Larisa Radomyselskaya

Larisa Radomyselskaya
Uzhhorod
Ukraine
Date of interview: July 2003
Interviewer: Inna Galina

Larisa Radomyselskaya is an elderly woman with typical Middle East Jewish appearance. Her resin black curly hair has turned gray. Her two grown up daughters looking very much like their mother live with her. They and Larisa's only grandson have this specific looks. Larisa's family lives in a small-size thee-bedroom apartment of Khrushchev's period design of the 1960s called Khrushchovka 1 when they economized on each square meter of the living space. They have furniture bought during that same period. It's a clean and cozy apartment. It shows that the family has little to live on, however. It hasn't undergone renovations for 40 years since they moved into it. Three women have maintained it as well as they could. Larisa had a stroke few years ago. Her older daughter is a single mother. Her younger daughter is an invalid. All three women dote on Igor, their 'sunray in the women's realm'. All three generation care about each other. They are very friendly, shy and quiet people. Larisa moves little after her illness. She speaks so quietly that at times it is hard to figure out the words. Her life has been as quiet as the way she talks. Larisa stays at home alone during a day while her daughters are at work and her grandson is at school.

My family backgrownd

I didn't know my paternal grandmother or grandfather. My father told me that his family lived in the small village of Rubanovka of Kherson region [500 km from Kiev]. My grandfather's name was Michael Lifshytz, his Jewish name was Moishe. I have no information about my grandmother. I don't even know her first name. I don't know where or when my grandparents were born. I don't know what my grandfather was doing for a living. They had five children: three sons and two daughters. My father's brother Zinovi was the oldest. I don't know his year of birth. Then my father Yefim was born in 1904. His Jewish name was Chaim. I don't remember any dates of birth of the other children. All I know is that after my father came his brother Mark, whose Jewish name was Morduch, his sister Sarra and the youngest sister whom I didn't know. My father told me very little about his family. He was reluctant to talk about it. In 1926 my grandmother and grandfather and their youngest daughter emigrated to Palestine on religious motives. They left their other children here. My father was 22 years old and Sarra was a teenage girl. As far as I know none of the children had any contacts with their parents. I have no information about them.

I don’t remember what my father’s brothers were doing to earn their living. Zinovi perished during World War II, he disappeared. As for Mark, I just can’t remember anything. I don’t know much about my cousins, my father brothers Zinovi and Mark’s children. Mark had two daughters: Inna, born in 1934, and Valeria, born in 1938. Inna and her family live in Haifa in Israel and Valeria lives in St. Petersburg. Zinovi’s daughter Sophia, born in the early 1930s, lives in Moscow. So this is how our life scattered us around. My father’s younger sister Sarra graduated from the College of Journalism in Novosibirsk or Krasnoyarsk. She was single. My father and his brothers and sister were convinced communists. Of course, none of them was religious or observed Jewish traditions.

My father finished 10 years of a Russian secondary school and at the age of 18 he was recruited to the army. He served in the Navy. My father told me little about that period. All I know is that they often sailed abroad and my father visited many countries. After the army, in 1925 he was sent to work in Kharkov [a big town in the east of Ukraine in 450 km from Kiev, before 1936 capital of the Ukrainian SSR], to the turbogenerator plant. My father was clever and he quickly grew from an apprentice to a qualified worker, manufacturer of turbine blades.

I don’t know anything about my mother’s family either. My grandfather died of a heart disease in the early 1920s, long before I was born. My maternal grandmother’s name was Maria Pinchusovich. I don’t know her maiden name or her place of birth. My grandmother was born in the 1880s. I knew one of her sisters: Sonia, whose last name was Leiberman in marriage. Sonia had four daughters: Fania, the oldest, whose year of birth I don’t remember, Ghita, born in 1917, Ida, born in 1919, and Ghenia, born in 1925. I don’t know any details of their life.

My mother’s family lived in Kherson in the east of Ukraine [500 km from Kiev]. My mother and her two sisters were born there. I don’t know my mother’s older sister’s name. She died when she was young. My mother Ida was born in 1915. Her sister Sarra was a little younger than my mother.

I don’t know what my grandfather did for a living. My grandmother worked her whole life. I don’t know where she worked. She left home in the morning and returned in the evening. My grandmother wasn’t religious and didn’t observe Jewish traditions. She didn’t go to school and she learned to read and write by herself. My grandmother spoke Russian, but she knew Yiddish as well. In the late 1920s her family moved to Kharkov. I don’t know for what reason they moved.

I do not know the history of acquaintance of my parents, I was too small, when my mum has died and I didn’t have time to ask her anything. I know only, that my parents got married in 1933 in Kharkov. It was an ordinary wedding of their time: they registered their marriage in a registry office and in the evening they had a small dinner. My father received a room in a communal apartment 2 from his plant and my parents moved in there. I was born on 20 July 1934 in Kharkov. I was given the Russian name of Larisa. I didn’t have a Jewish name. My parents were atheists and believed everything related to Jewish traditions, history or culture to be vestige of the past. From the time I remember I lived with my grandmother Maria, my mother’s mother. My mother was always ill: she had a congenital heart disease. Perhaps, she inherited it from her father. My mother couldn’t take care of me and my grandmother was raising me. She lived in a small private house in the center of Kharkov with the family of my mother’s younger sister Sarra. Sarra had two daughters and we were growing up together. I don’t remember Sarra’s husband or her last name in her marriage. He left for work very early in the morning and returned home when I was already in bed. Sara was a housewife after she got married. When grandmother Maria went to work I stayed with Sarra.

Neither my grandmother nor Sarra were religious and I didn't know anything about Jewish traditions or holidays. Of course, I was too small at the time to make any assessments of the situation, but later I came to understanding many things. It was 1936-37, the period of mass arrests [during the Great Terror] 3. Everybody was suspected of espionage and of being an enemy of the Soviet people. My father had relatives in Palestine and this might become reason enough to arrest him, even though we had no information about them. Besides, Soviet authorities struggled against religion 4. They were closing temples, arresting clergymen and persecuting believers. This is the way it was. Perhaps, this was the reason why even the word 'Jew' was said in whisper in our home. Fortunately, my father wasn't arrested, but later I got to know that there had been arrests at his work.

I saw my mother rarely, only when my grandmother took me there visiting. In 1940 doctors offered my mother to have a surgery in Kiev. Heart surgeries were just beginning to be performed. My father was going to take a vacation, accompany my mother to Kiev and wait there until she could go back home. Regretfully, it didn't happen this way. My mother died shortly before she was to go to Kiev in 1940. My father was a member of the Party and a Jewish funeral was out of the question. My mother was cremated and buried in the town cemetery in Kharkov. After she died my life went on as before: I continued living with my grandmother and my mother's sister Sarra. My father lived alone. He was provably feeling lonely since he asked my grandmother to move in with him and take me with her. My grandmother kept working and my father's sister Sarra came from Siberia to take to my bringing up. She didn't have children and was happy to take care of me. Aunt Sarra worked as a journalist in a small publishing house and she could take her work home and then she could spend much time with me. She taught me to read and write and before going to school I could read in Russian very well. When my aunt was working I used to sit beside her with a book and I could spend hours reading children's books by Russian and Soviet authors. We spoke only Russian in our family. I didn't hear one Jewish word, I didn't know any Jewish traditions and I didn't know who Jews were.

During the war

In September 1941 I was to go to school. I looked forward to this day. Nobody could imagine that a war would shatter our peaceful and quiet life. On Sunday 22 June 1941 my aunt Sarra promised to take me to a children's movie in the cinema and buy me ice cream. It was a hot summer day. We were at home and I was hurrying my aunt when our neighbor ran in. She said that the radio was broadcasting a speech by Molotov 5 and that fascists attacked the Soviet Union [and so began the Great Patriotic War] 6. They turned on the radio and I heard Molotov saying that we would win the victory. Then Stalin spoke with an appeal to the people. The adults were very anxious, but I, of course, did not understand how serious this was. If Stalin and Molotov said that we would win then it will be so, I thought. I can still remember how angry I was with my aunt who said that we would go to the cinema after the war since we had some more important things to do.

Things were quiet in Kharkov on the outside. There were refugees from other towns coming to town. My father was waiting for a notice from the military registry office. He insisted that my grandmother, I and his sister evacuated before he went to the front. I don't think my grandmother was willing to leave her home. Before our departure my grandmother took me to my mother's grave in the cemetery. There was a wall with numerous boards and there was quiet music playing. I couldn't come to my mother's grave after World War II: the columbarium was destroyed during a

bombing of Kharkov.

We evacuated from Kharkov by the last train in September 1941. German troops were approaching Kharkov. There were three of us leaving: my father's sister Sarra, I and my grandmother. We went by a train for cattle transportation. Our carriage was overcrowded. People slept on their suitcases and bags. We had little luggage and food with us. Our train was bombed almost every day on the first half of our trip. There was no water and toilets didn't work. I remember that when the train stopped all passengers ran to the toilet at a railway station and then hurried to get some water. Sometimes we managed to get some food, but there was not enough to eat. Later hunger became our habitual condition.

We arrived in Sverdlovsk region [approximately 1,000 km from Moscow]. The train stopped at a small station. There was a woman who said that she could accommodate one family in her house. My grandmother was very weak at the time and we decided to get off. It was a district town. I don't remember its name. We accommodated in the house of this woman. Her husband was at the front and she lived with her old mother and two daughters. They welcomed us and supported with whatever they could. They were poor, but they shared their clothing and food with us. They had a log house with two rooms. They gave one room to us. I remember that all residents of this town seemed different to me. All men and women were big, fair-haired and beautiful. There were many children in every family. There was a family with 18 children. I remember that children often gathered to listen to me telling them about life in a big city. They couldn't imagine many-storied houses and trolleybuses and trams commuting in the town. I told them about our apartment and that there was a balcony in it. My stories were like a fairy tale for them.

Kharkov turbogenerator plant evacuated to this town and my aunt went to work in a shop there. It had nothing to do with her profession, but workers received almost three times more bread for their food coupons and this became a decisive factor. My grandmother and I had dependants' coupons receiving 300 grams of bread per day while aunt Sarra received 1 kg of bread. This bread was baked with bran and sawdust and it was heavy. 300 grams made a 2 cm thick slice. We had to stand in lines for days to receive bread. My aunt returned home from work late at night and went to sleep immediately. She left early in the morning. My grandmother was our housekeeper. She knitted socks, mittens and sweaters for sale and her customers paid her with food that was much more valuable than money at the time. Of course, we never had enough food, but we didn't starve either. From spring till late autumn my grandmother worked in a local kolkhoz 7: pricking out, weeding and harvesting. After school I ran to the field to help her. They paid with agricultural products for work. I remember that I had a dream when in evacuation to have a whole crispy fresh loaf of bread just for myself.

I went to the first form of a local Russian school. About half of my classmates were children in evacuation. I don't know whether there were Jews among them. At that time issues of this kind didn't matter. There was no anti-Semitism. The local population sympathized with those who were in evacuation in their town. Local children used to bring a potato or a pie to give them to evacuated children. I studied well and had no problems at school. In the first form I became a Young Octobrist 8. I became a leader of a 'little star': an Octobrist unit of 5 children. I remember that 'little star' group went to help one old lady whose only son was at the front. We fetched water from a well and washed the floors in her house.

At first we didn't know about my father. In February 1942 we received his first letter and from then on we corresponded regularly. My father found us through a search bureau that had information about those in evacuation. I don't know at which fronts my father was. All I know is his field post number. He told us that my mother's sister Sarra and her children evacuated to Uzbekistan. We didn't correspond with them and only my father wrote us about them every now and then. Actually we rifted apart then. After World War II my mother's sister Sarra moved to Kirovograd and we only rarely wrote her. She died shortly afterward. Her last name in her marriage was Gurevich. She had two daughters: Fira, born in 1931, and Sima, born in 1937.

In 1944, when we heard that Kharkov was liberated grandmother began to pack to go back home. She and I went home together. My father's sister Sarra decided to stay in Sverdlovsk where she was working at the plant. Sarra was hoping to build up her personal life. So my aunt and I rifted apart.

I don't remember our trip back home. All I remember is that the train was too slow while I was eager to get home as soon as possible. My grandmother's home was ruined by bombing, but the house where my parents' apartment was there. My grandmother and I moved in there. There was a school near the house and I went there to submit my documents to the 4th form.

I remember 9 May 1945. In the morning our co-tenant came by to tell us that the war was over. My grandmother turned on the radio and we heard an announcement about complete capitulation of Germany and that the war came to an end. Strangers in the streets hugged and greeted each other. Many were crying. In the streets and squares people were dancing, and signing and there were fireworks in the evening. Everybody was happy hoping for a happy life in the future.

After the war

In late May 1945 my father returned home. The three of us shared one room. My grandmother was very concerned that my father was single. She kept telling him that he needed to get married and that I needed a mother and that he was too young to be living alone. My grandmother introduced my father to her niece, her sister Sonia's daughter Ghita. Ghita was my mother's cousin. Her surname in marriage was Wainshtein. Ghita's husband perished in Sevastopol on the first days of the war. Ghita's son Edward was born in March 1941. Ghita was in evacuation in the Ural and from there she moved to Kharkov. My father and Ghita registered their marriage in a registry office and Ghita and her son came to live with us. In 1947 my father and Ghita's son Mark was born.

We didn't observe any Jewish traditions or celebrate Jewish holidays. We, children, didn't even know anything bout such. We celebrated Soviet holidays: 1 May, 7 November [commemorating the October Revolution Date] 9, Victory Day on 9 May 10. We celebrated these holidays at home and at school. My parents tried to avoid any mention of Jewish subjects or Israel. Now I understand that they were just frightened. Between 1948, campaign against cosmopolitans 11, and until Stalin died in 1953, Jews were arrested. Jews lost their jobs and there were continuous article in newspapers stating that Jewish cosmopolitans were enemies of the Soviet power. I think my father was afraid that they could somehow figure it out that his parents and a sister lived in Israel [it was dangerous to keep in touch with relatives abroad] 12. We, children, thought that it was shameful to acknowledge our Jewish identity.

My grandmother didn't get along with Ghita and moved to my father's sister Sarra in Sverdlovsk. She lived there until she died. My grandmother worked as janitor at a military storage facility and occasionally we received short letters from her. She died in the early 1980s at the age of over 90. I don't know where grandmother was buried or whether there was a Jewish funeral. Aunt Sarra with whom my grandmother lived died few years after my grandmother passed away.

I was a difficult child. I couldn't find a common language with my stepmother and her son and I was jealous about my father and them. My father often went on business trips. He spent home few days per month. After my grandmother left I felt very lonely. I was nervous and restless. I studied at school hazardly and my teacher had many complaints about my studies. I couldn't wait to become independent from my father and his wife. After finishing the 7th form I began to consider getting a profession. I didn't want to think about finishing school and entering a college afterward since this option meant few more years of dependence on my father. There was a Construction College. I passed my exams successfully and entered the Faculty of Civilian Construction. There was anti-Semitism at that time and I was aware of it. Some of my friends told me that some of them got a refusal to admit their documents and some were plucked at an exam. However, I didn't face anything like that. My co-students and teaches had a friendly attitude toward me. When I was the first-year student I joined Komsomol 13 and I was very serious about it. I dedicated much time to Komsomol activities: I was an agitator and propagandist and participated in all Komsomol events. There were few Jewish students in our group and there was unprejudiced attitude toward them. Even the Doctors' Plot 14 that began in January 1953 did not impact these attitudes. I was a Soviet child raised in patriotic spirits and with strong belief that Stalin or Communist Party could not make mistakes. I believed that those doctors who wanted to poison Stalin were guilty. When in March 1953 Stalin died it was a terrible shock for me. On the day of his death I stood in guard of honor by his monument with tears pouring down my cheeks. I couldn't hold back my tears for several days. All people around were crying. They were not ashamed of their tears. I remember my stepbrother Edward sobbing on the sofa 'Why him? I wish I had died rather than he'. We believed in Stalin, this was how we were raised. His death was a terrible tragedy for millions. All of them kept asking one question: how we were to live on? A big shock for me was Khrushchev's 15 speech on the 20th Party Congress 16, when he denounced the cult of Stalin and told about the crimes committed by Stalin's regime. It was hard to believe what I heard, but I couldn't help believing what the Communist party was saying. In general, I believed piously radio broadcasts and was convinced that radio could only tell the truth. Few years later I learned to live with the thought that my idol was a criminal.

After finishing college I asked them to issue me a mandatory job assignment 17 to Uzhhorod in Subcarpathian region [800 km from Kiev] 18 where my cousin Ghenia whose family name was Cherchis and her children lived. Her husband was a military doctor. He served in Chop [700 km from Kiev, 30 km from Uzhhorod] near Uzhhorod. Ghenia and her daughters Elena and Marina, who were the same age as I, lived in Uzhhorod.

My friend Ada Trudler also got a job assignment to Uzhhorod. We became friends when we were first-year students. We went to work in Subcarpathian regional construction trust where we received a double room in a hostel. I liked Uzhhorod very much: it was a quiet, beautiful and cozy town. It became part of the USSR after World War II. It belonged to Austria-Hungary before 1918, then Czechoslovakia and in 1938 it became apart of Hungary. Since I grew up and was brought up

in the USSR I was amazed to hear Hungarian in the streets. Jews were not afraid of speaking Yiddish or demonstrate that they were Jews. I and Ada met few local Jewish guys who began to take care of us. One of them was Wolf and the name of another was Misha. They introduced us to their friends and families. They invited us to celebration of Jewish holidays where they told us about Jewish history, traditions and customs. This was all new and amazing to me. For the first time in my life I identified myself as Jew. There were many Jewish employees in the construction trust where I was working. The local Jews were surprised that neither I nor Ada knew Yiddish or received at last elementary Jewish education. The big synagogue didn't operate by then. It housed the Philharmonic. There was a small synagogue in Mukachevskaya Street and prayer houses where men got together to pray. At Pesach women made matzah. Later they began to supply matzah from Hungary. 3 years passed. At first we socialized with Jews only, but then we began to make other acquaintances. Many people moved to Uzhhorod from the USSR after World War II. I didn't face any anti-Semitism in Uzhhorod at that time. I think it emerged a little later and that those that had moved from the USSR were its carriers for the most part.

I met my husband Isaac Radomyselski in 1956. He was born in 1929 in Chopovichi town in Zhytomyr region, Ukraine, [150 km from Kiev]. My husband's mother Rieva was born in Chopovichi in 1888. Isaac didn't know his father Yakov Radomyselski: his mother left her husband when she was pregnant. She was raising her son alone and then she married a widower from Kiev who had five children. She moved to her husband in Kiev. Isaac was growing with his stepbrothers and stepsisters. Rieva was a housewife. She didn't get along with her stepchildren. She was a rough woman and she couldn't even find a common language with her own son. I don't know how religious Isaac's family was, but he knew Yiddish well. He often talked Yiddish with his mother. Before World War II Isaac finished the 6th form at school. In 1940 his stepfather died. During World War II the family was in evacuation in the Altay region. After the war they returned to Kiev. Their house was ruined during bombing and Isaac and Rieva had no relatives in Kiev. Rieva's stepchildren stayed in Kiev and Rieva and her son moved to Lvov [500 km from Kiev]. Isaac didn't go back to school. He didn't get any education at home: his mother was too busy trying to survive through trying times. Isaac went to a factory vocational school at the mechanic plant and spent his leisure time with other children like himself. They even used to steal food from vendors at the market. At the age of 18 Isaac went to the army. My husband told me that service in the army saved him from the way of life that he had led before: at least, he got food and clothes in the army. After mandatory term of service he remained in the army. He had no other alternative. When he was in the army he finished an evening higher secondary school. This was all education he got.

When my husband became a professional military he received a room in a barrack in Uzhhorod. His mother joined him there. After we got married we lived in this barrack for few years. We registered our marriage in a registry office and then had a small wedding dinner with Isaac's mother, my aunt Ghenia and her daughters and my closest friend Ada. None of us was religious and we didn't even mention a religious wedding. My mother-in-law also was an atheist.

Shortly after we got married, in autumn 1957, the military unit where my husband served was given the alarm and they moved to Hungary [because of the Soviet invasion of Hungary] 19. He didn't stay there long and returned to Uzhhorod. The Hungarian events that became a concern for many active residents of Subcarpathia didn't interest us. We grew up in the Soviet Union and were taught to blindly believe official explanations of events. We believed that if the Party and

Government decided it was right to take troops to Hungary, then this was necessary. Thus, when in 1968 the USSR brought its troops to [invade] Czechoslovakia 20 and Isaac also went there, I began to have doubts that it was right. My husband didn't take part in military action. He was in a supporting unit deployed at some distance from the area of combat actions. However, I was terrified to hear what he told me about beating and arrests of peaceful civilians. I understood that the USSR conducted tough policy with regards to socialist countries, but I thought that it might be some political necessity in this. In general, I took no interest in politics. I had other problems to think about.

In 1957 our older daughter Irina was born. Our second daughter Galina was born in 1961. After my older daughter was born I didn't have milk and gave her cow milk right from her birth. We didn't have any problems and Irina was growing a strong and healthy girl. I began to have problems after Galina was born. She was born prematurely. She fainted after each breastfeeding. Only few days later we had tests completed and I was told that I couldn't breastfeed her due to rhesus incompatibility. I guessed there was something wrong with my daughter. She looked and behaved different from other babies, but doctors calmed me down that it would pass. They wrote in the certificate that I received before release from the hospital 'Healthy baby'. My daughter was a difficult girl and didn't develop like other babies. She couldn't even sit when she turned one year old. My husband was terrified to look at her and he even said it wasn't his baby. When I took Galina to a professor pediatrician he said that she had 'children's cerebral palsy'. He told me that my daughter would never grow to be a normal person and that she would remain a creature with no mind or motion and would be not able to lead an independent life. But I didn't believe it was a final sentence. I took my daughter to doctors in big towns and was hoping for good luck. A professor in Kharkov who specialized in cerebral palsy gave me hope saying that if I attend to my daughter she would learn to move and do everything necessary and she could develop her mind. It's horrible to recall what my baby and I had to bear, but it worked. At the age of 8 my daughter went to the first form of an elementary school. She could read and write already. She couldn't walk well. She often fell injuring her knees. Her schoolmates teased her for her handicaps. Galina had a strong character and strong will and she finished school with a golden medal regardless of anti-Semitism of this period. It was next to impossible for a Jew to receive a gold medal, but my daughter did it.

After finishing school my older daughter Irina entered the Faculty of Mathematic of Uzhhorod University. Irina was a good student. She was number three on the list of best students of her faculty. Irina got a job assignment and went to work as a teacher of physics at school in Artyomovsk town in the east of Ukraine in Donetsk region [665 km from Kiev]. Irina was the only teacher of physics in this school and she also taught physics at the extramural department of the Pedagogical College in Artyomovsk. Irina lived in a hostel. Other people were friendly toward her. She didn't face any anti-Semitism. The only thing that made her sad was that she didn't have a good place to live. Because of this Irina returned to Uzhhorod in 1983.

My younger daughter Galina also decided to go to college after finishing school with a gold medal, but I was shocked to hear that she intended to go to the Lvov University. I couldn't imagine how Galena would manage without my help, but she insisted on it. She passed her entrance exams successfully and was admitted to the Construction Faculty of the Lvov Polytechnic University. My daughter shared her room in the hostel with three Ukrainian girls from Western Ukraine. They treated her well and helped her to cope with everyday routines. Galena had walking problems and

it was difficult for her to go downstairs. Other girls held her by her hand and she always had support. She helped others with their studies. She still keeps in touch with her University friends. They correspond and visit Galina. In 1983 Galina graduated from the university with honors and got a job assignment to a construction trust in Uzhhorod. She has worked as an engineer there for 20 years. Although they often reduce staff in her office Galina continues to work there.

We received this apartment in 1960 and moved in here with my mother-in-law. She died in 1964. Although she was an atheist she asked us before she died to arrange a Jewish funeral for her. My husband and I were confused: we didn't know anything about Jewish customs or traditions. She died on Friday morning and I recalled that Jews went to the synagogue on Friday. My husband and I went to the synagogue. Although we were there for the first time other attendants were sympathetic with us. We got any help we needed: they delivered a casket, excavated a grave and made all arrangements for the funeral. We buried my mother-in-law in the Jewish cemetery in Uzhhorod according to Jewish traditions, but my husband and I didn't join the Jewish way of life then.

We had Jewish, Russian and Ukrainian friends. We didn't care about nationality. Unfortunately, our daughter's condition didn't allow us to meet with friends or invite them home often, but we celebrated Soviet holidays: 1 May, 7 November, Victory Day and the Soviet Army Day 21 and our children's birthdays. I cooked and we had parties with guests. We danced and talked. On our daughters' birthdays they invited their friends. Sometimes on weekends we went for walks with the family. My younger daughter loved these outings, though walking was hard for her. We wished we could take our daughter out of the town, but we didn't have such opportunity. We didn't have a car and we couldn't generally afford it. Considering Galina's condition we spent our vacations in Uzhhorod.

Neither my husband nor I were members of the Communist party. In his youth my husband was a Komsomol member and secretary of the Komsomol unit of his military unit, but when he overgrew his Komsomol age and was offered to join the Party Isaac refused. He believed it was a great responsibility and a big honor to be a communist and he didn't deserve it as yet. It's hard to say whether this had an impact on his career or it was his national origin, but he never got promotions when his time came and received higher ranks with big delays. I spent all my free time with Galina. Besides, nobody offered me to join the Party.

I worked as an engineer in a construction trust 20 years. In 1974 I got an offer to go to work at the Uzhhorodpribor plant. I got a position of acting chief of the department of capital construction. After few years of work I asked them to appoint me chief of this department, but director called me to his office and said directly: 'You cannot be chief. Firstly, because you are a woman and secondly, because you are a Jew'. It was stressful for me. This was the first time I faced anti-Semitism. I had never faced any anti-Semitism before. It became difficult for me to come to work, but I understood that I wouldn't find another job. I worked there until I reached the age of retirement and then I continued to work as an engineer. I left work in 1992.

In the 1970s many Jews were moving to Israel. Our friends and relatives moved there at this period. My husband and I respected their decision, but couldn't understand why people having a place to live and a job would go to another country without knowing the language or knowing for sure that they would find their place in life in this country. We didn't even consider in our family the

issue of moving to another country.

My husband demobilized due to his health condition in 1978. He went to work at the Uzhhorodpribor plant where I worked. He didn't work there long. A severe disease made him quit. When in 1983 our both daughters returned home Isaac was very happy. It was as if he had a feeling that would die soon. Irina couldn't find work at school and went to work as an engineer at the Uzhhorodpribor plant. Both daughters were with us and my husband and I were very happy to have them back home. My husband died in 1984. We buried him in the town cemetery. We didn't make a Jewish funeral.

Few years later my mother sister Sarra's older daughter Fira moved to America, and Sima moved to Germany in 1991. Around the same period of time my mother's cousin Ghenia Cherchis, her husband and their daughter Elena moved to Israel. Their second daughter Marina stayed in Uzhhorod. Shortly afterward they sent us an invitation. My husband had died by then, and my daughters and I didn't venture to leave. I was afraid of giving up friends, our apartment and work to go to the uncertainty. My daughters were also afraid of such radical changes. Of course, propaganda had its impact on our decision-making. We believed that Israel was another capitalist country where money decided everything and where we wouldn't be able to find our place in life. I wish we had been more resolute then, but it is too late to feel sorry about what we didn't do.

My older daughter Irina only wanted to marry a Jewish man. I supported her in this: I was terrified to think that my daughter could hear the word 'zhydovka' from a non-Jewish husband one day. She has typical Semitic looks. However, Irina couldn't find a Jewish husband. At some point of time Irina decided to have a baby without a husband. In 1988 my grandson Igor was born. I don't know who his father was. My daughter never spoke to me about him. I think that if we had moved to Israel Irina would have got married and her child would grow in a full family. When she went to work in Hesed she finally got a Jewish surrounding. Irina tells me 'If only I had this when I was young…'. Anyway, Igor has become a big joy for us. He is a nice boy and we raise him together. He is a very talented boy. He studies well in a special school with advanced learning of English. Igor finished a music school in playing the flute. My grandson has played 3 years in the ensemble of old music in Hesed and we are very happy about it. He reads a lot and is fond of computer. He has Jewish friends for the most part. Igor is eager to go to Israel and we are very concerned about his future.

My father lived in Kharkov all his life. Regretfully, we rarely saw each other. Due to Galina's condition we couldn't travel. My father wrote us about his life and his family. My both stepbrothers finished Polytechnic College in Kharkov. Upon graduation they received job assignment to the turbogenerator plant. They married Russian girls. Edward had two daughters: Irina, born in the late 1970s, and Anna, born in the early 1980s. Irina is married and has a little son. Mark's son Dmitri was born in 1970. After my father died in 1979, my correspondence with stepbrothers died away gradually. He was buried in the town cemetery in Kharkov. My stepbrother Mark and his family live in Kharkov.

When perestroika 22 began we noticed a change. The Jewish life became more active. There were performances staged after works by Jewish writers and concerts of Jewish music and dances. Before perestroika it wasn't allowed to correspond with people from capitalist countries and it was impossible to imagine that they could visit or we could travel there. During perestroika this became real. Of course, life has become more difficult. We lost all our little savings. We felt it like many

other middle class citizens.

In 1992, after I retired I traveled to Israel once in my life at the invitation of my cousin Elena. Elena has two sons. They work in Israel. One is a rabbi and another was in the army at the time. I don't know where he is now. Of course, Israel made an unforgettable impression on me. It's a beautiful country and every citizen is a patriot of his country. I went on tours to many parts of Israel, met with my cousin Inna, Mark's daughter, and visited my friends. And of course, more than once I felt sorry that we failed to move to Israel. I was trying to find my father's family, but I couldn't, unfortunately.

After Ukraine became independent after the breakdown of the USSR 23, I saw that it had an effect on the Jewish life. We became closer to it. At first, I began to work at the synagogue helping to distribute meals to old people. In 1999, when Hesed opened in Uzhhorod, my daughter and I went to work there. My grandson Igor attends a Sunday school in Hesed. They study Jewish traditions, history and religion, Ivrit and Yiddish. In summer Igor goes to Jewish summer camps. He likes it there very much. My grandson identifies himself as a Jew and he speaks proudly about it. Hesed provides assistance to us: food packages and meals. We got to celebrate all Jewish holidays in Hesed and often attend lectures and concerts. Of course, our biggest pleasure is to attend the concerts of the orchestra where my grandson plays. I can socialize with friends in Hesed. Hesed has given me and my family a possibility to become Jews and return to our roots. This is very important for me now.

GLOSSARY:

1 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 Kiev.

2 Communal apartments
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 shared apartments continued to exist for decades. Despite state programs for the construction of more houses and the liquidation of shared apartments, which began in the 1960s, shared apartments still exist today.

3 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.

4 Struggle against religion

The 1930s was a time of anti-religion struggle in the USSR. In those years it was not safe to go to synagogue or to church. Places of worship, statues of saints, etc. were removed; rabbis, Orthodox and Roman Catholic priests disappeared behind KGB walls.

5 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.

6 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.

7 Kolkhoz

In the Soviet Union the policy of gradual and voluntary collectivization of agriculture was adopted in 1927 to encourage food production while freeing labor and capital for industrial development. In 1929, with only 4% of farms in kolkhozes, Stalin ordered the confiscation of peasants' land, tools, and animals; the kolkhoz replaced the family farm.

8 Young Octobrist

In Russian Oktyabrenok, or ‘pre-pioneer’, designates Soviet children of seven years or over preparing for entry into the pioneer organization.

9 October Revolution Day

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

10 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.

11 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'.

12 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.

13 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.

14 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.

15 Khrushchev, Nikita (1894-1971)
Soviet communist leader. After Stalin's death in 1953, he became first secretary of the Central Committee, in effect the head of the Communist Party of the USSR. In 1956, during the 20th Party

Congress, Khrushchev took an unprecedented step and denounced Stalin and his methods. He was deposed as premier and party head in October 1964. In 1966 he was dropped from the Party's Central Committee.

16 Twentieth Party Congress

At the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956 Khrushchev publicly debunked the cult of Stalin and lifted the veil of secrecy from what had happened in the USSR during Stalin’s leadership.

17 Mandatory job assignment in the USSR

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

18 Subcarpathia (also known as Ruthenia, Russian and Ukrainian name Zakarpatie)

Region situated on the border of the Carpathian Mountains with the Middle Danube lowland. The regional capitals are Uzhhorod, Berehovo, Mukachevo, Khust. It belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy until World War I; and the Saint-German convention declared its annexation to Czechoslovakia in 1919. It is impossible to give exact historical statistics of the language and ethnic groups living in this geographical unit: the largest groups in the interwar period were Hungarians, Rusyns, Russians, Ukrainians, Czech and Slovaks. In addition there was also a considerable Jewish and Gypsy population. In accordance with the first Vienna Award of 1938, the area of Subcarpathia mainly inhabited by Hungarians was ceded to Hungary. The rest of the region, was proclaimed a new state called Carpathian Ukraine in 1939, with Khust as its capital, but it only existed for four and a half months, and was occupied by Hungary in March 1939. Subcarpathia was taken over by Soviet troops and local guerrillas in 1944. In 1945, Czechoslovakia ceded the area to the USSR and it gained the name Carpatho-Ukraine. The region became part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1945. When Ukraine became independent in 1991, the region became an administrative region under the name of Subcarpathia.

19 Soviet invasion of Hungary, 1956: On October 23, 1956, in response to the recent backlash against reformist premier Imre Nagy, Hungarian students and workers took to the streets of Budapest in demonstrations against Soviet domination and Communist rule. Within days, the uprising escalated into a full-scale national revolt, and the Hungarian government fell into chaos. Nagy joined the revolution and was reinstated as Hungarian premier, but his minister János Kádár formed a counter-regime and asked the U.S.S.R. to intervene. On November 4, a massive Soviet force of 200,000 troops and 2,500 tanks entered Hungary. Here, Radio Budapest is heard reading a statement by Nagy in which he charges the Soviets with attempting to overthrow Hungary's "lawful democratic government." Nagy took refuge in the Yugoslav embassy but was later arrested by Soviet agents after leaving the embassy under a safe-conduct pledge. Nearly 200,000 Hungarians fled the country, and thousands of people were arrested, killed, or executed before the Hungarian uprising was finally suppressed.

20 The Soviet Invasion of Czechoslovakia: August 1968 – In the morning hours of August 21, 1968, the Soviet army invaded Czechoslovakia along with troops from four other Warsaw Pact countries. The occupation was the beginning of the end for the Czechoslovak reform movement known as the

Prague Spring.
21 Soviet Army Day: The Russian imperial army and navy disintegrated after the outbreak of the Revolution of 1917, so the Council of the People's Commissars created the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army on a voluntary basis. The first units distinguished themselves against the Germans on February 23, 1918. This day became the ‘Day of the Soviet Army’ and is nowadays celebrated as ‘Army Day’.

22 Perestroika
Soviet economic and social policy of the late 1980s. Perestroika [restructuring] was the term attached to the attempts (1985–91) by Mikhail Gorbachev to transform the stagnant, inefficient command economy of the Soviet Union into a decentralized market-oriented economy. Industrial managers and local government and party officials were granted greater autonomy, and open elections were introduced in an attempt to democratize the Communist party organization. By 1991, perestroika was on the wane, and after the failed August Coup of 1991 was eclipsed by the dramatic changes in the constitution of the union.

23 Breakdown of the USSR
Yeltsin in 1991 signed a deal with Russia's neighbours that formalized the break up of the Soviet Union. The USSR was replaced by the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).