

## **RG-90.047.0048**

### **Summary**

Jozef Reich, born on December 16, 1922 in Kremenets', Poland (now in Ukraine), discusses his parents Alexander/Sasha Reich and Sofia/Sonia, who, at the time of his birth, asked that his birth date be recorded as January 2, 1923 to allow him to do his military service a year later; his father's work building and managing an energy plant; his father being asked by the town to convert because of his position, but refusing; his grandparents being atheists; his father having been an officer in the Tzar's army; his father becoming a school principal; his mother being a dentist; being the only child; his friend Jacob Katz being like a brother; about a third of town being Jewish; living in the same villa as his mother's parents Chaim and Amalia, and Amalia's father Beirich (Boris) Perelmutter; his paternal grandfather Abraham Reich living in Shums'k, 30 km away, working as a merchant, owning a mill, and not being religious; his father's best friend being a priest; on September 17, 1939, Soviet troops being welcomed in town out of fear of Hitler; Soviets arresting Polish families and wealthy people; academics being left alone; his old school closing and going to school in Russian instead; the new teachers being appointed by nepotism, not having any background teaching; his father teaching technical subjects; his mother working for the state dental clinic; having to burn books by "enemies of the people"; his father saying if you start burning books, next you burn people; his parents being disillusioned socialists; his parents being in L'viv, Ukraine when he graduated on June 21, 1941; waiting in vain for his parents at the bus station when they were supposed to come back; hearing Ukrainian nationalists working with the Germans were killing Jewish young men and conscripts; with 10-15 young men, including Jacob Katz, escaping through the forest armed with knives, towards the old border with Russia; joining the Soviet army; escaping towards Moscow; being shot in the leg; being sent to a hospital and a reserve regiment; hearing Jacob Katz had died in battle; fighting at Stalingrad; being company commander; walking across the river Vistula/Wisla with his company during the battle of Vistula-Oder; getting injured by shrapnel; being the only one out of the 150 from his company to survive; teaching at a new military school in Moscow and going to officer's school; on March 19, 1945 hearing his home town had been liberated; going back, his father's friend, the priest, telling him what happened; his parents having been shot in a ravine in the mountains; 7000 Jews, including his grandparents, having been burnt; losing his will to live, wanting to commit suicide; after the war, not being able to kill one of the Ukrainians participating in the massacre of Jews; still having nightmares about the battle of Vistula and about his parents.