

Larissa Rozina

Larissa Rozina

Kiev

Ukraine

Interviewer: Elena Zaslavskaya

Date of interview: June 2002

My grandfather on my mother's side, Mihail Rozin, was born somewhere in Russia in the 1860s. Before the [Russian] Revolution of 1917 [1](#), he lived in with his family. He worked as a salesman. I don't know what or where he was selling. He didn't get any other education. After his wife's death in 1920 he went to live with his daughter Catherine who lived in Belaya Tserkov, Kiev province, Ukraine. He didn't work there, because of his old age.

My grandmother Haya Rozina, nee Rabinovich, was born in 1874. I don't know anything about her. In 1920 my father was in Kiev and my grandmother was traveling on the train from Voronezh to visit him. My father told me later that this train was attacked by bandits. My grandmother vanished and nobody ever saw her again.

They had four children: my father Alexandr, Lena, Sophia and Catherine.

My father's first sister, Catherine, was born in Voronezh in 1893. All I know about her is that she worked at the shoe factory in Belaya Tserkov before the war. Her son, Aron, was born around 1928. I don't know anything about her husband. She and her father and her son were shot by Germans in Belaya Tserkov in 1941.

My father's second sister, Sophia, was born in Voronezh in 1894. She didn't study at school, but she could read and write. She went to work when she was eleven. I don't know where she worked. She lived in Voronezh. She was married. Her husband Osip, a Jew, died in the late 1920s. After he died, she and her children moved to Kiev. She worked as a nurse at a kindergarten before the war. She had two daughters and a son. Her son Natan, perished at the front. Her older daughter had four children. Sophia got married for the second time after her husband also died at the front. Sophia, her younger daughter Chara and her three children were in evacuation in Frunze, Kirghisia [today Kyrgyzstan], during the war. Chara's husband also perished at the front. They returned to Kiev in 1944. Sophia didn't work after the war. She looked after her grandchildren. She died in Kiev in the 1960s.

My father's third sister, Lena, was born in Voronezh in 1895. She could read and write, but she didn't study anywhere. When she was eleven she began to work at a hat shop and learned to make lovely hats. In the late 1900s she was inspired by revolutionary communist ideas. After the Revolution of 1917, she studied at the Institute of Red Professorship in Kiev. [Editor's note: This institution was later renamed the Institute of Marxism-Leninism; it prepared the party officials.] She was a convinced revolutionary and a member of the Bolshevik Party. She was arrested in 1937 [during the so-called Great Terror] [2](#). Her husband Mihail Moiseyev, a Jew, was arrested a few months later and shot in 1937.

Lena was in exile in a camp near Magadan from 1937 to 1952. She lived in Magadan until 1954. Throughout this period she wrote a few letters to my grandfather. In 1941 he perished and other members of the family went to the front, or evacuated from their homes, and she didn't know their address. We didn't know anything about her until she returned to Kiev. Her skills in making hats saved her life. Instead of working on a wood cutting site, she was sitting in a warm office making hats for the camp managers' wives. She made hats in Magadan, too. She got married for the second time. She and her husband, Iosif Maidlah, a Jew, came to Kiev in 1954. She didn't work after she returned from exile.

Lena had a son with her first husband. His name was Mark Moiseyev, born in 1923. He was 14 when his parents were arrested. He went to live with his mother's sister, Sonia. In 1941 he went to the front, survived the war, and ended up in Berlin. After demobilization from the army he had to submit a questionnaire to obtain a passport. He wrote that his nationality was Russian. This enabled him to enter and graduate from the Moscow Aviation Institute and work at the cosmonauts' town in Podlipki near Moscow. He died in 2000. Lena died in the middle of the 1970s.

My father, Alexandr Rozin, was born in Voronezh, Russia, in 1896. His family wasn't religious. Voronezh wasn't a Jewish town. It was located outside the Jewish residential area. [Jewish Pale of Settlement] [3](#) I don't know how they managed to obtain the permit to reside there. My father's parents didn't know Yiddish. They spoke Russian. My father didn't know one word of Yiddish. Their family was very poor. My father didn't have an education. He had to go to work at the age of ten. His parents taught him to read and write. He worked as an apprentice in various small shops. He read a lot. Even when he was very young, my father already believed that the Soviet power was the best system.

In 1918 he went to the Civil War [4](#). He was a cavalry man and then a horn player in the army of General Budyonny. [Editor's note: Marshal Semyon Budyonny was one of the most famous Bolshevik Cavalry Commanders of the Russian Civil War]. When I grew up and made critical comments about the Soviet power, he replied, 'You know, there is nothing worse than working for a master, a private employer'. From 1920 my father lived in a big room that his sister Lena and her husband were sharing with him in Merengovskaya Street, Kiev.

My maternal grandfather, Lemel Gurtovoy, was born in 1871. I don't know where he was born. Before the Revolution he lived in Fastov with his family. Fastov was a small town within the area of residence. Jews constituted about half of the population. There were many Jews, rich and poor, in this town. There were several synagogues there. My grandfather had a huge brick house and a garden and owned a small mechanic plant or shop. He had a few employees and was like an engineer himself - he could do everything. I don't know what exactly they were producing. My grandfather didn't have a professional education. He learned everything he knew by himself.

In 1918 the power in town was continuously changing, and a Jewish pogrom [5](#) began with each new system. My grandfather's family found shelter in a friend's house. His friend was Polish. Many Jews were killed during the pogroms in Fastov between 1918 and 1919. In the early 1920s my grandfather and grandmother left their house and shop in fear of pogroms and moved to Kiev. Their three daughters - Anna, Fania and Bronislava - lived in a room in Proletarskaya Street in Kiev. My grandfather didn't work in Kiev. His daughters provided for him and their mother. My mother told me that my grandfather was a very hospitable man. They always had about twenty guests

sitting at the dinner table. He was very kind and agreeable. My grandfather died in 1933. I was only two years old then and can't remember him. In the 1950s or '60s we were on vacation near Fastov and my mother told me that my grandfather's house was still there. It served as an office for a governmental institution.

My grandmother Keina, nee Galperina, was born in 1873. I don't know where she was born. My cousin Grigory, the son of my mother's older sister, Anna Gurtovaya, said that their family came from Austria. My grandmother had two brothers and two sisters. All children, including my grandmother knew German well. My grandmother got married when she was 17. Her parents died when Eva and Esphir, her sisters, were still small. Both of them grew up at my grandmother's house.

My grandmother Keina was a very intelligent woman. I remember that she always had a book with her. I don't know where she studied. She read fiction and memoirs in Russian and German. My grandmother knew Yiddish well. She often spoke Yiddish with my grandfather, but never with the children. I don't know whether their family observed Jewish traditions before 1917. They never told me anything about it. I don't remember my grandmother doing any housework. She had a housemaid. My grandmother wore plain clothes and didn't cover her head.

In 1933, after my grandfather died, my grandmother lived with her daughter Lena's family in Gorky Street, Kiev. They lived in our building, a floor below us. This family didn't celebrate Jewish holidays or observe Jewish traditions. They weren't religious. They were Bolsheviks, after all.

In 1941 my grandmother and her daughters, Fania and Bronia, evacuated to Sverdlovsk. Fania worked at the Bolshevik plant in Kiev [one of the biggest machine tool plants in Kiev], and the plant was evacuated to Sverdlovsk. My grandmother fell ill and died there.

My grandmother's sister, Eva Medvinskaya, nee Galperina, was born in 1880. I don't know where she was born. The family called her Havka. She was married to Iosif Medvinsky. She had a son. Her husband and son died from tuberculosis in the 1920s. She lived in Kiev until 1941. She gave German lessons to private students. She had an excellent command of German. From 1941 to 1944 she was in evacuation in Buzuluk, Orenburg region. After the war she returned to Kiev. She worked as a nurse at school and lived in a small room there. She died in 1961. I don't know whether she got married for a second time, or whether she had children.

My grandmother's other sister, Esphir Voloshyna, nee Galperina, was born in the 1880s. She finished Russian grammar school in Kiev. I don't know whether she had a higher education. She worked at the library of the Academy of Sciences in Kiev from the middle of the 1930s until retirement. She was married to Yakov Voloshyn, a Jewish man. She had two children: a son, Iosif, and a daughter, Liya. In the late 1930s Iosif entered a Navy college in Leningrad. He was 16. After finishing it he worked on various military ships. He was the captain of a submarine. He died in 1994. Liya, Rubashevskaya after her husband, worked at the library with her mother. Esphir died in 1967. Liya died in 1989.

My grandmother's brother Aizek was born in the 1860s. I don't know where he was born. Before the Revolution of 1917 he lived with his family in a big house in Gorky Street, Kiev. Once I overheard a conversation between my parents in which they mentioned that, before 1917, he was part-owner of a big six or seven-story building. This was the kind of a house where the owner leases apartments.

He rented apartments to not very rich people. They weren't big or posh apartments. After the Revolution of 1917, Aizek lived in a small communal apartment [6](#). His property was expropriated by Bolsheviks. Aizek died in Kiev in the late 1930s.

My grandmother's other brother lived in Odessa, but I have no information about him. I don't even know his name.

My grandfather and grandmother had six children: Efrem, Hava, Anna, my mother Revekka-Liya, Fania and Bronislava.

My mother's older brother, Efrem Gurtovoy, was called Froichik in the family. He was born in Fastov in 1880. He finished Russian grammar school and graduated from the law department of Kiev Institute of Commerce. He worked as a lawyer at various offices in Kiev. He died of a heart attack in Kiev in 1953. His wife's name was Beila. She finished grammar school and was a housewife. Froichik and Beila had two sons: Mitia, called Mihail, and Boris.

Mitia was born in 1911. He finished Kiev Polytechnic Institute before the war. He fought at the front. He was a talented physicist. He lectured at the University in Kiev. Mitia died in Kiev in 1981.

Boris was born in 1913. He graduated from the Kiev Polytechnic Institute before the war. During the war he was severely wounded. He survived, but due to his spinal cord injury, he couldn't even tie his shoe-laces. He was a talented welder. He worked at Kiev Paton electric welding institute. He was single and died in Kiev in the early 1990s.

My mother's sister Hava Gurtovaya was born in Fastov in the 1890s. She finished Russian grammar school and Dentistry College in Kiev. She worked as a dentist in Gorodnya village, Kiev region. In 1937 she got married and moved to Leningrad where she also worked as a dentist. She and her Jewish husband, Zeidel, survived the blockade of Leningrad [7](#). She died of a heart attack at her work place in 1947. Her husband had died a year before. They didn't have children.

My mother's sister Anna was born in Fastov in the 1890s. She finished Russian grammar school in Kiev. She had a beautiful voice and dreamed of becoming a singer. She married Haim, a Jew, when she was very young. I don't remember her husband's last name. She worked as a stenographer and typist. Haim was a member of the Bund [8](#). He had kidney problems and received a small pension as an invalid. He didn't go to work. They were very poor, and, it is my understanding that he was not that ill that he couldn't go to work. But he realized that if he did go to work he would have been arrested for anti-Soviet activities. They lived in the same house, one floor below us. They had a separate apartment. These were small apartments in this building: a study, a bedroom and a dining-room. My grandmother and Fania and Bronislava lived with them. Haim was helping Lena with her typing work until 1941.

During the war they were in evacuation in Serdobsrk, Penza region. Haim was a very intelligent, talented and well-read man, though he didn't have any special education. After the war he earned good money by writing dissertations for other people. They had two sons. They were named after Lenin and Plekhanov [9](#): Vladimir, born in 1926, and Georgiy, born in 1929.

Vladimir was recruited to the army in 1944. He reached Berlin with the army. After the war he finished the school for workers and graduated from the Kiev Polytechnic Institute. He got married and moved to Stalingrad, where his wife lived. He worked at the plant. He died of a heart attack at

his work place in 1977.

Their younger son, Georgiy, had asthma. He studied by correspondence at the Kiev Polytechnic Institute and worked at the Paton electrical welding institute in Kiev. He died in 1969. My mother's sister Anna died in Kiev in the 1960s, and Haim died in 1954.

My mother's sister Fania was born in Fastov in 1900. She finished Russian grammar school in Kiev. Her fiancé was killed during a pogrom in Fastov in 1918. She stayed single. She worked at the Bolshevik plant in Kiev. She evacuated to Sverdlovsk with the plant and stayed there. Fania died in the late 1970s.

My mother's sister Bronislava was born in Fastov in 1907. She finished Russian grammar school in Kiev. In 1937 she married Piotrovsky, a Polish man. He was the son of my grandfather's friend who gave shelter to the family during Jewish pogroms in 1918. He was a member of the Communist Party and a military. In 1937, during the 'clean up' campaign [the Great Terror], he was arrested. There is no information about what happened to him. He was probably executed. Bronia's daughter Natasha was born in 1938. In 1941 Bronia and Natasha evacuated to Sverdlovsk. They didn't return to Kiev after the war. Natasha is still living in Sverdlovsk. She got married and has a very big family. In the 1950s, after Stalin's death, Natasha was trying to find out what happened to her father, but she failed. Bronia died in Sverdlovsk in the early 1980s.

My mother's name was Revekka-Liya Rozina, nee Gurtovaya. She had a double name. In the course of time, the family members called her Liya, and her childhood friends were calling her Venia. She was born in Fastov in 1898. Mama didn't have a higher education. She finished grammar school in Kiev and entered Kiev Medical Institute in 1919. In 1920 or 1921 Mama went to Povolzhye to help fight the famine [10](#) there. She helped to arrange canteens or other catering facilities. Besides that, she was involved in the distribution of humanitarian aid that was provided by the Americans. This famine was arranged by the Bolsheviks in order to suppress the citizens that weren't willing to accept the socialist revolution. People like my mother didn't understand the actual cause of the famine and made every effort to help those who were starving. Mama told me that they were unwilling to let volunteers go to famine-stricken areas.

Mama returned in 1924, but she couldn't continue her studies, because she had been away for too long. She took a course in planning and got a job as a planning economist at the alcohol factory in Kiev.

My father was working as a laborer at this same plant. He was a very handsome man. I know that my father's first visit to my mother's home was on 8th November. The day before, the two of them went to the parade dedicated to the anniversary of the great October Socialist revolution [October Revolution Day] [11](#) and forcedly stayed beside each other for over five hours. My father realized that he didn't want to let this woman go. They got married in 1930. They didn't have a wedding party - they couldn't afford it. In due time, my father was sent to take a course in accounting. He became an accountant. At first he was working at the same alcohol factory, but then they decided that it wasn't very convenient for a husband and wife to work at the same place. My father got a job as auditor- accountant for the protection of patent rights and as a part time auditor- accountant at the Red Cross.

I was born in Kiev in 1931.

My parents didn't earn well and they had to take on additional typing work in the evening. We didn't have an apartment. We had a room. We lived in a four-story house. There were two apartments on each floor: one three- bedroom and one two-bedroom apartment. There was a bathroom on three floors, but there wasn't one on the fourth floor. The fourth floor was like an attic. We lived in the study on the fourth floor. Our neighbors lived in the bedroom and dining-room and we had a common kitchen. There were four of us in our family: my father and my mother, my sister Lena, born in 1937, and I. We joked that Lena had been born thanks to the Communist Party and the government that banned abortions. We had a photograph of the building under construction in Tereschenko Street, where we were supposed to move. My parents paid a monthly fee - a considerable amount of money - for an apartment in this building. We didn't have any riches, but we had a huge collection of books in Russian. This was a collection of classical literature, books about adventures and tours, historical books and a few encyclopedias. My father was very fond of reading and had a wonderful book collection. Through him I developed a love for reading.

Here is what my father had to do at work. If a writer wrote a play and this play was staged in a theater, he was supposed to receive a certain interest fee. My father had to go on audits all over Ukraine to make sure that the theaters were paying such fees. There was an authorized representative in each city and Papa worked with these employees. Often such representatives were free-lance employees of the Association of Writers and worked full- time in bookstores. They helped Papa to get books that he wanted to buy. There were lots of propagandizing publications at that time and buying a good book was a problem.

My father was very kind. Mama used to say that he was ready to sell anything if he wanted to bring me a chocolate. I was shy about asking him to get me something because I knew that it would be hard for him to refuse me. If I asked Mama about something that was beyond what she could afford her usual reply was, 'I wouldn't steal'. Therefore, it was easy to ask her about things, but it wasn't a pleasant thing to do because she could easily refuse.

One of my childhood memories is that we were living in Proletarskaya Street. When Gorky [12](#) died, I saw our janitor replacing the plaque with the name of our street to another one that said, 'Gorky Street' [gorky means 'bitter' in Russian]. I could already read at that time. I read the name, went home and said that I didn't want to live in 'bitter' street. My parents explained to me that it wasn't a 'bitter' Street, but Gorky Street, named after a writer that died.

Later I went to the kindergarten, but only attended it for two or three months. That wasn't because I didn't like it, but because I fell ill and it took me about half a year to get better. I got scarlet fever that turned into measles, and then chicken-pox, etc. I attended a group of frebelichka [tutor] for some time. Our tutor had five or six children to look after while their parents were at work. We stayed at her house, had meals - we brought snacks with us - and slept. Our parents were paying her for taking care of us. She was German and my mother hoped that she would teach me some German. She did try to explain things to us in German.

In 1937, when I was six, I remember that some fathers of the children from our yard had vanished. Adults didn't say anything to us kids, but we understood that these fathers were arrested and that we weren't supposed to ask questions about it. I remember one of my parents' discussions in the evening; they talked when they thought I was asleep. They were talking about my father's sister

Lena and her husband Misha Moiseyev, and I heard that they had been arrested. My parents took parcels with food and cigarettes - it was all that was allowed - to jail twice a week or even more often. If the jail officers accepted such parcels, that meant that a person was alive.

I went to a Russian school, located not far from our home in 1938. There were Jewish schools at that period, but neither my parents nor I knew Yiddish, so we didn't have a choice. We received second-hand textbooks during our first day at school: ABC and other books. There were portraits of leaders in these books with their eyes poked out. The children who had used the textbooks before us had been told that these leaders were enemies of the people; that was why they poked out their eyes and crossed them out. I remembered well the expression, 'enemy of the people' [13](#).

I remember very well the Jewish and Ukrainian children in my class. I already understood that people had different nationalities. In 1940 all Jewish schools in Kiev were closed and our class was placed in a formerly Jewish school. Few former schoolchildren from this school came to our class. Thus, there were quite a few Jewish children in our class. I can't quite remember how I knew whether one was or wasn't a Jew. It happened subconsciously, perhaps. But I can't remember any anti-Semitism among children or teachers at that time.

I remember, in 1940, after the Non-Aggression Pact [Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact] [14](#) with Germany was made, there was a ban on anti-fascist literature issued in our country. Such books were to be removed from libraries and destroyed. Papa brought home a few anti-fascist books. He couldn't let these books be destroyed. There were a few children's books among them. I remember the title of one book, 'Henry Starts Fighting'. Its main character was a boy that was helping his father in his struggle against fascism. I enjoyed reading these books. I was nine years old. The anti-fascist spirits of the population were high and the Non-Aggression pact turned out to be a big surprise for many people.

I remember how Haim, Anna's husband, was visiting us in the evenings and he and Papa argued passionately about whether there was or wasn't going to be a war. Papa said that there was going to be a war, considering the circumstances, and Haim maintained that the German working class would never allow a war against a socialist country. As for me, I had a dilemma: on one hand, I wanted Papa to be right, and on the other, I didn't want a war.

I also remember that one night I woke up hearing someone tramping on the staircase. Mama said, hearing the noise, 'They aren't coming here, are they?' It turned out that some late guests were visiting our neighbors, but my mother got very scared. Anybody could be arrested at that time.

We had a Ukrainian housemaid. She was very nice. She was more of a nanny than a housewife. She helped Mama about the house, but she mainly took care of us and would even punish us when we were naughty. We always had the radio on at home. We didn't observe any Jewish traditions, nor did we know any Jewish songs, but I remember my sister and I loudly singing revolutionary songs. We learned them at school. We went to parades on 1st May and 7th November. We also sang patriotic songs there and enjoyed it. My parents were apolitical people. They didn't sympathize with the Soviet power, they were afraid of it and tried to stay away from any politics.

In June 1941 I went to the pioneer camp for the first time. I stayed there for a week. Papa turned up one day and went to the director of the camp and told him that the war had begun. We packed quietly to prevent any panic and left. I was so sorry to leave the camp, but I enjoyed the ride home

from the railway station on a cart. It was a rare treat for me. We always walked because we didn't have money to pay for a ride. The following day my friend and I were seriously discussing the possibility of joining the army when we were out in the yard.

Kiev was overwhelmed with panic and Papa didn't want to wait until his enterprise began orderly evacuation. He said that if he were to go to the army, Mama wouldn't leave Kiev, but would be waiting for news from him. Papa wanted his family out of Kiev. He read anti-fascist books and had a very clear idea of what fascism was like. So, we packed and walked to Brovary [a small town on the outskirts of Kiev]. At Brovary railway station we saw the announcement that men of Papa's age, 46, were to join the army. He went to the supervisor of the train that was evacuating a children's home and asked him to take his family on the train. We left on this train: Mama, my four-year-old sister Lena, Mama's sister Anna, her husband Haim, their two sons and me; I was ten. My father returned to Kiev, destroyed all photographs and documents - they were important to him and he couldn't allow anybody else to have them - and went to the military registration office.

He mobilized on 9th July, and on 14th August 1941 he was severely wounded. It must have been a big battle, and the Red army and fascist units left the battlefield scattered with dead bodies. My father was unconscious and stayed on this battlefield for almost 24 hours. By chance, a Russian military cart was passing by. It picked my father up and took him to a field hospital. He stayed there from August till December. He was severely wounded: a few floating splinters near his heart and splinters in his legs. He didn't want to tell us any details; those were hard memories for him. Once he told us that German tanks drove over the trench that they were sitting in. Many of those sitting in the trench turned gray. For many years we dedicated two birthdays to my father. The second birthday was 14 August, because he survived on this day.

Papa didn't return to the front-line forces after the hospital. He went on a month's vacation and came to where we were in Penza region. He registered at the military registration office on the first day. He was sent to various military units six times, but they didn't accept him due to his condition and age. He returned and we were happy, but then he had to go to the registration office another time and again he was sent to another military unit. He then stayed at the military unit in Penza region. He served there for a year and a half as a private, first-sergeant and sergeant-major. He wasn't promoted because he didn't have an education. In 1944 their military unit was transferred to Moscow, and he served there until the end of the war.

We were in evacuation in Serdobsrk, Penza region. I remember the apartment that we rented from a landlady. Mama told the landlady that her husband was in the army, and the landlady asked immediately, 'Do they take Jews to the army?'. When we moved in our landlady took away our passports in which our nationality was indicated. Besides, we looked like typical Jews. I played with our neighbors' children. When asked about my father I answered that he was in the army. People used to tell me that Jews weren't taken to the army. I mean, people knew that we were Jews. Or boys would see me in the Street and say, 'Zhyd - rope-walker. The rope tore, killing the zhyd'. I fought with them angrily: I even scratched and bit them. They stopped teasing me after a while. I mean to say that I understood that they called me 'zhyd', but I didn't feel humiliated because I believed them to be fools. Mama was surprised. She thought that, as there had been no Jews in this area before, this was preplanned propaganda. This was my mother's interpretation of such hostile attitudes.

I went to the third grade of the Russian school. I don't remember any anti- Semitic attitude on part of other children or teachers. I studied well and could fight, if necessary.

Mama found a job at the tobacco production shop. She had to mill tobacco leaves with her feet. Her daily payment was three rubles - and one bucket of potatoes cost 300 rubles. When he left for the front, Papa told Mama that he would be writing to Hava, my mother's sister, in Leningrad so we didn't lose each other. Papa was very much afraid that if he went to the front, he would never see us again. But he found us promptly and we began to receive some payment as the family of a military. This payment was called 'certificate'. Papa was a private and we received 100 rubles.

We were starving. But within about a month a military transport plant from Belarus was evacuated to Serdobsck and Mama was employed as a planning department supervisor. She received a worker food card and my sister Lena received a children's card. I didn't receive a card, because I was over ten years old. I went to work when I was eleven. There was a farmyard and a kitchen garden at the plant. I weeded the kitchen garden, and received a card. There was a list of food products on the card, but not all of them were available. Besides, the products were of poor quality. Bread was half-done, for example. I dreamt of eating a lot of bread after returning to Kiev.

We tried to celebrate birthdays whatever the circumstances, especially children's birthdays. I remember birthday treats: Mama gave us a few slices of bread and a few dry beetroot slices. On my birthday Lena acted as a guest and I treated her; and on her birthday, I was her guest. We cut bread into small pieces and ate it with beetroots.

In summer 1942 Mama fell ill and the doctors suspected typhoid. We called the ambulance. My mother had gorgeous hair. I asked the nurse to not cut her hair. I understood that they were taking my mother to the ward for patients with typhoid. The nurse replied, 'Hair? She won't live until morning'. I was eleven and my sister Lena was five years old. But Mama survived.

I read books for adults at that time: Balzac, Maupassant, etc. Our landlady's daughter studied at a pedagogical college. She had to read a lot. She borrowed all these books from the library, but she didn't read them. There was a wonderful library in Serdobsck. I think it was because the authorities confiscated private collection after the revolution. In the first months I read Rabelais, Cervantes and [Homer's] 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey'. I remember these books very well.

We left Kiev on foot and didn't have any winter clothes with us. I went to school until September while it was still warm. I stayed at home through the winter and read books. In May Mama came home and told me that she'd discussed with the school director about letting me take the 5th grade admission exams. I went to school for a month and passed my exams successfully. I stayed at home most of the time in the 5th grade, but this time I knew how serious Mama was about school and I did my homework, exercises, read my German textbooks and passed my exams.

In 1944 we returned to Kiev by train. Our room was occupied by my nanny, her daughter and her daughter's child. We didn't receive the apartment that we had paid for before the war. We didn't get any money back, either. We didn't have anywhere to go and we stayed in this small room. There was no electricity or water. I fetched water from a pump a few blocks away from our house. The room was heated by a stove. Gas supplies were arranged in 1947 or 1948. The center of the city was completely destroyed. We played hide-and-seek in the ruins until Mama found out and forbade us to do it.

In 1948 Mama sold the only valuable possession that we had: her father's golden dental plate. She gave this money to the nanny so that she could buy a small room in the neighboring wooden building and move out. There was nothing left in our room - everything had been stolen. There was only an empty wardrobe left. My father returned from the army in 1945 and went to work at his previous job: auditor-accountant at the patent right supervision committee. When my father was receiving his passport after demobilization from the army, a clerk at the office suggested that he might have his nationality written as Russian, but my father refused.

My sister Lena and I went to the Russian school for girls, not far from our house. My favorite subject was literature; I liked to write compositions. After school I often ran into my former math teacher on my way home. He couldn't forgive me for not going to study at the department of mathematics.

We didn't face any anti-Semitism at school. There was one teacher of physics: she gave Jewish girls lower grades. She gave me a '4' at the final exam and I didn't receive a gold medal. I received a silver medal instead. My composition at the final exam was mentioned in a newspaper.

Our favorite teacher was Tamara Fyodorovna, a Ukrainian. She was a teacher of history and she spent a lot of time with us. We attended a historical club that developed into a drama club: we staged some excerpts from plays. I enjoyed it a lot. In the 10th grade I read *The Oppermans*, Jud Suess [Power] and then, *Success*, by Lion Feuchtwanger [15](#), and understood that sooner or later things end up with Jewish pogroms. It is just a matter of time. For how long had Germans lived in Germany and everything was fine until Hitler came to power giving a start to mass extermination of Jews? Well, what I mean to say is that one has to have a home. Our problem is that we were not born at home. Jews must have a country of their own.

I didn't choose my friends according to their nationality, but it so happened that I had more Jewish friends.

My sister Lena finished school in 1954. She faced anti-Semitism for the first time when she was finishing the 10th grade. She was supposed to finish school with a gold medal, but she was treated with prejudice and didn't get it. At the end of the academic year, correspondents came to their class to interview the best students. The teacher pointed at Lena saying that she was the best student in class. My sister and I have a typical Jewish appearance. The correspondents ignored her and interviewed other girls. It was then that she faced anti-Semitism and she was very upset. After school she entered the woodwork department at the Academy of Agriculture. She got a job at the design institute, furniture department and worked there her whole life.

After finishing school I was eager to study at the department of journalism at Kiev University. I had a medal and I was supposed to be admitted without exams. I submitted my documents and didn't even go there to inquire whether I was accepted or not, as I was sure that I was. However, it turned out that I wasn't. This was clearly a prejudiced attitude. According to the law I requested to be allowed to take exams in accordance to general procedures, but they didn't allow me to.

Before I obtained my documents, the entrance exams were over in all higher educational institutions. I met one of my acquaintances, a Jew. She had also tried to enter the university, but had failed. She told me that the Institute of Foreign languages had just been opened and that academic year there began on 1 October. Both of us had medals and we were the first attendees with medals and were admitted right away. I liked studying there. I learned English very well. We

were short of money, and I gave English lessons from my first year at school.

I didn't face any anti-Semitism during my studies at the institute. However, I wasn't admitted to the post-graduate school, even though I deserved it. Upon graduation I got a job assignment in the village of Yaroslavka, Khmelnytskyi region. It was a distant Ukrainian village, 60 kilometers from the railroad. I worked as an English teacher at school. The school rented me a room in a house in the village.

The establishment of Israel in 1948 passed by me. I wasn't interested in politics. I cared more about my private life. But I was hurt by any demonstration of anti-Semitism. I couldn't forgive anyone for such things.

During the winter vacation of 1953 I went to Kiev and fell ill. The doctor issued me a sick-leave certificate and I went back to school. I was absent for three days. It was the first time that I got a sick-leave and I didn't know that this certificate was to be stamped at the polyclinic. I submitted this sick-leave certificate to the accountant at school. He sent it to some place as if it were a false document without mentioning it to the director. They opened a criminal case against me and wanted to expel me from Komsomol [16](#). If one got expelled from Komsomol the next step was dismissal from work and an impossibility to get another job. The director of the school was a very decent man. He was trying to delay things and he stood up for me. Finally, Stalin died. The director didn't know that he would die, but he knew that it was necessary to drag out the case for as long as possible and that time would tell. After Stalin died in spring 1953 the case was closed. Stalin's death didn't make any impression on me. People around were crying, but I didn't care to cry.

At 26 I had a discussion about departure with a friend of mine. Moving to another country was so far from me that he said angrily, 'If you need a Communist Party, you'll find two there'. But I didn't care about the Communist Party. I just couldn't imagine living in a different country. When I worked in the village they were trying to drag me into joining the party, but I didn't give in. At first, I was always afraid of having to attend another meeting, and I understood that a party member couldn't ignore party meetings. Secondly, I knew that one day they would expel me anyway for violation of discipline. To cut a long story short, I didn't join the party then.

My father joined the Communist party in 1943 during the war. In 1953 my father's office fabricated a case. I don't remember exactly what it was about. Some employees were accused of some criminal actions. My father wasn't in this group, but they said that he wasn't watchful enough when it was his duty as a communist. Papa was expelled from the party and they wanted to open a case against him in court. A famous writer and dissident, Viktor Nekrasov [17](#), supported him. He was the only one that supported my father. After Stalin's death, this case was closed. Within about a year or a year and a half my father was called to the party office and his membership was restored. My father told me that the same people that expelled him were shaking his hand saying that they always understood how he felt. I asked him, 'Why did you want to be restored? You should just ignore them.' He replied, 'I got restored, because I didn't want my daughters to write in the questionnaires that their father was expelled from the party.' This could have been a reason for persecution at that time.

I couldn't find a job for a long time after I returned from the village. I wanted to teach at school. Directors were willing to employ me, but their human resources departments didn't give their consent. They told me openly at one place, 'Our goal now is to promote Ukrainian employees.' At

that time patent-right departments were established in many design institutes. They were checking a unit under development that had a patent abroad. They needed translators. By that time I had finished a course in German and French and studied Polish a little. I was employed by an institute and received the lowest salary possible.

In 1964 I married Aron Hankin, a Jew, born to the family of Leiba and Sophia Hankin in the town of Snovsk, Chernigov province, in 1927. Snovsk was renamed Schors [18](#) in honor of the hero of the Civil War. It was a very small town. The majority of its population was Ukrainian. They were farmers. There were rather few Jews in the town and there are none left at present. I know that there was a synagogue and a church in the town and that people were poor, but friendly. In the late 1920s the family moved to Kiev.

My husband's father, Leiba Hankin, was born in Snovsk in 1894. When I saw him for the first time I had the impression that he was a very important man. He looked like a school director. He studied at cheder, but at the time when we met he didn't observe any Jewish traditions, though both of his sons were circumcised. They knew about the Jewish holidays, but had no specific celebrations and didn't cook anything special on holidays. They spoke Russian in the family. Leiba didn't have a professional education. He worked as a packing specialist at the vegetable storage facility in Kiev. He died there in 1971.

My husband's mother, Sophia Hankina, nee Yegudina, was born in 1896. I don't know where she was born. She finished a private Jewish grammar school in Snovsk. Teaching was in Russian. She didn't have any professional education. She was a very nice, kind and intelligent woman. I lived with her for a year and came to like her a lot. Fasting at Yom Kippur was the only tradition that she observed. She didn't cover her head. She got married in 1923 and her husband told her that a woman had to do the housekeeping. He didn't allow her to go to work even during the war when they were in evacuation in Ufa. She died in Kiev in 1973.

They had two children. Their older son had the Jewish name of Faiba, but he used the Russian name [common name] [19](#) Fedia - for pronunciation reasons, he explained. He studied at school in Kiev and finished it in Ufa. He had a poor sight and wasn't recruited to the army. After the war he graduated from the Kiev Institute of Finance and worked at the bank for many years. He was a member of the Communist party. He died in 1987. He was married and his daughter lives in the US.

My husband, Aron Hankin, was born in Kiev in 1927. He studied at a Russian school in Kiev. He finished seven classes before their evacuation to Ufa where he continued his studies at school. They returned to Kiev in 1943.

He finished school in Kiev in 1945 and entered the department of philosophy at Kiev University. He graduated in 1949. Beginning in 1948, Jews were not admitted to university. However, he couldn't find a job. He had to work part time in 18-19 schools at a time, because there was one logic and psychology class a week at school. In the early 1950s he entered the department of mathematics at Krivoy Rog Polytechnic Institute and graduated. Later he finished a three-year course in cybernetics.

When we met in 1963, he was a teacher of mathematics at school. Later he read an announcement about a vacancy of a mathematician-cyberneticist at the Institute of Mathematics at the Academy of Sciences. He went to an interview and was employed. He was interested in the job, but the

salary was very low and it took some time for him to accept the job.

We got married in September 1964. We didn't have a wedding party. We just obtained our marriage certificate at the registration office. I moved into the apartment that my husband shared with his parents. It was an old communal apartment, and there was a 'splinter of the past' - an old woman in every room. I was short-sighted and had to put on my glasses to be able to tell who was who. Immediately after we got married we started paying fees for a new apartment.

In 1965 we moved into a small two-bedroom Khrushchovka [20](#) apartment. Our daughter Alexandra, or Sasha, was born in February 1966. When she was six months old I had to go to work and we started looking for a baby-sitter. A Ukrainian woman came for an interview and we came to an agreement with her. The following day her neighbor came to tell us that she didn't want to work for us because we were Jews. That was when we faced everyday anti-Semitism.

Our daughter often faced anti-Semitism demonstrations in her class. Some girls used to call us on the phone and say nasty things about Jews. Our daughter was a tight-lipped girl and spent her time with a book. She hardly had any friends at school. Her friends were our acquaintances' children. We had warm relationships in our family. We had many friends visiting our home with their children. We had up to 30 guests at birthdays or New Year celebrations.

We didn't celebrate religious or Soviet holidays. We were atheists and didn't raise our daughter religiously. After school our daughter graduated from Kiev Institute of Culture. She had the profession of an 'amateur group manager', but she couldn't find a job for many years. Every month we gave her a small amount of money. She got married in 1992, but her marriage only lasted four months. She didn't have any children. In the middle of the 1990s she became fond of the study, 'Jews for Jesus'. She changed and became more sociable and easy-going. She was going to get married. She died from brain aneurysm in 1999. She is buried in the Jewish cemetery in Kiev.

My sister Lena got married when she was almost 45. She doesn't have children. She and her husband are pensioners and live in a small apartment that belonged to our father.

I've never been interested in the Jewish history. My husband Aron took more interest in such issues. He used to buy books like 'Beware - Zionism!' [available at that time] and read them attentively. He also had a special scrap book where he kept articles on the subject. He also kept articles from newspapers. We still have this scrap book. Besides, he listened to the American Radio Liberty [21](#) every day. We read Samizdat underground publications, books that were forbidden by the Soviet censorship, and books by Solzhenitsyn [22](#), Zoshchenko [23](#), Bulgakov [24](#), etc.

In the 1970s my husband was trying to convince me to emigrate to Israel. I didn't mind, basically, but I was afraid that my parents - my father, in particular - wouldn't accept this decision. This was the main reason for my unwillingness to move. Besides, I am a woman of the Russian culture and I love Kiev. But this wouldn't have stopped me. I often think that if my husband had said to me that he would go alone, I would have followed him. But he has a soft character and he wouldn't have said anything like that. Our friends were leaving. I had a friend, and when he was leaving I said, 'I'm very happy for you and unhappy about myself. It's a pity you are leaving'.

I felt like a Jew only when I was hurt. My husband is different in this respect. He never forgot about his roots, religion and traditions of his people. He wanted to live where his people were living on

their own land.

My parents retired and spent all their time with their granddaughter and books. My mother died in 1985. My father died in 1991. Sasha grew up and refused to emigrate, without giving any reasons.

During Perestroika [25](#) in the 1990s I came across a book by the famous Zionist, Jabotinsky [26](#), that changed me. I read Isaac B. Singer [27](#). We couldn't find such books before. Now my national self-consciousness has returned to me. But I still believe that one cannot be proud of being Polish or Jewish. It's equal to be proud of being red-haired or blonde. But my heart aches when I hear about terrorist attacks in Israel. I have become chauvinistic about Arabs.

Many of our friends left in the 1990s. We couldn't afford to visit Israel. We've seen photos, guide-books and read books about it. My husband knows more about it than I do. We listen to all the news from Israel. We listen to Israeli programs in Russian on radio Reka [River] every night.

If there is love in absentia, I can say that I love this country. My sister Lena has never been interested in Jewish subjects, but when she visited Israel in 1995 she said that she had felt at home.

In the 1990s the Sholem Aleichem Society [28](#) was established in Kiev and I enjoyed going there. Its leader Sophia Polisker died, and no activities are conducted there today. It used to be a real Sholem Aleichem Society: we had meetings, dedicated to him and his writing, and other Jewish writers. We met with interesting people.

I participate in the daytime workshops at Hesed. I spoke there about poets in Israel twice. My article about Rachil Baumwol, an Israeli poetess, was published in the 'Jewish Tuning Fork' in Israel, in Egupets magazine in the Ukraine and in the US. Hesed supports us a lot. We receive food packages that make a very good addition to our small pension.

We haven't come to observing Jewish traditions yet, which is unfortunate. Perhaps our Jewish self-consciousness has come too late.

Glossary

[1](#) 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.

[2](#) 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.

3 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.

4 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.

5 Pogroms in Ukraine

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

6 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.

7 Blockade of Leningrad

On September 8, 1941 the Germans fully encircled Leningrad and its siege began. It lasted until January 27, 1944. The blockade meant incredible hardships and privations for the population of the town. Hundreds of thousands died from hunger, cold and diseases during the almost 900 days of the blockade.

8 Bund

The short name of the General Jewish Union of Working People in Lithuania, Poland and Russia, Bund means Union in Yiddish). The Bund was a social democratic organization representing Jewish craftsmen from the Western areas of the Russian Empire. It was founded in Vilnius in 1897. In 1906 it joined the autonomous fraction of the Russian Social Democratic Working Party and took up a Menshevist position. After the Revolution of 1917 the organization split: one part was anti-Soviet power, while the other remained in the Bolsheviks' Russian Communist Party. In 1921 the Bund dissolved itself in the USSR, but continued to exist in other countries.

9 Plekhanov, Georgy (1856-1918)

Russian revolutionary and social philosopher. He was a leader in introducing Marxist theory to Russia and is often called the 'Father of Russian Marxism'. He left Russia in 1880 as a political refugee and spent most of his exile in Geneva, Switzerland. Plekhanov took the view that conditions in Russia would not be ripe for socialism until capitalism and industrialization had progressed sufficiently. This opinion was the basis of Menshevik thought after the split in 1903 of the Social Democratic Labor Party into the Bolshevik and Menshevik factions. After the outbreak of the Revolution of 1917, he returned from exile. Following the triumph of Lenin he retired from public life.

10 Famine in Ukraine

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

11 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 day 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.

12 Gorky, Maxim (born Alexei Peshkov) (1868-1936)

Russian writer, publicist and revolutionary.

13 Enemy of the people

Soviet official term; euphemism used for real or assumed political opposition.

14 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact

Non-aggression pact between Germany and the Soviet Union, which became known under the name of Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Engaged in a border war with Japan in the Far East and fearing the German advance in the west, the Soviet government began secret negotiations for a non-aggression pact with Germany in 1939. In August 1939 it suddenly announced the conclusion of a Soviet-German agreement of friendship and non-aggression. The Pact contained a secret clause providing for the partition of Poland and for Soviet and German spheres of influence in Eastern Europe.

15 Feuchtwanger, Lion (1884-1958)

German-Jewish novelist, noted for his choice of historical and political themes and the use of psychoanalytic ideas in the development of his characters. He was a friend of Bertolt Brecht and collaborated with him on several plays. Feuchtwanger was an active pacifist and socialist and the rise of Nazism forced him to leave his native Germany for first France and then the USA in 1940. He wrote extensively on ancient Jewish history, also as a metaphor to criticize the European political situation of the time. Among his main work are the trilogy 'The Waiting Room' and 'Josephus' (1932).

16 Komsomol

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

17 Nekrasov, Viktor Platonovich (1911-1987)

Russian novelist and short story writer. He fought in Stalingrad during World War II and published Front-Line Stalingrad, a novel based on his experiences there, in 1946. His series of travel sketches with favorable comments on life in the US drew Khrushchev's personal condemnation and Nekrasov was forced to emigrate by the Soviet government.

18 Schors, Nikolai (1895-1919)

Famous Soviet commander and hero of the Russian Civil War, who perished on the battlefield.

19 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.

20 Khrushchovka

Five-storied apartment buildings with small one, two or three-bedroom apartments, named after Nikita Khrushchev, head of the Communist Party and the Soviet Union after Stalin's death. These apartment buildings were constructed in the framework of Khrushchev's program of cheap dwelling in the new neighborhood of most Soviet cities.

21 Radio Liberty

Radio Liberty, which started broadcasting in 1953, has served as a surrogate 'home service' to the lands of the former Soviet Union, providing news and information that was otherwise unavailable to most Soviet and post-Soviet citizens. During that time, the station weathered strong opposition from the Soviet Union and its allies, including constant jamming, public criticism, diplomatic protests, and even physical attacks on Radio Liberty buildings and personnel. In 1976, Radio Liberty was merged with Radio Free Europe (RFE) to form a single organization, RFE/RL, Inc.

22 Solzhenitsyn, Alexander (1918-)

Russian novelist and publicist. He spent eight years in prisons and labor camps, and three more years in enforced exile. After the publication of a collection of his short stories in 1963, he was denied further official publication of his work, and so he circulated them clandestinely, in samizdat publications, and published them abroad. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1970 and was exiled from the Soviet Union in 1974 after publishing his famous book, *The Gulag Archipelago*, in which he describes Soviet labor camps.

23 Zoshchenko, Mikhail Mikhailovich (1895-1958)

Russian satirist, famous for his short stories about average Soviet citizens struggling to make their way in a world filled with red tape, regulations and frustration. Zoshchenko was attacked in Soviet literature journals in 1943 for 'Before Sunrise', which he claimed was a novel whereas it appears to be more of a personal reminiscence. The Central Committee of the Communist Party condemned Zoshchenko's work as 'vulgar' and he published little afterwards.

24 Bulgakov, Mikhail (1891-1940)

Russian-Soviet writer. His satiric- fantastic writings deal mainly with the relationship of the artist and state power, and of art and reality. He also described the tragic fights of the Russian Civil War. Many of his works were published after his death.

25 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.

26 Jabotinsky, Vladimir (1880-1940)

Founder and leader of the Revisionist Zionist movement; soldier, orator and a prolific author writing in Hebrew, Russian, and English. During World War I he established and served as an officer in the Jewish Legion, which fought in the British army for the liberation of the Land of Israel from Turkish rule. He was a member of the Board of Directors of the Keren Hayesod, the financial arm of the World Zionist Organization, founded in London in 1920, and was later elected to the Zionist Executive. He resigned in 1923 in protest over Chaim Weizmann's pro-British policy and founded the Revisionist Zionist movement and the Betar youth movement two years later. Jabotinsky also founded the ETZEL (National Military Organization) during the 1936-39 Arab rebellion in Palestine.

27 Singer, Isaac Bashevis (1904-1991)

Yiddish novelist, short-story writer and journalist. Born in Poland, Singer received a traditional rabbinical education but opted for the life of a writer instead. He emigrated to the US in 1935, where he wrote for the New York-based The Jewish Daily Forward. Many of his novellas, such as Satan in Goray (1935) and The Slave (1962), are set in the Poland of the past. One of his best-known works, The Family Moskat (1950), he deals with the decline of Jewish values in Warsaw before World War II. Singer was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1978.

28 Sholem Aleichem Society in Ukraine

The first Jewish associations were established in many towns of the country in the early 1990s. Many of them were called Sholem Aleichem Society. They had educational and cultural goals. Their purpose was to make assimilated Soviet Jews interested in the history and culture of their people, opening Jewish schools, kindergartens, libraries, literature and historical clubs.