Irina Doroshkova

Lvov
Ukraine
Interviewer: Ella Orlikova
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One can get to Irina's apartment through an iron gate to a dirty and stuffed yard. There are balconies from apartments in the apartment building built by Polish builders in 1930s inside the yard. They haven't been repaired since then. We climb a wooden spiral staircase onto the 4th floor and enter a cold apartment with no heating. Their water supplies last for a couple of hours in the morning and evening. There are two big rooms in the apartment and tiled stoves that are not sufficient to heat them. This is a typical apartment in the center of Lvov. It doesn't make an impression that people living here feel happy. Irina is very friendly and nice and is willing to answer all questions. Her husband Ivan Doroshkov came at the end of our interview. It is evident that these two people have nothing in common even though they have lived together for about 30 years. Their life together is more a matter of routine than love and understanding. Irina stays with him due to her fear of being alone.

My family background

My family's roots go to Berdichev, a town between Zhytomir and Vinnitsa in Ukraine 200 km from Kiev. In the past there were palaces of Polish lords and beautiful cathedrals in this town. There was about 80% of Jewish population in the town that kept a number stores and shops. [This percentage is specified in the Jewish encyclopedia issued in Jerusalem] Owning a store was a business in itself including management, accounting, supplies, etc. Inhabitants of Berdichev were mainly leather tanners, tailors, locksmiths or tradesmen. Before 1917 the main language of communication in Berdichev was Yiddish. There were few synagogues in the center and in the outskirts of the town. My father's parents lived near a synagogue in the vicinity of the town.

My grandfather on my father's side Henry Mazor was born in Berdichev in 1870s. He was a tall man with a gray beard. He always wore a cap. My grandfather was a poultry slaughterer at the synagogue. This was a responsible job that was trusted to those Jewish men that had knowledge of turning a live chicken into kosher food. He slaughtered chickens in the corridor of his house. I was small and was afraid of looking at the chickens hanging on a crossbar. I was just a small girl and felt sorry for little chickens, but it had really no impact on my religious feelings later. Slaughterer had to be a very religious person. My grandfather prayed in the morning and in the evening. He

was a very serious and responsible man. My grandfather was also very religious. He studied at cheder and knew numerous prayers and read religious books in Hebrew. My grandfather's family spoke Yiddish, but he also knew Russian. He spoke Russian to me since I didn't know Yiddish. I know that grandfather went to synagogue regularly, but at the time that I remember – 1930s – the synagogue was closed. Older Jews got together in one another's homes. I remember once they came to our house. There were candles burning and there were about ten of them. They dipped bread in wine and ate it, musing something. I can't say whether they were praying or just came to celebrate a holidays. I was taken to the yard promptly.

My grandmother Brukha Mazor was born in Berdichev in the late 1970s. From what I remember she was a tall gray-haired woman wearing a skirt gathered at her waist and a kerchief. In her room I saw a photo of her when she was young with a wig of a high hairdo. My grandmother only cooked kosher food – I remember it well since her 'advanced' children that were not religious used to laugh at her when she emphasized this. My grandmother went to synagogue and took me with her once. There was a synagogue in the outskirts of the town that functioned in 1930s and we went there. We came to a big building and went up on a staircase onto a balcony where there were quite a few other women. My grandmother opened her book of prayers in Yiddish – the language that I didn't know. I got bored and I looked down from the balcony at old men that murmured something [praying] with white shawls with black stripes on them [thales]. This was the only time that I went with my grandmother and this is all I remember.

My grandfather and grandmother observed all Jewish traditions and rules and had a very orderly life in this respect. I never visited them on holidays. My parents didn't take me there to avoid any religious impact on me. They had a traditional Jewish wedding with a rabbi and a huppah. I know about it from what my grandmother told me. She was also distressed that the old times were gone. This is all I remember from what my grandmother told me. My grandmother and grandfather lived in a one-storied house, but there was another family living in that house with an entrance from another side. There were such houses in Berdichev and there was a small porch at the door of every neighboring family. The door led to a small hallway with a primus stove 1 on a table where my grandmother used to cook. There was no kitchen, but just a door that led to the room from the hallway. The room was heated with a stove that was also used for cooking. My grandparents led a modest life. They had a beautiful carved wardrobe, a big steel bed with a number of pillows, a small settee with photographs over it and a table covered with a tablecloth. My grandmother had a small kitchen garden where she grew corns and sunflower plants – this is all I remember that she grew. They had a small folding bed where I slept when I came in summer to spend my vacations. My grandparents Mazor had 12 children – 6 of them survived: four sons and two daughters. All boys studied in cheder. As for the girls, my grandfather taught them to read and write in Yiddish. When the children grew up they left their parents' home. At the beginning of the Great patriotic War 2 in 1941 they evacuated from Berdichev. They were certainly too old survive in the hot climate of Middle Asia. They died and were buried far from home in Middle Asia.

Their older son Joseph, born in 1902, left home when he turned 17. He got very fond of revolutionary ideas and left his parents home in 1919 joining the Red army units. He was in the army during the civil war and later he settled down in Odessa. I only saw his picture. I don't know what he did for a living in Odessa where he lived until the Great Patriotic War. He perished at the defense of Odessa in 1941. I met his wife Manya Koifman and daughter Tsylia in the evacuation.

I never saw my father's sister Tsylia born in 1903 either. At 20 she married a Jewish man from Kiev Aaron. He was an accountant. They had three children. Their older daughter Nina, a prettiest girl, was 15 before the war. Aaron perished at the front and Sarah and her children perished in the Babiy Yar 3. My father's sister Rieva, born in 1906, lived in Kiev before the war. She was a laborer at the plant where her husband worked as a worker. Laborers had no professional education and had the lowest qualification doing all kinds of manual work at enterprises. Workers did skilled work operating equipment according to their qualification. In 1930s workers' trades were valued more than intellectual skills in the Soviet society. They had a daughter named Irina. In 1941 Rieva and Irina evacuated to the Ural with the plant. Rieva's husband perished at the front. After the war Rieva and Irina settled down in Berdichev. Aunt Rieva died in Berdichev in 1994. Irina is a pensioner – she lives in Berdichev.
My father's youngest brother Lessia, born in 1912 also perished at the front in 1942. He was single. Of four brothers only Leo, born in 1908, returned from the war. He was a beekeeper and lived in a village near Berdichev, He had a wife and a daughter. His daughter Natalia died from a heart disease at 36. His wife had a stroke in 1950s and she died shortly afterward. Leo was a diabetic. He did in 1978. This was the end of this family.

My father Moisey Mazor (called Misha at home) was born in 1905. Like his other brothers my father went to cheder. My father was raised to observe all Jewish traditions and celebrate Jewish holidays. My father's mother tongue was Yiddish. He was eager to study and went to a Russian primary school when he turned 5 years of age. His parents had no objections to his urge for education. They wanted their children to have a better life than they had. Only during the Soviet time my father realized that he couldn't afford to study and had to go to work. He worked as a shop assistant at a haberdashery store. In the evening my father studied at a rabfak school 4 and then attended a preparatory course to the only institute in our town – Pedagogical Institute. My father was good at physics and mathematic and he specialized in these subjects. My father was a reserved, just and calm man. He wouldn't have involved himself in any Party activities if he hadn't met my mother, a devoted communist.

My mother Hava Ozer (she changed her first name to Eva, but she didn't change her last name and was proud of it) also came from a Jewish family in Berdichev. Her parents died of enteric fever in 1914 when my mother was 6 [she was born in 1908]. My mother had dim memories of them, but she didn't know what her father Nakhman-Leid was doing for a living. She didn't even know her mother's first name. She only remembered that she was a great housewife and was very good at sewing. The house was clean and calm when her mother was alive. My mother also recalled that her mother had fair hair and gray eyes and her father was a tall dark brunet. There were no relatives willing to adopt five children and they were all sent to a children's home. This was a home of the Jewish community. There was a very influential Jewish community in Berdichev that kept the life of the town under its control. Wealthier families made contributions to support the poor. The children's and elderly people homes were also funded from this money. The elderly members of the community could go to the elderly people's home if they had no children to look after them. Children in the Jewish children's home were raised Jewish. They studied Yiddish and Jewish traditions. Girls studied housekeeping. The community tried to give children some professional education [crafts] and provided girls with a dowry for them to marry successfully. Regretfully, my mother told me little about this period of her life. The children lived like commune in this home. They had no personal belongings. In the Soviet society all people including children were to behave

and think alike. To be different was a bad-mannered and wasn't appreciated in any Soviet institution including children's homes. In the Jewish children's home the situation was more loyal than elsewhere, but still, it developed severity and independence in my mother. She didn't like talking or thinking about the past. She believed one had to think about the future rather than look into the past. My mother and her fellow comrades were raised atheists and internationalists and forgot about their Jewish identity. They believed that it was narrow-minded to focus on one's identity when the soviet power gave people freedom, equality and happiness to all nations.

My mother's oldest sister Reizl (aunt Rosa), born in 1898, married Misha Lieberson, a Jewish man, a shoemaker through a matchmaker. He happened to be an alcoholic – 'Aidish shyker' – Yiddish for 'alcoholic' – such a disgrace for a Jewish family! They lived in Odessa. Reizl brought her children to Berdichev in summer: she had two boys – Lyova and Grisha and a girl – Maria. The boys went to the army when the Great Patriotic War began and perished at the front. Aunt Reizl and Maria evacuated. I don't know what happened to her husband. He might have died before the war. After the war the family settled down in Berdichev. Aunt Reizl was a cook at a canteen. My mother helped Maria to enter the Faculty of mathematic at the two-year Pedagogical Institute. Upon graduation she got a job assignment in Chernochiye village near Tiraspol and later she was a teacher of mathematic in Tiraspol. She was a very good teacher and a well-respected person. Maria married David Zinger, a Jewish man in 1950s. He was an invalid of war and worked at the factory in Tiraspol that manufactured wine boxes. Aunt Reizl lived with Maria. She died in 1983. Maria and her family live in Israel now. They left after my aunt died in 1987. We correspond with her. When they went to Israel in the early 1980s David fell ill and the government in the country gave them a room in a special building for older people. There are good conditions there to have a good life, but they, unfortunately, have weak health.

My mother's older brother Leizer, born in 1900, was a big strong man. He lost his hearing in infantry and he couldn't get any education due to this handicap. Leizer worked as a slaughterer at the meat factory. He married a shy Jewish woman. She learned to communicate with him well. They had three daughters. During the war Leizer and his family were responsible for moving cattle to PreCaspian steppes. They stayed in evacuation there. In 1945 after the war they returned to Berdichev. Leizer's was the only family of all mother's relatives that strictly followed all Jewish traditions. Their daughters and sons-in-law spoke Yiddish and their families also followed all Jewish traditions. They baked matsah and lit candles at Shabbat. Their grandchildren were circumcised. They were wealthier than our family. Leizer provide well for them. Leizer died in Berdichev in 1985 – he was very ill. His children live in Berdichev, but we do not keep in touch with them. Leizer quit his job at the meat factory in 1973. He and his family always followed the kashrut. My mother and our family were ironic about this. We couldn't understand why people didn't give up their outdated habits in the new Soviet period.

My mother's youngest brother David was born in 1910. He finished a Jewish school during the Soviet time. He was very fond of animals and entered the Veterinary Institute in Kirov [Viatka at present], Russia in 1000 km from Berdichev. Upon graduation he got a job assignment to Cheliabinsk region where he worked as a vet. He had a wife – Rieva and son Slavik. At the beginning of the war David was released from service in the army, but he wasn't eager to go to the war. He looked after livestock in a collective farm. At the end of 1942 when Slavik turned two David went to the front. He was a vet there, too – there were horses in the army. After the war he

returned to Berdichev with his new wife 14 years younger than he was. She was Russian. I have no information about what happened to his family. David was a vet in Berdichev and was very skilled in his work. He didn't have any more children. David died in 1989. Rieva died in the Ural shortly after the war. I didn't keep in touch with her son Slavikand I wasn't acquainted with her second son that was born in the Ural. I have no information about them. They never visited father in Berdichev.

My mother's youngest sister Teibl (Tania), the prettiest one, born in 1912, vanished at the children's home. Nobody knew where she disappeared. My mother tended to believe that one of the families leaving for America during the Civil War [5] might take a lovely smart girl with them, but there is no confirmation of this guess. The war was a tragic period in the life of all people living on the edge of survival. Hundreds of people were missing and there was no possible way of getting any information about them. My mother and Leizer took after their father – they were both dark-haired, and David and Reizl a looked like their mother: they were fair-haired blonds with gray eyes.

My mother was the core of the family. She was a very wise woman and people always came to ask her advice: she helped them to live in peace with their relatives, told them where it was better to send their children to get education and how to spend money wisely. She was a wise and smart woman. She willingly shared her ideas and experiences with other women helping them with routinely matters such as cooking, looking after children or house. Whatever one's convictions were there were neighborly relationships that my mother cherished, always trying to help and support other people regardless of their nationality. My mother had very warm memories about the children's home. She had many friends from there and they corresponded. My mother was a young girl during the October revolution and Civil war but communist ideas became her religion. My mother believed in the Communist Party as if it were God and believed that socialist life was the best. She got free education and a place to live. The Soviet propaganda was so strong that people strongly believed that everything good they had inn life was given to them by the caring Soviet state. When she was very young she became a typesetter at a printing house. She knew Russian and Yiddish and set texts in these languages. She studied simultaneously – she studied continuously. My mother was happy to be an independent woman and not to have to marry for convenience. She became a Komsomol activist and later – an activist in the guild of printers before she turned 16. At that time 15-16 years was an active age. Many children became independent getting a profession and took an active part in the Komsomol and communist movement. Such activists had all chances to make a good political career or even hold commanding posts in the army. There was a popular slogan of this period 'Communism is the youth of the world and it is to be built by the young!' She was sent to take a training course at the All-Union Council of Trade Unions in Moscow. After finishing this training my mother became director of the municipal library in Berdichev and a lecturer-propagandist. She lectured at various enterprises explaining advantages of the socialism and communism to workers. My mother joined the Communist Party in 1929 when she had just turned 20.

She went to various organizations in town to explain the policy of the Party and the Soviet government. Somewhere at the crossroads of her activities my mother met my father who was a student of the Pedagogical Institute. He fell in love with her. In their relationships my mother always played the leading role – my father did what she wanted. My father was devoted to my mother and did what she told him. My father wasn't a member of the Communist Party. Firstly, he

wasn’t as active as my mother, and secondly he was a son of a slaughterer – servant to religion and such people were not admitted to the Party, but my father wasn’t really willing.
When they decided to get married at the beginning of 1930 any talks about religious wedding were out of the question. There wasn't even a wedding party. My parents got married at the town registration office. My grandfather and grandmother were very upset about it. This was the first wedding in their family without a rabbi or a huppah. They were rather unhappy to have a communist activist for a daughter-in-law. There were tense relationships between my mother and her in-laws. My parents and I visited my grandparents, but they tried to avoid visiting them on Jewish holidays.

Shortly after their marriage my mother received an apartment where they moved since my mother lived at a hostel and my father lived with his parents before. It wasn’t a big apartment, but it was all right. It was in a house in Krikinskiy Lane (before the war since later it was renamed to Pionerskiy). Grandmother and grandfather kept using an old name of the street. We had two rooms and a common kitchen – there were 3 other families living in the apartment. My mother cooked on a primus stove and stoked stoves with wood and coal.

Growing up

I was born in October 1930. I got my name Irina just because my mother and father liked this Russian name – Irina, they wouldn’t have named me after one of deceased relatives that was a custom with Jewish families. I was born in Kiev. My mother had a poor heart and had to be watched by good doctors during delivery of the baby and it was believed that the best doctors were in Kiev. She went to a maternity home in Kiev and then returned to Berdichev with me. My mother went on working a lot and entered the pedagogical Institute to get a higher education. Of course, she had no time to do housework. We had a housemaid – Marusya, a Ukrainian girl from a village. She was my first nanny.

My father worked at a Ukrainian school upon graduation. He was a teacher of physics and mathematic and deputy director for the school curriculum. My mother also involved him in lecturing, but he lectured on scientific and technical innovations. It might seem that my parents should have been wealthy people working so much, but I remember well the famine of 1932-34 6. Now historians call this period ‘forced famine’. I remember lying in my bed and crying of hunger. A piece of sticky brown bread dipped in some water and sprinkled with a little sugar was a favorite delicacy in my childhood. My mother tried to do her best to feed me, but she didn’t always manage.

I wasn’t raised religious. Now I realize that there were mostly Jews in my surrounding, but my parents never discussed this subject or focused on it. I had no idea about being Jewish or non-Jewish. All people had the same nationality, as I imagined. We spoke Russian in the family and with my parents' friends and acquaintances. This was a state language in the Soviet Union. My father conducted his lessons in Ukrainian working in a Ukrainian school. There were also Russian and Jewish schools in Berdichev, but the only difference between them was the language of teaching, and school programs were the same. In late 1930s Jewish schools were closed. There were Ukrainian and Russian schools functioning.

We lived in a two-storied house and there were two other 2-storied buildings next to ours. We had many Jewish neighbors. I remember some of last names: Yasha and Sarah Getlerner, brother and

sister, we played together. I also remember Lilia – a Russian girl. My mother had her principles of raising a girl and the basic factor was to be shy and no different from other children so that nobody could say that – God Forbid! – that the daughter of a party activist has something better than other children. I had few toys and a doll among them. It was a simple doll. Some girls had dolls that closed their eyes or bicycles. I never had those and I never asked my parents about buying me toys or clothing. I was a shy girl and made use of what I had.

My mother had a very busy schedule. There were meetings or parties at the library where she invited actors and singers – they were very interesting parties. My father and I attended them every now and then. I liked to watch parades on 1 May from the balcony of the library located in the central square. There were riders and tanks on these parades. People carried portraits of Lenin and Stalin, but I remember only portraits of Stalin. I enjoyed the parades waving my hand to the participants.

I didn't go to kindergarten. I spent my early years with my nanny Marusya. Now I know that during the period of famine villagers were trying to escape to towns looking for rescue and a job to survive. Marusya was happy to be staying in our family where she could have plenty of food and was treated like a member of the family. I liked this slim girl with dark eyes a lot. Marusya told me about famine in her village and taught me to cherish bread and food. Even now I wouldn't throw away even a breadcrumb. About once a month I was taken to my grandparents, but my parents never left me to stay overnight with them to protect me from hearing Yiddish or getting interested in Jewish traditions. My grandmother was always happy to see me. She usually asked me what I felt like eating and I said 'Lotkes' – potato pancakes. I liked them, but nobody made them at home. I also remember buckwheat with milk.

In 1937 when I turned 7 I went to a Russian school near our house in the center of the town. I remember an event at school when I was in the first form. We had portraits of Yakir 7, Kossior 8 and other military commanders and Party activists. Once our teacher told us that they were 'enemies of the people' and we painted them over with ink 9. I don't remember any details, but I remember that my mother was called to some office and I heard some big shot yelling at her 'Which enemy has worked on you?' My mother stood in his office and then she grabbed an inkpot and threw it at him. Thank God she wasn't arrested but they were trying to get a confession from her – I don't know about what. I remember a terrible tension at home – my parents hardly spoke a word.

I became a pioneer when I was in the 3rd form (1940). At the ceremony we were told that we had become Young Leninists and offered to learn a poem. I learned the poem 'Five days and nights' in which the country was grieving for the loss of Lenin. I remember some lines '…And crowds of people were flowing carrying flags to look at the yellow profile and a red order on his chest. They were flowing. And the earth was freezing as if he had taken with him some of the warmth…' and at this I burst into tears and felt very ashamed about it. These were tears of grief and despair, but I was ashamed to be crying in front of the audience not being able to pull myself together and finish reciting the poem that came right from my heart. Then our pioneer leader came to tie our neckties and show us how to salute. It was a very festive ceremony.

We rarely had guests. The only birthday celebrated in the family was mine. I had to invite every attendee saying 'You are invited for a cup of tea on my birthday'. Those were not my friends that

were invited, but my mother's colleagues and their children. We had tea, cakes and candy. There was also music on a wireless with a handle. We had a stove in one room, a sofa where my nanny slept, a table where we had meals and a cupboard. In another room there was my parents' nickel-plated bed and my bed, a radio – a big black plate, a big mirror on the wall and a big rubber plant.

We had ordinary food – I don't remember any specialties: clear soup, borsch, cutlets, potatoes and macaroni. This was all Marusya could cook. My mother could make stuffed chicken that Marusya couldn't do, but my mother made it rarely. We had a good life and my father was happy about it. He had an office at school since he was deputy director. He took me once to look at his office.

During the War

I had finished the 4th form successfully when my mother told me about the beginning of the great Patriotic War on 22 June 1941 10, announced on our black plate radio in our room. But the previous morning I was woken by a roar over my head. My mother said 'Go back to sleep – it is just another military training'. But no – those were German planes flying in the direction of Zhytomir and Kiev. In a day my mother ran home from work and told my father that Party dignitaries and their families were leaving the tom the following night, but my mother wasn't on that list. My parents packed a suitcase, grabbed me by my hand and we ran to the center of the town where my mother's friend Bertha lived. She worked at the Party town committee and was on the list.

We stood all night in her cold corridor waiting for a vehicle to pick us up. I was used to sleeping at night in my bed while I had to stand there waiting. In the morning a car arrived and we got in there. At the station we got into a freight railcar. My father was an only man and women didn't let him come inside and he was on a platform near the exit door of the railcar. The train headed Stalingrad in 1200 km from Berdichev. The trip took us a whole month. We had bags of sugar and tinned meat and got water when the train stopped. It was hot in the railcar and children got thirsty begging for water.

At first we arrived in Rovenki, Ukraine, 350 km from our home. We were accommodated in a school building where we stayed for two weeks. We were thinking of staying there hoping that the war would be over soon, but Germans were approaching. My mother got concerned and we went on by a passenger train. When we arrived in Stalingrad all passengers of the train were taken to the stadium. This was August and the heat was oppressive. There were tarpaulin tents installed on the stadium, but they didn't help much. We stayed there few days until my mother managed to obtain a permit to Frolov town near Stalingrad. We got accommodation in an apartment of a Kazakh woman. Her daughter slept with us in the room. My mother got a job of director of stationary store. My father received a subpoena from the Frolovsk military registry office– they recruited him to the front. He went to Kazakhstan where he was trained to operate with Morse alphabet. After finishing the course he went to the front as a radio operator. He was a private, but served in a special communications battalion. We received letters from him until February 1942. My mother wrote to commanding officer of the regiment where he served requesting him to give her information about her husband. He replied: 'Your husband left for a military mission on 13-14 February and never returned. He is missing. [During the years of the war this response was worse than death notification since such people might be suspected of treason.] But my father vanished and whatever effort we took after the war to find out what happened to him we couldn't get any information in this regard. There were only his letters left full of love towards me and my mother.

He adored my mother. My father was a very nice man. His colleagues and students liked him a lot. My mother was a nervous woman and often lost her temper, but my father was very kind. He knew how to deal with her and forgive her.

We stayed less than half a year with the Kazakh woman before we had to move on since the front was coming closer. We didn't face any anti-Semitism. I had friends among my classmates – only our family had to leave. My mother wrote her brother David in Cheliabinsk region and he replied that we could come to join him there.

We arrived at a small provincial town of Emanzhelinsk in the Ural, in 2500 km from Berdichev. David lived in a barrack where we got a room and a kitchen. There was a big Russian stove in the kitchen and we, children, used to sit and play there. My mother's sister Reizl and her daughter Maria and my father brother Joseph's wife Manya Koifman and her daughter Tsylia came there shortly afterward, too. There were many children: the youngest Salavik, David's son – he was 2, Tsylia – 5 years old, I – 10 years old and 12-year-old Maria. Maria told us fairy tales and read books. I attended the 5th form at school in the town in the Ural where I was behind all other children in mathematic since I missed a lot.

I heard the word zhydovka [11] for the first time in the Ural. Children called me this name when I was going home from school. I asked my mother what it meant, but she seemed to be reluctant to explain to me what it meant. She went to talk to parents of these children, but this didn't change much. I don't know whom these children got this name from. There were no Jews in this area whatsoever. Other girls and I played with dolls together– we wrapped some grass into a cloth, painted eyes and mouths and made them clothes from leftovers of fabrics. I mean to say that nobody ever paid any attention to my nationality. Only I knew that I was different and I felt like being no different.

My mother was a propagandist there, too. The collective farm was located in several villages and my mother went there to tell villagers about the situation at the front and about the policy of the Soviet Union. She read a lot and was aware of all events at the front. We didn't starve – our parents took every effort to provide sufficient food for us. Aunt Reizl was responsible for cooking and Manya, Joseph's daughter, sewed to earn some additional food or money.

In 1943 my mother was appointed as director of school in Selizianki village near Emanzhelinsk. This was a small school. We got accommodation – a small house with a high porch with one room. There was no kitchen. My mother learned to bake bread since there were no bread supplies to the village. She mixed flour and grain wastes that pricked on the tongue when eaten. In spring the collective farm administration allowed us to dig potatoes in the field. They were frozen but my mother still brought it home and learned to make potato pancakes on cod-liver oil –there was no other oil available. It tasted awful, but we were hungry and had no choice, but to eat it.

I went to the school where my mother was director. People treated us very nicely. I was a success with my studies and helped my classmates. I remember my classmates getting together in the house of one of our classmates Shurik. His mother used to tell us fairy tales and there was a kindling burning in the room. We had a big map of our country on the wall in our room at home and we always marked which towns were liberated from fascists. I don't remember whether we had newspapers, but we had a radio. In the evening I used to read with an oil lamp on. We made this oil lamp by ourselves: poured some kerosene in a bottle and made a wick from cotton from a blanket.

I was fond of reading and read a lot. I mostly read Russian and foreign classic literature.

My mother never discussed the issues of our Jewish identity or told me about mass shootings of Jews in the occupied territory. We got to know it after the war. I knew, though, that my father's brothers were at the front. We had no information about them or their families.

Berdichev was liberated in the late fall of 1944 and we returned home in March-April 1945. My father's sister Riva and aunt Reizl, my mother's sister, returned to Berdichev with us. Our house wasn't ruined and we returned to our apartment – only our belongings were gone. The windows were broken during air raids and window frames were stolen, but we were glad to have a roof over our heads. This was more than many other people had. I went to the 7th form at my former school. I remember Victory Day on 9 May 1945 – how happy people were that the war was over. They came onto streets singing and crying and greeting each other.

After the War

After the war my mother taught history at school and continued her lecturing activities. On certain days she lectured at some organizations telling them about international situation and the state policy. I don't know whether she was paid for this, but I believe she was. My mother did understand more than she mentioned. At 16,when I was in the 10th form, I went to a registry office to obtain my passport. I didn't have any document since we left all documents at home when we left for evacuation hastily. I had to visit a doctor to have him confirm my age and other details. A day before my mother told me to have my nationality written as Ukrainian. I obtained my passport where in the item line 'Origin' was written 'Ukrainian'. My mother was a Jew, though, and she never changed any information in her passport. I was to enter an institute and she new that there were admission restrictions for Jews. My mother never discussed this subject, but she was eager to help her daughter. My mother strongly believed in communist ideas like millions of her contemporaries without giving a thought to contradictions that were growing: anti-Semitism among them. She loved me dearly and wanted me to have a better life, but she knew that Jews were facing problems in the post war Soviet Union: problems with getting a job or entering an institute. She didn't think about assimilation.

After the war the number of Jewish population reduced dramatically. So many were exterminated by fascists in September 1941. Villagers from surrounding villages moved into vacant apartments that formerly belonged to Jews. Those Jews that were returning from evacuation were not welcome. This tendency was quietly supported by the town authorities and militia. There were no Jews holding official positions in the town and Jews found no support in their efforts to get a place to live.

In 1947 two major events happened in our life: I entered the Pedagogical College [with 2 years of studies: this was a teachers' training college; its graduates could only work in village schools] and my mother got married. At that time this institution was referred to higher educational institutions, but actually it was similar to high school.

My mother's husband Ilia (his Jewish name was Gilel) Inber also returned from the war – he was assistant doctor in a hospital at the front. His wife and daughter perished in Berdichev during mass shooting of Jews by fascists during the war. He worked as an accountant at school after the war where he met my mother. It was good for him to meet my mother – he had a weak character and

was no fighter. Can you imagine that this kind of a man survived the war while my father didn't. He didn't have any education and my mother made him go to study by correspondence at the Pedagogical Institute in Kiev, but I don't believe he ever finished his studies. He went to work as a marker at a plant and I guess he earned good money. This was one of high-skilled professions that required accuracy and patience. Marker was to mark dimensions on a unit to be manufactured. Such marking nowadays is made by electronic equipment.

I graduated from the institute in 1949 and was even glad to get a job assignment in Solotvin village, since there was too little space at the place where we lived. I remember numerous meetings at the institute where attendance was compulsory. They blamed and accused 'rootless cosmopolites' 12 at the meetings. I was 19 and didn't give much thought to what it was about and what it had to do with me. At home we didn't discuss newspaper publications or political subjects. My mother came home tired and didn't feel like talking at all and I couldn't care less about any political subject. My friends and I were more interested in parties and dancing. At one such party I met extended service man Alexandr Penkin.

Alexandr was Russian. He came from Riazan. He was born in 1924. He looked very handsome and nice to me. My mother didn't care about his nationality and He, when I told him that I was a Jew replied that it didn't matter to him. We got married in 1949 after I graduated from the institute. We had a small wedding party on the day when we registered our wedding at the state registry office where we invited our friends and relatives. I went to work at school in the village and my husband left the army and went to work as milling machine operator at a plant. He also attended a ballet class. He studied at a dancing school in Moscow before he went to the army. He was a very good dancer. He also earned additional money by teaching dancing at clubs. They danced Russian, Ukrainian and Moldavian dances, but not Jewish. Alexandr lived at the hostel of his plant, but he often visited me in the village.

Solotvin was a very poor village. I rented a room from a village woman. The owners of the house slept on their oven bench and I had a plain plank bed. The mistress of the house also made me some food since I had no place to cook or have meals. The school was housed in three one-storied houses quite at a distance from one another. There were one-two classes in one house. Children didn't know Russian – they spoke Ukrainian – their mother tongue. They made so many mistakes in Russian that it drove me crazy. There were no textbooks and a notebook was a luxury. They were starved and underdeveloped children and I had to do my best to teach them what I could.

In 1952 my son Vladimir Penkin was born in Berdichev. I went to have a baby in Berdichev where my mother was. It was scaring to hear from friends and acquaintances 'don't go to this doctor or beware of that doctor – they are all involved in murder and poisoning'. The majority of people believed that everything in official publications was true. People didn't trust Jewish doctors while there was a number of them in Berdichev. This was the period of 'doctors' case' 13 when there were many scaring publications in newspapers that people believed. I was very concerned since I, too, believed that my baby might be murdered on purpose. I didn't go to a Jewish doctor. However, I had a nice and healthy baby.

I didn't go back to the village. My husband and I received a room in a hostel for families. There were 4 families in a block of rooms (one room for each family) and a communal kitchen. We had central heating and a kitchen that was heated, too. The toilet was in the yard.

In March 1953 I was having a walk with my baby son – he was in a pram, when I heard mourning music on the radio and then it announced that Stalin died. I stopped feeling stunned. Stalin was our life and future and all of a sudden he was gone. He was my mother's idol, too. It was a tragedy and we felt it like a tragedy.

Vladimir, when he grew old enough, went to a kindergarten and I went to work as a Russian teacher at a Ukrainian school near the sugar factory not far from where we lived. It was located in the outskirts of the town and there were Ukrainian children studying at this school. I also studied by correspondence at Zhytomir Pedagogical Institute. Life seemed to be improving when I faced problems in my family. My husband was a drunkard. I didn't notice it at the beginning: nobody ever drank in our family and I had no idea what it was like. We had rows and he even hit my mother once when she was visiting us. I don't even feel like talking about it. I got a divorce in 1960 when our son was in the 4th form. My ex-husband met a woman that was in love with him when she was young. She felt sorry for him and took him to the Crimea where she lived, but she couldn't do anything about his alcoholism. When my son grew up he went to visit his father, but when he returned he only said 'Mother, you were right to divorce him'. Alexandr Penkin died in 1983.

My son was a success at school and was a smart boy. He finished school in 1969 and we wanted him to go to an Institute. He chose the Polytechnic Institute in Lvov. We were so worried when he was taking his entrance exams. I didn't want him to be in Lvov by himself – he was just a boy. A friend of mine moved to Lvov and I went to visit her. She convinced me to try to move to Lvov. We exchanged our apartment to Lvov since there were no vacancies at school. Work with smaller children wasn't quite interesting for me, but it was quieter. Director of the kindergarten wasn't satisfied with me. Although I was written as Ukrainian in my passport she must have identified that I was a Jew and never left me alone picking on me about minor things. Director of the kindergarten was anti-Semitic and didn't even conceal this. My son and I shared a room and my mother and her husband lived in another room.

My mother continued to be a Party activist – she worked with children. There was a club in our neighborhood where children came to play and read. She was retired. Later she began to work at a newsstand where she was selling newspapers earning some additional money. Her husband went to work at a storage facility where they kept some expensive things and lamps that were stolen and he was accused of theft. My mother helped him finding money to pay for the stolen things and he quit his job. He went to work as a lighting operator at the circus where he worked for many years. My mother worked for a long time and then, at 72 she grew old abruptly: she lost her hearing and began to have eyesight problems. She was devoted to the Communist Party to her last days. She always listened to latest news – she believed it was her duty to know since she was a member of the Communist Party. She was almost deaf and dumb and we turned on the radio for her to hear it. In 1990s my mother and stepfather decided to move to Israel and submitted their documents. It was amazing that my mother accepted perestroika considering her old age and her devotion to the Party and communist ideas. She still strongly believed in communism, but took much interest in the changes that were coming into people's life. She recalled her roots after so many years. I didn't care about perestroika either since I never took any interest in political occurrences. In late 1980s the Jewish way of life began to revive and we began to get more information about life abroad. My mother wanted to see Israel. She wished she could live in a kibbutz since it was so much like a commune! She watched all programs about Israel [there were

no programs about Israel before perestroika or if they mentioned this country at all they always did it with negative attitude]. My mother always watched new developments with interest and never condemned anyone. Mother died in January 1994, few months before her departure to Israel. She was so eager to leave for the land of our ancestors. She believed that she would get better there. We buried her at the town cemetery in Lvov. My stepfather moved there alone – he died in Israel in 1999. Prior to his departure he gained back his Jewish name of Gilel. His sister, her children and husband live there, too.

My son Vladimir married a Russian girl upon graduation from the Institute. I tried to talk him out of it. It wasn't that I didn't like her, but I believed he was too young to get married. Well, he didn't listen to me. She got a baby, but she continued to study at the Institute and he stayed with the baby and at night he made drawings for her. Tania knew that he was half Jew when she met him, but it didn't matter to her. I didn't care about her nationality either. I believe that most important was that they got along with one another. They have two sons. Andrey was born in 1976. He also graduated from the Road Faculty of Polytechnic Institute. He lives in Israel and likes it there a lot. Their younger son Sergey born in 1981 is a student of the Lvov Polytechnic Institute. Vladimir is a very good son and we are very good friends. He works for a construction company.

In February 1976 I met Peter Doroshkov, a car mechanic, born in 1921, Russian. He came from Siberia [Krasnoyarsk region]. He was divorced. I had lost my husband ten years before I met him. He seemed to be a nice man. I married him and changed my last name from Mazor to his last name. He was all right at the beginning, but his character has changed to worse. He knew from the very beginning that I was a Jew and it seemed to be O'K with him. We lived all together: my mother and her husband and my husband and I. We had a modest life and never went on vacation or had nothing else that was more than we could afford. We only celebrated Soviet holidays. But once I read a letter of my husband's ex-wife, although I still pretend that I never read it: 'You've never liked Jews, so how could you marry a Jewish woman?' He didn't reply her, but I can feel between lines that he might think 'Don't you forget I didn't tell you anything when you mentioned to me that you were a Jew' meaning that it was quite an act on his part to marry me. He thinks he would be better off if things turned out differently. At the beginning we had a good life. He loved me, but later we grew aloofness in our relationships. He wasn't an anti-Semite, but he wasn't particularly fond of Jews that is typical for all Russians. He was eager to move to Israel. There is a joke 'A Jew is not a luxury, but means of transportation'. Many locals, especially ignorant ones, are convinced that they would have a good life if they manage to leave their country for whatever price. By the way, this is an opinion of people that have never been abroad. He was thinking about Israel, and that it is a Jewish state was just a minor nuisance for him. When my mother and her husband decided to leave we were going to follow them, but my mother passed away and my son can't make up his mind about moving to Israel and what would I do without him? I wish I visited a foreign country, but I couldn't afford it before and now I wouldn't travel due to my health condition.

Few years ago my neighbors told me about Hesed. They had to find confirmation of my origin since I was Ukrainian by my passport. They did all necessary investigation and now I can attend Hesed. I received food packages, but when I fell ill I was assigned to the daytime center in Hesed. I attend it twice a month. We discuss religious and other subjects. I am interested to know about the history and culture of the Jewish people. We watch films. It didn't even occur to me how many spiritual riches our people have, how many scientists were Jewish and a lot more [The interviewee begins to

cry heavily]. I feel myself a Jew and I appreciate all care that I get in Hesed – this is so very important for me. I wish I were I had been closer to my people. I enjoy going there and I have made new friends. It is so important for older people since older people have an only communication with a TV set. I watch every program about Israel. Every terrorist attack is like a knife stabbed in my heart.

Glossary

1 Primus - a small portable stove with a container for about 1 liter of kerosene that was pumped into burners

2 22 June 1941 – memorable day for all Soviet people
It was the first day of the great Patriotic War when the Germans crossed the border of their country bringing the war to its terrain. 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 the German army had seized the Ukrainian Republic, besieged Leningrad, the Soviet Union's second largest city, and threatened Moscow itself. The Great Patriotic War, as the Soviet Union and then Russia have called that phase of World War II, thus began inauspiciously for the Soviet Union.

3 Babiy Yar is the site of the first mass shootings of the Jewish population that was done in the open by the fascists on September 29-30, 1941, in Kiev
During 3 years of occupation (1941-1943) fascists were killing thousands of people at the Babiy Yar every day: communists, partisans, prisoners of war. They were people of different nationalities.

4 Educational institutions for young people without secondary education, specifically established by the Soviet power

5 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.

6 In 1920 an artificial famine was introduced in Ukraine that caused the death of millions of people

It was arranged in order to suppress the protesting peasants that did not want to join the collective farms. There was another dreadful forced famine in 1930-1934 in Ukraine. The authorities took away the last food products from the farmers. People were dying in the streets, whole villages became deserted. The authorities arranged this specifically to suppress the rebellious farmers that did not want to accept the Soviet power and join the collective farms.

7 Yakir - member of the Communist Party since 1907, one of the founders of the Communist party in Ukraine

In 1938 he was arrested and executed.

8 Kossior - member of the Communist Party since 1907, one of the founders of the Communist party in Ukraine, in 1928 - 1938– General Secretary of the Communist Party of Ukraine

In 1938 he was arrested and executed.

9 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.

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 "Zhydy" – abusive nickname of Jews in the Soviet Union

12 Anti-Semitic campaign initiated by Stalin against intellectuals

teachers, doctors and scientists.

13 Doctors' Case - The so-called Doctors' Case was a set of accusations deliberately forged by Stalin's government and the KGB against Jewish doctors of the Kremlin hospital charging them with the murder of outstanding Bolsheviks

The 'Case' was started in 1952, but was never finished because Stalin died in 1953.