

# Communella Bunikovskaya

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Kiev

Ukraine

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*Communella Bunikovskaya lives on the 2nd floor of a 3-storied house in Vetrianyie Hills in the outskirts of Kiev. She has a small apartment: a living room, a bedroom a kitchen and a toilet. Communella looks young for her years. She is a hospitable woman full of energy. She is short and slim; she wears her hair in a knot. She has gray eyes. She has trousers and a blouse that she made herself. She also makes toys for her granddaughters. She has also made nice pillows that she has on her sofa. She has pictures of embroidered flowers on the walls made by her younger granddaughter. She has many photos of her mother and father, sister, son and her granddaughters. She has a big collection of books: about Jewish culture, biology, fiction and books about Jewish artists. Communella looks forward to spring when she can go to the Jewish library, attend exhibitions and visit friends. She seldom goes out in winter; the road is slippery and it gets dark early. Her granddaughters and her son visit her on vacation. Her son lives in Odessa. Her sister calls from Israel on Fridays and she talks with her friends on the phone. In spring Communella will read lectures about Jewish artists at the library in Sretenskaya Street and meanwhile she gets prepared.*

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## My family background

My grandfather on my father's side Abram Lyova Bunikovskiy was born in Priazovie, in 1870s [a Jewish agricultural colony near Mariupol] [1](#). He moved to Mariupol when he grew older where there were more opportunities to get education or a good job. He managed to get professional education and became a hat maker. The majority of population in Mariupol was Russian and Ukrainian. There was also Greek, German and Bulgarian population. There were not many Jews in the town. I remember my grandfather at the age of over 60: he was a strong man with straight hair with a parting to the left side and moustache. My grandfather was religious, but he didn't wear a kippah or a beard. After the revolution in 1917 [2](#) it was quite common in Mariupol that Jews changed their traditional looks. My grandfather's dream was to move to Palestine and he paid a high price for this dream; he was repressed as a Zionist in 1937 and perished in Stalin's camps. I don't really know

whether grandfather was involved in any arrangements for departure or whether he was a member of Zionist organization, but I guess, he was. We didn't discuss this subject in our family and had no information about when or where he perished. After Stalin died in 1953 I tried to raise this subject. I wanted my father to get some information about my grandfather, but he didn't do anything about it.

My grandmother Sarah Bunikovskaya was also born in Priazovie in 1880s. I don't know how or when she moved to Mariupol. My grandfather and grandmother got married in 1900s. They had a traditional Jewish wedding. They settled down in Mariupol. My grandfather supported the family and my grandmother was a housewife. They had four children: my father Moisey, born in 1905, David, two years younger, Isaac born around 1910, and sister Rosa, born in 1913.

I often visited my grandmother and grandfather before the World War II. I remember that they lived in a 2-storied house. I guess they owned this house since I never saw any neighbors or a different owner of the house. I remember a stair-case and a big dining-room. I also went to the melon and watermelon field, but I don't remember whether it was their field or they just took me to an agricultural colony. My grandmother was a short fat woman with gray curly hair. She was a very quiet and reserved woman. I loved her dearly.

My father told me that my grandparents observed all Jewish traditions before the revolution: they only had kosher food, celebrated all Jewish holidays. My father and his brothers finished cheder. They went to the synagogue with their parents. After the revolution the Soviet authorities struggled against religion [3](#) and in 1930s when I came to visit them there were no religious signs in the family, though I am sure that they remained religious people in their heart. I guess they prayed in secret. The last time I came to Mariupol in 1938 I didn't know that I would never see my grandmother Sarah and my father's brothers David and Isaac and their sister Rosa. In the end of 1941 they evacuated from Mariupol, but got in encirclement and were exterminated by Germans. In 1950s I found a sheet of paper with my mother's notes: 'In summer 1941 my husband's family: his mother, sister Rosa, brothers David and Isaac and Isaac's daughter was martyred by fascists during a mass shooting of Jews in Mariupol. The family of my cousin Meirah Fine also perished at that time. They resided in a Jewish agricultural colony. She and her husband, children, brothers and sisters were killed. My cousin sisters Luba, Nyusia and Rosa Lvovskiy and their families were thrown into mine pits in Donetsk'. This was how I got to know about the death of my father's family.

My father Moisey Bunikovskiy was born in Mariupol in 1905. My grandfather wanted his older son to become a rabbi. My father finished cheder. Perhaps he would have become a rabbi if it hadn't been for the revolution. My father didn't want to go to yeshiva. He ran away from home at the age of 14 at the beginning of the Civil War [4](#). He got to the Caucasus. He was strong and managed to get a job in the circus as an athlete. I don't remember exactly in what town he stayed in the Caucasus. He studied law and then entered a military infantry school in Vladicaucasus. He moved from one town to another for 10 years before he returned to Mariupol where he began to work as a legal adviser. Once he saw a picture of a young pretty girl in the family album and fell in love with the girl in the picture. She turned out to be his distant relative living in Stalino [Yuzovka at present - a regional industrial town] Donetsk region. My father went to Stalino where he found out my mother's address. He went to meet my mother. My mother returned his feelings and they got

married in 1930. Nobody ever told whether they had a religious wedding.

My mother Gita Bunikovskaya, nee Dubrova, was born in Yuzovka town in Donbass on 7 November 1909. Her father Mordukh (Mark - this name sounded more Russian fashion and the surrounding people called him by this name) Dubrov was presumably born in a Jewish agricultural colony near Mariupol in 1860s. My mother also wrote in her notes that his father Shaya Dubrov resided here. Grandfather Mordukh was a blacksmith - I only saw his photo. He was a big strong man with short hair and moustache. He owned a forge located in Sobachka, a poor neighborhood near Yuzovka. When I came to Yuzovka after the Great patriotic War there was housing construction where Sobachka used to be. At the beginning of XX century Yuzovka was a town of workers in Ekaterinoslav province. In early 1900th Jews were allowed to settled down there and I believe it was at that time that my grandparents moved there.

My grandmother Faina (or Fania how all the Russians people called her) Dubrova - I don't know her nee name - must have also been born in a Jewish agricultural colony near Mariupol in 1886. My grandmother was a beautiful woman: she was of average height, slim and had big eyes. She was reserved and quiet and had a great sense of humor. I remember her saying after she climbed the fifth floor and became short of breath 'I am short of breath as if I were an old woman'. She didn't like black clothes. Neither my grandmother Fania nor my paternal grandmother Sarah had any national accessories in their clothing when I knew them.

My grandparents had five children: there was a boy born in 1907 - he died of tuberculosis in 1915, my mother didn't remember his name. Alexandra (he was called Shura) born in 1908 was a housewife. I guess her husband a Jewish man, Turlianskiy perished during the Great Patriotic War [World War II]. She had three children: Murah, born in 1928, Semyon, born in 1931 and Konstantin, born in 1941. She earned their living by sewing and working as a room maid at a hotel. Murah and Semyon live in Israel now. Semyon is an engineer and composes music at free time. Konstantin, his wife and daughter live in Germany and their son lives in Donetsk. Shura lived her life in Donetsk. She died in 1990s.

Anna (or Ania how she was called) was born in 1911. She finished Physical culture College in Dnepropetrovsk and worked as a trainer in calisthenics at the Physical Culture School. Ania was popular in Dnepropetrovsk: for many years afterward there were contests named after Anna Dubrova in this town. Ania was married and had a son - Mark, born in 1941. She died in Dnepropetrovsk in 2001. Mark lives there with his wife and two children.

My mother's younger sister Clara was born in 1913. She lived in Donetsk and was a typist and stenographer at the Regional Party Committee in Donetsk, she was a member of the Party or otherwise she wouldn't have been able to work for the Party, but as far as I know, she wasn't a devoted Communist. She was married and had two children: son Michael and daughter Larissa. Michael is a mining engineer. He lives with his wife and daughter in Germany. Larissa graduated from the Conservatory. She lives in Donetsk. Clara died in 1980s.

My grandfather died of diabetes in 1914 when my mother was 4 years old. My grandmother had to raise five children. Her mother also lived with them. Grandmother Fania could read and write in Yiddish, knew all Jewish rituals and rules. Yuzovka was a small patriarchal town and my grandmother was almost the only Jewish woman with education. She read prayers to women at the

synagogue on holidays (and other women were listening and repeating after her) and earned some money in this way. Grandmother Fania also grew poultry supplying fat and down to wealthy families. The children made boxes for a match factory. In 1920s, after the Civil War, my grandmother leased the forge to an Austrian captive blacksmith.

However poor they were my grandmother took girls to the theater. It was her dream that my mother would learn to play the piano and Ania would become a ballerina. Shura and my mother studied in a Jewish private grammar school for 2 years. This was grammar school for girls: they studied Hebrew and religion, manners, housekeeping and general subjects like mathematic and literature. They studied in Yiddish.

My grandmother strictly followed Jewish traditions: my mother told me that they spoke Yiddish, had kosher food and on Friday my grandmother lit candles. They had special tableware and utensils for Pesach. Children always got some new clothes at Pesach. They had plentiful Seder and all traditional Jewish food on their table. Before Pesach all children got involved in searching chametz and its removal from the house. During Pesach the children searched for afikoimen: a piece of matsa hidden in a pillow. The children got a reward when they found afikoimen. At Chanukkah the children got few coins - Chanukkah gelt. At Purim my grandmother made gomentashy. There were 3 synagogues. I don't know how big they were and I was too small to ask any questions about it. There also was a charity community to support poor Jews and a Jewish cemetery. In late 1930s the synagogues were closed and the rabbi was exiled to Siberia.

My grandmother Fania left us to live with Ania in Dnepropetrovsk. She helped Ania to raise her son Mark. She lived her last years with Clara in Donetsk. Her daughter was a communist working with party organizations. She was a stenographer, but regardless of her position if her colleagues found out that she observed Jewish traditions she might have problems, get arrested or even sent in exile. My grandmother couldn't observe any traditions living at her home.

My mother believed that if it hadn't been for the revolution of 1917 their family would have remained poor and that she owed everything she had to the revolution. Her sisters were doing well. Ania got a higher education. My sister and I and my mother's nephews and nieces also got a higher education.

My mother had to go to work when she was in her teens. In 1924 an employment office sent her to the plant at the Mining institute. My mother became an apprentice in a shop, but when her supervisor noticed that she had a nice handwriting she became a ship forwarder for shipment of casting. Since my mother was a clerk she couldn't enter a higher educational institution since they only admitted workers and children of workers <sup>5</sup>. She didn't have any certificate or diploma and to get a document about some education she went to study at a course of Roentgenologists. After she finished this course she got a job related to her profession where she worked several months, but she had an urge to literary activities: writing poems, in particular. She used to say that poems were reflection of life. My mother was a self-educated woman, but she was smart and intelligent and had intelligent friends. She attended a literary club and all meetings with poets that came on tours. She knew some Ukrainian and Russian poets.

In 1929 the plant where my mother worked was shut down. This was when my father came to Stalino. They met and fell in love with each other. They got married in 1930. My mother moved to

Mariupol and they settled down with my father's parents. My father worked as legal adviser and my mother got a job with a small newspaper 'Priazovie Proletarian' that didn't exist long.

## Growing up

On 9 April 1931 I was born. My mother named me Communella - she liked extraordinary and beautiful names. My mother said that Communella was the name of a daughter of an Italian writer - I don't remember his name. I was born in Stalino - I guess, my mother came to Stalino to have me born there. My place of birth is stated 'Stalino' in my birth certificate and my parents' name stated there are Jewish: Gita and Moisey. Old Jewish names were not popular at that time and many Jews took Russian names to keep up with the trends of time. In 1933 my mother changed her name to Vladia and my father became Michael. Shortly after I was born my mother went back to Mariupol and continued to work for the newspaper. At the beginning of 1934 my parents and I moved to Stalino: my father got a new job at the regional department of NKVD [6](#). I don't remember where we lived in Stalino. On 9 October 1934 my younger sister Inessa [Inna short from Inessa - her family called her by this name] was born. In summer 1935 we moved to Makeevka, a small town of miners near Stalino. My father got a job and received an apartment there. My father worked at the Attorney office, but in 1936 during the period of repression [7](#) he became head of legal department at a plant. My mother worked for the 'Worker of Makeevka' newspaper. Makeevka is a small provincial town in the east of Ukraine - in 700 km from Kiev with the population of about 50 thousand people. The majority of population was involved in coal industry. There were few mines, cinema theaters, schools and hospitals in town. There were few multi-storied buildings in the center of the town.

We lived in a 3-room apartment (there was a living-room, a children's room and a study in the apartment) on the 2nd floor of a 4-storied building in the center of Makeevka. This house was cold the 'House of doctors and engineers' since there were families of intelligentsia living in it. We had a nanny that I have dim memories of. I remember bookshelves by two walls in our living room: classic books and dictionaries. Besides Russian classic there were books by Sholem Alechem [8](#) and other Jewish authors in Russian. My mother and father communicated in Yiddish, but my father forbade my mother to teach my sister and me Yiddish. He believed that this language would die out and Jews would get assimilated. Our mother sometimes tried to tell us sayings in Yiddish that she learned from her mother and grandmother, but my sister and I didn't understand them. We didn't observe any Jewish traditions in our family. This was the period of struggle against religion [9](#) and I don't remember any other Jewish families observing traditions at that time.

My parents' friends' doctors, engineers and lawyers often got together at our home on weekends. They listened to music, danced and talked and children played in our room. We only had a radio at home and guests often brought a wireless and records with them.

There were Jewish and Ukrainian families in our building, but we didn't care about nationality at that time. I had a friend Era Butylskaya, a Jewish girl. I remember we played in the yard once and a ball hit me on the head injuring me. I was worried that my father would be angry with me. Our neighbor washed and dressed my wound. My father got angry, but he didn't reproach me. I don't remember any toys. My parents often brought a wattle table in the garden for children to play table games. I remember a children's domino plated with acorns on them. We also liked to draw with color pencils. In summer my parents rented a summerhouse at Udachnaya station near Lisichansk



to the north from Donetsk where we spent our summer vacations. I remember a river and a forest. My mother taught the names of flowers, trees and birds. We picked raspberries and wild strawberries in the forest. We also went to see our grandparents in Mariupol.

I went to school in 1937. I was 6 and a half year old while children were admitted to school at the age of 7. Director of the school said that since classes were full he could only admit me in the class for children that remained in the 1st form for the 2nd year. My father agreed to this condition. I studied in a Russian school. I don't know whether there were Jewish schools in Makeevka, but our father wouldn't let us go to a Jewish school anyway. Besides, neither my sister nor I knew Yiddish. Our mother knew Ukrainian and my sister and I spoke fluent Ukrainian as well. I don't remember any teachers from my primary school. We studied reading and writing in Russian, handwriting, and calligraphy. I did very well at school. There was no anti-Semitism at school before the war.

### **During the War**

In 1939 my father went to the army. He took part in the establishment of the Soviet power on the territory of Poland that had joined the USSR shortly before. He was dismissed before term for some reason. When the war began on 22 June 1941 [10](#) my father wasn't recruited to the army since he was in reserve. My parents probably didn't believe that Hitler would attack our country since they went to a resort in Sukhumi at the end of May and returned home few days before the war began. There were trenches excavated in our yard where we hid during air raids.

In September 1941 we evacuated with the plant where our father worked to Barnaul Altaysk region [over 4000 km from Kiev].

We didn't take any warm clothes since we believed that we would come back home in a short time. There was a big carpet in our living room where my parents stored photographs, documents and some other papers and just few items of clothing. We traveled in a freight railcar in for about 3 weeks. We passed by a bombed train - I remember the frightening sight of wounded and dead people. We had a one-liter packet of caviar with us and this was all we ate on the road - there wasn't even bread; since then I hate red caviar.

It was freezing in Barnaul when we arrived. Some people that came in evacuation had their ears or noses frost bitten on the first days. Few plants evacuated to Barnaul were installed together to form one bigger plant of tank engines. My parents worked at this plant. During the war my father became a member of the Communist Party. At the beginning of 1942 our father volunteered to the front. Our mother was assistant human resources manager at the founding shop. We stayed in a room with a stove in a wooden barrack in the outskirts of the town. This stove didn't provide sufficient heating - in the morning our hair was iced to the wall so cold it was. We lived on the second floor and our window faced a work farm. In the morning trucks brought dead bodies of inmates to dump them in a pit and we could hear the sound of dead bodies hitting the frozen ground. Evacuated families received small plots of land from the plant. We grew potatoes, sunflowers, pumpkins and beans on our plot of land in the vicinity of the town. Our mother came from work late and my sister and I got starved waiting for her to bring some food. She usually brought frozen potatoes, but sometimes she got sugar beetroots. We used to bake slices of beets and pumpkin - they were delicious. My mother used to call it a 'dinner of a tsar'. My mother managed to write poems and arrange a literary club at the plant. She wrote mainly about

patriotism of the Soviet people, hard work in the rear and about husbands and sons struggling for freedom of their Motherland. Unfortunately, my mother's notes were lost during the war and in the process of moving to various locations. She took part in compilation of collection of poems 'Plant in Altay' where her poems were published, too.

My sister Inna had tubercular peritonitis before the war and received a food package for children with tuberculosis: half a kilo of cereal or coconut oil. Once she got a bar of chocolate instead of sugar, and we ate this chocolate: it was an unseen delicacy for us. Inna went to school in Barnaul. We didn't have school bags and tied our books to belts. My classmates were naughty children: they greased a blackboard in the classroom, or put thumbtacks on the teacher's chair, or applied glue on the chair, but I remember the time when we were all struck and even the most notorious children got quiet: our teachers went to a field to get sugar beets for us and our teacher of mathematic (he came from Leningrad) froze to death. We liked her a lot.

In autumn 1944 my mother got a job invitation from 'Pridunayskaya Pravda', a regional newspaper in Izmail [the south of Ukraine in 600 km from Kiev]. We went there.

My father was a military correspondent. He got an opportunity to come and see us and rented a room in a private house (of a Bulgarian family) in Bolgrad [40 km from Izmail]. My mother was an editor in Pridunayskaya Pravda [a small weekly communist newspaper]. Inna and I went to a Russian school. This area was populated with Moldavians, Bulgarians, Rumanians, Russians and Ukrainians, but there was no anti-Semitism and children played and studied together.

## **After the War**

On 9 May 1945, Victory Day, we were in Bolgrad. This was the happiest spring in my life. After the war was over my father demobilized and got a job of director of the town library in Izmail. We moved there to join him. I became a Komsomol member in Izmail. Inna and I studied in a secondary and music school. Our mother was an editor in the 'Pridunayskaya Pravda' newspaper - she also headed a literary club there.

My father was free-lance lecturer of the Republican Bureau of lecturers. In 1947 he got a job offer in Kiev and we moved again. We rented an apartment there. I went to the 10th form of Russian school #145 for girls. Soon my father received a room in the basement of a building. The house annexed to a hill on one side. We descended stairs to the verandah where the front door to our room was and an opposite wall of the house was built in the hill. The room was dark and damp. We had no running water or toilet in the room. In 1948 I finished school with all excellent marks, but one or two good marks in my school certificate. I got a '4' in composition - there was also a comment 'indistinct development of the subject'. This was the result of prejudiced attitude towards me due to my nationality, but I decided not to argue with school commission of teachers.

I submitted documents to the Faculty of Biology at Kiev University. At the entrance exams I wrote composition on the same subject as at school and received a '5' for it. We took 7 entrance exams and I got all '5' marks and one '4'. Only one girl, Ida Kachurova, a Jewish girl, passed all exams with '5' grades. 75 students were to be admitted: 25 school graduates with medals (they didn't have to take entrance exams) and 50 applicants that took entrance exams. I was in the group of leading applicants by the results of exams, but I wasn't admitted and nobody could explain why.

My father refused to go to see rector to find out the reasons and my mother went there. The Rector's office suggested that I went to Pedagogical Institute and they would assist me with admission. My mother went to the Ministry of Education and they promised her that I would be admitted as soon as there came an opportunity. On 1 September I went to the University - I attended lectures, but I didn't get the status of a student. I was doing so well that even lecturers kept asking me when I would be given the status of a student. Then there were two students transferred from other faculties to our faculty while I was ignored. At the end of November a girl I knew was going to be transferred to Medical Institute in Vinnitsa and she told me to try and take her place. I went to talk with the Dean and he promised me to go to the Rector with me to talk about my chances. He stayed in the Rector's office for an hour while I was sitting at the reception. When he came out of there he announced that I was enrolled and could receive my student's certificate on the following day. On 5 December, when the rector's order was issued I went to the Human Resources office to obtain the documents, but they refused to issue any to me. They said there were no photographs in my file. I brought them photographs and they told me to come back in few days. Every time I went to see them they told me to come again. I lost my patience and said that I was going to see their manager. His secretary didn't let me into his office, but I almost pushed her aside. Donetsk, Human resources manager, said 'You've never been and never will become a student of University. You were expelled from Mechanic and mathematic Faculty for non-attendance'. I assured him that I didn't miss one class at the Faculty of Biology. He told me that I had no right to attend the Faculty of Biology since I was a candidate to the mechanic and mathematic faculty. My mother wasn't told that they were talking to her about a mechanic faculty. I came home crying and told my parents what happened. My mother went to see the Dean She said to him 'You are a communist - tell me what is going on'. The Dean was a decent man. He promised to have everything arranged. On the next day he told me that there was an order issued about my expulsion from the Mechanic and Mathematic faculty. I replied that I wasn't notified about the Mechanic and Mathematic Faculty and passed my entrance exams for the Faculty of Biology. He brought me my student's card record book in few days. In few days the Dean told me to pay for my studies in the first half a year, since they charged for education at that time. I replied that my father was an officer and I was exempt from payment. I also mentioned that I submitted a required certificate for such exemption to administration. He told me to submit another certificate for exemption. I got one and submitted it to them giving me the right for free education. This was quite a story of my admission to the University. I was an excellent student in all 5 years of my studies at the University.

My mother couldn't get a job associated with her literary activities. All offices required a diploma and she didn't have one. She had miscellaneous jobs; statistics inspector at the polyclinic, tuberculosis clinic, and she continued writing poems. She wrote poetic greeting to her friends and acquaintances on holidays and on their birthdays.

My father worked as legal adviser at the Kiev Art Fund. He also lectured on 'Communist Morale', 'What is an intellectual/', about romanticism, etc.

Inna finished music school and passed her graduate exam with excellent results, but never again she sat to play the piano. She wasn't fond of music. She also finished secondary school with excellent grades and wanted to enter the University. At the exam in physics she got a bad mark, though she knew it very well. She took entrance exams to the faculty of radio engineers at Kiev



Polytechnic Institute. She attended classes in the evening and during the day she worked at the radio station in Bykovnia [in the vicinity of Kiev]. She was an excellent student and administration of the Institute kept promising her to transfer her to the daytime form of studies, but then they didn't keep their promise and she stopped trying and finished her studies at the institute by correspondence.

On 5 March 1953 Stalin died. I was a five-year student. I remember that my former classmate and I walked along streets in Kiev shedding bitter tears. Students at the University wore black-and-red armbands. My father was a devoted communist and this was a hard blow for him even though he was repressed and also, he was more informed about 1937, but he never changed his convictions even after denunciation of the cult of Stalin and never discussed this subject with anyone.

In 1953 I graduated from University. Resume of my diploma thesis on protection of plants was published in the 'Information Bulletin' of the Botanical garden of the Academy of Sciences. A request for such specialist was sent to the university from Middle Asia, but they replied that didn't have one available. I graduated the university with all excellent grades and wanted to go on with research work, but I became a schoolteacher. I got a job assignment at Krasnodar region and worked at school in the district town of Khadyzhensk [1200 km from Kiev]. It was a small town with about 2000 families living there. There was one school housed in a shabby building. There were 30-40 pupils in one class. There was no cinema, library or any other entertainment in the town. I lived in a one-room apartment for two years. My job assignment was for 3 years, but when my mother fell ill with myocarditis I was released after two years.

I couldn't find a job in Kiev. We had an acquaintance that was head of gynecology in a holiday helped me to be employed as laboratory assistant in her hospital on a temporary basis when their lab assistant went on maternity leave. When she returned from her leave they terminated my employment although they had a vacancy at the laboratory.

Inna, my sister got married in the middle of 1950s. Our grandmother Fania came to her wedding from Donetsk. There was a civil ceremony in a registry office and a wedding party in a restaurant in Kiev with many guests. Inna's husband, Misha Goldshtein, also a radio engineer, is a very smart, witty and cheerful Jewish man. Inna and Misha's friends were also intellectuals and very interesting people. Misha and Inna were fond of tourism and canoe sailing.

I got a job of biologist at the sanitary-epidemiological facility. In Krasnodar I became a candidate to the Party, since I realized that I had to be a communist to make a career. I became a member of the Party at the sanitary facility and when I went to the district party Committee to obtain my diploma they asked me why I wasn't working at school in a district town. They said 'Communists have to work at critical jobs rather than relax in laboratories'. I replied that I had passed my exams to the post-graduate school and was waiting for their decision. They said that I had to work at school rather than continue my studies at the post-graduate school. They confirmed my admission to the Party, but demanded that I went to work at school. I was not admitted to the post-graduate school and tried again next year. Both times I passed my exams with excellent grades and both times I wasn't admitted. They didn't explain why, but I understood that it happened due to my nationality.

I went looking for a job to the town of Slaviansk in Kuban at Krasnodar region, in 30 km from Khadyzhensk. It was a small provincial town slightly bigger than Khadyzhensk. I couldn't find work at school and went to work as teacher at a kindergarten. I got married in 1957. I met my husband Evgeniy Kostyuk when working at school in Krasnodar region back in 1954: we corresponded through this period. When I happened to come to the vicinity where he was we began to see each other. When we decided to get married we had a civil wedding ceremony.

My husband was born in Tuapsei. He is Russian by his passport, but he has Russian and Ukrainian ancestors. His profession was oil specialist. He was a very developed person: he was an amateur actor, was fond of drawing and making sculptures. In 1959 our son Pavel was born in Kiev where I was staying with my parents - I decided to go to Kiev to have the baby believing there were better doctors and medical services in Kiev. Besides, I wanted to be closer to my mother. My parents were very happy to have a grandson and had no problem that my husband wasn't a Jew. My husband came to see me in Kiev and got a job offer from the Institute of hard alloys. We lived in our damp and cold room in the basement.

When I decided to go to work after my son was born I couldn't find a job again. When I came to the district department of education they told me to find a vacancy at school and let them know. I found a vacancy and informed the department. They told me to come in few days, but when I came they declared that the vacancy wasn't there any longer. I went to the district party Committee and said 'Is my son and I supposed to starve to death or what?' They told me to find a vacancy. I found one in an evening school and went back to the district Party committee. I asked them to help me get this vacancy telling them about my previous experience. They helped me to get his vacancy at the evening school and I worked there for many years as a teacher of biology.

In 1963 my husband, Pavel and I received a 2-room apartment in Vetrianiye Hills in the outskirt of Kiev since my husband fell ill with tuberculosis and had the right to move out of the damp basement room where we lived before. Shortly afterward my husband and I separated, but I don't feel like talking about it.

My parents lived in that basement room for 20 years. The Soviet propaganda authorities promised to give them an apartment every year before elections to make them vote, but after elections they seemed to forget their promises. Many years passed before we decided to have the floors replaced in the room and it turned out there was swamp and frogs underneath. When my mother saw it she collected all father's awards from district and regional town committees and went to the District party committee. Only in 1967, before 50th anniversary of the USSR, they received a 2-room apartment in Hydropark [a neighborhood on the left bank of the Dnieper River]. My father received a very low salary in the last years before he retired and a miserable pension, but he managed to save for newspapers and magazines. He read a lot.

My parents' friends often got together on 7 November, Victory Day, birthdays and came to greet my parents on their wedding anniversaries. They often had discussions about hardships of life in the USSR, but my father had strong convictions and almost always gave his argumentation speaking for the Soviet power. My mother supported him in public, but she had her own opinion on life matters. She saw the drawbacks, but she also thought there were numerous achievements. My mother was a very intelligent and knowledgeable woman and all our family members [Inna and I, our children and grandchildren] used to address her with any disputable issues. My mother, Inna

and I, raised my son. He was doing well at school, but he never put much effort into his studies. After he finished lower secondary school [8 years] I made him enter Mechanic metallurgical college. He studied at the faculty of installation and set up of control and automation systems. He wasn't doing quite well and I was afraid he wouldn't be able to enter an Institute. He wasn't probably very fond of this subject, even though he was good at mathematic and technically smart and a very handy guy. After finishing the College he worked a couple of months and was recruited to the army. He was sent to the war in Afghanistan [11](#). I asked him how this happened and he said that their unit was lined and they were told to make 3 steps forward those that wanted to go to Afghanistan, but it wasn't the matter of whether one wished to go there or not. If somebody didn't make a step forward he was subject to a penal battalion. And the commandment reported to higher authorities about a high feeling of responsibility of Soviet soldiers and their unanimous striving for performing their international duty.

On 30 March 1980 our father died. We buried him at the Jewish corner of the town cemetery. Several years after he died his employers from enterprises called our home to invite him to lecture - that was how much they valued him.

Pavel returned from Afghanistan shortly after my father died. Of 2 years in the army he spent 1.5 in Afghanistan and it certainly had an impact of him. He wanted to enter the faculty of biology at the University - he wanted to study biophysics. He had no problem with his nationality since he is written as Russian in his passport. He was admitted to University. He also composed poems and music. After he returned from Afghanistan he composed a 'Merry song' and sang it playing the guitar. He got married shortly after he entered the university. His wife is Russian. Her family came from a wealthy family in Kiev. She is a very arrogant and demanding person. His wife insisted that he studied by correspondence to be able to work and provide for the family. There was no biophysics at the evening department and he entered some other faculty. He went to work at school; he was a teacher of biology and was a tutor at the tourist club. Children liked him, but his colleagues were jealous about his popularity with the children. He had to quit school.

He changed jobs afterward: was a worker and went in for speleotourism. He traveled a lot. He also worked at a dog training school. Since he was in Afghanistan he received an apartment. This dog training business was under control of some people that didn't like that he didn't charge people for his work and that he didn't develop aggressive behavior in dogs. They pushed him out of this business. He had his articles published in the 'Animal market' newspaper: 'I like dogs', 'Animal trainer', 'your dog is your friend and guard' and others. His acquaintances placed information about him in the Internet. He participated in contests: in 1999 he took the 1st place in animal training in Ukraine, in 2000 he took the 1st place in animal training in the CIS countries [Commonwealth of Independent States] and in 2002 he took part in the international contest in Slovenia.

Pavel has two daughters: Anastasia, born on 1 February 1982 and Sophia, born on 23 November 1990. Pavel divorced his first wife when Anastasia was 8. He remarried and when his 2nd daughter was born he tried to keep the family ties between them. Anastasia's mother has Byelorussian and Polish ancestors and her father has Russian, Ukrainian and Jewish roots. She is a very talented girl. Pavel wanted to send Anastasia to a Jewish grammar school, but she wasn't admitted there since her mother is non-Jewish. Anastasia went to a Jewish camp for young people several times: she brought her father's birthday certificate to prove that he has Jewish roots and this was sufficient

evidence of her Jewish origin. In her father's certificate it is written that his mother, that is to say I, is a Jew. Anastasia also attended a Jewish club for young people where they celebrated Shabbat. She knows Jewish Anastasia is a 4th year student of the institute of Public economy-Faculty of information systems and technologies. She also goes to work.

When Sophia, Pavel's younger daughter was born, they had two dogs. Pavel made a small cart where he harnessed the dogs to ride the little girl outside. Sophia is 12. She studies at the lyceum of international relations. She reads a lot. She had a brilliant memory. She wants to become a designer: she designs clothes for her Barbie doll and asks me to make these clothes. Sophia calls me 'The Super Granny Shop'. Sophia's mother is Ukrainian, but there is Polish, Ukrainian and German blood there. When somebody says to Sophia 'What a smart girl you are!' she replies 'How can I be smart when I have such a mixture of blood'. Sophia and I attended celebration of Purim and Chanukkah and she knows the history of these holidays. So, both girls are close to the Jewish way of life and traditions.

Pavel and his family reside in Odessa. He was glad to leave Kiev after he divorced his 2nd wife and lost his job. He got a job offer there, but those people didn't keep their promise. He prepared some materials for training dogs. He had his film and photographs shown on TV. He had an agreement with somebody that they would advertise his business and when they have enough clientele they would share the profit, but when it came to sharing, that man cheated on Pavel. If you ask me what Pavel is doing now, I can tell you honestly - I don't know. He doesn't discuss this subject with me. Pavel got married for the 3rd time in Odessa. He visits me whenever he has a chance - once or twice a month, with his two shepherd dogs: they are very nice and kind dogs.

Perestroika that began in 1980s brought us hope for a better life and more opportunities. Although life became more expensive young people got an opportunity to start their own business, read any book they wish, listen to music they like and speak their mind - I think these are important things in life. At that period I threw away my party membership card since I didn't need it any longer.

In 1988 I became a teacher of biology and chemistry at the Jewish boarding school. Besides, I read lectures in school from the 'Knowledge' association of lecturers. I retired in 1998. I was a member of the association of lovers of books and read lectures for children in libraries and schools. I read lectures on art. Just to give you an example I told children about artists that make cards. I began my volunteer activities 8 years before Hesed was established. I read lectures to Jews about great Jewish artists: Levitan, Serov, Antokolskiy, Bukst, Kibrik, Tyshler, Anatoliy Kaplan [graphic artist that illustrated books by Jewish writers Sholem Alechem, for example]. Probably under my mother's influence I got an idea to prepare a number of lectures on the following subject 'Jewish contribution into the world art'. I have a collection of books about artists, sculptors and graphic artists.

My mother passed away in 1999 at the age of almost 90. We buried her near father's grave at the Jewish corner of the town cemetery. She left good memories: she was a very kind woman, but she had her principles and opinion. She wrote poems all her life. My mother was a member of the 'Coziness' poetic club for pensioners in the library here. She recited her poems at their meetings. Inna's friend in Moscow had a book of my mother's poems issued and although there were only two books published, my mother was very happy about it. My mother wrote poems on Jewish subjects in Russian, especially in her last years. Here is an excerpt from her poem 'Inexhaustible subject':

Jews - this subject is like a boil,  
They never give up looking for the signs of freaks in us,  
While a powerful outburst of progress  
Has an input of our people.  
Being proud of the Soviet origin,  
Loving our Motherland with all heart,  
We suffered from the pain of our orphanhood,  
Failing to understand its grounds.  
And in spite of the ABCs of Marxism,  
In spite of everything we knew,  
Being unaware of Zionism  
We paid for its sins.

My mother always read a lot. She had a brilliant memory and was interested in everything that was happening around. She loved live and took part in all kinds of activities in her surrounding.

Don't remember my mother going to synagogue in my childhood or after the war. She didn't celebrate Jewish holidays, but we attended celebration of Jewish holidays in Hesed that opened in early 1990s. There were gathering of Jews - we were told about Jewish traditions, taught to celebrate holidays. We gradually came closer to our own culture.

I have many books about the Jewish culture and traditions. I celebrate Jewish holidays on a common level, but I do not follow all traditions strictly. I read lectures on Jewish subjects: 'Jewish ritual silver', Jewish ritual bronze' [about dishes for rituals, candle stands and description of when and how they are to be used] 'Jewish memorial art' [about Jewish cemeteries and gravestones]. I read these lectures at the Jewish library in Hesed, and in Hesed. I go to the 'Warm house' [where single pensioners can get free meals provided by Hesed] of our neighborhood and the Jewish library. I tell people about Jewish holidays and we celebrate them there, I don't observe any traditions or celebrate holidays at home.

On 28 April 2001 my sister Inna and Michael moved to Israel. At least 25 people came to the railways station to say 'good bye' to them when they were leaving. They are pensioners and live in Richon Le Cion. Michael used to fix TV sets and radios for his friends and acquaintances here and in Israel he continues to do this for free. Inna and Michael go on tours and attend symphony concerts in a club. They have a great collection of classic music. Inna calls me every Friday. Unfortunately, I cannot afford a trip to Israel, but I hope my sister will help me make this dream come true.

My granddaughters also spend their vacations with me. I receive a pension of 151 hrivna 84 kopeks [about \$30] and assistance from Hesed. This is hardly enough to buy food, but I can manage. I also receive food packages provided by Hesed and get free dinner twice a week. Well, I am not starving, that's what I can say.

## Glossary

1. Jewish farming colonies were founded in the 1840s to develop new territories. Jewish families from smaller towns and villages of Byelorussia and Ukraine moved to richer lands hoping for a



better life. The first colony was populated in Alexandrovskiy [at present - Zaporozhiye] district in 1846 and by the end of the century their number reached 17. About half of farm fields grew wheat, barley, corns and sunflower. About 42 % was occupied by pastures and 6 % were farmsteads. Those colonies got Russian names: Zatisiye, Trudolubovka, Nadyozhnaya, etc.

2. In early October 1917, Lenin convinced the Bolshevik Party to form an immediate insurrection against the Provisional Government. The Bolshevik leaders felt it was of the utmost importance to act quickly while they had the momentum to do so. The armed workers known as Red Guards and the other revolutionary groups moved on the night of Nov. 6-7 under the orders of the Soviet's Military Revolutionary Committee. These forces seized post and telegraph offices, electric works, railroad stations, and the state bank. Once the shot rang out from the Battleship Aurora, the thousands of people in the Red Guard stormed the Winter Palace. The Provisional Government had officially fallen to the Bolshevik regime. Once the word came to the rest of the people that the Winter Palace had been taken, people from all over rose and filled it. V. I. Lenin, the leader of the Bolsheviks, announced his attempt to construct the socialist order in Russia. This new government made up of Soviets, and led by the Bolsheviks. By early November, there was little doubt that the proletariats backed the Bolshevik motto: "All power to the soviets!"

3. In those years it was not safe to go to the synagogue. Those were the horrific 1930s - the period of struggle against religion. There was only one synagogue left of the 300 existing in Kiev before the revolution of 1917. Cult structures were removed; rabbis, Orthodox and Roman Catholic priests disappeared behind the KGB [State Security Committee] walls.

4. CIVIL WAR 1917-1922 By early 1918, a major civil war had broken out in Russia--only recently named the USSR--which is commonly known as the civil war between the 'Reds' and the 'Whites'. The 'Reds' were the Bolshevik controlled Soviets. During this time the Bolsheviks changed their name to the Communist party. The 'Whites' were mostly Russian army units from the world war who were led by anti-Bolshevik officers. They were also joined by anti-Bolshevik volunteers and some Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries. During this civil war, the Bolsheviks signed a separate peace with Germany and finally ended Russia's involvement with the world war. 8 to 13 mln people perished in the war. Up to 2 mln. people moved to other countries. Damage constituted over 50 billion rubles in gold, production rate reduced to 4-20% compared with 1913.

5. One of communist slogans in the USSR said: 'Who was a nobody will gain it all'. The USSR was declared to be the country of workers and peasants. Therefore, children of workers and peasants had advantages to enter higher educational institutions. They were to become builders of the new communist society. If a person had worked at a plant for few years he had no problems with entering an educational institution.

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

7. In the mid-1930s Stalin launched a major campaign of political terror. The purges, arrests, and deportations to labor camps touched virtually every family. Untold numbers of party, industrial, and military leaders disappeared during the 'Great Terror'. Indeed, between 1934 and 1938 two-thirds of the members of the 1934 Central Committee were sentenced and executed.

8. SHOLEM ALEICHEM [real name - Shalom Rabinovich] [1859-1916], Jewish writer. He lived in Russia and moved to the USA in 1914. He wrote in about the life of Jews in Russia in Yiddish, Hebrew & Russian.

9. In those years it was not safe to go to the synagogue. Those were the horrific 1930s - the period of struggle against religion. There was only one synagogue left of the 300 existing in Kiev before the revolution of 1917. Cult structures were removed; rabbis, Orthodox and Roman Catholic priests disappeared behind the KGB (State Security Committee) walls.

10. On 22 June 1941 at 5 o'clock in the morning Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union without declaring a war. This was the beginning of the so-called Great Patriotic War.

11. Civil war in Afghanistan 1978 after the coup conducted by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan [founded in 1965; scientific socialism was declared an ideological base foundation of the Party]. The Soviet troops occupied Afghanistan in 1979 to establish the Soviet dictatorship. They took part in the war [until 1989] on the side of the new government that took the power. In 10 years of this blood shedding was the Soviet army lost over 300000 soldiers and officers.