Ada Dal

Ada Dal
Kiev
Ukraine
Interviewer: Elena Zaslavskaya
Date of interview: July 2002

My family background

I remember very little of my grandparents on my father's side. I was very young when we visited them in Zhytomyr once. At that time it was a small provincial town with a large Jewish population. I remember my grandparents' big house and antique furniture. I don't even remember their names. I know that they died before the war. My grandfather had a sister named Sonia. She lived in Zhytomyr, was in evacuation and returned to Kiev afterwards to live in the family of my uncle, my father's brother Aron. She died in Kiev in the 1950s.

My father had four siblings. His brother Aron Dal was born in 1893-4. He lived in Kiev with his family, not far from where we lived. We saw each other often. Aron was married to Polina, a Jew, and they had two daughters: Lidia and Valentina. Before the war Aron worked with the NKVD 1. I don't know what his position was. During the war he was in evacuation and afterwards he was a clerk in an office. He died in the 1960s. His wife also died around that time. His daughter Lidia is a pediatrician and Valentina is a teacher of the Russian language. They both live in the USA.

My father's other brother Mihail Dal lived in Moscow before and after the war. He died around 1946. That's all I know about him.

My father's sister Anna Dal lived in Moscow before the war. She was in evacuation during the war. After the war she got married to the Moldavian Minister of Justice and left for Kishinev with him. This was her second marriage. Her daughter from her first marriage, Galina Matrina, born in 1932, lived in Moscow until she finished school. Then she moved to her mother in Kishinev. She studied at the law department and worked in court. Such a career was only possible for her because it was written in her passport that she was Russian. When Galina received her passport the clerk in the office told her that she didn't look like a Jew and put down 'Russian' in the 'nationality' line. Anna died in Kishinev in the 1970s. Galina still lives in Kishinev. She is single and has no children. She is such an intelligent, sympathetic and nice person and yet she is alone! In the early 1990s she converted to Christianity and was baptized. She enjoys communicating with the priest. When our

family was discussing emigration to Israel in the middle of the 1990s, she refused at once.

My father's second sister Raissa Dal was in evacuation during the war. She lived in Moscow after the war and she worked as a dentist. She died in the 1970s. She had a son named Dmitriy Dubrovin. That's all I know about her.

My father Veniamin Dal was born in Zhytomyr on 26th August 1896. His name is Russian, but I don't know why he was given a Russian name [see common name] 2. I don't know whether my father studied in cheder. I only know that he studied at grammar school in Ostrog, in the vicinity of Kiev, before the [Russian] Revolution of 1917 3. He finished his 8th year of grammar school in 1914. From 1920 to 1926 he studied in the Institute of Public Economy in Kiev. He received his diploma in 1926. My father was a lawyer. We have a document issued in 1926 stating that my father volunteered to join the Red army on 1st May 1920. He was a junior document control clerk there. It was also stated in this document that his mother tongue was Yiddish. I remember that he was a kind but strict man. I was his only child and he loved me.

My mother Maria Vulih was born into the Jewish family of Lev and Sabina Vulih in Soroki, Bessarabia 4 in 1903. Her father was a photographer.

I have no information about where they came from or who their parents were. I only know that they came to Kiev from Berdichev in the 1920s or 1930s. They lived in Soroki first and then they lived in Berdichev for some time. In Kiev we lived together in a big apartment on Pushkinskaya Street in the city center. When I was small my grandfather worked as a photographer. My grandmother was a housewife. Maybe my grandfather owned ad photo studio before the Revolution, but I don't know anything about it. My grandfather was a very well read and educated man. He followed all political events in the country. He was critical about what was going on during the period of Stalin's repression [the so-called Great Terror] 5. He was a very intelligent and a very reserved man. He never raised his voice. My grandmother Sabina was also a very intelligent and educated woman. She was also very kind. The family didn't observe any Jewish traditions. My grandmother didn't cover her head with a shawl. She didn't go to the synagogue. They talked in Russian in my presence, although they could speak Yiddish. My grandparents only spoke Yiddish when they wanted to keep something a secret from me. Mama had two sisters: Ada and Udel. One was born around 1900 and the other one in 1906. I don't remember which of them was older. They died young of tuberculosis in the 1920s. None of them were married and they didn't have children.

Growing up

My mother finished grammar school in Berdichev. When the family moved to Kiev in the 1920s she entered the Department of Biology of Kiev State University. She earned her living giving classes in mathematics. She was very good at it. She was also fond of French. In the late 1920s Mama fell ill with tuberculosis. She had to quit her studies and work. She was severely ill but she survived. She had to quit her studies and work until her full recovery in the early 1930s. As soon as the doctors allowed her to have children I was born in Kiev on 30th July 1932. Mama was already 29 and the delivery was so complicated that she didn't take the risk to have another child. I was the only and much loved baby in the family. I stayed at home in the care of my grandmother and our housemaid until I reached the age of five.

Our housemaid was a common Ukrainian girl. We treated her like family. We were kind to her and she was kind to us. She loved me a lot. Later Mama finished a course in accounting and got a job as an accountant. She worked as an accountant many years, until she retired. Mama, like her parents, didn't observe any Jewish traditions or cover her head. She spoke fluent and beautiful Russian without a hint of an accent. She knew and understood Yiddish but she practically didn't speak it. She loved reading and used to say that she didn't like to cook - although she was a great cook - because it kept her from reading.

I don't know where Mama met my father in 1930, but I know that my father had already had a family. I don't know anything about that previous family of his. My parents just lived together for some time. But then, after I was born in 1932, they got officially married although without any grand ceremonies. They had a very good life together. They had lots of Jewish friends. They got together to party and used to dance and enjoy themselves until late at night. It was either at our place or somebody else's. My parents often took me with them. They didn't sing in our house. [Editor's note: After the Revolution of 1917 singing revolutionary songs at proletarian gatherings was a very popular pastime in the USSR.] When sitting at the table people just talked, joked and laughed.

I remember that I read, like my mother. I liked it a lot. I liked fairy tales, children's poems by Barto, Mikhalkov, Marshak 6, the fairy tales of the Grimm Brothers, etc. I had an excellent memory when I was a child and I knew a lot by heart. I learned to read and write when I was about eight. I started school in 1940 and finished the 1st grade in May 1941.

Upon graduation from the Kiev Institute of Public Economy my father worked as a lawyer at various Soviet offices including the metal sales headquarters. This sales office was responsible for metal supplies to various plants. My mother told me that in 1937-38 they were expecting every night that my father would be arrested. They understood but too well what was happening around and had no illusions. Fortunately, he wasn't arrested. In 1939 when the Soviet army was 'liberating' Western Ukraine my father was summoned to the army, but his service didn't last long - he returned in 1940. My father was a member of the Communist Party.

We lived in a communal apartment 7 where our family had two rooms. One of them had a big balcony facing the street. Two other families lived in this apartment. One was a Jewish family and the other one was Ukrainian, but we lived like good neighbors should and had no arguments.

We had lots of books at home. My parents read classic and modern literature in Russian, and newspapers, of course. They followed what was going on the country and discussed it, but they didn't speak out their opinion in my presence. I was five or six years old then. At this delicate age it is difficult to explain to a child what she can tell her neighbor and what she should keep for herself. Later, after the war, my mother told me how critical my grandparents were about the events of the 1930s, how clearly they understood things and had no illusions. In summer we rented a dacha [cottage] in a village near the town and stayed there. We put our luggage on a big truck and boarded it ourselves. In 1941 the war began and my grandparents decided that if Germans didn't do any harm to the Jews during WWI in 1914 it would be the same this time. Besides, my grandmother had a stroke and could hardly move. They stayed in Kiev. According to one of the stories that we heard as soon as the Red army left Kiev the janitor of the building broke into the apartment and threw them out of the window. Our neighbors buried them in our yard. When my

father returned to Kiev in 1944 he reburied them at the Jewish corner of one of cemeteries in Kiev. At the end of the 1930s the family discussed the possibility of a war. I heard these discussions and they made a difficult impression on me. My parents thought that it might have been reasonable to go to the Far East to be as far away from the war as possible. These were just talks. Nobody knew anything for sure and it was a hard decision to leave. By the way, nobody mentioned the danger to the Jews. They discussed how dangerous it might be for my father and his brother being members of the Communist Party. Before the war it never occurred to me to ask any questions about my nationality.

During the war

I had nightmares about the Germans because people around were talking about it a lot - I was scared and imagined horrible things that might happen to all of us, Germans coming and me hiding under the table. I woke up in horror. That's why when the war began it was a catastrophe to me. This was on 22nd June 1941 [the beginning of the so-called Great Patriotic War] 8. Papa was at the recreation center in Vorzel, a small town near Kiev. We were planning to go see him in the morning. In the morning there were bombings in Kiev. We didn't know anything for sure, but we still went to see my father. When we arrived they were all listening to the speech of Molotov 9. I vomited on the bench from terrible fear. I understood that Papa would have to join the army and it horrified me. We felt far from taking a rest at the center. We returned to Kiev. Then the war routines began: air raids and windows barricaded with white tape. We watched battles in the air and listened to the radio. We were possessed by fear of war.

In 1941, when the war began, my grandparents decided that since Germans hadn't done any harm to the Jews during World War I in 1914 they wouldn't if they came again. Besides, my grandmother had a stroke and could hardly move. They stayed in Kiev. According to one of the stories that we heard as soon as the Red army left Kiev the janitor of the building broke into the apartment and threw them out of the window. Our neighbors buried them in our yard.

Uncle Aron sent his family away as soon as he got the opportunity. They had privileges as NKVD employees and their families left at the beginning of July. As my parents didn't know when they would be able to evacuate they sent me along with Aron's family. We went from Kiev to Kharkov on a truck. The organization where my father worked evacuated at the end of July. My father received a certificate that released him from his service in the army and went to Saratov with his organization. They went via Kharkov. In Kharkov they met with my uncle's family and took me with them. My uncle's family went to Chkalov/Orenburg and our family went to Saratov by train. We stayed there until we were able to return to Kiev.

During the first days upon our arrival we stayed in an office at the metal storage facility. It was a big facility. Each family got a plank bed. We ate and slept on these beds. There were many rats at that storage facility. At night rats stole the small quantities of food that we had with us to last for the trip. They even ate soap. We hung our food from the ceiling but it didn't help much. Since then I get panicky at the sight of rats. We lived for a month or two at the storage facility and then we were accommodated in the apartments. My family got a small room in the basement. The bigger part of it was occupied by the stove. We got along well with our host and hostess although they weren't very happy to let out one room of their house. But they felt sorry for us and were nice.

In evacuation I faced real anti-Semitism. There were very few Jews in Saratov. The local people didn't know who we were. But they got interested when there were more and more people coming into evacuation. They believed that Jews were monsters with horns. Our window was on the ground level and people peered in to look at us. Later, when many more Jews arrived, they began to act hostile.

There were many incidents in the streets. Boys were teasing me all the time. I remember one boy following me and throwing stones when I was going to see a friend of mine. At first I didn't understand what it was all about. Girls often teased me. They had a nickname for Jews - 'uze-uze'. Perhaps, this word combination was a slang in their language, but I know that it must have been something very abusive. I heard it often when I was on my way to the store. Or they called Jews 'zhydy' [kike]. It's interesting that I never heard anything regarding anti-Semitism from my parents.

In September 1941 I fell ill. This happened at the time when the Germans occupied Kiev. I had dysentery, measles and pneumonia. I was almost dying and was unconscious for several days. My parents lost hope that I would survive. I had to eat but there was no food. Papa moved to Engels - a small town on the bank of the Volga. It was the capital of the Republic of Soviet Germans living in the area of the Volga River [see Volga German ASSR] 10. Papa had acquaintances there. They gave him a little flour and butter. They made flat bread for me and I survived. 1941-1942 were hard years. I was constantly hungry during daytime. We only had breakfast and dinner after my parents came back from work. There was nothing to eat in-between. We had potatoes or cereals. There was little bread that we received in exchange for bread cards. We could also get some sugar for cards.

It was my responsibility to go to the stores. It was far away. At times they didn't have any bread at all. I went to another store, but they didn't always give you bread for cards. I returned home with nothing at all. Sometimes they gave me dough instead of bread. We made flat bread from it. I remember sweets before the war. During the war I forgot the taste of candy or cookies. In 1944 my parents' acquaintance visited us and brought some candy, but I didn't even feel like having one. Mama brought some flower seed wastes from her workplace - it was used as food for cattle. During the day I used to bite on them when I was hungry. It made me feel less hungry.

School years

In Saratov I studied at the girls' school #2 11. I had a good friend named Dina Chopova from Tallinn. We corresponded for several yeas after the war. There was also a Jewish girl from Kiev named Genia Terk. Many years later, in 1994-5, I met her in Kiev and we recognized each other. She lives in Israel now. There were many evacuated children in my class. I remember very well how cordially they congratulated me on the liberation of Kiev. Only one girl, Bella, was born and lived in Saratov. My parents met two families that became their good friends in Saratov. One family lived on the street where we lived. My parents saw them every now and then. They didn't have much time for social meetings. They were working from morning till late evening. A working day for laborers was twelve hours and I don't remember how long clerks had to be at work. Anyway, my parents returned late in the evening.

Winters were cold. The following happened in winter 1943: there was a railroad near the office where my mother worked. Often trains with captive Germans were passing by the office. Once the train stopped and the carriages were full of frozen corpses.

I remember us listening to the radio. It was especially hard when Germans were near Moscow. My parents brought home copies of Pravda [The Truth] and Izvestia [News]. There were many photographs of Soviet citizens that had been killed by Germans. During the Battle for Stalingrad Saratov was bombed every night at the same time, at 1 or 2am. Some people left Saratov thinking that Germans would reach it. During the air raids we got up and went down to the bombproof shelter. My father worked as a secretary of the party unit at a big plant. When the bombings began he walked to the plant crossing the whole town. Mama and I were very concerned about him.

Post-war

Kiev was liberated in 1944. When my father returned to Kiev in 1944 he reburied his parents in the Jewish section of one of the cemeteries in Kiev. My father was summoned to come to Moscow and got an assignment to reestablish the metal sales headquarters and become its director. Our apartment was occupied by some other people. Papa received another apartment with no comforts whatsoever. There was no power, no toilet or bathroom. It was an old brick house. This apartment was a part of another apartment. We only had a kitchen and a stove; that was all. Our old apartment had been robbed. There was only a wardrobe and a cupboard left. Our neighbors told us who had taken them. We created a big scandal when we took it away from another neighbor of ours. When we were taking back our possessions this neighbor was swearing and cursing at Papa. We failed to get our apartment back. It was occupied by a Hero of the Soviet Union.

My father didn't manage to do any work in Kiev. He died in an accident in 1944. On the morning of 4th November 1941 he was walking to work past a building destroyed during the war and the cornice of one of them fell on him. He died. We buried him near our grandparents in one of the cemeteries in Kiev. We lived from hand-to-mouth from then on.

I returned to Kiev in the summer of 1944 with the family of my uncle Aron. They returned from evacuation via Saratov and I was hurrying to be back before September to return to school in time. Mama couldn't leave her work. She was chief accountant assistant at the metal supplies office Snabchermet. They supplied metal goods to enterprises and her boss didn't want to let her go. She was a good employee and he didn't have a replacement. She managed to return much later, in winter 1944-1945.

Mama got married for the second time in 1953. My stepfather Sergei Shmaria Gershevich Landau was a very interesting man. He came from the family of a Jewish millionaire from Mogilyov, who was a citizen of honor in town. Bolsheviks expropriated their fortune, but he and his older sister Revekka never regretted it and lived like any Soviet common clerk. He received a wonderful education before the Revolution. He studied in Germany and in Moscow, in the famous Gnesinyh School of Music. He had a higher education and was a very intelligent man. He knew French and German. He worked as a lawyer and also translated German fiction into Russian. He read a lot.

He was married before he married Mama. He had married a woman with two children and they had a wonderful family. He loved the children and brought them up. But his first wife Susanna Hvatovker died in 1948. and he married my mother in 1953. My mother moved into my stepfather's apartment. He had a room in a communal apartment on 43, Saksaganskogo Street in the center of Kiev.

His older daughter Inna, or Irina, was born in 1916, but I don't know her place of birth. She finished the school of working youth in Kiev. Then she went to Leningrad and got educated at the Radio Engineering Institute. She worked at the Higher Marine College in Leningrad for many years. Her husband and children decided to emigrate to Israel and she had to accept their decision and go with them. She didn't want to go. She was a member of the Party. But she understood that it would be a tragedy for her husband if his daughter lived alone in another country and she agreed to leave. She lived in Israel from 1974. In the summer of 1991 she visited Kiev, but she couldn't go to Leningrad, which she loved and missed so much. She died in Jerusalem in 1992. Her husband Efrem Markovich Suhoi had died half a year before. He was a bridge construction engineer and was a very educated and intelligent man. Yury, my stepfather's son, lived in Odessa his whole life. He died in the late 1970s.

My stepfather's sister Revekka Gershevna, born in the late 1880s, studied at Sorbonne University [in France] and knew several foreign languages. She was a physician. During the war she was a military doctor in the army. After the war she lived in Kiev and worked as a doctor until she retired. She died in Kiev when she was 90. She never married and didn't have any children.

In 1953 Stalin died. Mama and my stepfather were happy about it. They understood that it was a liberation from the terrible dictatorship of repression. I didn't have the slightest idea about what was going on and grieved sincerely after him.

After evacuation I studied at the girls' secondary school #50 in Kiev. I had friends of different nationalities. I faced no anti-Semitism at school. I was fond of reading. I didn't go in for sports. Studying took a lot of my time but we managed to go to the theaters and cinema. We celebrated birthdays and holidays with my friends. We especially liked the New Year. We were very poor. We were always hungry until 1947 when they stopped the card system. We were also dressed very poorly.

I finished school with a gold medal. I had the highest grades in all subjects. I entered Kiev Polytechnic Institute without exams. It was during the period of the campaign against cosmopolitans 12. Jews were not accepted to higher humanitarian educational institutions. I was eager to get a profession related to the humanities, but I realized how slim my chance was and went to a technical institute. I became a chemical production engineer. I was the only Jew in my group. It made almost no difference in the course of our studies. But when we received [mandatory] job assignments 13 it turned out that all other Kievites stayed in Kiev and my assignment was to the small Ukrainian town of Sumy. I didn't stay there long - there was no work for me, and I returned to Kiev.

Married life

With big difficulties I managed to get a job at the design institute Giprochlor. I worked there until my retirement in 1987. It wasn't because I loved this work or the situation at the institute. It was because all my efforts to get another job resulted in polite refusals. I could have only found a job for a much lower payment or accept a much lower position. At work they also made me feel that I was a Jew, especially after our Jewish colleagues began to emigrate to Israel and the USA in the late 1970s. There were meetings at the institute and they declared those people that were going to emigrate 'enemies of the people' 14. Other people were afraid to communicate with those that wanted to leave fearing that they might be blamed of sympathizing with enemies of the people. [It

was dangerous to keep in touch with relatives abroad.] 15 There were efforts to fire those that sympathized with these people and to transfer those that were supporting these people to lower positions. But there were positive sides as well. In 1957 I met my future husband Mihail Ben, or Musiy as I called him, at this institute .

He was born into the Jewish family of Yuda and Nehama, or Anna, Ben in Kiev in 1934. I don't know anything about his father. It is known that he was summoned to the territorial army when the war began. After the war their neighbors said that they had seen him in Kiev right before the war. We don't know where or when he perished. He might have been killed in Babi Yar 16.

My husband's mother Nehama Leivikovna was born into the family of a rabbi. There were five children in the family: one brother and four sisters. They all lived in Kiev before the war. Her brother's name was Mihail Ben. I don't know anything about his life. The family didn't keep in touch with him. I only know that he lived in Kiev before he died in the 1980s. I never met him. My husband's aunts were very close. They often got together to celebrate birthdays and holidays. They didn't observe Jewish traditions after the war; as to before the war, I don't know. They didn't cover their heads and wore ordinary clothes. However, they always remembered that they were Jews and talked in Yiddish to one another.

Anna Ben Medvinskaya was born in the 1890s. She was married to Efim Mutsa Medvinskiy. After the war he was a very famous doctor in Kiev. He was head of department at Oktiabrskiy hospital in Kiev. Their son Iosif Medvinskiy, born in the 1930s, worked at the Baykonur 17 launch site close to Korolyov. He is a pensioner now. He lives in Kiev. Efim Medvinskiy died in 1962. Anna died in the 1970s.

The oldest sister Haya, born around 1896, was married and had two children: Evdokia and Mihail. Evdokia lives in the USA now. Mihail is a pensioner in Kiev. He got married at an older age. He has no children. That's all I know about Haya Ben. Her sister Lisa, born around 1900, lived in Kiev. Her son Roman and his family live in Kiev up to this day. Her daughter Margarita lived in Kiev, but she died in the 1980s.

The fourth sister Rosa Litvinchuk, born in the 1900s was the youngest child. She was married. Her husband died at the front in the 1940s. She was a beautiful woman and many men courted her proposing marriage, but she dedicated herself to raising her daughter Regina, born in the 1930s. Rosa died in the early 1980s. Her daughter and her family - she has a husband and a daughter - emigrated to Israel in 1997.

My husband's mother Nehama Leivikovna was born in 1898. She had two other children besides my husband. Her older daughter's name was Bella; and her younger daughter died of scarlet fever in 1939. I don't know her name. I only remember that we couldn't find her grave at Lukianovka cemetery 18 after we returned from the evacuation.

My husband's sister Bella Ben was born in Kiev in 1925. She finished school and learned some profession related to statistics. She worked at the department of statistics in Kiev for many years. She got married to a Jewish man called Yakov Turkot. The only thing I know about him is that he was on the front and had medals for heroic deeds. He wasn't an easy-going man. He worked at the Military Trade Association and made good money. They weren't a very happy couple but Bella never complained. Their son Yury was born in 1958. Bella Yudkovna, her son and his family moved

to Israel in 1998. She has sclerosis and doesn't remember much.

During the war Nehama and her two children Musiy and Bella were in evacuation in Buzuluk. Bella went there some time before the rest of the family with their relatives joined. My husband recalled that the mother of a future famous commander talked her into leaving the city. At that time he was commander of the Kiev military regiment. They were friends. According to the family legend this mother almost fell on her knees in front of her saying that she wasn't going to leave without her. They went to Kharkov on a truck. There they got on the train that was bombed. My husband often recalled how his mother jumped off the burning train pressing her handkerchief with money to her chest. After they returned to Kiev they lived in a small room in Shevchenko [Kreschatik] Lane. His Mama worked, and Musiy was raised by his sister Bella. He finished eight years of school and entered the Industrial Technical School. He worked as a technician, then a senior and chief engineer in the field of heat engineering and environmental safety in the same institute where I worked.

Yiddish was the main language of communication in my husband's family. Nehama Leikovna's Russian was very poor. She switched to Yiddish at any moment when she saw that she could be understood better. My daughter likes the memory of her grandmother: when she was speaking to herself loudly in a language unknown to my daughter while cooking in the kitchen.

In my husband's family they cooked Jewish food very well. Stuffed fish and hamantashen - 'Amman's ears' -little triangle pies with poppy seeds cooked at Purim) were always the best. They didn't follow the kashrut, though, and they rarely went to the synagogue. My husband's older daughter took her mother to the synagogue several times after the war. When my husband's mother was strong enough and had an opportunity she used to go to the synagogue by herself. My husband recalled that his mother always watched that she left her home with her head covered with a shawl. Even in summer when it was hot she wore a little summer shawl. She died in Kiev in 1979. My husband's sister Bella Ben (Turkot after her husband) was born in Kiev in 1925. She finished school and learned the profession related to statistics. She worked at the department of statistics in Kiev for many years. She got married to a Jewish man Yakov Turkot. The only thing I know about him is that he was on the front and had medals for heroic deeds. He wasn't an easy-going man. He worked at the Military Trade Association and made good money. They were not a very happy couple but Bella Yudkovna never complained. In 1958 their son Yury was born. I remember my cousin Nastia. She was the cousin of my husband's sister Bella, a children's doctor in Moscow, and visited them often. During the war, when she was 16, she happened to encounter a partisan unit. She was afraid to tell them that she was a Jew and that her first name was Nehama and she called herself Nastia. She was a nurse and happened to rescue a wounded young Russian man from the battlefield in Malaya Zemlia. His name was Pavel Ivashevich. He became a wonderful artist and director of the Institute Mosproject-2. After the war they got married and she remained Nastia. The nationality written in her passport is Russian. I remember well that she came to Kiev on the eve of Victory Day 19 to go to Rokytnoye with her family where all her relatives perished during the Holocaust. Nastia is very old now and lives in Moscow. Her husband died in the early 1980s.

In 1998 Bella Yudkovna, her son and his family moved to Israel. She has sclerosis and doesn't remember muchMy husband and I got married in 1958. We didn't have a big wedding party. My husband moved in with me into the same apartment that my father received in 1944. There were two other tenants - two elderly Jewish women. There were two rooms on the second floor - one was

ours and one was theirs; there was also a kitchen. An old wooden staircase led to the second floor. There were no comforts: no bathroom or toilet. In the early 1960s we decided to do major renovations in the apartment in order to build a toilet. The issue of a bathroom wasn't even discussed. We all washed ourselves in a big pot in the kitchen. When we were repairing the walls we found some money from the time of the Revolution of 1917.

Our daughter Elena was born in 1964. We lived a very modest life - at that time engineers had lower salaries than workers of the lowest qualifications. In 1966 we received a two-bedroom apartment in the Khrushchovka 20 building. It seemed like paradise to us. We went to the theater and to concerts. We didn't celebrate Soviet holidays. On days off we used to meet with friends, go for walks or to the theater. We went to the Crimea on vacation. My husband's hobby was playing chess. He participated at contests and had degrees and categories and became the 1st Ukraine grandmaster in chess competitions. My stepfather died in 1969. He fell ill in 1962, a few years before he died. Mama retired to be able to look after him. After he died she dedicated herself to raising her granddaughter.

In 1970 we had an opportunity to emigrate to Israel or the USA. We decided to stay - our age stopped us from moving. As my mother used to say: 'trees are to be replanted when they are young'. Inna Hvatovker, my stepfather's daughter, wrote us letters from Jerusalem that didn't necessarily add to our optimism. She wrote that at our age it was difficult to learn the language and find a job. We stayed at home.

My daughter was raised by her grandmothers. Nehama took care of her until she was six years old and then, after my stepfather died, it was my mother took care of her. In 1975 we changed our two-bedroom apartment and my mother's room to a three-bedroom apartment to have Mama with us. Mama was a very wise woman and she treated my husband with great respect. We got along very well. We never had any arguments. Our daughter didn't get any Jewish education. She states that she never faced anti-Semitism. Perhaps, this wasn't exactly so because after finishing school she went to an institute in Brest, Belarus. She graduated from the department of architecture in 1986. At her time it was practically impossible for a Jew to enter an institute. She returned to Kiev upon graduation and got a job at the institute that she hated since she was a child. This was the same institute where her parents had worked all her life. She worked there for four years and suffered a lot from her boss, who was a Jew. She quit and took to hiking.

In 1997 Mama died of an infarction. All our neighbors came to offer their condolences to my husband. They didn't believe she was my mother. They thought I was her daughter-in-law, so warm was her relationship with my husband.

My daughter's first husband wasn't a Jew. The marriage wasn't a success. In 1992 my daughter got divorced and she avoids any memories of this part of her life. He never came to see their son. When we were processing the necessary documents for emigration to Israel my husband signed a permission to take the child abroad and, also, a certificate confirming his refusal from his parental rights. We've never seen him since 1996 and know nothing of him.

My grandson Alexei was born in 1991. My husband and I were pensioners and dedicated all our time to him. My daughter earned very little and my husband and I only had our miserable pension. In 1994 my daughter was offered a job at the Industrial Technical School, which had always been her dream. She worked there for half a year and then she became repatriation consultant at the

Israeli Cultural Center after passing a very difficult exam. My family is very excited about the Jewish spiritual recovery. We read Jewish newspapers and go to Jewish theaters. We have more information about Israel now. Our daughter told us a lot about it. We decided to emigrate there in 1997. We got settled in a quiet and beautiful neighborhood of Jerusalem.

My daughter took a course in Hebrew and computer design. Eight months after our arrival she was already working in her field. She spoke fluent Hebrew. She was getting promotions and her management raised her salary. We also received a welfare allowance. We had a very good life. Our problem was that we were missing Kiev and our friends and, on the other hand, we felt some anti-Russian attitude. My daughter was openly made to understand that the Russian speaking were second rate people. She was lucky to have never faced anti-Semitism in the USSR and what was happening in Israel hurt her self- esteem.

My grandson Alexei studied in the Jewish school and apart from that he also attended a school for Russian speaking children. The reason was that the level of teaching in a common school in Israel was much lower in comparison to what we were used to in the USSR. Besides, his classmates that were eight to nine years old didn't miss a chance to demonstrate that Russian children were strangers to this country.

My husband and I had problems with the language and when we went shopping or to a bank we weren't served appropriately when the clerks heard us speak Russian. We felt lonely, especially so my husband. We had books and could watch Russian programs on TV, but we missed talking to our friends whom we valued so much. We only had a few relatives that we could socialize with. My husband died in Jerusalem on 1st November 1999.

In October 2000 my daughter went on a visit to Kiev. She came back and announced to me that she was going to marry a Jewish man from Kiev, who, for some reason, couldn't move to Israel and that she felt more at ease in Kiev. Within nine months - in August 2001 - my daughter and I returned to Kiev leaving the plentiful life in Israel behind.

My daughter works at the Institute of Judaism now. She's very happy with her job. My grandson goes to a Russian school. He has just finished the 5th grade. Hesed provides assistance to me. I receive food, tapes with Jewish stories and novels as well as medications. My health doesn't allow me to take part in any Jewish activities, but I read Jewish newspapers and books that my daughter and my son-in-law give me.

Glossary

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

2 Common name
Russified or Russian first names used by Jews in everyday life and adopted in official documents. The Russification of first names was one of the manifestations of the assimilation of Russian Jews at the turn of the 19th and 20th century. In some cases only the spelling and pronunciation of Jewish

names was russified (e.g. Isaac instead of Yitskhak; Boris instead of Borukh), while in other cases traditional Jewish names were replaced by similarly sounding Russian names (e.g. Eugenia instead of Ghita; Yury instead of Yuda). When state anti-Semitism intensified in the USSR at the end of the 1940s, most Jewish parents stopped giving their children traditional Jewish names to avoid discrimination.

3 Russian Revolution of 1917

Revolution in which the tsarist regime was overthrown in the Russian Empire and, under Lenin, was replaced by the Bolshevik rule. The two phases of the Revolution were: February Revolution, which came about due to food and fuel shortages during World War I, and during which the tsar abdicated and a provisional government took over. The second phase took place in the form of a coup led by Lenin in October/November (October Revolution) and saw the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks.

4 Bessarabia

Historical area between the Prut and Dnestr rivers, in the southern part of Odessa region. Bessarabia was part of Russia until the Revolution of 1917. In 1918 it declared itself an independent republic, and later it united with Romania. The Treaty of Paris (1920) recognized the union but the Soviet Union never accepted this. In 1940 Romania was forced to cede Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to the USSR. The two provinces had almost 4 million inhabitants, mostly Romanians. Although Romania reoccupied part of the territory during World War II the Romanian peace treaty of 1947 confirmed their belonging to the Soviet Union. Today it is part of Moldavia.

5 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.

6 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.

7 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.

8 Great Patriotic War

On 22nd June 1941 at 5 o'clock in the morning Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union without declaring war. This was the beginning of the so-called Great Patriotic War. The German blitzkrieg, known as Operation Barbarossa, nearly succeeded in breaking the Soviet Union in the months that followed. Caught unprepared, the Soviet forces lost whole armies and vast quantities of equipment to the German onslaught in the first weeks of the war. By November 1941 the German army had seized the Ukrainian Republic, besieged Leningrad, the Soviet Union's second largest city, and threatened Moscow itself. The war ended for the Soviet Union on 9th May 1945.

9 Molotov, V

P. (1890-1986): Statesman and member of the Communist Party leadership. From 1939, Minister of Foreign Affairs. On June 22, 1941 he announced the German attack on the USSR on the radio. He and Eden also worked out the percentages agreement after the war, about Soviet and western spheres of influence in the new Europe.

10 Volga German ASSR

established as Labour Commune of Volga Germans or Volga German AO within the Russian SFSR on 19th October 1918. Transformed into Volga German ASSR on 19th December 1924, abolished on 28th August 1941. The official state name was Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic of the Volga-Germans. The city of Engels is the former capital of the Volga- German Republic.

11 School #

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

12 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 anti-Semitic 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'.

13 Mandatory job assignment in the USSR
Graduates of higher educational institutions had to complete a mandatory 2-year job assignment issued by the institution from which they graduated. After finishing this assignment young people were allowed to get employment at their discretion in any town or organization.

14 Enemy of the people
Soviet official term; euphemism used for real or assumed political opposition.

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

16 Babi Yar
Babi Yar is the site of the first mass shooting of Jews that was carried out openly by fascists. On 29th and 30th September 1941 33,771 Jews were shot there by a special SS unit and Ukrainian militia men. During the Nazi occupation of Kiev between 1941 and 1943 over a 100,000 people were killed in Babi Yar, most of whom were Jewish. The Germans tried in vain to efface the traces of the mass grave in August 1943 and the Soviet public learnt about mass murder after World War II.

17 Baykonur
Situated in Karaganda region in Kazakhstan, it was one of the biggest space vehicle launching sites in the USSR, which carried out an extensive program of space research. The first artificial satellite was launched from Bayknour; the first human astronaut, Yury Gagarin, as well as the first woman astronaut, Valentina Tereshkova, was also launched from Baykonur.

18 Lukianovka Jewish cemetery
It was opened on the outskirts of Kiev in the late 1890s and functioned until 1941. Many monuments and tombs were destroyed during the German occupation of the town in 1941-1943. In 1961 the municipal authorities closed the cemetery and Jewish families had to rebury their relatives in the Jewish sections of a new city cemetery within half a year. A TV Center was built on the site of the former Lukianovka cemetery.

19 Victory Day in Russia (9th May)
National holiday to commemorate the defeat of Nazi Germany and the end of World War II and honor the Soviets who died in the war.

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.