Galina Shkolnikova

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Galina Idelevna Shkolnikova is not a very tall woman. She is slim, has straight grayish hair and a high forehead and wears glasses. She lives alone in a three-bedroom apartment that is full of books. Her children have families of their own and live in Saint-Petersburg. She is active and mobile; in the summer she visited her husband's brother in Astrakhan. She is an engineer by occupation and is now retired. Her speech is correct and she very scrupulously corrected inaccuracies in her biography's text. She is a very calm and intelligent person.

My family background

I was born in 1938 in the city of Leningrad. My paternal grandfather, Mordekhay Abramovich Farber, was born in 1868 in the town of Alushta, Tavricheskaya province. I only know that he had a sister and a brother. He had a serious quarrel with his brother early in life and didn't keep in touch with him after that. None of the relatives knew the reason for that quarrel. They assumed that it was about the difference in their material status. I don't know what education my grandfather had either. His job was related to forestry.

My paternal grandmother, Doba Yuliyevna Farber [nee Moina], was born in 1872. She became an orphan at an early age and was raised by her relatives. I don't know if she had brothers or sisters. She didn't have any education and took care of the household.

In the beginning my grandparents lived in the town of Berislav [150 km west of Kiev]. They had seven children and their first child, a girl, died as an infant. After that my father Idel was born, then Sarah, David, Isaac, Abram, Revekka and Rakhil. Grandfather Mordekhay worked in Nikopol, Southern Ukraine, as a log storage manager and had a house with a big garden on the bank of the Dnepr river. During the NEP 1 he organized a swimming pool and a boat-house in the garden, where his younger sons Isaac and Abram worked as boatmen.

Grandmother Doba and her daughters were keen on sewing and clothes- designing, besides keeping the household. They liked to wear beautiful and fashionable clothes. Aunt Rakhil and her daughter Eleonora still preserve this passion.

The Farber family was very close; the children subsequently left for various cities but always kept in touch with each other. My grandparents tried to provide education for their children. The two older sons graduated from the commercial school in Nikopol; the younger sons didn't manage to study there and finished Soviet schools, but all the seven boys got higher education.

My grandparents' mother tongue was Yiddish, but they spoke Russian in the family. They switched to Yiddish when they wanted to conceal something from the children or the maids. The boys studied Hebrew, probably in cheder. I don't know if the girls studied Hebrew. They all - grandfather, grandmother and their children - spoke very good Ukrainian.

My grandparents were religious people. All Jewish traditions were observed and all holidays were celebrated in the family. They attended the synagogue. Grandfather Mordekhay solemnly trampled on the New Testament on Sabbath, which was specially kept at home for that purpose, showing his belonging to Judaism and his denial of Russian Orthodoxy. However, all their children grew up as atheists. They left their home early in order to get education, and they lived their own life, which was common for Soviet intellectuals of that time. They never observed Jewish traditions.

My grandfather died in Nikopol in 1931, and, obviously, as a pious man, was buried according to the Jewish custom. After his death my grandmother moved to her older daughter Sarah and helped her to raise her little son, who was born in 1931. In 1934 a tragedy happened. The boy went for a walk with his grandmother, was hit by a car and killed. After that my grandmother moved to her son, my father Idel, who lived in Leningrad. She lived with our family and died in besieged Leningrad at the end of 1941. She didn't keep the Jewish tradition alive after she moved in with her children, because they were atheists. She was buried in the Volkov cemetery, but her grave doesn't exist any more because a bomb hit the place.

In my opinion, a lot of our relatives had successful lives. God was merciful to them: they survived repression, genocide and the war, though some of the relatives perished during the Holocaust. My father's older sister, Sarah Matveyevna Shevchenko [nee Farber], was born in 1898. She took the patronymic of her father's common name. She graduated from the Agricultural Institute in Dnepropetrovsk and worked as a veterinarian. Her Russian husband worked as an agronomist. They had three children: two daughters, Kima and Alvina, and a son, Leonid, who died at the age of 3, when he was hit by a car. Their family lived in Moscow. During the war they were in evacuation.

After the war public anti-Semitism started. [The interviewee refers to the campaign against 'cosmopolitans'.] 2 I think it's much more difficult for half-breds to endure it than for 'pure' Jews, especially if the mother is Jewish. They are torn between their natural love for their mother and the intention to conceal their identity of a 'despised' nation. My cousins found themselves in such a situation. Kima fell in love with her university mate. They studied at the Legal Faculty of the MGU [Moscow State University]. Kima was expecting a baby, and they planned to get married, but the fiancé's parents found out that the bride's mother was a Jew and flatly objected to the marriage. Their son was under their thumb. Kima now rests in the Promised Land. Her son, his Russian wife and their five children live in Israel.

Kima's sister Alvina concealed her marriage to a Russian from her mother for three months. They all lived together later on because Alvina's husband was from Moscow. Everything seemed quiet on the surface, but her husband was warped any time he heard the name of his mother-in-law. Sarah felt it and got very upset. She died in Moscow in 1968.

David Markovich Farber translated his father Mordekhay's name into Russian as Mark and so did his older brother, my father. All the other children used the name Matvey for their patronymic. David was an accountant, an economist. His wife was a Jew and worked as an accountant too. They were in evacuation in Siberia during the war. Their son Yuriy, born in 1927, was in the book trade. They lived and died in Moscow.

My father's other brother, Isaac Matveyevich Farber, got his education in Dnepropetrovsk. He was a talented engineer, worked in Baku and married Rimma Lvovna Chernyaeva, a Jew. They had no children. Isaac died young of cancer in Moscow and was buried there.

My father's younger brother, Abram Matveyevich Farber, also got his education in Dnepropetrovsk and was an engineer, too. His wife was a housewife. They lived in Moscow. Abram worked at Sovmin [Council of Ministers]. He was a very cheerful and witty man and liked to play tricks on everybody, including himself. He participated in the war, returned to Moscow after the war and worked at the Institute of Oil. He continued to work even when he was dying of cancer. His children, a son and a daughter, also became engineers.

Revekka Matveyevna Farber married a Russian, but didn't change her last name. Her husband was in the war, beginning with the Finnish war 3 and concluding with the war with Japan 4. He was a politruk [political official]. She was a doctor, an epidemiologist, and worked in besieged Leningrad during the war. Her daughter, Victoria, born in 1937, graduated from the Electro-Technical Institute named after Bonch-Bruyevich. Revekka died in Leningrad in 1970 and was buried in the 'Victims of 9th January' cemetery 5.

My father's younger sister, Rakhil Matveyevna Farber, born in 1909, graduated from the Dnepropetrovsk Agricultural Institute as an engineer- technologist in wine-making. She moved to Voronezh after graduation and married Abram Davidovich Gilevich, who worked as a commodity researcher in the book trade. During the war they were in evacuation in Siberia, and they lived in Lvov after the war. Aunt Rakhil's daughter graduated from the Lvov Medical Institute. It seems to me that anti-Semitism was felt less in Russia as compared to Ukraine, especially its western part. In any case, my cousin took a lot of efforts to move from Lvov to Moscow during the Soviet times, before the Soviet Union broke up. The reason for moving was anti- Semitism, both in everyday life and in state enterprises. At present she lives in Moscow with her mother and son and works as a radiologist. Aunt Rakhil is my only aunt who's still alive.

My maternal grandfather, Yankel-Movshe Yosel-Girshevich Yezersky, was born in 1860 in the town of Volkovysk, Grodno province [200 km from Minsk], which was part of the Russian Empire at that time. He was an Irregular Army warrior in 1878 [Editor's note: This was a form of draft to the Russian Army during the Russian-Turkish war of 1877-1878, which was aimed at the liberation of Bulgaria.] He probably obtained Jewish education because he worked as a melamed in his youth. My mother later wrote in all Soviet questionnaires that she was the daughter of a teacher.

My maternal grandmother, Riva Simkhovna Yezerskaya, was born in 1861. She didn't get any education and was a housewife. In the beginning my grandparents presumable lived in Brest-Litovsk, where their three older children were born: Froim-Peisakh, Iosif and Feiga. As the family grew bigger, my grandfather's salary as a melamed became insufficient to make a living for the family. With the help of a relative, he opened the 'Butter- Cheese-Yezersky' store in the town of Yekaterinoslav. Unfortunately, I don't know, how big the store was or how many employees worked there. At that time my grandfather changed his last name to Yezersky, probably for the advertisement to sound more euphonious. Before that the family name was Katzman or something the like. The change happened in the 1890s. Later all members of the family were called Yezersky.

After a ten-year period another three daughters were born in Yekaterinoslav: Shprintsa-Rochel, Lyuba and Sima, my mother. The three older children didn't get any education; the three younger ones had the opportunity to study. They went to a gymnasium and also learnt to play the piano.

Froim-Peisakh Yankel-Movshevich Yezersky had the common name of Yefrem Yakovlevich. He was a Ist Guild Merchant 6 in Kharkov before the Revolution of 1917. He owned a grocery store in the center of the town and worked as a seller after the store was nationalized. His wife, Fruma-Peisha Shlyome-Ziskelevna, was a housewife. They got evacuated to Alma-Ata during the war. We joined them and at first lived together. They had three children: Matvey, Feiga and Masha. They all got higher education. Matvey and Feiga were engineers, and Masha was a doctor. Matvey lived in Moscow, Feiga and Masha lived in Kharkov. They are not alive any more.

Iosif Yankel-Movshevich Yezersky was also a merchant before the war. He owned his father's store in Yekaterinoslav and was a commercial worker in Kharkov after the store was nationalized. His first wife died early, and he married again. He had a daughter, Pasha, and a son, Mikhail, from his first marriage and a son, Yakov, from his second marriage.

Pasha perished during the war in Dnepropetrovsk. She had a Russian husband. Her appearance was pretty international and she stayed on occupied territory. Their neighbors gave her away to the Germans. Her son, Vitya, was saved by her husband's parents. Pasha's husband perished in the war, his parents died and Vitya found himself in a children's home. The only person who tried to take care of him was Pasha's stepmother, Iosif's second wife. Iosif died before the war in 1937.

The children's home, where Vitya stayed, was very anti-Semitic. Teachers humiliated Jewish children in every possible way, and also his play-mates aimed at offending or even beating Jewish children. That's why he concealed his Jewishness as much as he could and was ashamed of his mother's Jewish stepmother, who was his only relative alive. Vitya was ashamed of her; he rudely cut short any assistance and care from her side when he was 14-16 years old and grew up a real anti-Semite.

Feiga Yankel-Movshevna Liberman [nee Yezerskaya] was born in 1886. She didn't have any education and was a housewife. Yiddish was her mother tongue; she spoke Russian poorly. She assisted in her brother Iosif's store in Yekaterinoslav and moved to Kharkov later. Her husband, Alter Liberman, died early in 1937. They had two sons, Abram and Zinoviy. Abram worked as a driver and Zinoviy got higher education and became a dentist. During the war Feiga was in evacuation. Both her sons were in the war and survived. Zinoviy was in a military hospital in Mongolia at the end of the war, where he continued to work for several years after the war. He got married there. His wife Nina had a daughter from her previous marriage. Their common daughter's

name was Larisa, but we lost contact with her. Zinoviy died in 1976 in Kharkov, his mother Feiga also died there some time in the 1960s.

Shprintsa-Rokhel Yezerskaya didn't change her last name after she got married. She graduated from Lausanne University in Switzerland as a dentist. It seems that her brothers helped her financially so that she could study in Switzerland. Her husband was a real loafer; she earned the money and he spent it. The family lived in Brest-Litovsk and their fate was tragic. They didn't manage to evacuate during the war and all perished in the ghetto. Their two children, their son, Abram, a schoolboy, and their daughter Bella, perished with them. Bella had just finished school and already had a train ticket, dated 22nd June 1941, to Leningrad, where she wanted to enter the Pediatric Institute. Rumor has it that Bella didn't perish. She was a beauty and they said that a Polish officer was in love with her and saved her. Relatives were looking for Bella after the war but without success.

Lyuba Finkel [nee Yezerskaya] was born in Yekaterinoslav in 1897. She studied in a gymnasium like her sisters and ran away with a traveling theater actor when she was in the last grade. She married the actor and was cursed by her father. The marriage broke up very soon, Lyuba left for Kharkov in the 1920s and married Beinish Finkel, whose common name was Boris Aronovich. He was considered a rich fiancé in the NEP period. He owned a plant. When the authorities took away the plant, he worked in various cooperatives, and Aunt Lyuba worked with him. Later they moved to Leningrad and brought my parents there in 1931.

It was Boris's sister, Revekka Aronovna Finkel, a military doctor, who saved my father, when he was in hospital in Leningrad, heavily wounded. Lyuba and Boris evacuated from besieged Leningrad to the Ural in 1942. They came back in 1944 when the blockade 7 was lifted. They had a daughter, Irina, born in 1923. She graduated from the Construction Technical School in Leningrad and worked with a construction company. She reached the position of the head of the Planning Department. My parents kept in touch with the family and met often. It wasn't possible to observe Sabbath at that time because it was a working day and even religious Jews worked, if they were employed at public enterprises. So everybody gathered at Aunt Lyuba's place for lunch every Sunday. Aunt Lyuba was a very hospitable person. She died in Leningrad in 1963.

The family spoke Yiddish, Ukrainian and Russian, but the common language at home was Yiddish, my grandparents' mother tongue. Grandmother Riva didn't speak Russian well. When children quoted her in letters, they wrote her words in Yiddish using the Russian alphabet. Her older daughter, Feiga, also spoke Russian poorly.

My mother's parents were religious people. They observed all Jewish traditions: They had a kosher household, observed Sabbath, attended the synagogue and celebrated all Jewish holidays. Grandfather Yankel was an active member of the community and a synagogue warden; he donated a lot to it. He died in 1914 in Yekaterinoslav and was buried in the Jewish cemetery according to the Jewish tradition. A lot of debts were revealed after his death, since he took the debts of the synagogue upon himself.

After her husband's death grandmother Riva lived in Yekaterinoslav in her son Iosif's family, who inherited his father's store. In 1928, after the NEP was over, the store was nationalized. Iosif, his family and grandmother Riva moved to Kharkov, where Iosif's older brother, Froim, lived. My grandmother died there in 1938. I don't know if she was buried according to the Jewish tradition.

My mother's parents had died before I was born, so I have never seen them and only heard about them from my mother.

My father, Idel Mordukhovich Farber, was born in 1897 in the town of Berislav. He spent his childhood and youth in the town of Nikopol, where the family moved to. Everybody in the family had a nickname. My father's nickname was 'Chief', as he was the older brother. The children made up a language of their own using various words from different languages, trying to hide what they were saying from adults. My father preserved words from this made-up language to his dying day. For example: child - 'wurf', or, something remarkable - 'wurfyak', something annoying - 'fortych', woman - 'yena', man correspondingly - 'yener' and so on. These are inexplicable words, as they contain no semantic roots of any words. They were just created by children as associative signals.

My father finished the commercial school in Nikopol. It was the year 1915, and he was drafted to the army. From that moment on and to his dying day he had the nickname 'Soldier', which he was very proud of. To tell you the truth, Grandfather Mordekhay took some appropriate efforts to enlist his son as self-determinative to the regiment. [Editor's note: a form of draft to the Russian Army during the years of World War I, which provided some privileges as compared to privates.]

I don't know if he managed to participate in World War I military operations. He was a soldier at the beginning of the Civil War [1918-1921], but soon returned home and later served in the Red Army as a corps man for four months. In 1920 he entered the Kharkov Technological Institute and graduated in 1924 as a chemical engineer. After graduation he was assigned to Donbass, the Donetsk coal fields in the south-east of Ukraine, where he worked at JSC Koksobenzol in the town of Artyom. There was a friendly team of young people, engineers and doctors, and he met my mother in that group.

My mother Sofia Yankel-Movshevna Yezerskaya was born in 1899 in the town of Yekaterinoslav. She finished the private Jewish secular gymnasium in that town and chose the medical walk of life. She entered the Medical Faculty of the Yekaterinoslav University in 1916. The Revolution of 1917 and the Civil War prevented her from graduating. She graduated from the Medical Institute in Kharkov in 1924 and left for Donbass to work as a 'traveling' doctor. She visited various villages on a cart; the hospital coachman led the horse.

When my parents met in 1925, my mother worked in a hospital at Pereyezdnaya station. They got married in 1927. They didn't have a religious wedding: my parents' friends, young Komsomol members 8 and some other people were present. My mother didn't change her maiden name after her marriage. It was written as Sofia Yakovlevna Yezerskaya in her passport, so her name and paternal name were already russified, though, in the record-book of 1917 of the Yekaterinoslav University, she wrote her name as Sima Yankelevna.

My parents lived in Donbass until 1931. They left under the following circumstances. One of the young engineers, who worked with my father, was fired. His friends decided that he had been treated unfairly and submitted resignation applications as a sign of protest. No one managed to find another job though, and everybody, except for my father, returned to their former workplace. My parents decided to leave Donbass for Leningrad, following the advice of Lyuba, my mother's sister, who lived in Leningrad at the time. It saved father because all his friends were later subject to repression on the basis of the notorious Mining Case 9. All in all, I have to point out that destiny was in my father's favor. More than once he found himself in situations where he could have

perished, but God drew the blow of at the very last moment.

My father worked at the Institute of Applied Chemistry (GIPH) in Leningrad, and my mother worked as a district doctor in the Gavan Polyclinic. She wanted to work in a hospital though and as a result found herself in the Children's Hospital, located near the Volkov cemetery. The war caught them there in 1941.

Growing up in wartime

I was born in 1938, and by the beginning of the war I was two and a half years old. I had no brothers or sisters. When the war broke out, I was very small and obviously didn't understand what was happening. When Leningrad was besieged and the Germans began to bomb it, people had to go to the bomb- shelters during the bombings. I lived with my grandmother and, as my mother told me later, I liked the bomb-shelter very much because a lot of children gathered there. So when I heard the air-raid warning signal, I began to jump and run cheerfully around the table. By the time my 80-year-old grandmother managed to catch and dress me, the bombings were over. As a result we stopped going to the bomb-shelter.

My father was a very straightforward person and supported the ideas of the Communist Party. At the beginning of the Civil War he served in the army and became a non-party Bolshevik. My mother was indignant with him because, in her opinion, he couldn't 'read between the lines' and 'lived according to the Pravda editorial', that is, in compliance with the ideology of the Communist Party of the USSR. He didn't doubt its correctness. He was always distinguished by honesty, adherence to principles, and an acute feeling for justice. In addition to his main job he was occupied with trade-union activities. He was responsible for the distribution of tickets at the Mestkom [10] of his Institute, and didn't take summer-camp tickets for me, when I was a child, because he considered it a demonstration of nepotism.

During the first days of the war my father went to sign up for the People's Volunteer Corps, as he was not subject to the draft, but mother, being a doctor, was already transferred to the state of barracks. She insisted that he stay with my grandmother and me. He continued to work in GIPH, but was soon also enlisted to the state of barracks. I stayed at home with my grandmother. In August 1941 my mother made an effort to send us into evacuation, but the Germans had bombed a train with evacuated people near Mga, Leningrad region, so she decided against the idea. Thus we all found ourselves in the siege. My mother periodically visited us. In October and November 1941 a boarding school for employees' children was arranged at my mothers' hospital, which was by that time re-organized into an evacuation hospital, and my grandmother was left alone.

Twice a week, on the days when my mother was on duty and had to 'test the food' in the kitchen, my father walked more than 10 kilometers on foot from GIPH to mother's hospital, in order to have a bowl of soup. On his way back he walked almost the same distance in order to bring mother's bread portion to my grandmother. Once he came home and found my grandmother dead.

The three of us were evacuated in July 1942 across Ladoga Lake [The so- called Road of Life] [11] and found ourselves in Alma-Ata, the capital of Kazakhstan [2,200 km south-east of Moscow], where my mother worked as a doctor at the children's hospital. My father worked as an engineer at the Chemical and Metallurgical Institute. He was preparing for the defense of his doctor's thesis, but in January 1944 he was drafted to the army. Father was at the Leningrad frontline. He was an

artillery-man, an ammunition carrier. In one of the battles a shell hit the ground and everybody, except for my father, perished.

My father was carried away from the battlefield, heavily wounded, and sent to the hospital in Leningrad. His left lung was shot and he had a lot of shell fragments in his arms and legs. It turned out, that the doctor in charge of his case was my mother's relative, Revekka Aronovna Finkel. She was a pulmonologist and held the rank of a major at the time. At the end of the war she was a colonel of medical service. She fixed my father up. After the treatment he continued his service in the army, but with the NKVD forces 12. He was in Bucharest, Romania, at the end of the war. After the war he returned to Leningrad and to GIPH and my mother returned to the Children's Hospital. Both worked at those places all their lives.

My most distinct recollections are connected with the time of our evacuation to Alma-Ata, when I was 4 years old. But I also remember our boarding school during the blockade. I recall my mother, being on duty, walking into our room, approaching each bed, bending over each child. And I was so jealous because she didn't come up to me immediately. I started crying bitterly. Even though she had explained to me that she was a doctor and had to treat me the same way she treated other children because some of them didn't have mothers. I understood it but didn't stop crying.

I also remember crossing the road across the Ladoga Lake on a motor boat and railroad bridges. In Alma-Ata we lived in a pise house with the family of my mother's older brother [Editor's note: A pise house was a house with walls built out of straw mixed with clay; the floor was also clay]. Later we got a room in the hotel, where the Lenfilm employees lived. I went to a kindergarten in Alma-Ata and learnt a song there. It went: 'A Jew slowly crossed the road' and so on. I was 5 years old and it was the time when mother commenced my Jewish upbringing. At that time and during my school years she kept telling me, 'Don't forget that you are a Jew and won't get away with something your Russian friends will be able to get away with'. My husband-to-be and many other Jews, with whom I spoke about it later, heard almost the same thing from their relatives. I was convinced that if I wanted to achieve something I had to work more and harder. It became my belief. I also said this to my children when the time came.

Post-war

The most striking thing in Alma-Ata was Victory Day [then end of WWII]. I heard about it when I was in the hotel entrance hall and on my way to the kindergarten. The kindergarten wasn't far away and I walked there on my own. I ran the whole way in order to tell the children about it, because almost no one had a radio at home. And still, when I recall that moment, I hear the happy screaming and see the cloud of dust, which was the result of our happy tramping and jumping around. There were a lot of other interesting things happening before that: the earthquake, our kindergarten's performance on the radio with the song 'My motherland is broad' and our trip to the Lysaya Mountain, where I tried to eat goat droppings, thinking they were berries.

I also remember a piece of a moth-ball, which I found on the hotel floor and put into my mouth, thinking it was sugar and incomparably delicious sweet beet, cooked in the drying oven, which my father brought sometimes from work. Once he came to the kindergarten in order to say good-bye before leaving for the frontline and gave me a paper bag of caramel and a book by Marshak 13. My friend and neighbor, a Kazakh girl named Tyulpana, taught me to read with the help of this book long before school.

I also remember Dzhambul's 14 funeral, upon which I incidentally came with Tyulpana, because we saw a crowd of people, passing by our hotel on their way to the theater, where the farewell took place; I also recall the departure to Leningrad and the view of the Aral sea, which we passed, and the first destroyed building in Leningrad, the Oktyabrskaya Hotel near Moscow railroad station; and the first salute on November holidays in 1945.

My father was very proud of his rank of a soldier. He stuck to a Spartan mode of life and walked a lot. Both in winter and summer he walked on foot from and to his work, approximately three kilometers. In winter he crossed the Neva river, which was covered with ice. Father loved his city very much and knew it very well. As soon as he heard about a new street, he went to explore it. He didn't go to the theater with my mother, but he liked to wander about museums on his own. He was always given some presents, but he didn't like new things and put everything into the closet. Mother used to joke about it saying that he had a 'museum of presents for comrade Stalin'.

My father worked as a senior research assistant at his Institute, although he didn't defend a doctor's thesis. In later years he worked at the Informational Department, was the academic secretary of GIPH and dealt with the distribution of precious metals for experiments. He spoke several languages besides Russian: English, German, Ukrainian, Latin and Hebrew, the language of the Torah. He had a phenomenal memory and neglected notebooks all his life. He was a very erudite person, and all employees addressed him with questions, as if he were a 'walking encyclopedia'. He was a real workaholic. When he took a vacation, he walked about Leningrad during the first week, then he would visit his relatives in Moscow and walk about Moscow during the second week, but when the third week came, he ran back to work. So, when he died, there were a lot of unused vacation days. After the war he never took a sick-leave. He took his first sick-leave two weeks before his death. He died in 1977, two and a half months after his 80th birthday was solemnly celebrated.

My father was a silent person and spoke very little. My mother used to say, 'He silences a whole room'. But when he told me something, it remained in my memory for a long time. One spring, before school exams, we had an hour off, and I went to the Orthodox Preobrazhensky Cathedral with my class- mates. We had hid our pioneer neckties under our dresses. We came from atheist families but we were curious like all children. We even tried to cross ourselves, exchanging smiles, imitating the believers.

In the evening I talked about this interesting event at home. My father was very displeased with me. He said, 'You are atheists, and you go to watch praying people, as if they were animals at the zoo. That's an outrage upon the feelings of pious people. You shouldn't do that.' I remembered these words forever and now when I enter a church as a tourist, I behave quietly, in order not to attract attention or disturb anyone. There was another incident when I climbed into the neighbor's garden with my friends and stole some cucumbers. Father was terribly angry and said, 'How dare you not respect other people's labor?'

My mother differed from my father when it came to temper. She was a sociable person, loved to chat and had a lot of friends. Her closest friend was her mate at the Institute, Nyusia, also a Jew, with whom she went to the theater and spent her vacation. In order to take me to the country-side, my mother worked in Komarovo, a resort village near Leningrad, in a district children's hospital. It only operated in the summer when a lot of children left Leningrad to spend summer

holidays in kindergartens and pioneer camps, located along the Finnish Gulf. She worked there on assignment from her hospital. My mother had a very serious and responsible attitude to her job, just like my father had. She was keen on medicine. She never refused to help any of our neighbors in our big house, if they asked her to look after their sick children. She was even offended when they offered her money because she considered that assistance to sick people was her obligation according to the Hippocratic oath.

My mother's friend Nyusia listened to the 'voices', as they called it at the time in this country, that is, the radio programs Voice of America and Radio Free Europe. My father considered her anti-Soviet, didn't like her and left the room when she came to visit us. Influenced by her friend, my mother didn't quite believe in the 'correct party policy' but, just like father, had a good attitude towards Stalin. They were both very proud of him after the war. However, after the fake Doctors' Plot 15 of 1952-1953 they regarded the death of the leader rather calmly.

My father wasn't concerned about the case, but my mother was very upset. On the one hand, she was afraid to be fired, on the other hand, she suffered from undisguised suspicions, which the sick children's parents expressed towards a Jewish doctor. When usually very uncared-for children recovered, some parents apologized for their suspicions. Mother was mostly irritated by a phrase like, 'There might as well be good people among the Jews'. She often replied to it, 'They are in the majority'.

My mother was proud of her Jewish identity, telling us about the Great Jews and their contribution to the treasury of mankind, though Jewish traditions were never observed in our family. For instance, she told me about the great writer Sholem Aleichem 16 and about the scientist [Albert] Einstein. However, two customs were sacred to her and she observed them, as well as I observe them now - a separate pan for milk and the inadmissibility of food in the cemetery. [The interviewee is referring to the Russian custom of funeral repast.] 17.

Our family was not used to blame all losses on anti-Semitism. We treated the occurrence like bad weather. In such situations mother usually repeated her older brother's wife's saying, 'No need of fear for the Jews'. Mother very often used well-known folk idioms and Russian-Yiddish-Ukrainian proverbs in her speech. For example, 'Agitsyn parovoz' [heat in the steam- engine], which means 'nothing special'. My mother lived a long life. She stopped working and retired after an infarction in 1958. She lived with my family during the last years of her life and died in 1985 at the age of 86.

My school years

I went to school after we arrived in Leningrad in 1946. Only one fourth of my 42 classmates had fathers; out of those fathers some were mutilated and some drank heavily. I had a father and a mother, a good, normal family, so I was one of the lucky ones. We also lived in relatively decent conditions, as we had two rooms with a total area of 32 square meters in a communal apartment in the city center.

In 1949-1950 me and my school friends got into a difficult situation and my father had to rescue us. We were admitted to the pioneers, which we were very proud of. Under the influence of a movie called The Young Guard 18 we set up an organization of our own with the same name. The movie was about a secret youth organization that did really exist in the occupied town of Krasnodon in Donbass and fought against the German invaders. Later almost all members of the Young Guards

were caught by the Germans and executed by shooting.

One fourth of our class-mates were members of our organization and our intentions were certainly the most noble: honesty, good studying and the like. We kept the secret for about half a year. When our class mistress, a Jew, found out about it, a scandal broke out, ending with a boycott and expelling us from the pioneer group. The complete terror of the situation became clear to me later, when I read about secret youth organizations being smashed by the authorities. I don't know what my parents knew about it at that time and what kind of rumors were spread.

It turned out that only I was admitted to our organization upon my word, all the others swore an oath, like real Young Guard members, but certainly with a different contents. I had tonsillitis at that time and it was resolved to admit me in my absence, just like Ulyana Gromova, the Young Guard heroine. When we understood that our silence might have a bad end, I was instructed to talk to my parents. They took the story very seriously and discussed it for a long time in the evening. The next day my father put on his worn soldier's blouse and all his medals, went to the Party's District Committee and told them about the situation. I don't know what kind of words he used in the conversation, but the case was dismissed. We were blandly scolded for hiding our good intentions from society, and our pioneer neckties were returned to us. This was how my father rescued us.

I finished school in 1956. Unfortunately, I didn't enter an institute [university] right after school because the competition was high, so I had to go work as a copyist at a Repair-Assembly Combine. My mother asked my father to arrange a job for me at GIPH, but my father, a man of principle, flatly refused to do so. In 1958 I entered the Leningrad Technological Institute of Cellulose-Paper Industry. I graduated as an engineer- technologist in 1963.

Everybody in our family liked to read, be that books, magazines or newspapers, and after the war we assembled a big library, which we still keep. This is our second library, because the first one, collected before the war, had been used for stove kindling in besieged Leningrad by people that stayed in our apartment when we had been evacuated. After the war a lot of classics were bought for me, a lot of literature about chemistry and medicine for my profession and history and art books, which I was very fond of. I didn't choose history to be my profession, because I considered this science to be too politicized. All books were in Russian.

I started to work at the Technological Department of the Giprobum Design Institute [State Design Institute for Paper Industry] and worked there as a technologist until I retired in 1996. We had a very nice and friendly team, most of the people were born between 1930 and 1939. We still keep in touch, call each other and meet from time to time. I liked the job and the business-trips, and even periodical emergencies, when we had to work till late at night and on weekends. However, there was something I really hated. Those were trips to sovkhoz fields and vegetable storages, which occurred regularly. [Editor's note: All townspeople were systematically engaged in agricultural works in kolkhozes and sovkhozes, collective and state economies, within the conditions of the chronic Soviet agricultural economical crisis.]

Married life

I got married rather late, in 1970, when I was already 31. We had a secular wedding at home, with our friends and some relatives present. My husband, Alexander Moiseyevich Shkolnikov, was born in 1933 in Leningrad. He graduated from the Leningrad Ship-Building Institute as an electrical

engineer in 1957 and started to work at Gidropribor CIHD [Central Institute of Hydraulic-Engineering Devices]. He worked there all his life.

My mother knew Alexander's family very well. She worked with his aunt at the hospital and also spent her summer vacation in the village of Repino with her for 10-15 years. They often told me that Alik as they called him at home, was a wonderful man, but we didn't have a chance to meet before. One day we were sent to the theater together. We saw each other on and off for two to three years. Alexander often had to go on business-trips. When he left, we kept in contact by correspondence. We soon got married. Alexander's relatives accepted me very warmly. It was a very nice family, and the wife of Alexander's cousin, with whom they grew up, still remains my best and closest friend.

My husband's father, Moisey Mendelevich Shkolnikov, and his wife, Khana- Sarah (her common name was Anna) Abramovna Shkolnikova [nee Dvorkina] were both born in 1902 in the town of Zhlobin in Belarus, which was part of tsarist Russia. They had an economic education, lived in Leningrad and had two sons: Emmanuil, born in 1927 and Alexander, my husband.

When the war broke out, the children were evacuated from Leningrad with the kindergarten Alexander attended. At first they were brought to Yaroslavl and later to the Northern Ural. The boarding-school was located in the village of Vilva, Solikamsk district, Molotov region. Alexander's brother Emmanuil, a schoolboy at the time, lived at the same boarding-school. Their mother was later evacuated from Leningrad. She lived close to her children, but not with them, and worked as an accountant at a sovkhoz in the neighboring village.

Moisey Mendelevich Shkolnikov worked as an economist in the Purchase Department of the Oktyabrskaya Railroad before the war. He held this position up until 1943 in besieged Leningrad and was transferred to the Department of Military Reconstruction Works afterwards. Their organization was responsible for the restoration of railways, destroyed during the military operations. They reconstructed railways in Pskov, the Baltic countries and Dnepropetrovsk. He was allowed to take his family with him in 1944, so his wife and their younger son followed him to Dnepropetrovsk. After the war they returned to Leningrad and Moisey returned to his previous workplace. He died in 1958 and was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Leningrad. Khana moved to Astrakhan at the end of her life and lived with her older son. She died there in 1993.

Emmanuil completed secondary school in Vilva, in the Ural, in 1942 and entered the Second Leningrad Military-Navy Special School, which was evacuated from Leningrad and was located in the town of Tara, Omsk region. He finished that school in 1946 in Leningrad, but he was immediately transferred to the reserve because of poor sight. He entered the Leningrad Electro-Technical Institute of Railroad Transport and graduated from it in 1952. After graduation he left for Middle Asia to participate in the railroad construction in Tashkent. After his marriage he moved to the town of Astrakhan, where he still lives with his family. I visited them in the summer of 2002.

I always had good relations with my husband's mother and his relatives. When we got married, they gave us a one-bedroom cooperative apartment. Our son, Mikhail, was born there in 1971, and our daughter, Lyuba, followed in 1976. In the same year we moved in with my parents. We exchanged our one- bedroom apartment and two rooms of my parents in a communal apartment for a separate three-bedroom apartment.

We always got on well. My husband was a very nice man. He was known for his kindness, obligation and tenderness, and he never let anybody down. If he understood that his assistance was required, he always helped without waiting for a request. He was an optimist. I was always afraid of something bad to happen. He always calmed me down, saying 'Everything will be fine!' or 'Don't be afraid, we'll break through!' Alexander collected stamps and postcards. He liked old German movies and Charlie Chaplin, and he collected old books of the 'Life in Art' series about famous Hollywood actors. I collected books about artists.

He worked a lot, even after he was diagnosed with an incurable illness in 1991. He only stopped working in 1999, when he was confined to bed. He died in 2000, to my enormous grief. He was buried in the Jewish cemetery and rests in the same grave as his father. After his death I was in a very bad condition, and only a trip to my Aunt Rakhil and cousin Eleonora in Moscow and their sympathy softened my anguish a little. Afterwards I was able to carry on. My children are already grown-ups and have families of their own. My husband liked to joke that our children corrected our mistake: we got married late, they got married early, at the age of 19. Now they live separately from me. I live alone in our old apartment.

Our children didn't get traditional Jewish upbringing, though they identify themselves as Jews. Their mother and father are Jews, and they consider themselves Jews too, not from a religious but from a nationality point of view. Traditional Jewish customs were never observed at home and we only celebrated Soviet holidays: 7th November - the Day of the October Revolution, 1st May - the Day of the Workers' Solidarity, 8th March -Women's Day, and so on.

Mikhail graduated from the Leningrad Electro-Technical Institute named after Ulyanov-Lenin [LETI] in 1994 and works as a programmer. His wife Tamara is a Jew; they studied together. When they got married she quit, and now she looks after their daughter Asia, who was born in 1997.

My daughter, Lyubov Bugayeva [nee Shkolnikova], graduated from the Leningrad Institute of Fine Mechanics and Optics [LITMO] in 2000. She chose to get married to a Russian man, and I insisted that she rose the issue of her Jewish nationality before the wedding. My son-in-law told me that it didn't matter to him. All in all, I've met many Russian people in my life, to whom the person was important and not his or her nationality. Of course I've also met people who were the complete opposite, but I learnt not to communicate with them or to reduce such communication to the minimum. My daughter's husband also graduated from LITMO and now works in a mobile telephone repair shop. Lyuba doesn't work at present; she looks after their daughter, Anastasia, who was born in 1999.

My cousins and their children live in different cities and countries now. All my relatives, both on my father's and my mother's side, who lived in Ukraine left for either Russia during the Soviet times, or for Israel and Germany. Actually, and strangely enough, those who were born in mixed marriages, were the first to leave. We hardly keep in touch. Sometimes we call each other, and this goes for both relatives in other countries and other cities. It's very bad that we don't communicate more, but that's the way it is.

I'm certainly very worried about Israel and get very upset, when I see and hear about acts of terrorism and the victims. It's not a foreign country to us because Jews live there. The life of the Jewish community is reviving in our city nowadays. Jewish holidays are solemnly celebrated in the best city halls. I receive food parcels on holidays from the 'Eve' Jewish charitable organization and I

attend cultural events that they organize.

Glossary

1 NEP

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

2 Campaign against 'cosmopolitans'

The campaign against 'cosmopolitans', i.e. Jews, was initiated in articles in the central organs of the Communist Party in 1949. The campaign was directed primarily at the Jewish intelligentsia and it was the first public attack on Soviet Jews as Jews. 'Cosmopolitans' writers were accused of hating the Russian people, of supporting Zionism, etc. Many Yiddish writers as well as the leaders of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee were arrested in November 1948 on charges that they maintained ties with Zionism and with American 'imperialism'. They were executed secretly in 1952. The antisemitic Doctors' Plot was launched in January 1953. A wave of anti-Semitism spread through the USSR. Jews were removed from their positions, and rumors of an imminent mass deportation of Jews to the eastern part of the USSR began to spread. Stalin's death in March 1953 put an end to the campaign against 'cosmopolitans'.

3 Soviet-Finnish War (1939-40)

The Soviet Union attacked Finland on 30 November 1939 to seize the Karelian Isthmus. The Red Army was halted at the so-called Mannengeim line. The League of Nations expelled the USSR from its ranks. In February-March 1940 the Red Army broke through the Mannengeim line and reached Vyborg. In March 1940 a peace treaty was signed in Moscow, by which the Karelian Isthmus, and some other areas, became part of the Soviet Union.

4 War with Japan

In 1945 the war in Europe was over, but in the Far East Japan was still fighting against the anti-fascist coalition countries and China. The USSR declared war on Japan on 8 August 1945 and Japan signed the act of capitulation in September 1945.

5 Victims of 9th January cemetery

On January 9, 1943 the Soviet ultimatum to the 6th Army at Stalingrad was ignored by order of Colonel- General von Paulus, and the battle continued with unabated ferocity. A part of the Leningrad cemetery is named after this date.

6 Guild I

In tsarist Russia merchants belonged to Guild I, II or III. Merchants of Guild I were allowed to trade with foreign merchants, while the others were allowed to trade only within Russia.

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 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.

9 Mining Case
At the beginning of the 1930s the NKVD arrested a group of experienced engineers based on a false accusation of sabotage, in order to lump onto them the responsibility for failing to bring Stalin's country industrialization plans to life.

10 Mestkom
Local trade-union committee.

11 Road of Life
Passage across the Ladoga lake in winter. It was due to the Road of Life across the frozen Lake Ladoga that Leningrad survived in the terrible winter of 1941-42.

12 NKVD
People's Committee of Internal Affairs; it took over from the GPU, the state security agency, in 1934.

13 Marshak, Samuil Yakovlevich (1887-1964)
Writer of Soviet children's literature. In the 1930s, when socialist realism was made the literary norm, Marshak, with his poems about heroic deeds, Soviet patriotism and the transformation of the country, played an active part in guiding children's literature along new lines.

14 Dzhambul, Dzhabaev (1846-1945)
Traditional Kazakh folksinger. An expert in Kazakh music, he knew vast numbers of melodies by

heart. He sang to the accompaniment of the domra, a plucked string instrument, at contests and received the Stalin prize in 1941. He became famous during the war for his touching message to the people in besieged Leningrad. He died in Alma- Ata, Kazakhstan.

15 Doctors' Plot

The Doctors' Plot was an alleged conspiracy of a group of Moscow doctors to murder leading government and party officials. In January 1953, the Soviet press reported that nine doctors, six of whom were Jewish, had been arrested and confessed their guilt. As Stalin died in March 1953, the trial never took place. The official paper of the party, the Pravda, later announced that the charges against the doctors were false and their confessions obtained by torture. This case was one of the worst anti-Semitic incidents during Stalin's reign. In his secret speech at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956 Khrushchev stated that Stalin wanted to use the Plot to purge the top Soviet leadership.

16 Sholem Aleichem, real name was Shalom Nohumovich Rabinovich (1859- 1916)

Jewish writer. He lived in Russia and moved to the US in 1914. He wrote about the life of Jews in Russia in Yiddish, Hebrew and Russian.

17 Funeral repast

It is traditional in Russia to arrange funeral repast right in the cemetery, near the graves, with food and vodka. When people come to visit the graves of their relatives on Russian Orthodox holidays, it is also traditional to eat some food 'for the peace of the soul' and to leave pieces of food, candies and hard-boiled eggs near the tombstone or directly on the grave.

18 The Young Guard

This book, written by Aleksandr Fadeyev (1901-1956), praised the underground resistance of a group of young communists living under German occupation with crude distortions and was criticized by the Russian propaganda as a means of ideological zombying of the young generation.