

Ludmila Pavlovskaya Biography

Kiev, Ukraine

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My grandfather on my father's side Bencion Pavlovskiy, born to the family of a handicraftsman in 1862, lived in Khorevaya street in Podol , Kiev. I don't have any information about my grandfather's parents. My grandfather was a tinsmith. He may have followed into his father's steps but this is my mere guess. My grandfather's first wife died leaving him with 3 children. I don't know anything about them, even their names.

My grandfather's 2nd wife was much younger than him. I guess, his children with his first wife were big enough to live their own life. My grandmother Rachel, nee Besitskaya, was born in Podol, Kiev, in 1878. I don't know anything about her family. She got married when she was very young. She was my grandfather's neighbor and they had known each other for a long time. My grandfather and grandmother had 2 children: my father's older sister Genia, born in 1897, and my father Vladimir Pavlovskiy, born on 6 January 1899. He was named Shloime-Wolf at birth.

I have very dim memories of my grandfather and grandmother. I was very young before the war. We visited them every now and then. I also know a little from what my parents told me. At that time it was not a tradition to tell children about their ancestors, so, I just heard bits of information that I tried to put together to make a picture of the family.

My father's parents were religious people. My father told me that his parents observed Jewish traditions and celebrated Jewish holidays and Sabbath. They spoke Yiddish in the family. They went to the synagogue in Schekavitskaya street in Podol. My father said that the family wasn't wealthy: they couldn't afford anything extra. But at Sabbath and Jewish holidays my grandmother always had a festive dinner and cooked all traditional food. My father said that his sister and he always looked forward to Sabbath and holidays because it was the only time when they could have enough food. My father studied at cheder and then finished 4 years at primary school. Unfortunately, my father didn't have an opportunity to continue his studies. He had to support his family. At 12 my father got a job of a "boy" (a word for an apprentice) in a store. He became a shop assistant and worked in this fabric store for 10 years.

My father's sister Genia studied at the Jewish school. She was a sickly child and she couldn't go to work when she grew up. She managed to finish 8 years of studies at the Jewish school. She finished then medical college and graduated from Medical Institute in Kiev. She became a physician. She was single and dedicated herself to her work. At the beginning of the war Genia evacuated along with the hospital where she was working. She spent the evacuation in Novosibirsk. The severe climate didn't agree with her and she returned to Kiev being very ill. She was confined to bed and died in 1949.

My father was very enthusiastic about the revolution of 1917. The residential boundaries and the percent rate of admission of Jews to the higher educational institutions were cancelled. Education was free of charge and anybody could get it. This all gave him hope for a better life. The revolution also called to give up faith in God. Religion was called "opium for the people". My father became an atheist and quit observing Jewish traditions.

Later my father worked as an assistant accountant, then as secretary at the provincial department of education in Kiev and secretary of the pedagogical council of the cooperative professional school. In 1930 he entered the working rabfak at the Institute of State Trade and in a year upon finishing this working people faculty and entered the cooperative trade institute. This institute was located in Kiev, but later it was transferred to Kharkov (Kharkov was the capital of the Ukrainian SSR) and renamed into the Institute of Soviet Trade. My father spent two years in Kharkov studying and working. He graduated from the institute in Kharkov in 1936 with the diploma of a commodity expert for manufactured goods. He was already married by this time.

The families of my grandfather and grandmother on my mother's side lived in Berdichev. My grandfather Mordko Ioselevich was born in 1860s. My grandmother's name was Tzylia. I don't know her nee name. She was one or two years younger than my grandfather.

They had two daughters: my mother Clara, named Haya at birth, was born on 18 September 1905 and her sister Sonia, born in 1910.

My mother's parents were religious. The majority of population in Berdichev was Jewish. There were also Ukrainians and Russians. They all spoke Yiddish, including the Russian and Ukrainian population. All Jewish families were religious and observed Jewish traditions before the revolution of 1917. There were few synagogues in Berdichev. On Saturday and on holidays my mother's family went to the synagogue. They observed Jewish traditions and celebrated Sabbath and Jewish holidays. They spoke Yiddish in the family. The daughters received Jewish education. They had a Jewish teacher teaching them at home. My mother and her sister knew Hebrew, and could read and write both in Hebrew and Yiddish. My mother said that they had a menorah and hanukkah at home. My grandfather had a thales and a tfilin. On weekdays my grandfather put on his thales and tfilin to pray at home. I don't remember any more details of the religious way of life.

When I was growing up the children we were raised atheists. Religion was considered to be vestige of the past. We were all Soviet people having no nationality or national traditions. Even this little that my mother told me she was saying in whisper. She also told me about Jewish pogroms in Berdichev. Nobody in the family suffered from them, but they often had to hide in cellars or in the attic. My mother told me that sometimes bandits killed Jews. My grandfather was a watch and

clock specialist. He had a shop and two employees. My grandfather also fixed jewelry in his shop. After the revolution of 1917 the authorities were putting a lot of pressure on my grandfather. He had to pay very high taxes until the Soviet power expropriated my grandfather's shop in 1924. He was desperate and committed suicide. My mother was living in Kiev when she heard about it.

My mother and her sister Sonia went to a Jewish lower secondary school. My mother went to work after the revolution of 1917. She gave private mathematics classes for some time. Later she became an apprentice at the sewing shop. She did portion of work at home to be able to go to school. In 1924 my mother left Berdichev for Kiev looking for a better job and the possibility to get education. From 1924 to 1929 my mother took all kinds of minor jobs and rented rooms from different landlords in Kiev. She was an agent in the proletariat newspaper "Communist". Her responsibility was distribution of badges with Lenin and Stalin. Later she was a cashier at a canteen and worked at the streetcar garage. In 1929 she got a job of a puncher at the factory of the 10th anniversary of October in Pechersk. My mother was a very good employee and a shock worker (udarnik in Russian) of labor. She had some privileges.

The shops were empty and it was next to impossible to buy anything in stores. Udarniks of labor received special cards enabling them to buy goods without having to stand in endless lines and buy a certain food package in special stores once a week. My mother told me that she could buy 1 kg cereal, 2 kg bread, 2 tins of fish a week and 3 meters of cotton once in 3 months. It may sound funny for today, but at that time it was a lot. My mother worked at this factory 3 months and then the factory issued her a recommendation to the trade faculty for working young people (rabfak). My mother studied at the rabfak for a year and then she entered the cooperative trade institute where my father was studying. My mother was a first year student and my father was a senior student. They met at the students' canteen. Students received coupons for a plate of soup and a piece of herring at the canteen. My mother said that my father always sat at the nearby table and kept looking at her. They were young and handsome. They got married in 1933. They had a civil ceremony. My mother made a gauze dress. They couldn't afford a wedding party. There was a horrific famine in 1933. My mother fell ill with tuberculosis and had hemoptysis.

In 1935 the institute moved to Kharkov and my father went there. My mother felt very ill and couldn't go. She had to go to work to survive. She got a job as a secretary at the "Lesosplav" (timber facility) logistic department. Later this year she went to work as a secretary at the Ukrainian Association of Cooperators.

In 1936 upon graduation my father returned to Kiev and worked as senior textile commodity expert at the department store. In a year he got a job offer from Ukrtextileshveitorg (what kind of..?) and he worked there as a senior textile commodity expert until the war began.

My mother had 3 friends that moved to Kiev from Berdichev: Sonia Yanovskaya, Shelia and Fania – I don't remember their last names. They were all Jews. They were my mother's childhood friends and remained her friends for the rest of her life. They were married and we all got together with them. They died a long time ago. My mother also had Ukrainian and Polish friends, but I didn't know them. They were her colleagues and they must have met somewhere else as well. I was born in Kiev on 7 April 1936 when my mother was 31 and my father was 37 years old. I don't know where my parents lived before I was born, but after my birth they were living in a 5-story building

in 5, Proreznaya street in the center of Kiev. It was a communal apartment with many rooms and many tenants. We lived in a small room. There was a common kitchen where all women of this apartment got together in the evening cooking dinner for their families. There were lines to the bathroom and toilet in the morning. My mother went to work before I turned 1 year old. I went to the day nursery and then to the kindergarten.

We got along well with our neighbors. They all tried to support and help one another. I don't remember whether there were Jews among our neighbors. I didn't have an idea who a Jew was at that time. We were an ordinary assimilated family. We only spoke Russian at home. My parents only switched to Yiddish when they didn't want me to understand the subject of their discussion. Later when I studied German at school I began to grasp the meaning of words in Yiddish. However, I could only understand some words. I didn't know Yiddish. We had guests at home. Most often it was my mother's sister Sonia visiting us. She moved to Kiev after my mother came here. Aunt Sonia finished rabfak and the accounting course. She married Iosif Shehtman, a Jew, when he was a student of the Kiev Engineering and Construction Institute. Iosif graduated from the Institute in the same year as my father and began to work as a foreman at the construction site. After the war he became manager of a construction trust and worked there until retirement. Aunt Sonia worked as an accountant for some time, but after her daughter Mara was born (we are the same age with her) she quit her job and became a housewife. She had kidney problems.

After evacuation in the Ural her condition got worse. Aunt Sonia died at the age of 46 in 1956. Her daughter Mara graduated from the Kiev Road Institute and became an engineer. She got married and had a daughter. Her husband died and she moved to the US with her daughter's family in the early 1970s. She lives there now.

My friends were children in the kindergarten. I don't know their nationality. My mother took me to the kindergarten before 8 o'clock in the morning. I stayed there a whole day and came home in the evening. We were raised patriots in the kindergarten. We were told that the Soviet children had the happiest childhood in the world thanks to grandfather Lenin and grandfather Stalin. The first thing I saw entering the kindergarten in the morning was a big portrait of Lenin and another big portrait of Stalin in the lobby. We learned poems glorifying our Communist Party and its leaders by heart and sang patriotic songs. We were told about the sufferings of children in capitalist countries and about a happy life of the Soviet children. I heard this every day since I was 3 years old and took it for granted for a long time since then never giving it another thought. We also danced and listened to what our tutor read to us. When the weather was warm we stayed outside playing with a ball and "seek-and-hide". In summer the kindergarten spent time in the country house in the outskirts of Kiev.

My parents didn't take any vacations. They were working and work was their life. Many people lived according to the popular slogan of that time "You must first think about your Motherland and then about yourself". These were the people that could only work in the name of the right but rather illusory future and didn't know how to rest and care about themselves and their families. My parents didn't celebrate any Jewish holidays. They didn't celebrate Soviet holidays either, but not because they were against them, but because they could hardly cope with everyday expenses and just couldn't afford any celebrations. We have always had little money. I can't remember even my parent's birthday celebrations in my family. We had guests on some of my birthdays. When I

turned five my mother said that we were going to a photo shop. This was an important event. We had never had any pictures taken before. We couldn't afford it. This happened the first time in my life. The photographer gave me a plaster cat and said that it would look like a real cat in the picture.

I don't remember the day when the war began. My first memory of the war was of me sitting on a chair and my mother pulling stockings onto my legs. I was crying. I didn't want to wear stockings on such a hot day. This was the day when we were leaving home. It was over 60 years ago and I was only 5, but this day imprinted on my memory forever. Kiev was bombed and it was very scaring. There were 3 of us going to evacuation. My father had nephrolithiasis and he suffered from it a lot. The authorities didn't summon him to the front. My father wanted his parents to go with us, but my grandfather and grandmother were very old and they refused to go point blank. Besides, my grandfather believed that we didn't have to go. He met Germans during WWI and was trying to tell my father that Germans were civilized people and didn't have anything against Jews.

My grandfather said that if he managed to get along with the Bolsheviks Germans would be no problem whatsoever. My grandfather and grandmother stayed in Kiev. Later we heard that they were shot by Germans in the Babi Yar on 29 September 1941. My mother's mother Tzylia perished in Berdichev during mass shootings of Jews in 1941. My mother's distant relative from Berdichev found in the empty half-ruined house of my grandmother a family photograph of my grandmother and grandfather and their daughters and sent it to my mother. The picture was covered with mold stains and torn. This is the only picture of my mother's parents that we have. We went to the evacuation in railcars for cattle transportation. Our trip lasted a month. Our carriage was full of people. We were leaving in summer and didn't have any warm clothes or boots with us. One family was allowed to take two suitcases of luggage. We took underwear, documents, family pictures, children's books, toys and my only fancy gown that my mother had made me before the war. We were sure that we were leaving for a short time. I remember numerous air raids. The train stopped and people jumped off the train to hide. After the bombing was over we got on the train again.

We stayed in Stalinsk (Novokuznetsk at present), Kemerovo region in Siberia, about 2500 km from Kiev. My parents went to work at the metallurgical plant producing steel for tanks. My father was production engineer and my mother worked at the plant training school. We lived in a small room in a 3-storied dull gray building in Stalinsk. There was one kitchen and one bathroom on each floor. Each family had its own primus stove in the kitchen. There were few trees in the yard where children played. I went to the kindergarten in Stalinsk. We didn't have enough food. I remember the delicacy of that time: my mother washed potato peels and made potato pancakes. Food was distributed per cards. We received bread, peas and some cereals. We didn't get any meat, butter or sweets. When winter came my father obtained a card to get one pair of boots and a quilted jacket. That was all we had. We wore these clothes in turn.

My father was awarded the order of Red Star for Labor. It was given to him by secretary of Kemerovo regional Party Committee. My parents were not Party members. They didn't explain why they didn't become Party members. The so-called "triangle" of the plant – director, party leader and chairman of the construction committee – greeted my father.

In 1943 the Soviet army liberated Stalingrad. My father was sent to do reconstruction and we all moved to Stalingrad. My father worked at the “Krasny Oktiabr” metallurgical plant that manufactured something for the military and was involved in the reconstruction of Stalingrad. The city was all ruined. At first we lived in a dugout in Stalingrad. We fetched water from the Volga. The water was contaminated with oil and it was impossible to drink it. Later we received two rooms in the barrack for the workers of the plant. We were living in one room and kept some junk in another. We were used to huddling together and couldn't imagine why we might need another room.

In Stalingrad I went to a Russian secondary school. Children went to school at 8 and I only turned 7 in 1943, but I was well prepared for school: I could read and count. I was admitted on condition that if I failed they would expel me. I studied well. Our teacher Galina Alexandrovna Buzina was a young woman, but she seemed old to me. When she needed to go out she gave me a book and I read it in front of the class. I don't know whether there were Jewish children in our school. Nationality didn't matter to us. This issue became significant when we returned to Kiev.

There was a concert hall at the plant and there was a piano on the stage. One of the evacuated women was a music teacher. She formed a music class and auditioned children for it. I was admitted. She taught us music and we played our drills on the piano. In half a year I completed the program of two years at the music school. My teacher called my mother to tell her that I had talent and had to continue my studies. But my parents couldn't afford it.

My father got a job assignment in Kiev and we returned in 1946. We could hardly make ends meet and music studies were just out of the question. But I always loved music.

We didn't have a place to live in Kiev. Our house in Proreznaya Street was destroyed. Later the house was reconstructed, but we didn't get back our apartment. We were moving from one place to another until we rented a room in a private house in Vinogradny Lane, Pechersk. It was an old big house. We lived there until my father got a room in a two-room apartment in Chokolovka, a distant neighborhood in Kiev. There was another tenant in another room, but it was our first good dwelling. This was the first time we got a room of our own. We had to rent apartments before.

My father was a textile commodity expert at the textile sales department. He was a quality assurance inspector for the fabrics manufactured at enterprises. He retired at 70. My mother didn't work for some time after returning to Kiev. In the late 1940s my mother got diabetes. She had few surgeries and she couldn't go to work. She distributed theater tickets for some time, but then she quit. I finished 3 grades in Stalingrad and went to the 4th grade in Kiev. I went to Russian secondary school #118 in Podol, because we were residing in Podol at that time. We had to hide from raids all the time – militia was searching for those who didn't have a residence permit and sent them out of Kiev. I went to the 5th form in school #147 near the Musical Comedy Theater and later I went to school #82 in Engels street. When school #51 was reconstructed I went to this school and completed my secondary education in it. It was a school for girls. The following year after I finished school boys and girls began to study together.

I was a young Octobrist and a pioneer at school. I took an active part in the social life. In the 7th grade I became a Komsomol member. We had to know by heart the names of the leaders of the Communist Party in all countries as well as many other dull and useless things. It was an exam that we had to pass to become a Komsomol member. We were admitted at the district Komsomol

committee and we were very nervous about being good at our responses. Actually we were asked easier questions and were all admitted. We were very happy about it and wore our Komsomol badge proudly.

I always took part in preparations to the Soviet holidays. We arranged concerts and invited our parents. We also made little flags and paper flowers for the parades. It was mandatory for teachers and schoolchildren to go to parades. When we became senior schoolchildren we had cadets of the Suvorov military school invited to our parties at school. We danced and our teachers were sitting at tables and talking. In Kiev I realized that I was a Jew and faced anti-Semitism. I didn't face anti-Semitism before the war. Perhaps, I was too young then. There were no discussions on this subject in our house before the war. I understand now that my parents avoided any political discussions in my presence. They understood that I could speak out what I wasn't supposed to say at the wrong place. When I grew older I came to understanding many things.

I was 12 when struggle against cosmopolites began in 1948. The words "cosmopolite" and "Jew" became synonyms. We couldn't even understand what these people did wrong to become cosmopolites. I remember the hatred in the eyes of non-Jews when they pronounced the word cosmopolite. We were told at school about cosmopolites scheming against the Soviet way of life. I can't even remember what exactly they were saying but they said it to implant hatred towards innocent people. It was the first time when I realized that I disagreed with what our teachers were saying. I didn't know whether it was true or not, but I disliked these demonstrations of public hatred. My parents never commented on this subject. People were so intimidated that they were afraid to speak even in the presence of their children. Perhaps, they were right to do so. Few generations of the Soviet children were raised by the example of Pavlik Morozov that was a hero for us.

In 1953 the "doctors' case" began. I was shocked to see all these Jewish names in the "Pravda" newspaper. I remember this newspaper with the list of names of these Jewish doctors - "murderers and poisoners" and the picture of the woman - the "lover of truth" that denounced them and was awarded the Order of Lenin for her vigilance. In 1960s, though, when the truth was found she had to return her award, but she caused extermination of several innocent people.

I finished school in 1953. That year Stalin died. I heard about his death at school. It was such a shock! We cried and wailed. We were afraid of the future. We felt as if it was the end of the world. From the very childhood we have been told that Stalin was the wisest, kindest and most fair leader and we believed every word of it. But I don't remember my parents crying. Later we heard about Stalin's funeral in Moscow. Many people that came to pay their last respects to the "chief of all times and people" from all over the USSR perished in the crowds. Then was the XX Congress of the Communist Party and Khrushchov's speech. He spoke about the crimes of Stalin and his comrades. We were all shocked. We didn't know how to react to this. We couldn't believe what we heard. After Stalin's death we still believed in Lenin's ideas for over 30 years and thought that Stalin betrayed his predecessor and teacher, but the idea was communism was the best. It was brainwash of all people when the ideas instilled into them became a dogma and a common rule to follow. And this all collapsed all of a sudden in 1990s I had a feeling that I didn't feel the ground under my feet any longer. When we heard the truth about millions of Soviet political prisoners and execution of thousands of innocent people we felt scared of life. There was no support to hold to. What were we

supposed to believe in? I lived many years with this feeling.

I was fond of literature at school. Our teacher of the Russian language and literature Raissa Efimovna Leskova was a wonderful teacher. She taught me to love reading and books. My favorite writers are Pushkin and Turgenev. I like a Jewish writer Sholom Alechem , but I can only read his books in Russian.

My closest friend was my classmate Mary Fridman, a Jewish girl. We are still closest friends. Mary and I were the only nominates for a gold medal at the end of school. We both got good marks at the final exams I got a “good” in geometry and she – in composition. Gradation: “5” (excellent – the highest grade) and finished school with a silver medal. It was important to have a gold medal. Medallists were not required to take entrance exams at the higher educational institutions. A special commission reviewed all documents submitted by applicants and decided who to admit. This process was also called “the competition of line 5” . I submitted documents to the chemical engineering faculty at the Polytechnic Institute. I didn’t get any response for a long time. I went there myself asking the commission to return my documents if I were not admitted. They replied that I would receive their response by mail. I was very nervous, because exams were at the same time in all institutes and I might be late with the submittal of my documents to another institute. In a week before the document submittal due date I received their response that I was not admitted. I went to Ivanovo in Russia because I understood that it was impossible for a Jew to enter the institute in Kiev. I entered the Chemical Engineering Institute in Ivanovo. There was not so much anti-Semitism in Russia. It is hard to explain why it was so. Perhaps, the reason was that there were fewer Jews in Russia than in Byelorussia and Ukraine. People told jokes about Jews, but there was no such beastly hatred in them. They were kind and nice. I felt homesick at first. But then I got used to the new place and liked it there. People were very nice there. They drank a lot, though, but I took no notice of that. I was a Komsomol and later a trade union leader in my group and I felt equal among students. There were other Jewish students from Vinnitsa, Ukraine: Ilia Lubliner and Maya Khutorianskaya. They got married upon graduation. Some lecturers were Jews. Lecturer in our group was a prominent chemist and physicist Konstantin Yatsemirskiy. Later he moved to Kiev and worked at Kiev University. I also remember a lab assistant from the chair of organic chemistry Bella Guseva. I lived in her apartment until I got accommodation at the hostel.

I was one of the best students. I could choose a job upon graduation, but I wanted to go home. My parents grew older and needed somebody to help and support them. They went to the authorities to obtain a permit for me to get a job at the Darnitsa silk factory. I returned to Kiev. At Darnitsa factory I worked as an assistant foreman at the dye-shop. I had a double workload, but it didn’t even occur to me to protest. I believed that upon graduation it was my duty to complete 3 years of my job assignment where I was sent by Komsomol. We worked in 3 shifts. It was a very hard work. I worked there few years and then went to work at a dye-house in Podol. We worked in two shifts there that was easier.

Later I went to work at the chemical reagent plant “RIAP” (“reagents, indicators and analytical preparations). I liked it very much. It was an interesting job. My colleagues were intelligent young people. But I had to work with airwaves and I fell ill. Doctors told me that I had to quit my job. At that time the Ukrainian Scientific Research Textile Institute was established. I was lucky to get a job there. I worked at this institute about 5 years. Then the Ministry of Light Industry was established

and I got a job of decorator. I was responsible for selection of paints and reagents for the goods and fabrics and made patterns and drawings. I worked at the Ministry for 23 years. Then we were notified that the Ministry was to be eliminated in two-months' time. I returned to the research institute where I had been working before I got a job at the Ministry. I worked at this institute until retirement.

In 1964 my parents and I received a separate two-room apartment on the 5th floor. There was no elevator and it was difficult for my parents to go upstairs. But we were happy. I got a room of my own and my friends could visit me.

My father retired at 70 in 1968. He didn't work for a year. Life became more difficult. His pension was very small. My mother didn't work. She was a housewife. In a year my father had to go back to work. He worked as a lift operator, a janitor at a storage facility, at a printing house and a cloakroom. When he turned 89 I begged him to retire. He couldn't live without work. Staying at home was a problem for him. He was used to be among people. But at 89 he couldn't do any work at all. I had to take him to work and then pick him up to take home. My parents were my family. I dedicated all my time to them. My father died in 1990 and my mother died in 1995.

After the war I felt anti-Semitism all the time. It wasn't only on the state level, but also, in everyday life. Whenever I came to an office looking for a job they gave me a questionnaire to fill in and told me to bring it the following day. It was an employment procedure between 1940s-80s. The following day I submitted my questionnaire where it was written that I was a Jew and they told me that they had no vacancies left, even if I brought back my questionnaire first thing in the morning. As if they could have hired somebody at night. My first and last names are not Jewish and they couldn't determine that I was Jew at our first meeting. It happened so often. And if I was lucky and got a job I believed it to be God's grace.

I feel anti-Semitism in everyday life even now. An anti-Semite can always tell whether one is a Jew. I don't know how they do it. I cannot tell you how many times I heard "Go to your Israel". Once in spring in the late 1960s I was going to work past our janitor in the yard. She was watering flowers from a hose. She directed the hose at me. I asked her what she was doing and heard a customary phrase about going to Israel. There were also various situations at work. I tried to have no contacts with such people, but it was more like the policy of an ostrich hiding his head in the sand. I had an inferiority complex developed. I felt myself defective.

In 1970s people began to emigrate to Israel. I sympathized with those that were leaving, but I didn't even consider such option. I had to take care of my parents and couldn't leave them. I grew up in this country. I've lived my life here. I've lived in the Soviet reality. My roots and graves of my relatives are here. I am a part of this land. I couldn't live anywhere else. Many of my friends and acquaintances left at that time. But I have never regretted that I decided to stay.

In the recent years the attitude towards Jews has changed. The Jewish way of life has revived. It is possible to discuss Jewish issues with non-Jews. My life has changed. There is Hesed where one can feel oneself a person of value. There is a club "Freindshaft" ("friendship" in Yiddish) and I attend it. I love it there. There are many older people attending the club, but I feel very comfortable among them. They are my people. We understand each other well having common problems and

common views in life. It is very important, especially that my parents died and I am alone now. I tell these people about a Jewish writer or a poetess and they listen to me with interest. We listen many interesting lectures. I attend lectures on Jewish history. Historians, artists and writers come to visit us. This club is my family. When the line "nationality" was removed from the passport I thought it was good. But now I am not so sure. Perhaps, it had to be done in the situation of anti-Semitism. But now I think that everybody has to be proud of his nationality.

I am proud of my people. Their history accounts to many centuries. My people have suffered and struggled for its rights, religion and traditions. I attend celebration of Jewish holidays at our club. I am learning about Jewish holidays now. All people become religious when they grow old. I believe that there is God and everything happens by His will. However, I don't go to the synagogue and I don't fast. I am too old for it now. I am very happy to look at young Jews that identify themselves as Jews and are proud of their Jewish identity.