many of them became famous in the art circles. I wrote a derivative play written by Spanish playwright Lope De Vega. The leaders of cultures were indignant about it.

Somebody spread a rumor that we made the guys from the studio to sing with our blood and all kind of other nonsense. In the end the studio was closed down. It had worked for 3 years. Then I wrote a comedy “Intriguer”. She went through 3 contest rounds, was in the final round, but then a dignitary from the ministry of culture showed up, read it out loud and said indignantly that the play was anti-soviet. It was a nightmare.

I was in trouble and they even wanted to expel me from the party. That play of mine is still unpublished. It was a horrible time. Illiterate officials concocted mendacious anti-Soviet motifs in literary pieces and dramas and did not let the authors breathe so to say.

Neither before nor during war did I feel anti-Semitism. For example, people from my squad did not know what nationality their comrades were. There were guys in my squad, who did not mention their nationalities. I wrote stories about them. Then my book was published collected stories “Reminiscences of partisan doctor”.

I found out that the characters of my book were Jews from the reviews to my book. It was also written there that the author paid a lot of attention to the people of his nationality, and therefore he did not recommend that the book would be published. Thus, I found out that people, with whom we fought together, were Jews. That book was published later. It was published by the publishing house Soviet Writer in 1956 in the amount of 10000 copies.

State anti-Semitism was double-died. In 1948 Mikhoels [33](#) was murdered. Nobody believed in the public version that it was an accident. It was clear that it was assassination if his theatre was closed down and the troupe was dissolved. I was in his theatre.

The King of Lyres was the highest literary piece I had even seen staged in the theatres. What an actor Mikhoels was ! Though I remember that some officials, who were at the performance, asked: «Why a Jew should be the King of Lyres?» Assassination of Mikhoels commenced persecution of Jews- cosmopolites etc.

am grateful that I came across such an experience. I was invited in the ministry of health care and offered a job in the international department. At that time I was lured by the opportunity to go abroad. I was to fill in the form. When I was filling in item 5 [34](#), the employee who was standing behind my back, asked if I was fluent in English. Having heard my negative answer, he said that I did not fit. Then I understood what it was all about. I was so happy that I was not employed there!

During the struggle against cosmopolites I was working in the system of Moscow health care. Our chief doctor Valentina Postnikova was a great person. The instructor of the regional party committee attended our party meeting. He started talking about cosmopolites.

Postnikova said that she had just graduated from the Institute of Marxism and Leninism and she was taught there that main motto of our party was internationalism. But is this preaching of the instructor of the party committee? The guy turned pallid and dashed out from the room.

oon I became the secretary of the party organization. The head of the health care department said that she was called to the regional committee where she was suggested that she should make a list of the Jews, she considered to be exiled to Siberia from Moscow.

On my way to the regional party committee I met the 3rd secretary of the committee who was to tackle that issue. He told me: «Though you are our man, but you have a Synagogue over there!». I said that those people who were working there were loyal soviet people and good professionals.

He told me to ponder things over. “Fun” began! I was the member of the academic council of the scientific and research institute. There were a lot of notifications to the institute where it was written that there were a lot of Jews in the institute. The leadership of the institute managed to leave things as they were. Then the doctors’ plot [35](#) was commenced.

It was the last chord. I knew a lot of people who were arrested. Many of them taught me. In that period of time many of my friends suffered. For example, my friend professor Kagarlitskiy in GITIS [editor’s note: GITIS was a State Institute of Drama Art, now it is called Russian Academy of Drama Art (abbreviation RATI-GITIS). It is the largest drama institution of higher education in Europe and one of the largest in the world.

GITIS departments encompass almost all specialties, connected with drama art: producers of drama, musical performances, variety shows circus, actors, drama studies specialists,scene designers and directors] He hold a course of English literature there. He was fired without even explaining things.

He had an infarction as a consequence. It was the moment when I understood that our state was degenerated. All those high ideals, which used to inspire the youth, turned out to be a soap bubble. I understood that it could not last long. In 1953 Stalin died. The doctors were set free and state anti-Semitism was not as blatant.

My wife hated Stalin. When all people got up during the general meetings to acclaim Mr. Stalin, my wife did not get up and came into trouble for that at work. She was adamant in that sense. I cannot say that I hated him. It was strange for me that the man who wielded the scepter was not aware of the things going on in his county.

When Stalin died the mourning days were announced and my wife and I wanted to go and see column hall, where there was a coffin with his body. We witnessed a terrible throng of people on the way, who crushed the fence, whereon people fell. Trucks were along the curb. A boy was pressed with his chest against one of those trucks.

The throng could not stop. I jumped on the hood of the truck and screamed «Stop!». The throng stopped for a moment and we took the boy. But there were a lot cases of jam and many people died.

Tatiana taught Histology at our Institute, then she was transferred to the Institute of Blood Transfusion and defended a dissertation there. When the Institute of Medical and Biological Problems of Space was founded, she was offered a job there as a leading scientific expert. The first dogs who were in the space, were under her supervision.

These were the first laboratory data showing that a man could be in the space She had worked there until retirement. Wife took after her father and was as musical as he. She plays the musical instrument and composes music. My wife and I have lived a long, hard, but at the same time very interesting and friendly life.

Our house was always open for relatives and friends, no matter where we lived. My parents, sister's family often came to see us. I liked sister's husband, an intelligent and interesting man. My friends-partisans and participants of the theatrical studio very often called on us.

Daughter Natasha was raised like the rest children of that time- nursery, kindergarten, school. She was fond of the languages and entered the Institute of Foreign Languages. She had worked in the Ministry of Automobile Industry for many years. She went abroad very often. She is still working as a translator from/into German language.

Her husband's name is Vlasenko. He is a Ukrainian, but the most important thing for us was that they loved each other. Natasha has a two children. Elder son Dmitriy Vlasenko is 33 года и daughter Tatiana is 29. Natasha's husband died from cancer 2 years ago. He was a wonderful man. Dmitriy is studying at the Economy Institute, in the 4th year.

Now he is a general director of the company, working in sports service. The company organizes sports competitions. It is a hectic work. Tatiana, unfortunately, left the faculty of journalist department of Moscow State University [36](#). She did not like it there. She is currently working in the center of environmental protection. She likes her job.

Son Alexey Tsessarskiy is 12 years younger than my daughter. He graduated from MGU, Biology Department. He worked for the Biology Institute by the Academy of Science of USSR, then defended candidate's dissertation. Apart from his main job he is also a chief editor of the paper, dedicated to ichthyology. Alyosha has a son. His name is also Alexey Tsessarskiy. He is 23. He is working in cybernetics. My son divorced his first wife and married a woman who was also a

biologist, but we still love his first wife. He has another son Pavel. He is in the 8th grade now.

I retired in 1990. It was physically hard for me to combine medicine and literature. I have been the member of the Council of Writers since 1975. I wrote two books about war. I wrote a novel «Reminiscences of partisan doctor » and a play 'Eve and Irene' about young workers. It was staged in Leningrad Theater –Lenin Komsomol. I wrote 18 books for youth, children, adolescence. It was something that I was most worried about.

I suddenly found out that there was new cooperative house constructed in the yard of our house. By that time our family had grown. Daughter was married and had a baby. I entered that building society. At that time I got the emoluments for my published book, so I could afford to have my apartment built. My wife, son and I moved to that 3-room apartment, and our daughter remained in previous apartment in our yard.

At that time one of front-line fellow Lev Ermolin. Both of us flew to the rear, jumped from the parachute, lived in one waterproof cape, boiled porridge in one pot- were friends in a word. He talked me into building a dacha [summer house] next to his place in Borodino[about 120 km to the west from Moscow].

At that time he was the director of the plant. They obtained the land plots for dacha in that district. He kept one land plot for me there. It was pretty far away from Moscow, but it was a spectacular place. I was hesitant, but when my second book was released and I got an emolument, my wife and I decided to build wooden house.

Both of us did it with our hands. We are really pleased with that dacha. Almost every summer we spent there and children grew up there as well. Now my elder grandson is having a plush house built next to my dacha and I hope that my great grandchildren will be raised at my dacha.

All my loved ones and I were delighted when we found out that the state of Israel had been founded. When the state anti-Semitism was in full swing, Jews felt themselves as people of 3rd grade in the our country- «You do not have a motherland. Where are you peoples? Where are you roots?» When Israel was founded I was not going to immigrate, but I felt that I was one step higher and I was not worse than anybody else. I was treated very well even in the full swing of anti-Semitism.

I am not religious, I do not observe Jewish traditions and rites. I hardly know the language. I am not assisted by Jewish charitable organizations and I consider it to be humiliating for me. My children were raised international. They identify themselves as Russians. Though, Jewishness is one of the elements of my personality. My parents were Jews. I know the culture, music, mentality as I lived among Jews. I called on my school friend. Now he is indigent, but he had a grandfather who marked all the holidays. When I came over to them on Pesach I saw grandpa playing with his grandchild hiding a piece of matzah and when the grandson found it grandpa was rapt and burst into laughter. I was admiring them. I am worried for the fate of the Jews and I am happy for their success.

I consider [37](#) perestroika to be ambiguous. When Gorbachev appeared [38](#) all of us were very happy. He was young and as compared to Brezhnev [39](#) he understood what he talking about. Gradually we felt that he was losing control over country and it was scary.

Maybe we felt that the system could not exist anymore. Now I am very frustrated because good things which were in the country are exterminated, but new things have not come in place. I am worried with our current president. I found out that Putin was a hypocrite.

He says publicly that he will not let anybody do harm to the journalists, meets with them, makes promises and then suddenly he does away with the leading TV company, protecting the interests of the right wing. He publicly promises that he will not harm large-scale business, and in couple of days a largest oil company is collapsed and the state is involved in the affaire. One dummy company acquires it and re-sells it to the state. A silly and untalented man –the head of health care –was framed.

He was an accountant by education. How can an accountant be at the head of this branch? No matter what we start, it is collapsing. I think it is because things are not thought over, and I am aware that mercantile interests are behind it. Free entrepreneurship is strangled. The economic politics is flunked.

When I am traveling throughout the country I see that the industry is not working, plants are emptied. For instance, 10000 people were employed at Bryansk engine-building plant and now about 200 men are working in one workshop. The rest is either plundered or rotten. It makes me sad because I love my country, its hard-working and boundlessly tolerant people.

My life worked out to be good. I always did what I like. I have a great family: loving and caring wife, wonderful and close to my heart children and grandchildren, a lot of magnificent friends, who do not forget about me. We live in different towns, but we meet on every Victory Day [40](#), have drinks and remember the years of your youth.

• Glossary

1 Odessa: The Jewish community of Odessa was the second biggest Jewish community in Russia. According to the census of 1897 there were 138,935 Jews in Odessa, which was 34,41% of the local population. There were 7 big synagogues and 49 prayer houses in Odessa. There were cheders in 19 prayer houses.

2 Russian Revolution of 1917: Revolution in which the tsarist regime was overthrown in the Russian Empire and, under Lenin, was replaced by the Bolshevik rule. The two phases of the Revolution were: February Revolution, which came about due to food and fuel shortages during World War I, and during which the tsar abdicated and a provisional government took over.

The second phase took place in the form of a coup led by Lenin in October/November (October Revolution) and saw the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks.

3 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.

4 Realschule: Secondary school for boys. Students studied mathematics, physics, natural history, foreign languages and drawing. After finishing this school they could enter higher industrial and agricultural educational institutions.

5 Nicolas II (1868 -1918): the last Russian emperor from the House of Romanovs (1894 * 1917). After the 1905 Revolution Nicolas II was forced to set up the State Duma (parliament) and carry out land reform in Russia. In March 1917 during the February Revolution Nicolas abdicated the throne. He was shot by the Bolsheviks in Yekaterinburg along with his family in 1918

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

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

8 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.

9 Communal apartment: The Soviet power wanted to improve housing conditions by requisitioning 'excess' living space of wealthy families after the Revolution of 1917. Apartments were shared by several families with each family occupying one room and sharing the kitchen, toilet and bathroom with other tenants.

Because of the chronic shortage of dwelling space in towns communal or shared apartments continued to exist for decades. Despite state programs for the construction of more houses and the liquidation of communal apartments, which began in the 1960s, shared apartments still exist today.

10 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.

11 Jewish Pale of Settlement: Certain provinces in the Russian Empire were designated for permanent Jewish residence and the Jewish population was only allowed to live in these areas. The Pale was first established by a decree by Catherine II in 1791.

The regulation was in force until the Russian Revolution of 1917, although the limits of the Pale were modified several times. The Pale stretched from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, and 94% of the total Jewish population of Russia, almost 5 million people, lived there.

The overwhelming majority of the Jews lived in the towns and shtetls of the Pale. Certain privileged groups of Jews, such as certain merchants, university graduates and craftsmen working in certain branches, were granted to live outside the borders of the Pale of Settlement permanently.

12 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.

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

14 Trotsky, Lev Davidovich (born Bronshtein) (1879-1940): Russian revolutionary, one of the leaders of the October Revolution of 1917, an outstanding figure of the communist movement and a theorist of Marxism. Trotsky participated in the social-democratic movement from 1894 and supported the idea of the unification of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks from 1906.

In 1905 he developed the idea of the 'permanent revolution'. He was one of the leaders of the October Revolution and a founder of the Red Army. He widely applied repressive measures to support the discipline and 'bring everything into revolutionary order' at the front and the home front. The intense struggle with Stalin for the leadership ended with Trotsky's defeat.

In 1924 his views were declared petty-bourgeois deviation. In 1927 he was expelled from the Communist Party, and exiled to Kazakhstan, and in 1929 abroad. He lived in Turkey, Norway and then Mexico. He excoriated Stalin's regime as a bureaucratic degeneration of the proletarian power. He was murdered in Mexico by an agent of Soviet special services on Stalin's order.

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

16 Tolstoy, Lev Nikolayevich (1828-1910): Russian novelist and moral philosopher, who holds an important place in his country's cultural history as an ethical philosopher and religious reformer. Tolstoy, alongside Dostoyevsky, made the realistic novel a literary genre, ranking in importance with classical Greek tragedy and Elizabethan drama.

He is best known for his novels, including War and Peace, Anna Karenina and The Death of Ivan Ilyich, but also wrote short stories and essays and plays. Tolstoy took part in the Crimean War and his stories based on the defense of Sevastopol, known as Sevastopol Sketches, made him famous and opened St. Petersburg's literary circles to him.

His main interest lay in working out his religious and philosophical ideas. He condemned capitalism and private property and was a fearless critic, which finally resulted in his excommunication from the Russian Orthodox Church in 1901. His views regarding the evil of private property gradually estranged him from his wife, Yasnaya Polyana, and children, except for his daughter Alexandra, and he finally left them in 1910. He died on his way to a monastery at the railway junction of Astapovo.

17 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.

18 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.

19 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact: Non-aggression pact between Germany and the Soviet Union, which became known under the name of Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Engaged in a border war with Japan in the Far East and fearing the German advance in the west, the Soviet government began secret negotiations for a non-aggression pact with Germany in 1939.

In August 1939 it suddenly announced the conclusion of a Soviet-German agreement of friendship and non-aggression. The Pact contained a secret clause providing for the partition of Poland and for Soviet and German spheres of influence in Eastern Europe.

20 Invasion of Poland: The German attack of Poland on 1st September 1939 is widely considered the date in the West for the start of World War II.

After having gained both Austria and the Bohemian and Moravian parts of Czechoslovakia, Hitler was confident that he could acquire Poland without having to fight Britain and France. (To eliminate the possibility of the Soviet Union fighting if Poland were attacked, Hitler made a pact with the Soviet Union, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.) On the morning of 1st September 1939, German troops entered Poland.

The German air attack hit so quickly that most of Poland's air force was destroyed while still on the ground. To hinder Polish mobilization, the Germans bombed bridges and roads. Groups of marching soldiers were machine-gunned from the air, and they also aimed at civilians. On 1st September, the beginning of the attack, Great Britain and France sent Hitler an ultimatum - withdraw German forces from Poland or Great Britain and France would go to war against Germany. On 3rd September, with Germany's forces penetrating deeper into Poland, Great Britain and France both declared war on Germany.

21 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.

22 Bolshoi Theater: World famous national theater in Moscow, built in 1776. The first Russian and foreign opera and ballet performances were staged in this building.

23 Molotov, V. P. (1890-1986): Statesman and member of the Communist Party leadership. From 1939, Minister of Foreign Affairs. On June 22, 1941 he announced the German attack on the USSR on the radio. He and Eden also worked out the percentages agreement after the war, about Soviet and western spheres of influence in the new Europe.

24 Hero of the Soviet Union: Honorary title established on 16th April 1934 with the Gold Star medal instituted on 1st August 1939, by Decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet. Awarded to both military and civilian personnel for personal or collective deeds of heroism rendered to the USSR or socialist society.

25 Order of Lenin: Established in 1930, the Order of Lenin is the highest Soviet award. It was awarded for outstanding services in the revolutionary movement, labor activity, defense of the Homeland, and strengthening peace between peoples. It has been awarded over 400,000 times.

26 Georgy Zhukov (1896-1974): Soviet Commander, Marshal of the Soviet Union, Hero of the Soviet Union. Georgy Zhukov was the most important Soviet military commander during World War II.

27 Stalingrad Battle (17 July 1942- 2 February 1943) The Stalingrad, South-Western and Donskoy Fronts stopped the advance of German armies in the vicinity of Stalingrad. On 19-20 November 1942 the Soviet troops undertook an offensive and encircled 22 German divisions (330 thousand people) in the vicinity of Stalingrad. The Soviet troops eliminated this German grouping.

On 31 January 1943 the remains of the 6th German army headed by General Field Marshal Paulus surrendered (91 thousand people). The victory in the Stalingrad battle was of huge political, strategic and international significance.

28 Bandera, Stepan (1919-1959): Politician and ideologue of the Ukrainian nationalist movement, who fought for the Ukrainian cause against both Poland and the Soviet Union.

He attained high positions in the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN): he was chief of propaganda (1931) and, later, head of the national executive in Galicia (1933). He was hoping to establish an independent Ukrainian state with Nazi backing. After Germany attacked the Soviet Union, the OUN announced the establishment of an independent government of Ukraine in Lvov on 30th June 1941.

About one week later the Germans disbanded this government and arrested the members. Bandera was taken to Sachsenhausen prison where he remained until the end of the war. He was assassinated by a Soviet agent in Munich in 1959.

29 Order of the Great Patriotic War: 1st Class: established 20th May 1942, awarded to officers and enlisted men of the armed forces and security troops and to partisans, irrespective of rank, for skillful command of their units in action.

30 Medal 'To Partisan of the Great Patriotic War': Established on 2nd February 1943, the first class was awarded to partisans, commanders of partisan detachments, and partisan movement organizers for personal feats of courage and valor. Approximately 57,000 were issued.

2nd Class was awarded to partisans, commanders of partisan detachments, and partisan movement organizers for distinction in carrying out orders and assignments for higher echelons during the Great Patriotic War. Approximately 71,000 were issued. The medal was awarded to over 100 foreigners fighting in Soviet partisan units.

31 Medal "For Defense of Moscow" was established by the decree of the of the Presidium of Supreme Soviet of the USSR as of May 1, 1944. More than a million of people were conferred with that medal.

32 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'.

33 Mikhoels, Solomon (1890-1948) (born Vovsi): Great Soviet actor, producer and pedagogue. He worked in the Moscow State Jewish Theater (and was its art director from 1929). He directed philosophical, vivid and monumental works. Mikhoels was murdered by order of the State Security Ministry.

34 Item 5: This was the nationality factor, which was included on all job application forms, Jews, who were considered a separate nationality in the Soviet Union, were not favored in this respect from the end of World War II until the late 1980s.

35 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.

36 Lomonosov Moscow State University, founded in 1755, the university was for a long time the only learning institution in Russia open to general public. In the Soviet time, it was the biggest and perhaps the most prestigious university in the country. At present there are over 40,000 undergraduates and 7,000 graduate students at MSU.

37 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.

38 Gorbachev, Mikhail (1931-): Soviet political leader. Gorbachev joined the Communist Party in 1952 and gradually moved up in the party hierarchy. In 1970 he was elected to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, where he remained until 1990.

In 1980 he joined the politburo, and in 1985 he was appointed general secretary of the party. In 1986 he embarked on a comprehensive program of political, economic, and social liberalization under the slogans of glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring).

The government released political prisoners, allowed increased emigration, attacked corruption, and encouraged the critical reexamination of Soviet history. The Congress of People's Deputies, founded in 1989, voted to end the Communist Party's control over the government and elected Gorbachev executive president.

Gorbachev dissolved the Communist Party and granted the Baltic states independence. Following the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States in 1991, he resigned as president. Since 1992, Gorbachev has headed international organizations.

39 Brezhnev, Leonid (1906-1982) Soviet leader. He joined the Communist Party in 1931 and rose steadily in its hierarchy, becoming a secretary of the party's central committee in 1952. In 1957, as protégé of Khrushchev, he became a member of the presidium (later politburo) of the central committee.

He was chairman of the presidium of the Supreme Soviet, or titular head of state. Following Khrushchev's fall from power in 1964, which Brezhnev helped to engineer, he was named first secretary of the Communist Party. Although sharing power with Kosygin, Brezhnev emerged as the chief figure in Soviet politics.

In 1968, in support of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, he enunciated the 'Brezhnev doctrine,' asserting that the USSR could intervene in the domestic affairs of any Soviet bloc nation if communist rule was threatened. While maintaining a tight rein in Eastern Europe, he favored closer relations with the Western powers, and he helped bring about a détente with the United States.

In 1977 he assumed the presidency of the USSR. Under Gorbachev, Brezhnev's regime was criticized for its corruption and failed economic policies.

Victory Day in Russia (9th May): National holiday to commemorate the defeat of Nazi Germany and the end of World War II and honor the Soviets who died in the war.