

Boris Slobodianskiy

Boris Slobodianskiy

Chernovtsy

Ukraine

Interviewer: Ella Levitskaya

Date of the interview: November 2002

I met Boris Slobodianskiy and his wife at Hesed [1]. Boris and his wife live with their daughter's family in a three-room apartment. There is an atmosphere of love and mutual respect in their family. Boris changed into a kippah with silver piping and had a shofar in his hands. He used to blow the shofar during Jewish gatherings for a prayer in his native village of Poyana when he was a child. During our interview he demonstrated his art of playing and explained the meaning of tunes. Boris is the founder, author and producer of "Yiddishe Wort," the only radio program in Yiddish in Ukraine. It is his creation and he can talk about it endlessly.

My father, Moshe Slobodianskiy, was born in the village of Poyana, Rezinsk district, Moldova [2], in 1900. At that time it was the territory of Russia and in 1918 it became a part of Romania.

I didn't know my grandparents on my father's side. They died during an epidemic when they were young. All I know about them is that they were born in Poyana. My grandfather's name was Berl Slobodianskiy and I was named after him.

My father told me that his family was poor and that my grandparents had many children. My father was the youngest. After their parents died their older children moved to Palestine and the USA. They didn't write letters and there was no information about them since then.

My father and his two older brothers, Ide-Leib and Yankel, were raised by some distant relatives. My father and his brothers studied at cheder, but after finishing it they had to go to work. I remember them well – they lived in our village.

My father's brothers built houses in Poyana and got married. One of my father's brothers, Ide-Leib, worked as a shoemaker, but later he became a tailor. He could do many things; he was very handy. He could also cut glass. My father's brother Yankel was growing tobacco and my father was helping him. It was his business.

My father's brothers were religious. There was no synagogue in Poyana and Ide-Leib had Jews coming to his house for a prayer every day. Ide-Leib was a cantor during such prayers.

Ide-Leib perished at the beginning of the Great Patriotic War [3], and Yankel and his family moved to Israel in the 1970s. He died recently; his children still live in Israel.

My mother's parents lived in the village of Pisarevka, Yampol district, Vinnitsa region. They were born in the 1860s. My grandfather, Haim Kupershtock, was a handicraftsman and my grandmother was a housewife. My mother's parents were religious; they observed all Jewish traditions. My mother and her sister were raised in a religious manner. My grandparents had two daughters: my

mother's sister Boba, born in Pisarevka in 1895, and my mother Pesia, born in 1901.

All I know about Pisarevka is that it was a Ukrainian village and there were few Jewish families living in it. Jews were handicraftsmen: shoemakers, tailors, coppersmiths and tinsmiths. There was no synagogue in their village and Jews went to the synagogue in the neighboring village, some five kilometers away.

My mother's sister Boba got married and moved to her husband in the nearby village of Shypka. Boba had two sons and a daughter. She grew vegetables in her kitchen garden and kept chickens. She also had a cow and sold some dairy products and milk.

My mother's whole family was religious and Boba was no exception. She observed Jewish traditions and celebrated Sabbath and Jewish holidays. She also followed the kashrut. Jews bought dairy products from Boba, because they were sure these were kosher products.

My aunt Boba perished at the very beginning of the war. She had a neighbor, a young Moldovan man. After my aunt's husband died this man was helping her about the house. My aunt treated him like a son, but when the Germans came to the village in 1941 this Moldovan man came to my aunt's house and killed her with a knife.

Her children survived. After the war her younger son and daughter lived in Chernovtsy and her older son lived in Kishinev. Boba's older son died in Chernovtsy and her other son died in Israel.

My parents were introduced to one another by a shadkhan. It was a traditional way of arranging marriages in Jewish families. Matchmakers showed my father pictures of my mother and her parents and he came to her village to meet her in person.

My father and mother liked each other and got married in 1922. They had a traditional Jewish wedding with a chuppah in Pisarevka. The rabbi conducted an official ceremony. After the wedding my mother moved to my father in Poyana. My father owned a small house that formerly belonged to his parents. My mother's father, Haim Kupershtock, died shortly after my parents' wedding. My grandmother died two years after my grandfather passed away - in 1924.

My older sister Haya, born in 1924, was named after our grandfather Haim. I was born on 5th August 1926 and was named after my grandfather on my father's side. Berl in Hebrew means 'bear.' During the Soviet regime I was mostly called Boris. My younger sister Sheiva was born in 1932.

Poyana was a Moldovan village. It had a Moldovan and Jewish population. There were about 20 Jewish families in the village. Some of them were handicraftsmen like my uncle Ide-Leib. There were tailors, roofers and carpenters. Some Jews owned stores and the rest of them rented fields to grow tobacco like my father and his brother Yankel.

Tobacco is a very demanding plant. It required constant care to grow. After harvesting it had to be dried. Dried tobacco leaves were sold to wholesalers. This wasn't a profitable business. Our family was one of the poorest in the village. In cold summers tobacco plants died in the field. In rainy falls tobacco leaves got rotten. Therefore, my father didn't usually earn enough money from tobacco sales to last until the next season and there were periods when we were starving.

My mother was a housewife, but she also helped our father in the field. We, children, were helping in the field, too. There was enough work for all members of the family. We had to water the tobacco plants, turn up the soil, weed and collect harmful bugs from bushes. In the fall we gathered leaves and took them home, so they could dry on a special wooden frame in the yard. We hung tufts of leaves on this frame, but when it rained we had to take it promptly to the shed. If the leaves got wet they began to rot and were useless.

When I was five I already went to work in the field at 5 o'clock in the morning. We didn't wear shoes when working in the field. Shoes were expensive, so we worked barefoot. We got our feet injured by dry branches. Injuries developed into blisters and abscesses. There was no medical facility or drugstore in the village and our mother used to heal abscesses with baked onions.

We had two small rooms plainly furnished with beds, a table, chairs, a cupboard and a wardrobe, and a kitchen in the house, half of the area of which was occupied by a stove. In winter this stove was used for both cooking and heating. In summer our mother cooked on a small brick stove in the yard.

There were few fruit trees near the house. We had apples and pears in July. We also grew quince and our mother made jam from this fruit. Our mother also grew all vegetables that we needed in the kitchen garden. There was a shed and poultry yard near the house. My mother kept chickens and ducks. We had meat and eggs.

There was no synagogue or shochet in our village. On Jewish holidays Jews went to the synagogue in Rashkov, seven kilometers from Poyana.

There was a shochet in Ochedar, some three kilometers from our village. I used to take chicken to have them slaughtered when I was a young boy. I took the living chickens to the shochet. I took a path across the forest. Sometimes I joined a group of people from Poyana going to the shochet. The shochet slaughtered our chickens and afterwards we returned home.

We spoke Yiddish at home. We knew Moldovan and Romanian to communicate with our neighbors. The other villagers respected the Jewish traditions and religion. There was no anti-Semitism or pogroms in our village or in the neighboring villages.

There was a sufficient number of men in the village for a minyan. On Jewish holidays, such as Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah and Pesach, Jews went to the synagogue in Rashkov, but not all of them could walk that far. So these people always, and on less important holidays all the Jews, got together to pray either in our house or in the house of my father's older brother Ide-Leib.

Ide-Leib was a cantor. When I turned six years old my uncle taught me how to blow the shofar. I blew the shofar at Yom Kippur and my uncle expressed his appreciation. Every combination of tunes has its own meaning and there are many such combinations.

My parents weren't deeply religious, but they always celebrated Sabbath and Jewish holidays according to all rules. They strictly followed the kashrut at home. On Saturday and on holidays my mother went to the synagogue in Rashkov – she walked seven kilometers to get there. My father stayed in Poyana and went to the community house to pray.

On Friday our mother made challah for Sabbath, chicken broth and gefilte fish. Besides dinner our mother made food for the next day. She stewed potatoes with beans. She left the pot with the stew in the stove to keep the food warm for the next day. Our mother also made potato pancakes and rolls.

We got together on Friday evening and my mother said, 'Tsaritsa Subbota' – she always said it in Russian – 'Enter our house.' We pronounced a traditional greeting, 'Shalom Sabbath!' and started dinner.

Nobody worked on Saturday. We were not even supposed to light a lamp or start a fire in the stove. We asked our Moldovan neighbors to come and start the fire in the stove. Our father read out the weekly paragraph for Saturday from the Torah.

At Pesach we bought matzah, because it was difficult to make it at home. We bought 10 kg bags with matzah at the synagogue in Rashkov. We needed lots of matzah for the five of us. We didn't have any bread at home at Pesach. My mother made everything from matzah flour.

Before Pesach we cleaned the house. My sisters and I searched for breadcrumbs walking through the house with a candle. They were to be burned. Our mother always whitewashed the house before Pesach. We took our everyday utensils onto the attic and took a box with festive dishes and utensils down.

My mother sent me to have a few chickens slaughtered by the shochet in Ochedar. My mother and my older sister Haika were cooking the food. My sister was helping my mother and learning to make traditional Jewish food. Gefilte fish was our favorite food. My mother made boiled chicken, chicken in jelly and stuffed chicken neck with liver and flour.

I was responsible for crushing matzah in a copper mortar. Then this crushed matzah was sieved. My mother made sponge and honey cakes from fine matzah flour and pancakes from the matzah flour that remained in the sieve. Our mother also made strudels with jam, raisins and nuts and pudding from matzah and eggs.

Nobody worked for eight days at Pesach. On the first day of Pesach my parents went to the synagogue in Rashkov. On the other days of Pesach all Jews got together for a minyan in our house or Ide-Leib's.

On the first night of Pesach our father conducted the seder. My mother put a white tablecloth on the table with embroidered quotations from the Haggadah. My father said prayers in Hebrew. I asked him the traditional questions. I began to study Hebrew only at the age of five, but I had learned these questions even before this age.

At Sukkot our father made a sukkah at a special spot in the yard. My father made a booth with a roof made of branches. My mother and sisters decorated the sukkah with green leaves and ribbons. At Sukkot we ate in the sukkah even if it rained.

Before Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur the whole family took to fasting for 24 hours. Then we all sat at the table after the evening prayer. On these days I played the shofar during praying. I was praised and was very proud of it.

All Jews in our village strictly followed all Jewish rules. Jewish families lived in the center of the village.

There was a Jewish community in Poyana. There were metal boxes [4] with a Jewish star on them in Jewish houses. People threw coins in a slot in these boxes. This was money saving for poor Jews and for Jews in Palestine. Savings were collected by the chairman of the community and his deputy.

There was no cheder in our village. When I turned six my father began to teach me Hebrew, but I wasn't doing well. Probably it was because my father worked a lot and got very tired or I was a poor student, but our classes were no success. Later my mother hired a teacher of Hebrew for me and my sisters to teach us at home. He lived in Ochedar. After the war this teacher was a cantor at the synagogue in Chernovtsy.

All Jewish children had to study Yiddish and Hebrew. I haven't met an illiterate Jew in my life. At the age of seven I went to the Romanian elementary school in our village. It was a free school. My sister Haya also studied in this school. I studied five years in this school.

My parents wanted me to continue my studies and so I went to the Romanian lower secondary school in Rashkov. There was also a Talmud-Torah religious Jewish school in Rashkov and my parents sent me to this school, too.

My parents rented a room for me from a Jewish family. The mistress of the house cooked for me and did my laundry. I had classes at the Romanian school in the morning and in the Torah-Talmud school – in the afternoon. I didn't have enough time to do my homework.

Our teacher at the Jewish school used to punish us punching or even slapping us. In the Romanian school teachers didn't punish us for coming to class unprepared, but at the next lesson we were supposed to show them our homework for a previous class. We studied Hebrew and Yiddish and religious subjects at the Jewish school. At weekends I went home.

At 13 I had my bar mitzvah. I received a teffilin and came of age. Since then I went to the synagogue in Rashkov every evening.

There was a fabrics store in Rashkov. I became an apprentice to its owner, Haim Tzenner. I also helped the shop assistant in the evening. I was paid and could pay for my accommodation and meals myself.

We lived in a small and shabby house in Poyana. My parents saved money for a new house. They were buying construction materials and began to build a new house next to the old one in 1938. My mother and father worked day and night. They also hired employees to do work that they couldn't do. The house was completed by 1940. There were three spacious rooms, a big hallway and a big kitchen in the house. My father made a well in the yard. After we moved into our new house the old house was removed.

In 1933 Hitler came to power in Germany [5] and Romanian fascists raised their heads immediately. There were two fascist parties in Romania: the Iron Guard [6] and the Cuzists [7] – Cuza was the name of their leader. At that time there was anti-Semitism. Jews had to sit on

separate benches at the higher educational institutions. It was not safe to walk in the dark – Jews could be abused and beaten. Boys threw stones and broke windows of Jewish stores.

The authorities didn't bring fascists to order. We were glad that Moldova and Bessarabia joined the USSR on 28th June 1940 [8]. Soviet tanks arrived in the village. The whole village came out to meet them. We built up hopes for the power of workers and peasants and were attracted by the slogans of the Soviet power: 'For Freedom, Equality and Brotherhood,' 'Peace to all people!' We believed that it was a fair power and that we would have a better life.

Our family was poor and we came to the first ranks of the new regime. My mother was elected a deputy of the district council. I finished eight classes in 1940 and entered the agricultural college in Rezin, 30 kilometers from our village. On the first day in college I became a Komsomol member [9] I believed in the ideas of communism and dropped religion and everything about Jewish traditions.

My parents continued to observe Jewish traditions and celebrate holidays. They had to do it in secret. I didn't try to dissuade my parents from Jewish traditions or holidays. I understood that it was useless and might only cause argument in the family. When I was at home I usually joined them for a festive meal during celebrations. Saturday was a working day and our father had to work in the field that belonged to the collective farm [10].

Young people in Moldova were called to work at the communist construction sites in the USSR. My older sister Haya, who had turned 18 by that time, went to work in Makeevka, Donetsk region. She wrote us letters. She was working at the construction in mines. It was very hard work and there were no comforts in their living quarters, but young people were enthusiastic about their work anyway. Some of them, even young men, tried to escape, but they were imprisoned if captured.

We lived less than a year during the Soviet power when the Great Patriotic War began. On 22nd June 1941 German and Romanian armies occupied Moldova. The college in Rezin was closed on that same day. I got to my village by vehicles. Local authorities there announced that the Germans were killing Jews and we had to evacuate. My mother packed our luggage.

The nearest railway station was in Shuldaneshty, some 40 kilometers from our village. A few Jewish families were given horse-drawn carts to get there. At the station we boarded a train. I went with my parents and my sister Sheiva. We had no information about our older sister Haya. We arrived in Novomoskovsk, Dnepropetrovsk region, where we began to work at the collective farm.

This collective farm had to drive its cattle to the Northern Caucasus. A few families that knew about cattle were sent along to take care of it. We walked day and night taking a short rest every now and then. We had to cover over 1000 kilometers. Our father had a severe cold. When we reached Chechnia he got much worse. After a few days he died. We buried him at the local cemetery and continued on our way.

We reached the village of Bekeshevskaya, Ordzhonikidze region, where we decided to stay. My mother went to work at the collective farm and I went to the 7th grade of the local school. I didn't know Russian, but I understood that I would have to master it to continue my studies in the USSR.

In summer 1942 we went on. The Germans were close to the Northern Caucasus. We got to Turkmenia by boat and continued on our way by train. We came to Kata-Kurgan in Uzbekistan, over

2500 kilometers east of Kiev. My mother and I worked in a collective farm not far from the town.

We were accommodated in the clay hut of a local Uzbek woman. My sister Sheiva stayed alone when we were at work. We received bread per bread coupons, but there were long lines to get it and besides, its supplies were very rare. My mother sent Sheiva to a children's home where they provided food for children and where she could study.

In Kata-Kurgan I went to study at a professional school. After finishing it I got a job as a tinsmith at the machine building plant. From there I was mobilized to the construction of the longest channel in Middle Asia. There were only men working there. Most of the construction employees were local Koreans. People were dying of malaria and other diseases in the hundreds. I was glad to go to the army from there when I turned 18 in 1944.

Upon completion of my military training I was sent to the front at the beginning of 1945. I participated in the storm of Zeelov hills and the storm of Berlin. At the beginning of the war I was senior sergeant and I finished the war in the rank of lieutenant. I was awarded the Order of Combat Red Banner [11] for my participation in the storm of Berlin. The fascists tried to resist our attacks desperately, but all sides understood that the war was coming to an end. I was wounded in my head and had to stay in hospital, but then returned to the front.

I celebrated Victory Day [12] in Berlin and from there I was sent to the border of Czechoslovakia. There were remaining fascist units in the woods in Czechoslovakia and we were to clean up the area. The Czechs were happy that we came, because the Germans were killing them. Later I returned to Germany and continued my service in the Soviet occupational units until 1950.

When we returned to Berlin we were exhausted, dirty and worn out. We got washed and received new uniforms to march along the streets signing songs. I served in Chemnitz for about two years and then in a fortress in a wood near Berlin. Our task at that period was to guard nationalized enterprises, convoy shipments and support the development of public economy in the Soviet territory of Germany.

I became a member of the Communist Party in 1948. It was easy to become a member of the Communist Party in the army. I was eager to become a party member and couldn't imagine my life without the Party. In 1950 I demobilized.

My mother took my sister Sheiva from the children's home after the war and returned home with her. Our new house in the village was robbed and disassembled to bricks stolen by villagers. Our relatives helped my mother and Sheiva to move to Chernovtsy. My mother went to work at the human resource department at a plant.

After demobilization I came to my mother and sister in Chernovtsy. I liked the town. I went to work as personnel inspector at the textile plant where my mother was working. Later this plant was modified into a garment factory. I worked there until retirement. I was a former military and a party member and I was employed without any problems.

I went to complete my secondary education at an evening school. I finished higher secondary school and entered the faculty of economy at the university where I studied by correspondence. Upon graduation from the university I became production manager.

Throughout this time we had no information about Haya. My mother continuously wrote letters to evacuation agencies, but Haya wasn't registered in any of them. We believed our sister to be dead, but our mother said she was sure that Haya was alive. My mother died in 1958, some time before we heard from Haya.

It turned out that Haya was captured by Germans at the beginning of the war. She said she was Ukrainian and they let her go. She came to Poyany after we had left. Our neighbors, a Romanian family, took her to Romania as a niece of theirs. She lived all these years with a different name in Romania.

She married a German man, born in Romania and resident of Romania. He knew that Haya was Jewish, but it was no problem for him. They had two sons. In the 1950s my sister and her family moved to Germany. My sister didn't face any anti-Semitism living in Germany after the Great Patriotic War. Her husband died there and my sister and her sons still reside in Düsseldorf. Her sons are electronic engineers.

My younger sister Sheiva lives in Chernovtsy. After the war she finished Business College and worked as an accountant at a plant. She married a Jewish man, a former inmate of a ghetto. Her husband was foreman at a textile factory.

They had twins: a boy and a girl. They are 45 now. Their son moved to America over ten years ago and their daughter lives with her parents. She is single. She lost her job recently due to major reduction of staff. My sister Sheiva had an infarction. She is 72 and her husband is the same age.

In 1952 I met my wife-to-be Dora Melman. She was born in the Romanian town of Faleshty in 1930. Her father, Wolf Melman, was a leather specialist and her mother, Golda Melman, nee Shnaiderman, was a housewife. My wife's parents were religious people. They observed all Jewish traditions.

After the World War II they moved to Chernovtsy. Dora graduated from the Faculty of Biology of the University and worked as a teacher of Biology at a school in Chernovtsy. Her distant relative was my colleague and he introduced me to her.

We got married in 1952. We didn't have a wedding party. We had a civil ceremony and our parents organized a small dinner to celebrate. We invited our closest relatives to the dinner party.

From the plant where I worked I received a room in a communal apartment [13]. It was a dark and damp room, but we felt happy to have it. My wife spoke Yiddish and Romanian when she was a child. She began to study Russian in 1940. Dora and I spoke Yiddish at home.

We didn't observe any Jewish traditions – I was a communist and it was not appropriate for me to follow any Jewish rules. This was a period of struggle against religion and even more so – with Zionism. Part-time agents of the KGB [14] were near the synagogue all the time. They took no notice of older men, but if they saw a younger man they photographed him, identified who he was and informed his management at work. A communist might have been expelled from the Party or fired.

However, my wife's parents strictly observed Jewish traditions and celebrated Sabbath and Jewish holidays. We visited them on holidays and attended their seder at Pesach. My wife used to joke saying that even though I didn't celebrate holidays at home I was a co-participant of my in-laws' celebrations. My wife and I celebrated Soviet holidays, arranged parties, sang Soviet songs and enjoyed ourselves.

On 22nd May 1959 our daughter Polina was born. Her Jewish name is Pesia-Perl after my mother and my wife's grandmother on her mother's side. My mother's parents looked after our daughter until she turned five. I took the girl to them in the morning and my wife picked her up after work.

Polina spoke Yiddish before she went to the kindergarten. Our daughter studied successfully at a secondary and music school. After finishing school she finished Pedagogical Music College and now she teaches music at school in Chernovtsy.

My wife and I were very happy that Polina married a Jewish man. Our granddaughter Marina is 20 years old. She finished a Jewish secondary school and Polytechnic College. They live with us and my wife and I are happy about it.

I remember Stalin's death in March 1953. Many people were crying and I didn't hide my tears. I was secretary of the party unit of the plant at that time. I was involved in organization of memorial meetings and spoke at them. Stalin was my idol and symbol and I believed in him like he was God. I couldn't imagine life without him. After the Twentieth Party Congress [15] I began to see things in a different light. But at that moment it was the biggest sorrow of my life.

Upon graduation from the university I was appointed as production manager. Besides, I was secretary of the party unit of the plant until I retired. I was an enthusiastic activist. I arranged meetings to criticize underperforming employees and stimulate advanced employees. We arranged socialist competition between employees and shops. People were infatuated with the enthusiasm of building communism and a happy future for their children and grandchildren.

I wasn't paid for such activities, but I got involved in them willingly. These activities took much of my leisure time, but I felt an urge to do them. In 1960 I was elected a deputy of the town council and held this position for 13 years. People trusted me to deal with their problems.

I never faced any anti-Semitism. People treated me with respect. When in the 1970s Jews were moving to Israel there were demonstrations of everyday anti-Semitism. I was a member of the party town committee. I went to the secretary of the town committee and told him that the situation had worsened significantly: Jews couldn't find a job, enter higher educational institutions and suffered abuse. Of course, I put myself at risk. But I knew that the secretary was a decent and honest man and secondly, I just couldn't help speaking my mind in this situation.

The secretary of the party town committee arranged a meeting with directors of enterprises, human resource managers and secretaries of party units. The secretary of the town committee invited the chief of the KGB office in Chernovtsy. This chief spoke at the meeting indicating that Jews were not traitors or parricides. They are citizens of the USSR like people of all other nationalities. The secretary of the town committee stated that if he ever heard of refusal to employ a Jew he would bring a guilty manager to justice.

It was at my initiative that this happened. I was head of a group of 40 lecturers at the town committee. We lectured on international education of the Soviet people. We tried to explain that if a Jew behaved wrongly it was his own fault that should not be transferred to all other Jews.

My wife and I never considered moving to Israel for several reasons. Firstly, we are attached to our home and are content with what we have. I served in the army for five years and then worked at the same enterprise for 43 years. We prefer stability to new experiences. I had a low salary, but I learned to make use of what I had.

My work and my party activities were most important for me. I was a member of the bureau of the town committee of the Communist Party. I was also a leader of a group of 40 lecturers, including university professors. Our group traveled all over the Chernovtsy region holding lectures. People are looking for places where they can earn more now, but we never looked for more than we could get. People respected me and I appreciated it. I was invited to all celebrations in town.

In Israel I would have faced a language problem. I would have been isolated there. My friends were trying to convince me to move to Israel telling me that I would find a job and that even if I couldn't find a decent job at the beginning I could work as a janitor. But I don't want to have a job like that – I am an important person here and have many things to do.

In 1999 I went to Israel with a delegation of war veterans from Ukraine. We traveled around the country. Israel is a beautiful country. There are hardworking people there. It's hard to imagine that this prosperous country was built in a stone desert. I wish these people a peaceful life and prosperity. I visited our relatives: 23 families of my relatives and 16 families of my wife's relatives live in Israel. Only my sister Sheiva lives here, the rest of my relatives moved to Israel.

When perestroika [16] began we saw the difference immediately. Mikhail Gorbachev [17], the new Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU, was the first Soviet leader in a long time that began to build up relationships with Israel. There were associations of friendship and cultural ties with Israel established.

In 1987 an association of the Jewish culture was organized in Chernovtsy. I became a member of the council of this association. I took a great effort in the revival of the Jewish culture by arranging lectures and concerts. At that time some people were in opposition to these activities. My wife and daughter were concerned about my safety. They feared that I might be attacked or there might be a pogrom during a lecture, but there were no such incidents.

Later I became leader of the group of the International Ukrainian Union of War Veterans and Ties with Israel. A year ago I was elected as a member of the Presidium of the Jewish Council of War Veterans of Ukraine. I work with all Jewish war veterans.

The most important work is renaissance of the Jewish identity. I have established a radio program in Yiddish – 'Yiddishe Wort.' It's a monthly program and we do not pay for its broadcast. About once in three months we broadcast a Jewish program on TV. There are about 400 generals of Jewish nationality, the Minister for Armaments during the war was a Jew. There were many outstanding design engineers and we identify their names.

This is what I call renaissance of the Jewish identity – that we call them by name. We make programs with outstanding Jews: design engineers, professors, heroes, etc. This program is dubbed in Ukrainian. People write us letters. The broadcast has spread to Chernovtsy, Ivano-Frankovsk, Lvov, Ternopol and Khmelnytsk regions.

I can't say that I am a religious man. I worked on Saturday and we didn't observe Sabbath, but nowadays my wife and I celebrate Sabbath with our friends in Hesed. I go to the synagogue on Jewish holidays and on the death dates of my relatives to say prayers for them. My wife and I celebrate Jewish holidays sometimes at home and sometimes at Hesed.

I used to organize parties for war veterans. I invited actors and other people of art. They didn't charge us and I wasn't paid for my organizational activities. We didn't even have money to buy flowers for our guests, but they enjoyed being our guests. These were interesting parties. I am used doing things for others and I think it is very important.

We have meetings at our club for war veterans at 11am every Monday. We talk about Jewish culture, literature, read literature works and listen to music. We discuss the history of the Jewish people, traditions and holidays. We have many books and other materials prepared for the future radio programs and meetings of veterans of the Great Patriotic War.

We've scheduled a meeting with Joseph Burg, a Jewish writer, to celebrate his jubilee, a memorial day to honor the memory of the Jews shot in Chernovtsy on 8th July 1941, the 90th anniversary of the birth of the Jewish actress and singer Sidi Tahl, the 60th anniversary of the death of Joseph Shmidt, a wonderful Jewish tenor who perished in a concentration camp, celebration of Jewish holidays and many other events.

We find common graves of Jews shot during the Great Patriotic War to install monuments on them. There are many such places in Chernovtsy region where Jews were killed by the Germans as well as by the local population.

My wife and I have lived a beautiful life. This year we've celebrated our golden wedding. We love each other and are in agreement with one another. Our daughter and granddaughter need us, and so do many other people. They tell us that they need us.

Glossary

[1] Hesed: Meaning care and mercy in Hebrew, Hesed stands for the charity organization founded by Amos Avgar in the early 20th century. Supported by Claims Conference and Joint Hesed helps for Jews in need to have a decent life despite hard economic conditions and encourages development of their self-identity. Hesed provides a number of services aimed at supporting the needs of all, and particularly elderly members of the society. The major social services include: work in the center facilities (information, advertisement of the center activities, foreign ties and free lease of medical equipment); services at homes (care and help at home, food products delivery, delivery of hot meals, minor repairs); work in the community (clubs, meals together, day-time polyclinic, medical and legal consultations); service for volunteers (training programs). The Hesed centers have inspired a real revolution in the Jewish life in the FSU countries. People have seen and sensed the rebirth of the Jewish traditions of humanism. Currently over eighty Hesed centers exist in the FSU countries. Their activities cover the Jewish population of over eight

hundred settlements.

[2] Moldova: Historic region between the Eastern Carpathians, the Dniester River and the Black Sea, also a contemporary state, bordering with Romania and Ukraine. Moldova was first mentioned after the end of the Mongol invasion in 14th century scripts as Eastern marquisate of the Hungarian Kingdom. For a long time, the Principality of Moldova was tributary of either Poland or Hungary until the Ottoman Empire took possession of it in 1512. The Sultans ruled Moldova indirectly by appointing the Prince of Moldova to govern the vassal principality. These were Moldovan boyars until the early 18th century and Greek (Phanariot) ones after. In 1812 Tsar Alexander I occupied the eastern part of Moldova (between the Prut and the Dniester river and the Black Sea) and attached it to its Empire under the name of Bessarabia. In 1859 the remaining part of Moldova merged with Wallachia. In 1862 the new country was called Romania, which was finally internationally recognized at the Treaty of Berlin in 1886. Bessarabia united with Romania after World War I, and was recaptured by the Soviet Union in 1940. The Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic gained independence after the break up of the Soviet Union in 1991 and is now called Moldovan Republic (Republica Moldova).

[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] Keren Kayemet LeIsrael (K.K.L.): Jewish National Fund (JNF) founded in 1901 at the Fifth Zionist Congress in Basel. From its inception, the JNF was charged with the task of fundraising in Jewish communities for the purpose of purchasing land in the Land of Israel to create a homeland for the Jewish people. After 1948 the fund was used to improve and afforest the territories gained. Every Jewish family that wished to help the cause had a JNF money box, called the 'blue box.' They threw in at least one lei each day, while on Sabbath and high holidays they threw in as many lei as candles they lit for that holiday. This is how they partly used to collect the necessary funds. Now these boxes are known worldwide as a symbol of Zionism.

[5] Hitler's rise to power: In the German parliamentary elections in January 1933, the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) won one-third of the votes. On 30th January 1933 the German president swore in Adolf Hitler, the party's leader, as chancellor. On 27th February 1933 the building of the Reichstag (the parliament) in Berlin was burned down. The government laid the blame with the Bulgarian communists, and a show trial was staged. This served as the pretext for ushering in a state of emergency and holding a re-election. It was won by the NSDAP, which gained 44% of the votes, and following the cancellation of the communists' votes it commanded over half of the mandates. The new Reichstag passed an extraordinary resolution granting the government special legislative powers and waiving the constitution for 4 years. This enabled the implementation of a series of moves that laid the foundations of the totalitarian state: all parties other than the NSDAP were dissolved, key state offices were filled by party luminaries, and the

political police and the apparatus of terror swiftly developed.

[6] Iron Guard: Extreme right wing political organization in Romania between 1930 and 1941, led by C. Z. Codreanu. The Iron Guard propagated nationalist, Christian-mystical and anti-Semitic views. It was banned for its terrorist activities (e.g. the murder of Romanian Prime Minister I. Gh. Duca) in 1933. In 1935 it was re-established as a party named Totul pentru Tara, 'Everything for the Fatherland', but it was banned again in 1938. It was part of the government in the first period of the Antonescu regime, but it was then banned and dissolved as a result of the unsuccessful coup d'état of January 1941. Its leaders escaped abroad to the Third Reich.

[7] Cuzist: Member of the Romanian fascist organization named after Alexandru C. Cuza, one of the most fervent fascist leaders in Romania, who was known for his ruthless chauvinism and anti-Semitism. Cuza founded the National Christian Defense League, the LANC (Liga Apararii National Crestine), in 1923. The paramilitary troops of the league, called lancierii, wore blue uniforms. The organization published a newspaper entitled Apararea Nationala. In 1935 the LANC merged with the National Agrarian Party, and turned into the National Christian Party, which had a pronounced anti-Semitic program.

[8] Annexation of Bessarabia to the Soviet Union: At the end of June 1940 the Soviet Union demanded Romania to withdraw its troops from Bessarabia and to abandon the territory. Romania withdrew its troops and administration in the same month and between 28th June and 3rd July, the Soviets occupied the region. At the same time Romania was obliged to give up Northern Transylvania to Hungary and Southern-Dobrudja to Bulgaria. These territorial losses influenced Romanian politics during World War II to a great extent.

[9] Communist youth political organization created in 1918. The task of the Komsomol was to spread 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.

[10] 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.

[11] Order of the Combat Red Banner: Established in 1924, it was awarded for bravery and courage in the defense of the Homeland.

[12] 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.

[13] 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.

[14] KGB: The KGB or Committee for State Security was the main Soviet external security and intelligence agency, as well as the main secret police agency from 1954 to 1991.

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

[16] 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.

[17] Gorbachev, Mikhail (b. 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.