

Anna Dremlug

Anna Dremlug

St. Petersburg

Russia

Interviewer: Nika Parhomovskaya

Date of interview: November 2003

Anna Matveevna Dremlug is a small, thin and young-looking woman, who, despite of her eighty years of age, keeps on being active and optimistic.

She lives in a three-room apartment in one of the new city districts together with her husband and a dog called Mika.

She can't see well and wears very strong glasses; still she currently takes care of the house. That's why the apartment looks clean and cozy.

Guests, knowing the way she cooks (I must say that it was the most delicious home-made food), come here both on holidays and on weekdays too...

Anna Mateveevna tells me about her relatives with great pleasure, she is ready to share any information, that she knows about her oldest ancestors, and she gives me ancient photographs without any hesitation.



- [My family](#)
- [Childhood and young years](#)
- [During the war](#)
- [Later life](#)
- [Glossary](#)

- **My family**

I know very little about my maternal grandparents. I can say only that, possibly, my maternal grandfather and grandmother lived on the territory of the Jewish Pale of Settlement [1](#) and my mother Ghindah Zusevna Alperovich, nee Bogorad, or Zinaida Zakharovna, as it was written in her passport [2](#), was born in Gorodok [small town in Belarus, 50 kilometers north of Vitebsk]. That was quite a remote, out-of-the-way place; however, many Jews lived there. Then her family moved to Staraya Russa [Novgorod province, 300 kilometers south of St. Petersburg].

My mother's father Zusya Bogorad or Zakhar, as it was written in his passport, was a craftsman, and he owned a small lemonade and soda factory. Staraya Russa was a spa place, so they sold their soda and lemonade in the recreation parts of the town. My mother's parents had fourteen children: Anna, whose Jewish name was Chaya, Bronya, Lev, Solomon [Samuel], Tatiana, Elisabeth, Zinaida, Maria, Bertha, Ida, Semen and three more children, who died in childhood. All of them,

when they grew up a little, worked at the factory: girls washed dishes and guys helped Granddad.

They had their own wooden house with a mezzanine. The house wasn't preserved, I guess. And there was a shed near the house, where the factory was situated: two big cans with kvass [soft drink made of bread] and soda, storages of cranberries in tubs and two baths to wash the bottles.

I don't know where my grandfather was from, or where he met my grandmother, Zlata Iztkovna Bedereva. I know very badly the history of my maternal grandfather. He died, when I was only two years old, in 1925. And his date of birth is unknown. My mother told me that his wife Zlata ruled the place and business, and he, probably, closed his eyes on quite many things, and obeyed her. They spoke mainly Yiddish in the family, but they knew Russian too.

I spent much time communicating with my maternal grandmother, and she loved me very much. She was a very strict woman, though. Mother told me that she managed their factory on her own, and guys, when they went to sell the lemonade, tried to overcharge her. And she watched very carefully, how many bottles she sent, and if she noticed that something was wrong, the guys were punished.

Granny tried to give an education and a vocation to all of her children: Aunt Maria was a dressmaker, Aunt Bertha made hats, she was a milliner, and my mother learned how to knit on a special stocking machine.

Grandmother often came to see us in Bologoye [300 kilometers south of St. Petersburg]; she also liked to take me to her place in Volochek [Vyshniy Volochek, small town 350 kilometers north of Moscow]. Grandmother died on Praygka River in Leningrad, in 1948, when she was 86. She had a strong sclerosis. They buried her in the Jewish cemetery [the only Jewish cemetery in Leningrad is the Preobrazhenskoe cemetery].

My dad's father, David Abramovitch Alperovich, was born in 1856. I don't have any information about his brothers and sisters. It seems, he had a brother called Michael, who stayed to live on the territory of Poland after the [October] Revolution [3](#). After World War II his son Jacob together with his children came to see us in Bologoye.

My father's mom, who died very early of some heart disease, was called Anna or Chaya; they named me after her, in her honor. Then Grandfather married for the second time. The second grandmother, named Itka Semenovna, was of the same age as Grandfather's elder son, she was something like thirty years younger than Granddad, but the children liked her very much.

Grandfather was a peasant, a serednyak [a representative of the middle class, as 'seredina' means 'middle' in Russian], he lived in the village of Lipsk, Begoml district, which was situated in Borisov uезд [in Russia they divided regions into small parts, called 'uezds.' Begoml town, 150 kilometers north of Minsk, is a part of the Vitebsk region in Belarus today.] Grandfather had eleven children. In 1905 his elder children from the first wife left for America [after the Revolution of 1905 [4](#) many Jews emigrated from Russia to the USA or Palestine]. Grandfather had an only daughter Maria – at home they called her Mura – from his second wife.

The family lived in an ordinary peasant house, divided into two parts: the summer part and the winter one. The summer one was cold, and there was only one room in it. At the same time, there was a Russian stove [5](#) in the winter rooms. Grandfather's bed, closed off with a pink curtain, stood

beyond the stove. There was no electricity, and the well was in the yard. Everything they grew, they ate, and nothing was sold. There was no garden in the usual sense, only the kitchen garden, and the only animals they had were a cow and a horse. After the Soviet power was established, my grandfather was among the first peasants to join the kolkhoz [6](#). He didn't go to the army.

The Alperovichs always were friends of Belarusians. Mother told me that when I was born, Belarusian peasants came to congratulate her and brought some self-made fabric for nappies.

Grandfather wore tallit. And he had tefillin too. No doubt, that he and Grandmother Itka followed Jewish traditions. I remember, the way I helped them to bake matzah when I was a schoolgirl. But when we went into evacuation we found out that he wasn't such an Orthodox Jew. While we were travelling in heated goods van, Mother made us sandwiches with lard and onions.

Grandfather asked us, 'Children, what tasty things do you eat?' We replied, 'Grandfather, this is bread with lard.' – 'Ah, it smells very nice.' – 'Grandfather, just try it.' He hesitated and then said, 'We [the Jews] can't eat pork.' – 'Don't worry, Grandfather.' And finally we gave him some sandwiches. Later, when we came to Chuvashia [an autonomous republic in the central Volga region] he bought two small pigs and began to eat pork heartily.

Grandfather and Grandmother Itka moved to Bologoye just after Aunt Zhenya married our neighbor Naum Abramovich Dik, a dentist. It happened in the early 1930s, because they didn't want to stay in Begoml, for they were old and didn't have enough forces to keep the house. After all, all their children left Lipsk and they wanted to live near their children and grandchildren.

During the evacuation they went to Chuvashia, to Tarkhany [small village in the south of Chuvashia]. First, we lived there all together: my grandparents, my mother and my sisters, my aunt and her daughter, my cousin. Then they stayed in Tarkhany together with Aunt Zhenya, and we left for another village after I got a job in a kolkhoz. We all came back home in 1943.

I, just like my father, was born in Lipsk, not far from Begoml in Borisov uezd, which is now in Belarus. Then my mother went back to Staraya Russa, and in the mid-1920s we moved to Valdasi [small town in Novgorod district, 300 kilometers west of St. Petersburg]. I don't remember anything about our life in Valdasi. The only thing I remember is: when Sophia, my middle sister, who is three years younger than I am, was born, we went to the hospital.

I remember the black hat of Aunt Bertha and that it was raining. Bertha, my mother's sister, lived in Valdasi together with her husband, a Communist. She was a housewife then, I think.

In 1930 we moved to Bologoye. We lived there in an ordinary wooden house with two floors. The owner, Naum Abramovich, lived on the second floor, and we rented one of the apartments on the first floor. We lived in that house till the Great Patriotic War [7](#) began. And even later, in 1948, after Dad came back from the front, my parents bought a quarter of that building.

There was a small garden in front of the house. In general Bologoye was a green town, with its nice park and public garden.

We had neither a synagogue, nor a rabbi. We didn't even have a shochet. When Grandfather came over from Belarus he ate only kosher food, and it was necessary to kosher the chicken, so my mother especially went to the local shochet in Vyshniy Volochek to do so. And later she said she

would go to Volochek, but Father koshered the chicken himself – in principle, he knew what to do.

There still were some Jews in Bologoye, but not a lot. My friend Rebecca Alpert was a Jew; her father was a dressmaker. The school headmaster Mark Evseitch and his sisters, the Parmit family – their grandfather was a metalworker, I think – and Raya, the hairdresser, lived not far from us. After World War II the family of my father's cousin arrived too: he, his son and two daughters.

And our milliner was a Jew – from the Kalach family, if I'm not mistaken. There was also the Finkelshtein family; I studied together with Bertha Finkelshtein at school. Well, there weren't many Jews in our town in total, maybe, about one hundred people. And the town was a small one. All Jews knew each other and communicated with one another, since they all lived nearby.

Everyone had his own business: for example, Aunt Maria Alperovich, my father's cousin Jacob's wife, was a bookkeeper; she worked in 'Kalinintorg' [the regional selling union], Uncle Jacob himself was employed at the meat processing and packing factory, and Mark Evseitch was the school headmaster. There were Jewish office workers, someone worked as pharmaceutical chemist in the drugstore, and another one was a seller.

My father Matvey Davidovich Alperovich was born in 1898. Among those children, who stayed – those, who didn't leave for America – Father was the oldest one, his sisters Zhenya, Rachel, Ghitah and step-sister Maria were younger than him. He didn't communicate a lot with his American relatives, but even after the October Revolution Father's sister Zhenya wrote to them [8](#). I don't know anything about their lives over there: neither what they were, nor where exactly they lived. However, I recall that we received their parcels: they sent us food and some fabrics.

We also received letters in Yiddish, and Father read them together with Aunt Zhenya – they both knew Yiddish and could write it. Of course, Yiddish was their mother tongue, but at home Father spoke both languages: Russian as well as Yiddish. He wasn't a religious person, not at all. I can't recall that he would observe Sabbath or pray. Perhaps, he had some Jewish education, but he never told me if he studied in cheder, or in a regular elementary school. I can't even say what kind of education he got; maybe, they had no schools in Begoml district?

Father's sisters wrote to those brothers and sisters, who left for America, mainly to Sarah and Olga. Today Olga's children live in Canada. When Larissa, Ghitah's daughter immigrated to Canada, she visited them. One of Olga's children happened to be an architect: he has his own office, and they aren't poor. Another one of my father's sisters, Rachel, left for Canada in 1926. My aunt lived in Toronto, Canada, and had her own dry cleaner.

In Soviet times she came to Leningrad [today St. Petersburg, called St. Petersburg before WWI and Petrograd during WWI] twice – in the 1950s and 1970s – with a tourist voucher. Aunt Zhenya even got permission to live with her sister in 'Pribaltiiskaya' Hotel, and they, of course, didn't go around much, they mostly talked. When she came for the second time, she stayed in 'Astoria' [one of the oldest and most expensive hotels in Leningrad]. Then she went to Moscow, where she stayed at the 'Ukraine' Hotel.

My mother lived in Moscow at the time, and we went to visit Rachel. I saw her only there, for when she went to Leningrad, I didn't go to the meeting: I was scared, my husband worked in the Navy College, he was connected with sailing abroad, we spoke and decided that it doesn't make any

sense to risk so much.

My mother was born in Gorodok in 1900. I don't know, when her family moved to Staraya Russa, but, it seems to me, that happened around 1913; mother told me a story about some London aunt, who wanted to take them to her, but then Jews were allowed to live on Russian territories in honor of the Romanov dynasty's 300th anniversary [in 1913 in Russia they celebrated the 300th anniversary of Romanovs' rule], and they decided to stay.

I guess, they believed in some better future as the authorities allowed them to live in Russia, not far from the capital and to run their business. Probably, they just didn't want to emigrate and leave their Motherland and hoped that everything would be all right for them in Russia.

At school my mother was a friend of some Russian girls. And apparently her name 'Ghindah' wasn't in use, everyone called her Zina [short for Zinaida], and so it happened to be the same in the future. Her brothers and sisters were close friends, they all played and studied together, and Tatiana, one of the elder children, ruled this small group. The two of them slept in one common bed.

Here I should tell you more about them. Anna was one of the oldest siblings. She was born in the early 1890s, but I don't remember what she did for a living. I know exactly that she lived in Toropets [small town in Kalinin district] and had four children: two sons and two daughters. One of her sons became an assistant to the public prosecutor.

One of the brothers, Lev, was born in the early 1890s too. He was the only one, who followed in his father's footsteps, for he worked in the lemonade and soda industry. He was employed at a factory in Leningrad district, and from Staraya Russa he moved to Pavlovsk [town near Leningrad, summer residence of Russian tsars]. He had three sons, I remember that Samuel worked with medical equipment and Isaac was a colonel, head of department in the Academy of Transport Troops.

Bronya, another elder sister of my mother, was a dressmaker, she lived in Bologoye too. Tatiana was born in 1897, Mother said that she was 'literate'; she worked in a shop, then in some personnel department. She was married to Abram and had two children: Zusia was killed during World War II, and her daughter Emma became a doctor. Finally she moved to Kolpino [town near Leningrad] and died there in the 1970s.

Semen, the youngest brother, was born in 1904 and died in 1965; he managed a store, worked as a shop assistant, and lived in Vyshniy Volochek and Leningrad. He had a nice wife, Esphir, and two daughters. As I guess, he was Grandmother's favorite and she lived at his place often.

I also remember that Maria, the next sister, was born in 1901, and she was a dressmaker too. First she lived in Toryok [small town 250 kilometers north of Moscow], then evacuated to Chuvashia, and finally, after the Great Patriotic War, found herself in Kiev. She had two daughters: Elizabeth, who graduated from the Pedagogical University, and Eugenia, who immigrated to Germany and now lives there.

I know very little about my mother's other two siblings: Elizabeth, who was born in 1899 and died in 1927, and Samuel, who died in the early 1920s from typhus. Elizabeth died, when I was a little girl. I don't know why, but I remember her very well in her blue dress with white dots. And as for Samuel, he died even before my birth.

Aunt Ida was born in 1903 and died in 1986; she was a bookkeeper. From Staraya Russa she moved to Okulovka [small town in Novgorod district, about 400 kilometers from Moscow]. Her husband, Uncle Boris, was a nepman [small owner, businessman, called after the NEP [9](#)], later he was arrested, but they didn't shoot him. Sometimes we went to visit them, even then [in the 1930s] they had a housekeeper, they were much richer than we were, and sold some manufactured goods. Later they moved to Leningrad. Ida and Boris had a son, who left for Germany. I never liked him and them either.

Mother's sister Bertha was born in 1902 and died in 1988. She worked as a sales assistant and at a factory, lived in Valdasi and Leningrad. Bertha was married to David Ilkovsky, who was one of the first Komsomol [10](#) members. In the 1920s he was an active member of the Communist Party, but later they arrested him too. And they were opposites: nepmen Ida and Boris and Komsomol guys Bertha and David.

They argued till their death, which one was right. However, my father was more of a friend of Uncle David, and we communicated a lot with them both. They had a wonderful daughter called Nelya; I was great friends with her.

Mother never told me stories about her brothers and sisters, but I saw them often and communicated a lot with most of them. My parents had friendly relations with many of their brothers and sisters. Mother communicated with Tatiana, who, just like us, during World War II was evacuated to Chuvashia, more than with others.

My parents got to know each other during the Civil War [11](#). My father was in the army; he served in a sanitary company. Their sanitary train went to Staraya Russa; Father went for a walk, found a place, where they sold kvass, and went inside the house. Mother washed the floors; she interrupted her work, washed her hands and gave him some kvass. So they met, and began to talk.

Then, together with his unit, he left, but they continued to write to each other. And, after he was demobilized from army, Mother went to Belarus, to that village called Lipsk. There they registered their relations in 1922, but the large Jewish wedding happened in Staraya Russa later, some time in 1923, even after my birth. Probably, they didn't organize the wedding in Belarus, because they didn't have the money to afford it. And my maternal grandparents were richer than the paternal ones, and maybe Mother asked her parents to help her with a big celebration.

The point is that after my birth my mother decided to go back home to Staraya Russa to stay with her parents: she was bored in Lipsk because she came from a town, wore town clothes and, apparently, was a coquette, and Lipsk happened to be a small peasant village, where nothing was going on. Then Father came to Staraya Russa too. I suppose, it could have been in late 1923 or around that time.

A couple of years later, in 1926, they moved to Valdasi, where Mother's sister Bertha lived together with her husband. There Father got a job as a regular employee in Prom cooperation [so-called Industrial cooperation, state unit of stores and small businesses]. We left Valdasi, when I was six, and my sister Sophia was around three, that is, in 1930. Then we settled in Bologoye, where we rented an apartment from a dentist: two rooms and a kitchen.

There was electricity and a radio in the house, but we had to bring the water from outside. The kitchen was very cold, and there was a great demand for firewood to warm it up.

Father was the director of 'Koghsyrie' – a small organization, part of Prom cooperation, where peasants from neighborhood villages brought animal skins. A man responsible for raw materials worked there too, together with my father, who, as a matter of fact, only admitted the skins. The job was very poorly paid, we lived very modestly. We had neighbors, who worked at the railway and got better rations [food help for state employees [12](#)] than my father. We mainly bought food and stuff at the market, then we got a goat, a pig, chicken, and, for some period of time, even a cow, so we managed somehow.

Mother was unemployed: children on her hands, and no place to work. She hated her profession as a knitter, sewed only stocks and scarves from time to time, but, apparently, she didn't like to sew at all. I recall that once Mother came and said, 'They sell cream crepe de Chine. I want to buy it for a blouse.' And then Sophia and I took out our savings and went to Aunt Zhenya to get some money too, and finally bought this fabric for Mom.

Father wasn't a Komsomol member, however in 1938 he joined the Communist Party – maybe, not on his own initiative, I think, they made him join. At that time Stalin's terror [13](#) had begun already, and it was less dangerous if you were a Communist, especially for Jews.

Once in their life my parents went on vacation with a voucher – Father got this voucher as a civil servant: before World War II, when they just built the Belomorsko-Baltiyskiy Channel [connecting the White Sea with Lake Onega, was built in the 1930s, political prisoners actively participated in its creation]. And we stayed at home – we never spent holidays all together, never ever in our lives, we just didn't have such an opportunity.

Then Father went to a recreation center in Eysk [small town in Krasnodar district] at the Azov Sea coast before World War II. He also went to Moscow, when the VDNH [Exhibition of People's Economic Achievements] was just opened. And mainly they spent time in Bologoye, there was a lake, and we went for walks to Putyatin garden, and organized dances in the evenings.

There were some books at our home, but not very many. We only had a small bookshelf with books. I think those were the usual books: Soviet fiction, Russian classics, and no religious books for sure. Father mainly read the newspaper, but I don't remember which one, maybe, the local one, as in Bologoye, certainly, there was a local newspaper.

Father read more, Mom less – she started to read later, when she was free of children. Then she began to read avidly, borrowed books from neighbors, and later, when she moved to us – after the death of her second husband in the 1970s, she moved to Leningrad and lived with me and my husband – she read the 'Leningrad Pravda' [meaning Truth in Russian; main city newspaper, the official press issue of the local Communist Party], and 'Izvestia' [News; all-Russian newspaper, established in the 1920s].

Anyway, she developed a passion for reading. But back in Bologoye we had a neighbor who loved to read so much, that my mother even reproached her for it: 'The dinner isn't ready, the children haven't eaten yet, but she sits there and reads!'

My mother was a very friendly and convivial person. And so was Daddy. They both had nice voices, they both sang songs. On Soviet holidays, such as 1st May, for example, when everyone gathered, Father sang both Jewish and Ukrainian songs.

It is hard to say what kind of relations they had. Mother thought that Father was unfaithful to her. I don't know if she was right or not, but sometimes she was jealous for no reason. I recall such an incident: in Bologoye some Jewish family lived not far from us, and the wife, apparently, liked my dad and invited him to some birthday party. Father bought a box of sweets and hid it somewhere in the house, but Mom found the box, and there was a big scandal.

As a matter of fact, I liked my father very much, maybe, even more than my mother. Sometimes, in my childhood I was more on his side, it seemed to me that Mother wasn't right about him. Probably, I should have understood her too: she didn't have any interests: she didn't work and had to talk to people, who, possibly, were much less interesting, than she wanted them to be.

Our neighbors in Bologoye were mainly Russians; there weren't a lot of Jews in town. My parents had friendly relations both with our neighbors and relatives. On holidays we met with the family of my father's cousin, his sister, grandfather and grandmother. He didn't communicate much with his work colleagues. Mother had very good relations with my paternal grandparents. They never lived together, but they were our frequent guests. If Dad didn't go to Grandfather, Mother always said, 'Motya – short for Matvey, Dad's name at home – you should go and see your father.' She baked cakes for them, and sent them presents from time to time.

Father suddenly died in 1956 from some form of cancer. I lived in Leningrad and was a doctor, so my mother called me and said that he was sick. I asked them to come. So they came at the very beginning of 1956, the first days of January. I took him to Mechnikov hospital, one of the best in Leningrad, but the doctors couldn't understand what was going on. They said that he had cancer only after his death. So we buried him at the Jewish cemetery, the same one where my Granny was buried, and most of her children later on.

After Father's death Mother stayed to live in Bologoye until my younger sister Lilia graduated from school and went to Leningrad to study. Later someone introduced her to Lev Moiseevich Tylkin, the brother of Aunt Ida's second husband [mother's sister, who married for the second time, after her husband died]. He lived in Moscow and was a widower. Mother sold her apartment in Bologoye, moved to Moscow and together with her new husband built a one-room 'cooperative' there [in the USSR apartments weren't private, the state decided itself where citizens should live].

My mother had a very interesting life in those years, she liked this person and his friends, they had nice neighbors, who were much more interesting and intellectual people than the ones she had to communicate with in her previous life. They read many books, played cards and came to visit their numerous pals and neighbors. However, Lev Moiseevich died sometime around 1976, and it was necessary to decide where Mom would live. We wanted her to go to my younger sister in Vladimir [regional center, 200 kilometers from Moscow], but Mother wanted to move only to Leningrad. As a result, she exchanged her Moscow apartment and moved to us.

- **Childhood and young years**

In my childhood, when I went to Staraya Russa to see my grandmother Zlata, she made me pray before breakfast, and I refused:

- Granny, I'm not an old woman, I won't pray.
- So, I won't give you cacao.
- I don't need any...

I was a very little girl, I was five. And my grandmother prayed.

I also remember that once they sent me to Grandmother after I got typhus. My parents lived very poorly, and at my grandmother's in Vyshniy Volochek life was a bit easier. So we went for a walk and I noticed a doll with no head lying in a ditch. We took the body, washed it, bought a head and made a real doll – my first real big doll ever!

I don't remember Volochek itself because I was very little, I was only six, but I remember that Granny liked me more than all her other grandchildren. When she came to visit, she always asked Mother to let me go with her. She liked tasty things herself, that's why she always put some sweets or chocolates under my pillow. I slept in her room, and they had three rooms, and a hall, and a kitchen.

There was a garden and a small courtyard. The building was in the center of the town. It was a two-storied wooden house, and Semen rented the second floor. He lived there together with his wife Esphir and his mother, my Granny. I liked to go there because I liked Grandmother and also because they lived much better than my own parents.

I never went to a kindergarten; my mother raised me and my sister herself. Later, when already a schoolgirl, I often went to pioneer camps [14](#). I started school, when I was eight. I studied at the school #11 [15](#), which was called 'eleventh railway.' There were only three schools in town: ours, twelfth railway and the ordinary one. Our school was the state one, but the railway union supported it.

For example, we traveled to Leningrad on holidays and vacations. Our school was a very good one, I think; it was the best one in town. We had good teachers – the only one I could complain about was our literature teacher, who was very young, had just graduated from the Institute – and we got a good education.

Our school was located in a wooden building, actually two buildings, connected with a corridor. It was situated in the very center of the town, on one of the main streets. We had a special hall for sport activities, the school provided all kinds of faculties. During the Technical Education lessons we made shelves and sewed things. We had wonderful New Year's Eve celebrations, and there was a big fir-tree standing in the middle of the school hall.

I recall with pleasure both the pioneer camps and military games: we had to find a hidden flag and so on. At the pioneer camps military games were popular. They had to prepare the youth for defending their Motherland, usually children were separated into two teams, put on different uniforms and were 'fighting.' Their goal was to find the headquarters of the enemies and to take their flag.

I took part in amateur talent activities; we had a wonderful theater studio, and our Physics teacher managed it. So I was the main star over there, I played the leading roles. We performed 'Poverty is No Crime' [a play by A.N. Ostrovsky (1823-1886): Famous Russian playwright, author of more than fifty plays, both social and historical] and I played the main role. There were evenings of amateur talent activities at the local Palace of Culture [a kind of recreation center], there was a good House of Pioneers. Also, when they organized evenings of amateur talent activities, I recited poetry to musical accompaniment.

I recall my childhood with great pleasure, not paying attention to all the difficulties. We had always been at the very center of life, not paying attention to the fact that we were Jews. And we had friends and were dating. We were friends of the Parmit brothers; they were Jews and all three of them were murdered during World War II. The brothers played different musical instruments, first mandolins and then violins. I had friends only among my schoolmates. We danced: in summer in the railway club and on the territory of the Putyatin garden. We danced foxtrot, tango and waltz. We had optional dancing lessons at school.

Besides, we had a very good Music teacher, Grigory Vikentievitch Uspensky. He told us a lot about music and composers. I started to take some additional music lessons: there was a piano at my Aunt Zhenya's, but it was standing in a very cold room, which could be hardly warmed up, and it was almost impossible to practice, so I stopped doing this.

I liked our Geography teacher Galina Konstantinovna and our Chemistry teacher too. He always said, 'Nobody knows Chemistry so well as to get an excellent grade, I know it well enough to get a four [out of five].' I remember also, that we had a very good Physics teacher, Anna Semenovna Ossipova. Her brother came from Leningrad once for New Year's Eve, when we performed 'Poverty is No Crime.'

He invited me for a dance and started to make me compliments, he said that I should apply to the Theater Institute. I was burning to do that and before World War II, I wrote to GITIS [the State Institute for Theater Arts in Moscow], I even got a booklet with rules of admittance from there.

Daddy, of course, tried to dissuade me from it: 'To be an actress, you need to be beautiful.' And I replied, 'Father, I'm not ugly.' And my boyfriend Valery Buchinsky - he was killed in World War II - tried to dissuade me too. And then the Great Patriotic War came: we had the graduation party in June, on 17th June 1941, and the war started on 22nd June.

However, my friend Rebecca and I were in the last grade and we decided to enter the Philological Faculty of Leningrad University and even had a chance to send them some of our documents. I don't remember why we chose that particular faculty, probably, we thought that it was great, because it was connected with literature. At first Rebecca and I studied in different classes. And I don't know remember why, but I had some argument with my friend Valentina Egorova, maybe, we liked the same guy, maybe it was something else.

In any case, I felt such loneliness... The depression started, I needed some support, and I spoke to Rebecca, and then I moved to her class. And we agreed to apply to one institute and to prepare for entry exams together: Rebecca was very accurate, she could manage her time well, and I needed to have someone with such a character nearby. Of course, I had all excellent marks too, and studied well, but I wasn't self-disciplined enough.

Rebecca and I participated in our school Komsomol bureau [the ruling Komsomol organ], and once they decided to edit a statement about paying for studies, and we told everyone about our resentment. Then they called us up just to this bureau and gave us a dressing down, and said that there was no need to talk.

It seems, at the beginning of the 1930s in Bologoye they organized something like a prayer house, men gathered there, and my father went there too. However, as a matter of fact, my parents didn't follow Jewish traditions at home, they mainly celebrated Soviet holidays, and Father wasn't a religious person, not at all. At school we didn't study Hebrew, and there was neither a cheder nor a yeshivah in town. Our Dad had a bar mitzvah for sure, but they didn't organize any bat mitzvot for us. We spoke Russian at home, sometimes putting in separate Yiddish words.

Of course, Grandmother Zlata kept the Sabbath. I recall one funny episode. In Volochek they had a housekeeper, but she was off on Saturday, and it was necessary to warm up the samovar: to pour in the water, then put coal, and light a match. Grandmother walked around and shouted: 'Shabes [Sabbath] how can I warm up the samovar, how can I warm the samovar?' I said, 'Let me warm it up, you only have to take it down and put it on the floor, and I will put in the water.'

I took a pot, put the water in and said, 'Granny, you now raise the samovar.' Basically, I made her do almost everything on her own. Of course, she celebrated Sabbath and, I think, although I don't know this for sure, that she was a religious person till her death. And the Alperovichs observed Jewish traditions too. I know that Grandfather prayed, but I don't know, if he did it till his death.

I remember that I liked it very much when Grandmother Itka, Father's stepmother, invited all our relatives to hers before Pesach and they baked matzot. They rolled out the dough on such huge, soft desks; then they put it with the very long oven fork into the Russian stove. I was so impressed by this performance! Of course, they had Pesach celebrations and, probably, conducted seder dinners, but I can't recall any of those holidays. I told you the story of baking matzah, because I really loved the whole process and it's such a bright memory that I simply can't forget it!

We didn't feel any particular anti-Semitism. Once at school they called me 'zhidovka' [kike], and that was a boy, who was in love with me later. His name was Monka [Edmond] Rogovich and he was Polish. There was a special class meeting, where they discussed his behavior.

We celebrated holidays the same as now: gathered with relatives, ate tasty food and talked. We went to demonstrations on 1st May, or on October Revolution Day [16](#) -they were held on the football field - and sang songs. Usually we celebrated all holidays in school, and I was the main boss over there. We sang pioneer songs at demonstrations, but I don't remember exactly which ones.

My sister Sophia - Sarah Alperovich, in her passport - was born on 25th May 1926; we lived in Valdasi. As a matter of fact, she was a madcap; she'd better been a boy, not a girl. She would play with boys, run and fight; Sophia never was calm, never sat still and always hurried somewhere. She was a worse student than I, but, after graduation from school, she came to Leningrad and entered the Faculty of History in 'Gertzenovskiy' [the Pedagogical Institute, named after Gertzen (Hertzen), Russian revolutionary, writer and philosopher].

Anyway, she didn't finish the Institute as she got married. Her husband Alexander was a sailor, and they sent him to the North, to Polyarny [small settlement at Kola Bay], and she departed together with him. Then he served in Dikson [port city on the Kara Sea], Magadan [regional center located on the Sea of Okhotsk], Vladivostok [big city in the Far East], Nakhodka [port city situated on the Japanese Sea, 100 kilometers from Vladivostok], and they never came back to Leningrad.

They have two children: Boris and Olga, who both live in Vladivostok. Some time ago, Olga's daughter's got married, and Sophia has grandchildren now. In spite of the fact that my husband is Russian, and Sophia's husband is a Jew, she doesn't identify herself as a Jewish woman any more than I do. Sophia's son Boris is married to a Russian, his son is married to a Russian too, and Olga was married to a Russian, and her daughter too. So all of them are Russified.

Vladimir, the son of my nephew Boris, graduated from the Law Faculty of Vladivostok University; he got married while a student. Recently, together with his young wife, who is a lawyer too, he moved to Moscow to get some additional education. Perhaps, they will stay to live there. Sophia calls us often, we write letters to each other, and I have many photos from Vladivostok in our family album.

Lilia [Matveevna Danilova], my other sister, was born on 19th February 1941. Mother wasn't a very young woman, she was 41, but Dad wanted a boy. So they decided to keep the child, when she got pregnant. We had already grown up and thought of leaving home, and they didn't want to stay alone. I remember why they called her Lilia. There was one Jewish family in Bologoye, the parents and three daughters.

One of them, Lilia, was a real beauty, and when I looked at her I got jealous. In her honor I named my sister Lilia: she was dark and I believed that she would be as beautiful. Lilia grew up mainly in Dad's absence, without a father: she was four, when Dad came back from the front in 1945. And then, while she studied in the ninth grade, Father died. She was less lively than we were. Mother always said, 'Why is Lilia so sad?' And she asked us, me and Sophia, 'Why are you so beautiful, and I'm not like you?'

Later Lilia went to Leningrad, finished college, and got a job assignment to Vladimir [17](#). She met her husband, an ordinary Russian guy, at some dance. Thank God, they have lived together for forty years. They have two children and grandchildren already too. All of them immigrated to America; they live near Los Angeles. First her elder daughter Svetlana went to America.

She got married to a Jew from Odessa called Vladimir. They are great friends, he makes good money, and Svetlana gave birth to two children. Then Lilia, her husband and their younger daughter Elena together with her husband moved to California too. They left a year or two ago. We keep in touch; my sister continues to write and calls often. I have good relations with both my nieces too.

• During the war

On 19th October 1941 we left for evacuation in goods wagons. My mother and sisters and I went on the upper deck, and Grandfather with Grandmother on the lower one. They gave us some food at certain stations and in certain wagons: bread and something else. We went under bombings, because we left after the Germans took Kalinin [today Tver, regional center 175 kilometers from Moscow]. They bombed the railway rolling stock in front of us, and we stopped very often.

Before we departed, Mother made flannel-wool dressing gowns for us, and we all had knapsacks with documents. Mother said, 'My daughters, you run and I'll manage somehow with Lilia.' Lilia was four months old, when World War II started, and seven months, when we departed for evacuation. Finally, we happily arrived in Chuvashia on 7th November 1941. The Chuvash people [a Turkic ethnic group, living mainly on the Middle Volga] met us.

They were fine fellows; they welcomed us in a very friendly manner and hosted us well. They came to take us on the sledges, then guided us to the village, put us up in their houses. The Chuvash didn't speak Russian, and we, naturally, didn't know any Chuvash. The only way to communicate with them was by using gestures. They placed us with some illiterate peasants – an old woman, her daughter-in law, and the little boy, whose father went to the army, but we learned Chuvash quickly.

At first they employed us at the motor-transport station and I became a weigher. It was a night job, and it was very cold, Mother muffled me in 'valenki' [traditional Russian felt boots] and a sheepskin. We used all winter clothes that we had taken with us. We sold Father's clothes – he had a 'bekesh' [short sheepskin] – as it was necessary to buy food. After I found a job, I got a food ration.

Then, my pal Sarah Sigal, who repatriated to Israel later on, worked as a head bookkeeper in 'raizemotdel' [regional land department] and invited me and Sophia, one of my cousins, to be accountants. We even learned about external courses for accountants, and I applied for those courses. Later they moved us from Tarkhany village to a village, where I was employed as an accountant. We got a separate house over there, while our grandparents stayed in Tarkhany. We bought a goat, a couple of pigs, some chickens, and organized our own husbandry.

We returned from evacuation by train, in regular passenger wagons. I don't remember if we had to pay for the tickets. And there was some Moscow couple in front of us, so Mother asked them to accompany me in Moscow. That's why I dropped off in Moscow and spent a whole day there. I had to do that because we had a ration, and my mother wasn't sure that we could get food at home in Bologoye. So she decided that I'd better try to do that in Moscow.

I don't remember, if I got any food or not, but I think Mother risked a lot, leaving her daughter alone. I have no idea how we kept the connection with my father. Maybe, we wrote him a letter. Perhaps, he knew our address in Chuvashia, because when we left for evacuation, he was in the Home guard; he went to the front a little bit later.

So we came back home in 1943, in March, just after the Stalingrad Battle [18](#). Bologoye was destroyed, but not completely, most of the houses were intact and only some were bombed. Our house was preserved, and our family lived there till Dad's death.

When we came back from evacuation to Bologoye, our neighbors were very glad to see us. Some of them didn't even leave; they lived under the bombing, made kitchen gardens everywhere, and ploughed up where it was possible. The evacuation, apparently, wasn't obligatory. However, we certainly wouldn't have survived: we were not afraid of hunger as much as of the Germans that could have come to kill all Jews.

I wanted to study very much, but we – my sister and I – got typhus and spotted fever just after we came back home in 1943. And it was necessary to get some food wherever and however possible,

so Mother and Grandmother Itka began to fry fish and bring it to the trains [Bologoye is a large railway station]. Later they found a little bit of wheat somewhere and started to bake pies and cakes and meet the trains. Not only my mother was baking, other women did the same.

Fortunately, during the Holocaust almost all of our family survived: my sisters, mother and father. However, my cousin Zusya, the son of my mother's sister Tatiana, was killed near Leningrad. On my father's side only Dad fought, and on my mother's side Uncle Isaac was a colonel of railway troops. The husband of Aunt Bertha was arrested in 1938 [during the period of the Great Terror]; she was exiled too.

That meant that both the war and the concentration camps, thank God, passed them by. Besides, her husband David Ilkovsky was a Communist, he graduated from the High Party School [19](#) in Moscow, and I never heard any 'anti-Sovietchina' [speeches against Soviet power and Communist order] from him.

• Later life

In 1944 I went to Leningrad to apply for the Medical Institute. My friend Rebecca, who had entered the Philological Faculty earlier, during the evacuation, advised me against entering this faculty: 'It is necessary to read a lot, and you have poor eyesight. Now after the war, there are plenty of injured, you should go to the Medical Faculty, and you'll always have a piece of bread, and it's a useful job.' I obeyed her, entered with no exams – I had an excellent school leaving certificate – and they even wanted to admit me to the Dentist Faculty, but I decided to apply for the medical one. That one was also in Leningrad.

The Dentist Faculty was situated on the street named after Peter Lavrov [one of the oldest streets in the city, today it has its pre-Revolution name Furshtatskaya], in a very beautiful building. And I went to the 7th November [day of the October Revolution] Ball. My hair had grown a little, girls helped to curl it, using pieces of paper and so I had a new haircut. I had my mother's shoes; Father had bought her those shoes just before the war: they were very beautiful, gray, with high heels, and a net, something like open-toe sandals. Mom gave me those shoes and a piece of the gray crepe de Chine, from which they sewed a 'sun-flared' dress in the atelier on Gorky Street.

I also went to the New Year's Ball in the Teachers' House. There were light effects, balloons and mirrors. I, after all, danced very well; I even got a prize for dancing some years earlier, while studying in Bologoye. There were mainly girls in our Medical Institute, and from time to time, we got together with some college, for example, the highest Technical Engineering College, and organized dance evenings. At the Institute I had both Jewish and Russian pals, we got on very well and arranged gatherings for many years. The last time we met, was forty years after our graduation.

I studied at the Medical Institute for four years. Part of that time I lived on the campus of that Institute, and later I got married and lived at my husband's, and then my son was born, and I had to take a year's pause. Then, after I came back, I had to pass two extra exams, for the Institute changed its status and turned to a Sanitary-Hygienic one.

The first year after my graduation and diploma I didn't work, but then I was sick of staying at home, and they sent me to the sanitary epidemiological station of Dzerzhinsky district, where I was

head of the school sanitary department. [Editor's note: Such sanitary epidemiological services existed in all parts of the city, they controlled the cleanness and hygiene in different organizations.]

After World War II none of my relatives left the country. And where could we go? To America? With no money? And there was no Israel at the time. And they didn't discuss the foundation of the state of Israel [20](#), and I can't even recall when I learned about it.

When I studied in the third year of my Institute, in 1946, Father bought a voucher to the health resort 'Shirokoe,' which was lucky from all points of view. They put me in a club, called 'monkey place.' And my future husband, Valentin Dremlug, lived just opposite - at the so-called 'blue dacha [21](#).' After I arrived, he said, 'One more monkey has come to the monkey place.' The next day, in the morning, I went to the dining room, raised my eyes and saw a puny man walk before me. I passed him and paid no attention. After breakfast I went back and saw him again. He stopped and said, 'Excuse me, are you staying here too? Do you live in the club? Did you come a long time ago? I see you for the first time.' That was the very beginning. I stayed in this health resort for two weeks, and he left a bit before my holidays came to an end.

Then he went to Leningrad, and I came back to Bologoye. And we made an agreement that he would meet me at the railway station. I arrived in Leningrad, walked a little and saw that everyone was meeting people with flowers. Of course, like a provincial girl, I was trying hard to find the biggest bouquet; however, he wasn't among the 'big bouquets.' I found him finally just near the railway station building with a small bouquet in his hands. Well, so we met, he took me to my campus on Kirillovskaya Street, gave me the flowers: there were red pinks and asparagus, a very elegant bouquet for those times.

And so we began being friends, and then, in November he proposed to me, although we knew each other for three months only. We got married in January 1947. First there was a wedding without any registration, and then we went to ZAGS and registered our relations. [ZAGS: 'Signing-up the acts of civil conditions' - the state establishment, where marriages, divorces, births and deaths are registered.]

My father didn't like my husband at first, not because he wasn't Jewish, but due to the fact that he wasn't a tall and strong man. He even blamed my mother, who went to Leningrad to check my choice before the wedding took place. But later they had good relations, and we never had any troubles because of his nationality.

His mother's parents were peasants, and his father's parents were craftsmen. Apparently, all his ancestors were Russians, but my mother-in-law told me that her grandfather was a Nikolai soldier [22](#), a baptized Jew. I don't know if that is true, probably, she just wanted to say something pleasant to me.

His father Valentin was responsible for electricity in Peterhof Palace [summer residence of Russian Emperors, built in the 1720s on the orders of Peter the Great], he sailed with the tsar on 'Shtandart' [famous ship, which the last Russian tsar used to sail on]. And till his very death in 1940 he was an electrician at the Russian Museum, at the Ethnography Museum, and, I think, even in the Winter Palace [Tsar Palace in Petersburg, after October Revolution of 1917 and until today the State Hermitage].

My husband's mother Lidia Alexandrovna was a florist. She graduated from the Genetics Faculty of Leningrad University and developed new, different sorts of flowers. She worked on the so-called control-experience station in Pushkin [one of the Leningrad outskirts, got its name after the poet Alexander Pushkin, before October Revolution of 1917 used to be called Tsar Selo, or Tsar Village].

My husband Valentin entered the Hydrography Institute even before World War II but he didn't have a chance to graduate. He passed his finals in Krasnoyarsk [big city in Siberia]. After the war finished, he went to get a PhD degree in Leningrad; in 1949 he fulfilled his academic program and got a job as the head of a sub-faculty. He worked in the Highest Arctic College until his retirement in the 1980s. He was assistant professor there and he held lectures.

Our son Igor was born in December 1947; he lives in Leningrad. He followed in his father's footsteps: he was involved in ocean research and went on expeditions. Igor, of course, always knew that he is a Jew, that his grandparents were Jews. I don't know for sure, when or how he learned it. I remember only that once he came home and said, 'Mom, you don't know the Jewish language yourself and didn't teach me either.' However, theoretically, we didn't have any reasons to teach him the language, or the traditions, which I didn't know myself. He didn't ever suffer from the fact that he was a Jew, because, when he turned sixteen, he got a passport, where it was written that he was Russian [23](#).

After perestroika [24](#) he left science, and now he is involved in insurance business. He has a son, Anton. Igor was married twice: his first wife Natalia, the mother of his son, is half-Jewish, like him. She is an architect, and she lives in Petersburg not far from us. His second wife Irina was an engineer, and after perestroika she was involved in insurance business too. She is Jewish, and they went to Israel some years ago. He said that this trip changed his life and he wants to go to Israel one more time. He lives together with his second wife and their beloved cat, Mars, in her apartment in one of the new districts of the city.

As for Stalin, I remember the following incident. Zhenya, my father's sister, went to Leningrad and stayed at our place. And suddenly she noticed that a picture, which I liked very much, a picture of Stalin holding a girl, hung next to my son Igor's bed. And she said, 'How come you put this monster near your child's bed?' I was surprised, but I took the picture off. And after Stalin died [in 1953], I cried, and we all cried. Later, of course, we began to understand what was going on.

When the Doctor's Plot [25](#) started, I worked at the sanitary epidemiological station and we had quite a few Jews over there. Only two Jews remained: the main epidemiologist and I. All the others were dismissed on grounds of staff reduction. And among them was the head, Rosenshtein, who came to me and said, 'Anna Matveevna, please write a letter of resignation to free the working place.' You see, they threw him out because there 'were no vacancies.' And my husband also said, 'Leave your work, you won't be so nervous anymore.' Anyway, in 1952 I resigned and didn't go to work for a couple of years. My husband earned enough, and I didn't want to suffer from anti-Semitism. When the situation stabilized and changed for the better, I began to work again.

But, to be frank that was the only situation, when I experienced anti-Semitism: never ever, never again did something bad happen to me because I'm a Jew. They never oppressed and never insulted me. I lived in a Russian family, among Russians and worked where there were both Russians and Jews.

And then, thanks to the protection of my husband's pal Jacob Katznelson – by the way all of Valentin's friends, are Jews – I started to work at the State Institute of Examination of People's Working Abilities, in the department in charge of finding jobs for people with special needs. Later the director of the clinic department advised me to write a dissertation. I was interested in people suffering from heart-vascular diseases and chose the topic of 'Finding a job for people with myocardial infarct': I studied heart-vascular pathologies, made an experiment on the Kirov factory [one of the largest metallurgical factories in whole country] and completed the dissertation in January 1971.

After I turned 55, I became a part-time employee in a clinic, where I worked till 1981, when we moved to our new apartment. Here I got a part-time job in polyclinic #51; I became a social researcher in the rehabilitation department and worked there for ten years. So far I have quite an impressive work experience.

Since my husband was a famous scientist – he continues to work, and the local papers write articles about him – we didn't have a bad life, maybe lived in better conditions than many others. First we had a big apartment in the very center, and later, in 1981, we moved to our new three-room apartment, where we still live today. We could afford a trip to the Black Sea or to a sanatorium.

When our son was little, we rented a dacha in Zelenogorsk [small village near Leningrad, on the shore of the Gulf of Finland] and in the late 1980s we got a plot of land. We built a summerhouse there and I grow fruits and vegetables and flowers there too, and that dacha takes up all our free time. In summer we spend weeks over there.

My husband was very keen on his work. Even at home he spent a lot of time writing articles and doing scientific research, but I can't say that he is a typical scientist, he isn't lonely, he has many friends and pals. And we were meeting our friends very often, we went to visit them and invited them to our place. I always loved cooking and inventing new dishes. When we gathered with our friends and relatives, we always played cards.

My mother died in 1987 in Leningrad. In her last years she suffered from some heart disease. She was buried in the Jewish cemetery.

As for the changes, I consider that all that happened was very good. I see both the fall of the Berlin Wall and the opening of the Eastern block as positive developments. Life changed completely, in all directions, after 1989. But the most important is that I went to Israel, and that was truly a great event in my life. I learned many new things, talked to people, who live over there. I saw wonderful temples, unique architecture.

I learned how Jews pray, how they spend their time, the way they work and what clothes they wear. I tried some Jewish meals and some fruits, which I had never eaten before. Above all, I was impressed with the Israeli nature. And of course, I compared their lifestyle to ours, and found that our lifestyles are quite a bit different. Unfortunately, we didn't have enough money for me to go there together with my husband. They invited him too, and he wanted to go.

In principle, I don't take an active part in the local Jewish community life because of my age and health conditions. I would go to 'Hesed Abraham' [26](#) with great pleasure to attend interesting

evenings and meetings, if my health allowed. For example, when I could, I went to the Big Concert Hall 'Oktyabrsky' [concert hall in the center of St. Petersburg] for the Jewish New Year, once I went to the Jewish songs concert together with my son and his family. When there is something Jewish on TV, my husband always calls me.

Some time ago I read Golda Meir's [27](#) book. She was completely right, I think. She was right that she helped to build the state of Israel, and she changed the attitude toward Israel in the world, due to her activities Israel became stronger and more powerful. But it's horrible, that they are still fighting. But this Golda was a great woman!

Earlier we didn't celebrate any Jewish holidays, even though I celebrate all holidays. I celebrate holidays, not paying attention to their meaning or 'nationality.' For me it's just a reason to meet relatives and friends and to cook tasty meals, and to talk and play cards and so on. And now I don't celebrate Jewish holidays because I don't know exactly how to celebrate and what to do. But my cousin came some time ago from Israel, and we celebrated Rosh Hashanah together.

We get food packages and congratulations for the holidays from 'Hesed Abraham.' My husband, Valentin Valentinovich, always gets congratulation cards on Victory Day [28](#), and received a postcard on his 85th birthday.

Did we have any friends among Jews? I have only one friend, Rebecca, while my husband Valentin Valentinovich had many friends, both Jewish and Russian. All my colleagues, with whom I'm in touch, are Russians. We didn't choose our friends because of the national factor.

Talking about our relatives, I have frequent contacts with my sisters and cousins. Especially with Nellie, Svetlana, Ludmila and Alya – I write to her, as she lives in Klin [small town 70 kilometers north of Moscow]. I hear less from Inna, who left for Germany. She is from another circle; all her friends and pals are involved mainly in selling goods.

Of course, I didn't maintain relations with all my relatives: for example, Aunt Ida, I didn't like her too much, and we met mainly at funeral ceremonies. But I loved Aunt Laylya [Esther Borisovna Bogorad], Uncle Semen's wife, very much, more than him, more than her daughters. So, as a matter of fact, I choose friends not because of their age, or nationality, or even family connections, I choose friends because of their spirit.

• Glossary:

[1](#) Jewish Pale of Settlement

Certain provinces in the Russian Empire were designated for permanent Jewish residence and the Jewish population was only allowed to live in these areas. The Pale was first established by a decree by Catherine II in 1791. The regulation was in force until the Russian Revolution of 1917, although the limits of the Pale were modified several times. The Pale stretched from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, and 94% of the total Jewish population of Russia, almost 5 million people, lived there. The overwhelming majority of the Jews lived in the towns and shtetls of the Pale. Certain privileged groups of Jews, such as certain merchants, university graduates and craftsmen working in certain branches, were granted to live outside the borders of the Pale of Settlement

permanently.

2 Common name

Russified or Russian first names used by Jews in everyday life and adopted in official documents. The Russification of first names was one of the manifestations of the assimilation of Russian Jews at the turn of the 19th and 20th century. In some cases only the spelling and pronunciation of Jewish names was russified (e.g. Isaac instead of Yitskhak; Boris instead of Borukh), while in other cases traditional Jewish names were replaced by similarly sounding Russian names (e.g. Eugenia instead of Ghita; Yury instead of Yuda). When state anti-Semitism intensified in the USSR at the end of the 1940s, most Jewish parents stopped giving their children traditional Jewish names to avoid discrimination.

3 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.

4 1905 Russian Revolution

Erupted during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05, and was sparked off by a massacre of St. Petersburg workers taking their petitions to the Tsar (Bloody Sunday). The massacre provoked disgust and protest strikes throughout the country: between January and March 1905 over 800,000 people participated in them. Following Russia's defeat in its war with Japan, armed insurrections broke out in the army and the navy (the most publicized in June 1905 aboard the battleship Potemkin). In 1906 a wave of pogroms swept through Russia, directed against Jews and Armenians. The main unrest in 1906 (involving over a million people in the cities, some 2,600 villages and virtually the entire Baltic fleet and some of the land army) was incited by the dissolution of the First State Duma in July. The dissolution of the Second State Duma in June 1907 is considered the definitive end to the revolution.

5 Russian stove

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

6 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.

7 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.

8 Keep in touch with relatives abroad

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

9 NEP

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

10 Komsomol

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.

11 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.

12 Card system

The food card system regulating the distribution of food and industrial products was introduced in the USSR in 1929 due to extreme deficit of consumer goods and food. The system was cancelled in 1931. In 1941, food cards were reintroduced to keep records, distribute and regulate food supplies to the population. The card system covered main food products such as bread, meat, oil, sugar, salt, cereals, etc. The rations varied depending on which social group one belonged to, and what kind of work one did. Workers in the heavy industry and defense enterprises received a daily ration of 800 g (miners - 1 kg) of bread per person; workers in other industries 600 g. Non-manual workers received 400 or 500 g based on the significance of their enterprise, and children 400 g. However, the card system only covered industrial workers and residents of towns while villagers never had any provisions of this kind. The card system was cancelled in 1947.

13 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.

14 All-Union pioneer organization

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

15 School #

Schools had numbers and not names. It was part of the policy of the state. They were all state schools and were all supposed to be identical.

16 October Revolution Day

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

17 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.

18 Stalingrad Battle

17th July 1942 - 2nd February 1943. The Southwestern and Don Fronts stopped the advance of German armies in the vicinity of Stalingrad. On 19th and 20th November 1942 the Soviet troops undertook an offensive and encircled 22 German divisions (330,000 people) and eliminated them. On 31st January 1943 the remains of the 6th German army headed by General Field Marshal Paulus surrendered (91,000 people). The victory in the Stalingrad battle was of huge political, strategic and international significance.

19 Party Schools

They were established after the Revolution of 1917, in different levels, with the purpose of training communist cadres and activists. Subjects such as 'scientific socialism' (Marxist-Leninist Philosophy) and 'political economics' besides various other political disciplines were taught there.

20 Creation of the State of Israel

From 1917 Palestine was a British mandate. Also in 1917 the Balfour Declaration was published, which supported the idea of the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Throughout the interwar period, Jews were migrating to Palestine, which caused the conflict with the local Arabs to escalate. On the other hand, British restrictions on immigration sparked increasing opposition to the mandate powers. Immediately after World War II there were increasing numbers of terrorist attacks designed to force Britain to recognize the right of the Jews to their own state.

These aspirations provoked the hostile reaction of the Palestinian Arabs and the Arab states. In February 1947 the British foreign minister Ernest Bevin ceded the Palestinian mandate to the UN, which took the decision to divide Palestine into a Jewish section and an Arab section and to create an independent Jewish state. On 14th May 1948 David Ben Gurion proclaimed the creation of the State of Israel. It was recognized immediately by the US and the USSR. On the following day the armies of Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon attacked Israel, starting a war that continued, with intermissions, until the beginning of 1949 and ended in a truce.

21 Dacha

Country house, consisting of small huts and little plots of lands. The Soviet authorities came to the decision to allow this activity to the Soviet people to support themselves. The majority of urban citizens grow vegetables and fruit in their small gardens to make preserves for winter.

22 Nikolai's army

Soldier of the tsarist army during the reign of Nicholas I when the draft lasted for 25 years.

23 Item 5

This was the nationality factor, which was included on all job application forms, Jews, who were considered a separate nationality in the Soviet Union, were not favored in this respect from the end

of World War II until the late 1980s.

24 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.

25 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.

26 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.

27 Golda Meir (1898-1978)

Born in Kiev, she moved to Palestine and became a well-known and respected politician who fought for the rights of the Israeli people. In 1948, Meir was appointed Israel's Ambassador to the Soviet Union. From 1969 to 1974 she was Prime Minister of Israel. Despite the Labor Party's victory at the elections in 1974, she resigned in favor of Yitzhak Rabin. She was buried on Mount Herzl in Jerusalem in 1978.

28 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.