

Yefim Volodarskiy

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Kiev

Ukraine

Interviewer: Oksana Kuntsevskaya

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Yefim Volodarskiy is a tall thin man. He looks good for his 86 years of age, only his hearing fails him a little. He moves very vividly. He and his second wife live in a two-bedroom apartment of a 9-storied building in a rather distant from the center district of Kiev. Their apartment is very cozy and clean. Mr. Volodarskiy is a very attractive man with a good sense of humor; he willingly shares his recollections and opinions regarding the current events. He goes for walks and shopping every day regardless of his age. He likes reading and takes an interest in political and cultural events in Ukraine and other countries.

I was born in Belaya Tserkov [100 km from Kiev] in 1917. Belaya Tserkov was a Jewish town [shtetl] with about 80% of Jewish population, I think. The others, Ukrainian, Russian and Polish, were an 'addition' to Jews and representatives of a 'minor' race. [ethnic group] I don't know for sure, but it seems there were about 40 thousand Jewish residents in our town. They mainly resided in the central part of the town and were poor for the most part. What did Jews do? They were craftsmen: tailors, shoemakers and traders, of course. The craftsmen had a club where they had operational meetings. There was also an amateur art club and other clubs. There were mills and a woodworking factory in the town. There were also Jewish lawyers, doctors and merchants.

There were three synagogues in Belaya Tserkov. There was one synagogue for aristocratic public [high class], one for middle class and one for bindyuzhniki [Russian jargon for strong and rough people. Originally it means cargo driver.]. We, children, liked the 'bindyuzhniki' synagogue. Bindyuzhniki often had celebrations and drinking parties singing songs at the synagogue. They had the most joyful celebrations. During pogroms in Belaya Tserkov in the 1910s bandits were afraid of the bindyuzhniki neighborhood, because they were strong people and united into self-defense groups [1].

Besides those synagogues there was also a shil [shul], also a synagogue, but the grandest one. There were one-storied buildings and rarely two-storied ones in Belaya Tserkov, but this synagogue was a three-storied building. There were services on big holidays in it with concerts of a Jewish choir and a boys' choir. In the 1930s, during struggle against religion [2] the state expropriated the shil, but to not offend Jews, they established a Jewish school in it, and the former school building was given for a shop.

There was also an Orthodox Christian church in Belaya Tserkov that was also closed in the 1930s. There was a catholic church, very beautiful and grand, but Soviet authorities also closed it and it became a storage facility.

There were two Jewish, one Ukrainian, one Polish and one Russian schools in the town. The Jewish and Ukrainian schools were the best even in the 1920s. Soviet authorities didn't quite acknowledge the Polish or Ukrainian schools. The Ukrainian school was a private school, and therefore, was ignored by authorities. Children of intelligentsia, doctors, lawyers and traders, mainly went to the Russian school. Children studied Yiddish in the Jewish school, but no Hebrew. They studied all subjects in Yiddish, but the school curriculum was no different from other schools. There were very good teachers at school. There were also cheder schools in the town. My brothers went to cheder and to school. I didn't go to cheder.

There was a klezmer musician called Yoseleutz in Belaya Tserkov. He played the violin and drums. He played at weddings and the public enjoyed his music. He played alone, but he was very talented and could quite cope to pass for an orchestra. There was also a 'crazy head', a young quiet man, wondering the streets of the town. He could multiply 2 or 3-digit numbers and people gave him some change for this.

There was no theater in Belaya Tserkov, but there were clubs. There was a cultural activist in our town. His surname was Verlinskiy. He established a Jewish drama studio in the town. It was not worse than a professional theater.

My father's parents died before I was born. They were wealthy. My father's father Leib Shul Volodarskiy owned a transportation office in Belaya Tserkov. He transported loads to and from the railway station, also furniture and other loads in town or took passengers to on business to nearby towns. My father inherited it after his father died. I don't know when it happened. I don't know anything about my grandmother. My father's family was religious. My father had three brothers and a sister. I don't know when they were born. I know that Horatsiy Volodarsky was the youngest. I have no information about two of my father's brother, but I know a little about his sister and his younger brother.

My father's sister Nese Rudgaizer, nee Volodarskaya, lived in Belaya Tserkov. I don't know when she was born or whether she had education. I remember that her husband died young and she lived with her children. During the Great Patriotic War [3] we lost track of her, and this is all I know about her life. She had two sons. Her son Leibl Rudgaizer was a member of the Central Committee of the Zionist Party [Revisionist Zionism] [4], forbidden by authorities. He was probably born in 1902 – 1903. Leibl finished a Jewish school and took to politics. He was arrested for his Zionist membership in the 1920s and exiled to a camp in Siberia. They promised to release him if he refused from political struggle and Zionism, but Leibl didn't accept this. He was imprisoned, but he preserved his ideas. After his term of sentence was over he was not allowed to return home and settled down in Siberia. Leibl was released in the early 1930s and was sickly and lame when he returned to Belaya Tserkov. He was still an underground member of the central committee of the Zionist Party of Russia! Leibl got married and moved to Zhitomir [120 km from Kiev]. When the Great Patriotic War began he stayed in the town with his family and they all perished. Nese's second son Lulek Rudgaizer was a hardworking man like all bindyzhniki. He was also a Zionist, but a common one. Lulek may have been born around 1905. I don't know where he studied, but he had some elementary education. I think, some time in the 1920s the Joint [5] arranged some Jewish school or employment and Lulek moved to Palestine in the 1920s. He joined a kibbutz. In his letters to relatives he wrote that they were developing the land pulling out stones! They had a hard life.

There was no money paid in the kibbutz and Lulek wrote that he was already receiving two shirts per year. Later the kibbutz bought a horse and then Lulek was awfully proud that few years later his kibbutz managed to buy a tractor. He stayed in this kibbutz till the end of his life. He was a pensioner, but he couldn't imagine life without work and Lulek became a shoemaker. I visited this kibbutz, only I don't remember its name, during my trip to Israel. People still remembered Lulek. He died five years ago. He had no family.

My father's younger brother Horatsiy Volodarskiy finished a grammar school in Belaya Tserkov. He was considered to be the most talented one in the family. There was a 5% quota [6] for Jews to enter higher educational institutions and the Volodarskiy family decided to contribute money so that the smartest one got a higher education. So they exactly he studied. Horatsiy went to study in France in the 1920s and became an engineer. I don't know in what college he studied. After finishing his college he returned to the USSR, got married and worked in Kiev. I know that at some time Horatsiy worked as an engineer at the 'Bolshevik' instrument-making plant in Kiev. I don't remember my uncle wife's name, but I remember that she was very strict. When my father, my brothers and I visited them in Kiev, we had to watch our manners: wash ourselves, speak quietly and behave ourselves. We were so scared there! My uncle didn't have children. During the Great Patriotic War Horatsiy and his older brother Semyon evacuated to Nizhniaya Salda in Sverdlovsk region. There were very hard life conditions. He may have starved to death. He was an old man. Horatsiy's wife died probably in 1940.

My father Srul Leib Volodarskiy was the oldest in the family. He was born in Belaya Tserkov in 1870. He finished a cheder and grammar school and worked in the transportation office of his father's. My father inherited his father's office. It still existed in the 1920s and was called 'Ukrvozdukhput'. Its staff consisted of three employees. Belaya Tserkov is on the way to Kiev. There is a railway station in the town. My father's office arranged delivery of shipments to the railroad for further transportation. He hired horse-drawn wagons to support this deliveries. He arranged for load and passenger transportations to other villages on horse-driven wagons, they didn't even know about vehicles at that time in Belaya Tserkov. During the Soviet regime my father's office merged with a bigger transportation office. My father was responsible for railroad transportations.

My mother's father Aizek Livshitz owned a transportation office in Proskurovo village [about 100 km from Kiev, present Ukraine]. He had some business relationships with my grandfather Volodarskiy and they decided to acquaint my father and mother, their children. Unfortunately, I don't know any details.

My mother's family came from Proskurovo in the Ukraine. [This village does not exist today. It might have merged with a bigger town or may have disappeared for some other reason.] They were a patriarchal family. My grandfather Aizek Livshitz was considered to be the most honest man and people came to ask his advice. Also, he was a guarantor during money transactions. I don't know when my grandfather was born, but he died in the late 1920s. I don't remember my grandmother's name. She was a housewife, and this is all I can tell about her. She died in the late 1930s.

They had four daughters: my mother, Mayka, Mariam, Rivka and Malka. After pogroms in the 1910s Mariam and Rivka decided to move to Palestine. Their father Aizek went there with them. The

mother and daughter Malka stayed in Russia, I don't know why. My grandfather Aizek Livshitz didn't like it in Palestine. He thought this was the wrong Jewish movement and returned to Russia.

My grandfather Aizek gave education to all daughters: they finished a grammar school, but I don't know exactly where. Mariam Hertzberg, nee Livshitz, was a friend of Golda Meir [7]. Mariam was actively involved in public and political activities in Palestine and then in Israel. She was ambassador of Israel in England for a long time. She was married and has a son, whose name is Amas Hertzberg. We have no contacts and I don't know anything about him. Mariam has passed away, but I don't remember when.

Another sister Rivka Savon, nee Livshitz, worked at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Israel. She lived in Jerusalem. She died about 10 years ago.

I remember very well that my mother's sister visited us when I was small. They brought me toys. They even came to see us after my mother died.

I hardly know anything about my mother's third sister Malka. She got married and lived in Khorol [about 200 km from Kiev], she was a pharmacist. We hardly ever saw her.

After grandfather Aizek returned from Palestine, probably in the early 1920s he lived with grandmother in Proskurovo. After he died in the early 1920s my grandmother moved to her daughter in Khorol. She had poor sight and problems with hearing. My grandmother wrote my father that she wanted to see Mayka's children before she died. She asked for one of us to visit her and we decided it was going to be me. I was probably 12 years old. At first my father was thinking of sending Mitia, my older brother, who knew my mother's sisters and mother well, but he had to be at work in the theatrical studio. Then I went on this trip. This was the first time I saw my grandmother in Khorol being mature enough to remember. Well, I looked at her. I didn't have any feeling since I didn't grow up with her. What was my grandmother's name? I don't even know.

My mother Mayka Volodarskaya, nee Livshitz, was born in Proskurovo village in 1887. She finished a grammar school like the rest of her sisters. In 1906 my mother got married. There were no affairs of the kind they have now wearing these short skirts. My parents settled down in my father's pise-walled house in Belaya Tserkov. This house seemed grand to me when I was a child. There were 6 or 7 rooms and a big brick basement.

During the Civil War [8] there were some refugees accommodated in our house. I don't know where they came from. They were cooking and frying something in the oven and were rather careless about it. In one word this caused fire. The middle part of the house got burnt. Later we restored four rooms and lived there. My father sold one part of the house.

I hardly remember my mother who died of typhus in 1919, when I was 2 and a half. My mother's sisters told me a lot about her when they visited Belaya Tserkov. My mother was very beautiful, more educated than my father and a commanding type. Many people came to ask her advice: about family budget planning, raising children or baking pies. We had a nanny and a housemaid. My father was rather wealthy. They told me that during a pogrom made by Denikin [9], or Petlyura [10] gangs we took shelter in the basement. There were our acquaintances and neighbors there, too. My mother failed to hide and they ordered her to stand by the stove and kept shooting at the stove. She was brave and joked and snarled at them.

When my mother died, our housemaid, who was as quiet as a mouse when my mother was with us, stole everything valuable from the house. Of course, my father needed a mistress in his house and he remarried shortly afterward. My stepmother's name was Hava. She was younger than my father. I don't know her surname before she married my father. When my mother died, Matvey, the oldest of us, was 12. He remembered my mother well, and my stepmother couldn't compare with her. We didn't think much of her and Matvey was the one whom we listened to. Poor father, he worked all days long and didn't have time for us. My stepmother was a very hardworking woman. I can't understand now how she gained strength to take care of four guys like us. She had to go to the market every day. There were no fridges and she had to buy food every day, do cooking and washing. My stepmother died in evacuation. I think, it happened in 1943.

Our family was religious. My father was sure to celebrate Saturday, Pesach and all other holidays. They followed all religious rules. He went to the synagogue and I was carrying his tallit and the Torah. My father prayed and then we went home together. We asked our Ukrainian or Russian neighbor to light the lamps at home. We followed kosher rules and made matzah. Now the synagogue produces matzah, but at my time few Jewish families got together to make matzah. Almost all Jewish families cooked gefilte fish on Friday. I was told that it was the same before the revolution in 1917 [11]. Then Jewish families bribed the policeman giving him gefilte fish on Saturday. I don't know why they wanted to bribe him. People always believed it was good to establish friendly relationships with authorities, just in case. He liked it very much. They also cooked chicken. At that time Jewish housewives bought living hens. We had a cage at home where we kept hens. Only this chicken was kosher. There was a special slaughterer since families were not allowed to slaughter themselves. The slaughterer slaughtered the chickens on Friday. Every family used to have a cage with chickens.

My parents had four sons: Matvey, Semyon, Shimshin and I, Yefim.

My older brother Matvey Volodarskiy was born in Belaya Tserkov in 1907. He was very talented. He studied in cheder and finished a Jewish school in Belaya Tserkov. At the age of 15 Matvey entered the affiliate of Kiev Polytechnic College in our town, but my father had to bribe director of this affiliate since they didn't want to admit Matvey due to his young age. Later Verlinskiy organized a theatrical studio in Belaya Tserkov, and advanced Jewish young people began to attend it. Verlinskiy also enticed my brother there. Matvey quit his college and began to work in this studio. Their employees earned little money since they were funded by sponsors. My brother earned five or ten rubles. It was a sufficient amount. It was possible to buy a piece of clothing and have some money left for cigarettes and food, for example, a bun cost 3 kopeck. Matvey spent day and night in this studio rehearsing and acting. In the morning he sent me to the butcher to buy sausage cut offs. The name of this sausage maker was Novikov. You won't find sausage like that anywhere today! I bought 100 grams sausage cut offs for my brother. I can still remember the smell of this sausage. There were no soy beans in it! There was a clock shop on the way to the sausage store and Matvey taught me to ask them what time it was. Matvey or I didn't have watches. Only our father had one.

Some time in the late 1920s – early 1930s this theatrical studio was closed. There were Jewish theaters in Kharkov [500 km from Kiev] and Moscow and studio actors moved to these theaters. Matvey became a producer in the Kharkov Jewish theater. He knew Jewish culture and Hebrew very

well from cheder. Later this theater moved to Kiev. My brother left the theater and began to lecture in the Kiev Theatrical College. Later the Academy of film producers opened in Kiev. The first admission was about 12 students. Matvey finished this academy and became a film producer. At first my brother worked as film producer the film studio in Kiev and later, before the great Patriotic war, he moved to Moscow to work at the 'Mosfilm' studio. In Moscow my brother met Tatiana, a Russian girl, and married her in 1939, I think. Their son Vsevolod was born shortly afterward.

Matvey was recruited to the army during the Great Patriotic War. His commandment knew that he was a film producer and sent him to Chkalov [about 2000 km from Kiev, Russia] in the rear. Matvey became chief producer at the house of officers. His family joined him there. After the Great Patriotic War my brother and his family returned to Moscow and Matvey continued his work at the 'Mosfilm' studio. Matvey was very attached to my father and often invited him to stay with them in Moscow. Matvey died in Moscow in 1993 and was buried in the Jewish cemetery. I don't remember when Tatiana died. Matvey's son took after his father: he finished school with excellent marks and entered the Faculty of Fine Art in Moscow University. He was scientific secretary of the Tretyakov Art Gallery for a long time. Now he lives in Moscow.

My second brother Semyon was born in Belaya Tserkov in 1910. He also attended cheder and finished a Jewish school in Belaya Tserkov. Semyon went to work in Kiev and then moved to Dnepropetrovsk [about 500 km from Kiev, Ukraine] where he finished Metallurgical College. He married Rosa, a Jewish girl. Semyon worked at a big metallurgical plant where he was a big shot. During the Great Patriotic War Semyon and his wife, my father and stepmother evacuated with the plant to Nizhniaya Salda. My stepmother died shortly afterward and my father decided to join me in Kuibyshev [present Samara, Russia, about 1700 km from Kiev]. My brother Semyon and his family returned to Dnepropetrovsk after the Great Patriotic War. Semyon had two children. I didn't get along with Semyon and I don't know any details of his life. He died in 1998.

My third brother's name was Shimshin. Everybody called him Shulia. He was born in Belaya Tserkov in 1914. Shimshin studied in cheder, finished a 7-year Jewish school and then studied in the Jewish technical school in Belaya Tserkov. He went to serve in the Red army and stayed for an additional service. Then he entered a military school, I don't remember which one, and became an army officer. He was at the front during the Great Patriotic War and was shell-shocked. He demobilized in the rank of colonel. My brother was married few times. He didn't have children. He lived in Dnepropetrovsk. Shimshin died in 2000.

I was the youngest in the family. Hey called me 'mizinek' in Yiddish - 'the dearest' one. I was born in 1917. I went to the Jewish school in Belaya Tserkov at the age of 7. I had a piece of bread with goose cracklings for breakfast. We made bread at home. My family also gave me 5 kopeck for breakfast at school. I used to save this money. I gambled with other boys. What kind of games we played? We removed a steel ring from a barrel and rolled it for money. We put a coin on a solid surface throwing another coin to hit the first coin so that it turned around. If it turns, the player takes both coins, and if it remained in the same position - both coins go to another player. I became a young Octobrist [12], a pioneer and Komsomol member [13] at school like all other schoolchildren. This was a standard process and everybody had to follow it, but I took no interest in public life.

I finished seven forms in the Jewish school. At that time the period of forced famine began [14]. It became hard to survive in Belaya Tserkov. Not many people could get food for their families. In 1932 I left my home. At that same time I put an end to the observance of Jewish traditions. My brother Matvey was working in Kharkov already. There was a Jewish technical school in Kharkov. I guess, it was the Transport School. I entered it. My brother supported me and I lived with him. Besides, Matvey helped me to become a light operator at the theater. So, it depended on me whether a performance was to take place or not! I studied for over a year, when the theater moved to Kiev. Matvey also moved to Kiev and I followed him. My brother entered the Academy and lived in a hostel. He had to live his own life and I had to take care of mine.

I made friends in Kiev with teenagers of my age. During the period of famine everybody tried to survive as best as he could. There were 6 of us. We moved into an abandoned house on the outskirts of Kiev. One of us worked at the confectionery. He had a coat that he stuffed with sweets going back home after work. We used to sell these sweets. Another friend went to study at the vocational school at the 'Lenkuznia' shipyard. He had a worker's card and also received a stipend. We had meals in the canteen of this vocational school. We bought 15-20 dinner rations. Why? Because we poured the soup into one plate to make a more or less sufficient meal for one person. Those rations were too small. There were soy beans given for the second course. We also took 15 rations to make one meal. There was a slice of bread going with each dinner ration. Anyway, we had to pay for these meals and to make some additional money we were selling the bread we got with our meals at the canteen. One slice of bread cost as much as we had to pay for a whole meal and we used to sell few slices at the market. There was a stove in the house where we dwelled. We used to break fences at night to stoke it. Neighbors were scared to go outside at night. We cooked mamaliga, a bucket full, for example. That's how we lived. Of course, anything might have come out of this way of life, but that I had to continue studies was something that I was sure of. Where was I to go? There was no Jewish school or higher secondary school in Kiev. I went to a rabfak [15] school and to work. My uncle Horatsiy, who was an engineer at the plant, used his connections to have me employed by the plant. There was no other way to get a job there: there were numbers of people coming to Kiev from surrounding villages searching for a job and food. I was 15 years old and I worked at the storage office. I received a worker's food card. [The card system was introduced in the Soviet Union to directly regulate food supplies to the population. There were different cards for physical workers, non-manual employees and dependents. There was nothing in stores to buy for money. Food cards were issued at work or in colleges.] After finishing the rabfak I entered Agricultural College, present Agricultural Academy. I finished the Faculty of Mechanization at the Academy in 1939. I got a job assignment [16] to Chernigov [regional center, about 150 km from Kiev], where I was a shop superintendent. We also studied military disciplines in college and after finishing it I became a reserve lieutenant of armored troops. I worked at the vehicle and tractor plant in Chernigov. There I was mobilized for two months. I was directed to inspect the army equipment with a traffic police representative. Two months later I returned to the plant. Then there was another mobilization for two months. I wanted to move to Kiev. I asked the registry office to issue a certificate saying that I 'was recruited to the army' and I quit the plant on the basis of this certificate. When those two months of mobilization were over, I was free to go to Kiev. In Kiev I applied for a job at aviation plant # 454. They took 15 days to check my documents. I went to visit my father in Belaya Tserkov and then decided to go back to Kiev few days before these 15 days were over. There was to be a football match that I wanted to see. On my way back on 22 June 1941

I heard about the war and that Kiev was bombed... I decided that I had to go to the military registry office for mobilization. I went to the plant to pick my documents from there, but they said: 'Oh, no, you already have a release from military service and you are employed!' The plant evacuated to Kuibyshev on 1 July. We were the first plant to evacuate and I got tickets in a nice train! I was seeing a girl, a nice Jewish girl, I liked her, but I was not thinking of marriage yet. So I offered her to evacuate with me. She agreed instantly. The girl's name was Anes Dubinskaya. Her mother was a common woman and I was an all right guy, so they agreed. Her older daughter was smart, though. She said: 'What do you mean go with him? No. Let him marry her first!' This is how it was then: you want her – you marry her. I said: 'Let's get married!' We went to a registry office where our marriage was registered. So I got married. Our luggage was taken to the railway station.

My wife's parents came from Volodarka village near Kiev. My wife's father Simkha Dubinskiy owned a leather factory there. Bandits killed my wife's father during a pogrom in the 1920s. Soviet authorities expropriated the factory and their belongings. My mother-in-law's name was Haika Dubinskaya. I don't know her maiden name. Her older daughter was married. Frankly speaking, I don't remember anything about her. After her husband died my mother-in-law and her daughters moved to Kiev. She had a relative in Kiev, an uncle, it seems, who was a supplier for the army at the czarist time. He was very wealthy. He was single. He gave my mother-in-law his apartment in the center of Kiev. This is all I know about him.

My wife Anes Dubinskaya was born in Volodarka in 1920. In the middle 1920s she moved to Kiev with her mother and sister. After finishing a secondary school she entered the Faculty of Foreign languages in Kiev University. When we met, she was a third-year student. So, this trip to the destination of our evacuation was our 'honey moon'.

We got a room at the hostel of the plant. In Kuibyshev I helped my wife to get an employment at the human resources department at a military plant. She heard that Kiev University evacuated to Kzyl-Orda in Kazakhstan. After a year of our life together it suddenly occurred to her that she wanted to finish her studies. Let her! I worked at the military plant day and night and hardly ever was at home. I had an office at the plant and there I slept. My wife went to Kzyl-Orda where she graduated from the university and then returned to Kuibyshev some time in 1943. My wife's mother joined us this same year, it was a miracle that she escaped from occupied Kiev. She found us through a search agency and joined us there. My wife's older sister and her family perished in the occupation. My father also joined us after my stepmother died. My mother-in-law overtook housekeeping. She sewed and traded.

Regarding our parents, I recall an episode. There was a kolkhoz [17] near Kuibyshev organized from the kulaks [18] deported to this area from all over the Soviet Union. All other kolkhozes around were miserably poor, but this one was outstandingly rich. There were tractors in the kolkhoz. This kolkhoz even had an aircraft manufactured for the army. Tractors needed repairs. Chairman of this kolkhoz and his board came to see director of the plant and made him an offer: you do the repairs and I shall pay in food products – beetroots, potatoes... Director said he didn't have the authority to make such decisions since it was the aviation plant. 'You just go to your maintenance shop where Volodarskiy is superintendent. If he agrees to do the repairs without causing delay to your plan, then let's do it!' Director called me to tell me this was all right with him. Chairman of the kolkhoz came to see me and we came to an agreement. I talked to my guys:

'Guys, we shall receive food products, but we need to do it to cause no harm to the aviation!' I entered into 'brotherhood' with this kolkhoz. Well, we repaired whatever they needed and chairman of the kolkhoz brought me a bag of beetroots. I took it home. My mother-in-law was a practical woman. She went to sell these beetroots at the market. She had plumbed the depths of misfortunes before. So, she was selling those 5 rubles each, I guess. My father was standing beside her. She once said: 'You stay here and I will buy something'. When she returned there was a crowd near that bag! My father began to sell beetroots 20 kopeck each. : People began to scream that he should sell maximum 3 beetroots to one person. She saw this 'dealing' and shouted everybody away. Some people wanted to beat her... She said: 'But you've seen me doing it!' and he replied: 'How can one charge so much money per each beetroot!' That was my father.

Our son Horatsiy was born in Kuibyshev in 1944. We named him after my uncle who died in evacuation. After the war my wife and I, our son, my wife's mother and my father returned to Kiev with my plant. We managed to move into my wife mother's apartment, though we were only allowed to live in one room. Here were other tenants in another room. I went to work as an engineer at the Artyom plant. This was also a military plant and it belonged to our ministry. Shortly afterward I received an apartment and my wife and I and our son moved there. My mother-in-law died in Kiev in the late 1940s.

After we returned to Kiev my father decided to visit Belaya Tserkov to take a look at the house. The house was sinking to one side and there were other tenants there. Of course, the authorities acknowledged my father's ownership of this house. However, they only gave him one room in the house since he was alone. My father was so kind. He never managed to force these tenants to move out of his house. It was his house and he could take an effort to make them move out, but he wasn't this kind of a person. He lived there for a short time, but what kind of life it was when he was alone? He sold his room for peanuts and moved to me in Kiev.

In 1950 I went to work as shop superintendent at the motorcycle plant. I was promoted to chief mechanic and then became assistant chief engineer of the plant. My father also worked there till his last day. He died at the age of 87. He worked as a timekeeper clerk, that describes the products and their quantities and also indicates the time of shipments. He had a sound mind till the end. My father died in 1957. We buried him in the town cemetery.

After we returned to Kiev my wife went to work as a French translator at the State Security Ministry. Since there were not many French translations she also translated from Yiddish that she knew since childhood. The Ministry did the dirty work of copying correspondence of citizens with their relatives abroad. My wife translated them, thought there was nothing illegal in them. People wrote about their life and children. Sometimes she translated forbidden, but secretly published books also. Then Anes went to work as a French and German teacher at school.

In the 1950s the Party central Committee issued an order to send engineers to kolkhozes to enhance their operations. I was sent to work as chief engineer at the Uman equipment yard in 250 km south of Kiev. I went there alone. I need to say that I had a nice welcome reception in Uman. They gave me a big apartment in Uman. Was alone. My wife was in no hurry. So, I organized a club of preference players [card game], we gathered in the evenings and played until morning. Of course, we drank. When Anes visited me she was horrified. There were so many vodka and beer bottles that if taken back to the store where they gave money in return, one could live a month on

this cash! I tried to convince my wife to join me there. My wife went to the educational department to ask them about a vacancy of French teacher, but they didn't have French at schools. They had English classes. So she stayed at home. When my three years were over my management didn't want to let me go. I never regretted going to Uman. I enjoyed working there. There were many engineers in Kiev, but in provinces they valued engineering professions. Secretary of the district party committee gave his word to let me go three years later. He kept his word. I returned to the motor cycle plant in Kiev where I worked till retirement.

All those troubles of the 1950s, 'the doctors' plot' [19] they didn't have any impact on me. It was clear that this story with doctors poisoners was a mere fiction. Of course, I was a Komsomol member. In 1937 I understood that Stalin was a bastard after they arrested my childhood friend for the only reason that he was Polish. They sent him to Siberia and nobody saw him again. I knew that these arrests and sentences [Great Terror] [20] were wrong. I knew it, but I didn't tell anyone, of course. I knew that one little thing said – and they would know. I kept my tongue behind my teeth. I thought that Lenin [21] was a genius and Stalin was a usurper, he grabbed the power. I was very happy when he died in 1953, but I kept these emotions to myself.

My wife and I had a family who knew Jewish culture well, but we were not religious. I didn't know Hebrew, but my wife and I communicated in Yiddish with ease. I can read well in Yiddish. I know and like Jewish literature. I used to be a light operator at the Jewish theater! I watched all performances. We celebrate our holidays as another occasion to have a drink and to eat. However, we only celebrate them having a party, but we do not observe any traditions. I have a nice collection of books: Sholem Aleichem [22], Peretz Markish [23] and many others. My wife retired in 1975 and I retired in 1977. I liked going to theaters with her. We often went for walks in parks and spent vacations in recreation centers. We had noisy and joyful birthday parties. Our friends and the children's friends visited us. Anes died 10 years ago in 1993.

I have two sons. My older son Horatsiy was born in Kuibyshev in 1944. He grew up like other Soviet children; he went to kindergarten and then to a secondary school in Kiev. He finished school in 1962. Jews already were having problems with entering higher educational institutions. However, we found the way out. There was an order issued that if school graduates worked at plants for a year then those plants could assign their workers to study. I helped my son with employment at my plant. After a year's work he entered Novocherkassk Road Transportation College. There he met Ludmila, a Russian girl, and married her. We had no objections. Horatsiy and his wife returned to Kiev after finishing their college. I helped my son to go to work as a designer at a plant in Kiev. Later Horatsiy became chief engineer at the plant and earned well. I helped Ludmila to get work at the motorcycle plant. She was an engineer and was chief of industrial communication at the plant. Horatsiy's wife is more Jewish in her heart than him! There were all Jewish engineers at our plant. Ludmila used to say: 'We have a Jewish community!' My son didn't know the dates of holidays. She always tells him the dates of holidays. She said: 'I am more Jewish than him! What can he understand?' They get along well and she is a good wife. Neither my son nor my daughter-in-law knows Yiddish, of course. In the 1990s Horatsiy and his family moved to Germany. He owned a garage at that time. I asked him: 'Why are you going to Germany? What is there that you haven't seen?' He replied: 'It's impossible to work honestly. Paying taxes I won't have anything left. So, it is necessary to find a way to cheat the state. I can't do it'. Besides, when he was trying to start his business those gangsters were demanding a part from him in the Ukraine. His patience was

exhausted when those bandits demanded to pay them more pretending they were his 'security' and this meant for him to work for losses, Therefore, Horatsiy gave it up and left. Horatsiy has a son. He is my grandson Vladimir. He left for Germany with his parents. He had various jobs and earned well, but he says he doesn't like it in Germany. He returned to Ukraine. He has his own car business in the Crimea, in Sevastopol [1000 km from Kiev]. He is married and I have a great grandson.

My younger son Alexandr Volodarskiy was born in Kiev in 1954. After finishing a Ukrainian secondary school he entered the faculty of Journalism of Kiev University. He worked as a journalist for newspapers in Kiev. Now he heads the humor column in the daily newspaper 'Kievskiy Vedomosti' and performs on TV. Alexandr also has a Russian wife. They have a daughter. She is my granddaughter. They live in Kiev. My son's family does not observe any Jewish traditions. They do not speak Yiddish either.

As for me, I think that the breakup of the Soviet Union, was wrong. Europe is uniting now. Couldn't Ukraine enjoy more independence within the Soviet Union? There was a big Union with great economic possibilities. Democracy is good, but why leave the union? They ruined the economy. The economy of the Soviet Union was structured so that each enterprise manufactured only a portion of the whole product. Now there are frontiers between them and each country has its own part that cannot be used anyway, and plants have collapsed. There is wonderful soil in Ukraine, wonderful climate, but very low standards of living.

I've visited my relatives in Israel twice. I was with my wife Anes in the first trip. They welcomed me there and wanted me to stay. I liked the country very much, but my age, I was, I could say, in a pensioner's age. I refused. I haven't done anything for Israel and I don't want to be a dependent and receive money! If I were younger I would move there, but I don't want to live on this money that I haven't earned. For this same reason I do not join any Jewish organizations and do not accept help from Hesed. Of course, I identify myself as a Jew, but I don't want to take anything from the people when I cannot offer something in return. I visited Israel for the second time in 1995, with my son. I introduced him to our relatives for him to know them.

GLOSSARY:

[1] Jewish self-defense movement: In Russia Jews organized self-defense groups to protect the Jewish population and Jewish property from the rioting mobs in pogroms, which often occurred in compliance with the authorities and, at times, even at their instigation. During the pogroms of 1881-82 self-defense was organized spontaneously in different places. Following pogroms at the beginning of the 20th century, collective defense units were set up in the cities and towns of Belarus and Ukraine, which raised money and bought arms. The nucleus of the self-defense movement came from the Jewish labor parties and their military units, and it had a widespread following among the rest of the people. Organized defense groups are known to have existed in 42 cities.

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

[3] 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.

[4] Revisionist Zionism: The movement founded in 1925 and led by Vladimir Jabotinsky advocated the re-examination of the principles of Political Zionism developed by Theodor Herzl, the father of Zionism. The main goals of the Revisionists was to change Chaim Weizmann's moderate policies toward the British Mandatory regime and they wanted to put relentless pressure on Great Britain for a Jewish statehood on both banks of the Jordan River, a Jewish majority in Palestine, the reestablishment of the Jewish regiments, and military training for the youth. Their pre-state organizations, which included the Betar youth movement and the ETZEL (National Military Organization), were founded during the 1936-39 Arab rebellion in Palestine. In 1935 the Revisionists seceded from the World Zionist Organization after heated debates on the immediate and public stipulation of the final aim of Zionism and established the New Zionist Organization. The Revisionist Zionists formed the core of what became the Herut (Freedom) Party after the Israeli independence. This party subsequently became the central component of the Likud Party, the largest right wing Israeli party since the 1970s.

[5] Joint (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee): The Joint was formed in 1914 with the fusion of three American Jewish committees of assistance, which were alarmed by the suffering of Jews during World War I. In late 1944, the Joint entered Europe's liberated areas and organized a massive relief operation. It provided food for Jewish survivors all over Europe, it supplied clothing, books and school supplies for children. It supported cultural amenities and brought religious supplies for the Jewish communities. The Joint also operated DP camps, in which it organized retraining programs to help people learn trades that would enable them to earn a living, while its cultural and religious activities helped re-establish Jewish life. The Joint was also closely involved in helping Jews to emigrate from Europe and from Muslim countries. The Joint was expelled from East Central Europe for decades during the Cold War and it has only come back to many of these countries after the fall of communism. Today the Joint provides social welfare programs for elderly Holocaust survivors and encourages Jewish renewal and communal development.

[6] Percent of Jews admitted to higher educational institutions: In tsarist Russia the number of Jews in higher educational institutions could not exceed 5% of the total number of students.

[7] Meir, Golda (1898-1978): Israeli political leader, born in Kiev, Russia. Her family emigrated to the United States in 1906. She became a school teacher and involved herself early on in the Zionist labor movement. In 1921 she and her husband emigrated to Palestine. She joined the Palestine labor movement and became head of the political department of the Histadrut, the General Federation of Jewish Labor, in 1936. After Israeli independence was achieved in 1948, she served as minister (ambassador) to Moscow, minister of labor (1949-56), and foreign minister (1956-66). She became secretary-general of the Mapai party (later the Labor party) in 1966, and the fourth

prime minister of Israel in 1969. She resigned in 1974.

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

[9] Denikin, Anton Ivanovich (1872-1947): White Army general. During the Civil War he fought against the Red Army in the South of Ukraine.

[10] Petliura, Simon (1879-1926): Ukrainian politician, member of the Ukrainian Social Democratic Working Party, one of the leaders of Centralnaya Rada (Central Council), the national government of Ukraine (1917-1918). Military units under his command killed Jews during the Civil War in Ukraine. In the Soviet-Polish war he was on the side of Poland; in 1920 he emigrated. He was killed in Paris by the Jewish nationalist Schwarzbard in revenge for the pogroms against Jews in Ukraine.

[11] 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.

[12] Young Octobrist: In Russian Oktyabrenok, or 'pre-pioneer', designates Soviet children of seven years or over preparing for entry into the pioneer organization.

[13] Komsomol: Communist youth political organization created in 1918. The task of the Komsomol was to spread of the ideas of communism and involve the worker and peasant youth in building the Soviet Union. The Komsomol also aimed at giving a communist upbringing by involving the worker youth in the political struggle, supplemented by theoretical education. The Komsomol was more popular than the Communist Party because with its aim of education people could accept uninitiated young proletarians, whereas party members had to have at least a minimal political qualification.

[14] Famine in Ukraine: In 1920 a deliberate famine was introduced in the Ukraine causing the death of millions of people. It was arranged in order to suppress those protesting peasants who did not want to join the collective farms. There was another dreadful deliberate famine in 1930-1934 in the Ukraine. The authorities took away the last food products from the peasants. People were dying in the streets, whole villages became deserted. The authorities arranged this specifically to suppress the rebellious peasants who did not want to accept Soviet power and join collective farms.

[15] Rabfak: Educational institutions for young people without secondary education, specifically established by the Soviet power.

[16] Mandatory job assignment in the USSR: Graduates of higher educational institutions had to complete a mandatory 2-year job assignment issued by the institution from which they graduated. After finishing this assignment young people were allowed to get employment at their discretion in any town or organization.

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

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

[19] 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.

[20] 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.

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

[22] Sholem Aleichem, real name was Shalom Nohumovich Rabinovich (1859-1916): Jewish writer. He lived in Russia and moved to the US in 1914. He wrote about the life of Jews in Russia in Yiddish, Hebrew and Russian.

[23] Markish, Peretz (1895-1952): Yiddish writer and poet, arrested and shot dead together with several other Yiddish writers, rehabilitated posthumously.