

Zina Kaluzhnaya

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[Family background](#)

[Growing up](#)

[During the War](#)

[After the War](#)

[Glossary](#)



Family background

My name is Zina Petrovna Kaluzhnaya. I was born into an ordinary Jewish family on 29th March 1932. My father had no higher education, but he was a very intelligent, well-read and smart person. My mother never worked, but she was also intelligent. I didn't meet my grandparents. Mama's parents emigrated to America in the 1920s, and my father's parents died during a gang [1](#) attack in 1918. Therefore, our family was very small. My older sister fell ill and, basically, she didn't live with us.

My father's name was Pinhus Zelmanovich Slobodskoy. He was the director of a greengrocery. Mama didn't work. My parents came from Skwira, a small town in Kiev region. My father was born in Volodarka, in the vicinity of Skwira, but his family didn't stay there long. His younger brothers and sisters were already born in Skwira. I know little about my father's family, my grandmother Sarra Slobodskaya and my grandfather Zelman Slobodskoy. I only know that my grandfather worked in the synagogue. He was very religious. He went to the synagogue regularly. He followed the kashrut, worshipped Saturday and observed all Jewish holidays. My grandmother had a little store.

My grandfather was much respected, people regarded him as a wise man and were seeking his advice, as at that time disputes between the Jews were resolved in the so-called court of arbitration. Some of my grandfather's advice is still remembered in our family. An example: 'Never speak about your dreams, especially not the bad ones. Because if you don't speak about them, it is possible that they will not come true'. It was known in the family that some gang came to the village - they were chasing a peasant girl; they wanted to rape her. And she ran to the house of my father's parents. They hid her. The bandits stormed into the house and slashed my grandfather and grandmother to death. They didn't touch the children. The peasant girl escaped.

My father, born in 1903, was the oldest of the children. He was 14 then, and he couldn't study, as he had to support the family. He started to work after this incident. My father raised all the children, three sisters and a brother, and they all finished a rabfak [2](#), a trade school. This kind of education allowed finding a good job. My father had to take up any work he could find, which included selling stockings and socks at the market, to support them all. He took some precious

metal, silver and gold, to a Torgsin store [3](#); he even melted coins.

I hardly remember my childhood. But one of the few recollections I have is about how I got lost, when I took my cousin to my father's workplace. I was three years old then and my cousin was about five. My father worked as the director of a greengrocery on the corner of Kreschatik [main street in Kiev], near Roofed market. We lived in Shuliavka, near former Kerosinnaya Street. From there my cousin and I were walking to my father's workplace. We came to Kreschatik, and from there I didn't know the way. We stopped in the middle of the road and burst into tears. A crowd gathered around us. This was at the time when the film 'Foundling' was showing, and right away there was somebody who wanted to adopt me, and someone wanted to adopt my cousin, but the militia interfered. They took us to the militia office, started asking questions and found out from the little information they could get out of me where my father worked. They called his workplace and someone came and picked us up.

My father's younger brother, Lyova, was born in 1908. He was a very active Komsomol [4](#) member, one of the organizers of the Komsomol unit in Skwira. My mother's sister, Aunt Golda, was also an active Komsomol member. My father also had three sisters: Aunt Rosa, born in 1907, Aunt Mania, born in 1911, and Aunt Etlia, born in 1914. Aunt Rosa stayed in Skwira during World War I and II. She died there along with her children in 1941, when Skwira was occupied by the Germans. Etia evacuated to Alma-Ata during the war and survived. She had a good life. Her husband was very lucky - he was in captivity, in the encirclement, but he was rescued and survived. Later they emigrated to America. Aunt Mania lived in Moscow all her life. She married a Russian and any relationships with the family were terminated, as my father rejected her for doing so. Once, before the war, my father went to Moscow to take her and her two children away from her husband. He brought them to Kiev, but her husband took them back. Only after the war they started writing to each other and she came here.

My mother's name was Bluma Fridelevna Slobodskaya, nee Tsyurulnik. She was born in Skwira on 8th July 1905. There were 14 children in the family; ten of them survived. I don't know anything about the other four. In the early 1920s two sisters and two brothers went to America and took with them my grandmother at first, and, later on, also my grandfather.

The departure must have been illegal, they might have used somebody else's documents, as they lived under a different name in America. In Skwira my grandfather was called Fridel Tsyurulnik, and my grandmother Sarra-Rukhl Tsyurulnik. In America they lived under the name of Segal, and my grandmother's first name was Amy. At that time only single people could leave, and later they closed the border. That's how it happened that six children are here and four children in America. I visited the USA and went to the Jewish cemetery in Philadelphia where my grandparents were buried.

There is a story in the family: one of the brothers was eager to join the Komsomol, but he wasn't accepted as my grandfather was considered to be a rich man. He left for America and sent a letter to this Komsomol unit from Philadelphia. There was a picture in that letter: he and his own car in the background. And on the back of the picture he drew a big doulia [insulting gesture].

My grandfather owned a pawn-shop in Skwira before the Revolution of 1917. My grandmother was raising the children. They were believed to be well-to-do for those days. Judging from my mother's clothes one could tell that she didn't like cheap things. Se used to say that we weren't so poor as to

buy cheap clothes and therefore it would be better to save some money, make do without something else and buy a good quality piece instead. In general, she had high-and-mighty manners. But she had difficult times. They took away my grandmother first, and my mother stayed here. She told us she had to travel, exchange things, sell something. She often traveled on the roofs of trains. When she was very young she attended a dress-making course. She specialized in shirt making.

My mama had a very soft character, but at the same time it was tough to some extent. If she believed somebody to be dishonest, or if somebody tried to say something bad about her family, she tried to stop seeing those acquaintances. She did a lot of good to her acquaintances, family and relatives, and she loved children. Relatives and neighbors always brought their children to her, and she looked after them. She was very kind-hearted, and when I grew up and got married, all our acquaintances used to say, 'You know, Zina, you are really lucky with your mother'.

Growing up

My sister Sarra was born in Skwira in 1926. She was very intelligent, but her health was failing her. She was ill for the bigger part of her life. She fell ill when she was about six years old. For a very long time the doctors couldn't find out what it was - her legs were failing her. She was prescribed physical exercise. It didn't work and her condition was getting worse. This happened at the time when Postyshev [5](#) held the highest position in Ukraine. Mama was told to try and meet with him to ask him for my sister to be sent to the Crimea. They told her that Postyshev always walked in the park over the Dnipro river. Mama went there early in the morning, waited for him and addressed him with her request. At that time things were different. Mama told him about this trouble in the family and on his direction my sister was taken to the Crimea.

She didn't stay long in the Crimea - just about half a year. Her illness progressed rapidly and her legs got paralyzed. Then they diagnosed the disease - it was bone tuberculosis. She was put into hospital in Puscha-Voditsa. During the war the hospital moved to Buzuluk and she stayed there throughout the war. Then, gradually, the paralysis retreated, she returned to Kiev and stayed in the health center where she studied all the time. Later she went to school, finished it and graduated from university. However, my mother had to take her to the university and back home. My sister worked as teacher all her life, but she didn't live a long life and died in 1990.

My father's family was religious. My father observed all holidays except Saturday because it was a working day. One couldn't just say that we had to have the day off on Saturday, so we had to work on Sabbath. But on holidays my father always went to the synagogue; he had his own seat there. He even went there when he was already very, very old. And later we took him there by taxi and I brought him back home. And even the year he died he was at the synagogue at Yom Kippur. At home we observed all holidays. I knew what this holiday was about and what was to be done for each other holiday. For Yom Kippur they cooked chicken and stuffed fish; for Purim they made little pies with poppy-seeds and so on.

We generally spoke Russian. My parents only switched to Yiddish when we, children, weren't supposed to know the subject of their discussion. I understood Yiddish, but I never learned to speak or read in Yiddish. My parents knew it well. My father could read and write perfectly in Yiddish and Hebrew; my mother only spoke Yiddish.

After my older sister was born in 1926, the family moved to Moscow looking for a better life. My mother's older brother, Solomon Tsyrułnik, lived there. But for some reason they didn't stay long in Moscow. They came back to Kiev, and I was born there.

I never heard my father call the Soviet power anything other than, 'these bandits'. Mama only said, 'Careful'. Well, but this does seem to be all one can say about the Soviet power, really. My father didn't take it seriously. He never spoke about it seriously. He didn't even want to talk about it. If there were discussions he used to tell me, 'Remember what I tell you, Zina. These bandits won't last long'.

We openly discussed things. Once, when I was younger, they warned me, 'Zina, you're not supposed to talk about this elsewhere'. Besides, we knew very well what was going on in the 1930s [during the so-called Great Terror] [6](#) because Aunt Golda's husband, Semyon Novobratskiy, was repressed. He was raised in an orphanage, and he was promoted in the Party and was a delegate of the Congress and Party organization in Vorontsovo-Gorodische. And he was a Jew. Once they came and took him away. When they took him to their office an NKVD [7](#) employee said to him, 'You understand, Semyon, that I can't do anything. All I can do is to allow you make a phone call'. He called my father immediately.

Aunt Golda - she was also a party member - was a woman with a strong character. She went there, put her party membership card on the table and said that if her husband was an 'enemy of the people' [8](#) she couldn't be a party member, and left. Late in the evening an acquaintance of theirs came and said, 'Leave immediately'. My father went there and took her to Kiev right away. There they separated. My aunt and her younger son were in Belaya Tserkov at her brother Gersh's, her second oldest son stayed with us and her older daughter was in Dnepropetrovsk. My aunt changed her name but she was afraid all her life and kept it a secret. She always took on minor jobs as a cleaning woman or something the like because she was afraid of being recognized. However she was summoned to the authorities during the rehabilitation [9](#). They told her that her husband had been rehabilitated and that she would receive compensation. She replied that she wouldn't accept anything for her husband. She took the certificate and left. But she was on the lists for an apartment and she received it promptly, strangely enough. Mama's brother Yankel lived in Alma-Ata. His son-in-law was also repressed and shot.

We lived on Kerosinnaya Street before the war. We had one small room there. There was a yard. We had very friendly neighbors and got along well. There were many Jewish families. There was a blacksmith and I always went to see him. I was absorbed by what he was doing. The blacksmith was a Jew. I always ran to him and said, 'Blacksmith, shoe my foot!' and pushed forward my little foot. And he pretended that he shod my foot. All our neighbors were nice people. The ones that survived met after the war.

Later we moved downtown to Meringovskaya Street, where we had one big room in a communal apartment [10](#). We had four neighbors in this apartment. One neighbor's name was Nikolai Alexandrovich. He paid a lot of attention to me. When I studied in the 1st grade he checked my homework. He lived in a small room. At that time he didn't work. He had two daughters and he visited them. One Sunday he visited one of them and the following Sunday the other one. Once a week a woman came to his place, cleaned up and did everything else necessary. There was another Jewish family there. They had a boy, Vilia. His parents were the same age as my parents.

There was also a Ukrainian family. There were a mother and daughter, the daughter's name was Nadia, she was already an adult. And there was an old blind man, a musician. He died, and another musician came to live in his place. He was a violinist. This was the beginning of all my tribulations. In those years Bousia Goldstein, a boy that played the violin splendidly, was very popular. And all Jewish parents wanted their children to be like Bousia. All in all, they started teaching me to play the violin. I wasn't particularly gifted, but I honestly spent several hours a day pestering the violin. Tears were running down my cheeks and I couldn't do anything about it until they took pity with me and cancelled the violin lessons. I was six years old then. Everything was fine: the communal apartment, the common kitchen - I cannot remember one single quarrel, or argument, and no yelling.

Everyone cooked on Primus stoves. There were no kerosene stoves then. Everyone had his little table, Primus stove and everything was left unlocked. Nobody touched anybody else's belongings. Nobody ever quarreled. Vilia's parents sometimes argued. We heard their yelling through the closed door. We had one big room, 25-30 meters. It was a nice, square room on the second floor; the balcony was facing the yard. There were two gardens nearby. One of them was across the street from the Franko theater. We went there for walks. The second garden was across the street from the gift store.

I didn't go to kindergarten, I attended the Froebel Institute [11](#). This was sort of a private governess system. The groups were small: six to eight children. We took our breakfast with us and went outside. We studied German. But it wasn't academic studies, it was everyday conversation. The teacher only spoke German with us. I spoke fluent German. I started to understand Yiddish due to German. In the afternoon we went to somebody's home to eat our food there. Then we went out again. She talked to us all the time and played with us. It all lasted from morning till five o'clock in the afternoon. It's difficult to say how many Jewish children were there, as there was no such issue - Jewish or not Jewish. However, all our relatives and acquaintances were Jewish. When my aunt married a Russian man it was a terrible scandal. But otherwise nationality wasn't an issue. No one seemed to pay attention to it. By the way, I can tell you that those who weren't Jewish always knew that some Jewish holiday was coming up and it was all right with them. I remember them saying, 'Your Easter is soon', for instance. And, fish got more expensive before the Jewish holidays.

People who weren't Jewish visited us on Jewish holidays. They danced, and then a good dinner was served. And, by the way, my mama never made cakes with cream, which were in fashion then. They were always traditional Jewish dishes: strudel, honey cake and sponge cake. And I told her that some people soaked white bread in milk to add to the mince for cutlets. I thought, the cutlets were more delicious that way. Mama told me in horror that one should never do such a thing. All laws were followed in our family, but somehow intuitively, traditionally.

We were doing quite well. In summer we went to the dacha [cottage] in Puscha-Voditsa, as my sister was there in the health center. We rented a room and lived in the dacha all summer. We were well dressed. It's not that I had millions of dresses. I may have had two summer dresses and one woolen one, so I didn't have many of them but they were of good quality. And we were well fed.

Before the war I finished the 1st grade at school #79 [12](#). School #79 was located near the Franko theater, on the square. After the war Kievenergo was housed in the building. At that time one could

start school at the age of eight. Therefore, I went to school later. I studied well, and things were easy for me.

During the War

I remember well the first day of the war [see Great Patriotic War] [13](#). My cousin Volodia, Aunt Riva's son, was visiting us. And in the morning we had a fight. Mama wasn't at home. When she came in we started complaining about one another. But Mama sat down and started crying. She said, 'What are you talking about? The war has started, and you have nothing better to do than fight?' Papa was at work. Later they took Papa away, first to the militia unit and then to the army. Within a few days he was gone.

They managed to send Volodia to Dnepropetrovsk on that very day. And then there were just mama and me left. Mama was at a loss - she didn't know what to do. All of a sudden the son of Mama's older brother, Uncle Solomon, came. He worked as doctor with the NKVD. He had changed his name to Alexei. Previously he had a different name [see common name] [14](#). He came in and said, 'Bluma, get packed and leave immediately. The car is waiting in the yard'. 'What?! I won't go!', my mother replied. And he urged her, 'Go now! The Germans are killing all Jews'. Nobody else said anything like this back then; nobody knew. That's why mama didn't take his words seriously and didn't want to leave. I remember how mama was holding on to the doorway crying that she wouldn't go and leave Sarra alone in the hospital. Alexei and the driver lifted mama up, took her outside and threw her into the car. And he said, 'I will take care of Sarra. They will evacuate health centers first'. I believe, this was on 6th August. We were one of the first people to evacuate. When we arrived in Alma-Ata they welcomed us with an orchestra, as we were the first ones to arrive.

I remember the trip. Uncle Solomon's younger son Misha was with us. He was a 1st-year student at a medical institute. We traveled in railcars, and the people in there were lying side by side like sardines. It's unbelievable how many people fit in there. On all stops we were given some boiling water; sometimes they gave us some soup. Then, all of a sudden, we heard a siren, which meant there was a raid - and then all people got out of the train and hid wherever they could find a place to hide. After the raid they all came back to their places and the journey went on. Of course, there was no schedule whatsoever. When we were passing by a river the train stopped and we could wash ourselves in the river. That was our trip to Stalingrad and that took us three weeks. I remember one thing that helped us on the way. During one bombardment they ruined a food store and the people ran over there to take whatever they could away with them. And Misha brought a big piece of ham and a pack of cookies. I don't really know how we managed to keep that ham in the summer heat. We sailed from Stalingrad to Astrakhan. And in Arys they put us on a train again.

My father went to the militia unit and we didn't hear from him for a long time. Then he was a private in the army. In 1942 they sent him to Novosibirsk as a result of his illness. Later he joined us in Alma-Ata. They put us in the apartment building of NKVD employees, where we lived with the secretary of a minister. Mama, myself and my cousin lived in the connecting room. Later mama's brother, Misha's father came with his daughter Sonia. And mama and I moved in with another family on the first floor. This was done unofficially. A woman and her son lived there and her husband was on the front. The kitchen was occupied by a family from Kiev; a woman and her daughter. A woman and her son lived in another room. When she saw our condition she mentioned to mama that she might be more comfortable living with them. We settled in her room. There were

four of us - herself and her son and mama and I. After my father returned he went to work at the Ministry of the Fish Industry. He was logistics manager. He wasn't satisfied with the life we were leading, so he made some arrangements and we moved in with a Jewish family in a private house. Mama worked for entrepreneurs - she knitted stockings and leggings on the knitting machine.

We corresponded with my sister. She told us afterwards that she was living in horrible conditions and that they were starving. Nurses were begging to get some food for the children. But the children were treated nicely. By the way, my sister was the only Jew, but she shared much love and compassion. Mama didn't see her throughout the war. When my sister was back it took us some time to get used to her. We helped her to learn to walk. All relatives on my mother's side moved to Alma-Ata. We got along all right, but we hardly ever saw each other. The children did meet, but the adults were always busy. Mama worked at a factory and she only came home to sleep.

Our life improved after my father returned. I remember I received 400 grams of brown bread and my mother received 600 grams of white bread. In addition, mama received half a liter jar of semolina porridge. I only remember this semolina porridge and white bread. I don't know what mama ate. Besides, mama gave blood regularly: not only because it was needed, but also because she received an additional ration of food for it. I was awfully thin and tall and my face had turned green. Once Aunt Riva, who lived better, suggested that I moved in with them for some holidays. She said that I would eat better and would fatten a little. My mother had never let me away from her side. But then she decided it was a good idea and we should take advantage of it. She let me go stay with Aunt Riva. That evening we sat down for dinner, but I wasn't used to such rich food and so much of it. So the next day I had jaundice. Mama took me back home right away and put me on a semolina porridge diet. Aunt Etlia, my father's younger sister, was a waitress in Mosfilm studio. On Sundays many actors were away. The employees could bring their families and children to give them food. Her son and I regularly went to the studio and had dinner there. After my father had come back, we got fish as he worked in the Ministry of the Fish Industry.

I went to school. We studied the Kazakh language, but the teaching was in Russian. Nek tepte means school in Kazakh. That's all I remember. I had a Kazakh friend. After school we always went to the hospital. We read to the patients and wrote letters to their families. I studied in the 2nd, 3rd and 4th grades in the Kazakh school. The conditions were very difficult - we wrote on pieces of newspapers. I remember losing a book from the library. It was 'Package' by Gaidar [15](#). My teacher said to me that she wouldn't give me my award diploma for successful studies until I return this book. I was sobbing and huge tears were running down my face, as I couldn't get a copy of this book anywhere. I became a member of the pioneer organization in the 3rd grade. I remember them gathering us all in the hall, and we all aligned. There was a bust of Lenin and everything was very official. They told us about Pavlik Morozov [16](#), the main pioneer, and we tied up our red neck kerchiefs. We were happy. This was such a great event! They told us to study well to be accepted into the pioneer organization. Our parents didn't care about us becoming pioneers.

We knew everything that was going on at the front. We knew the commanding officers and the marshals. We knew that Zhukov [Marshall of the USSR, played a leading role in gaining victory in the Great Patriotic War] showing up on some front meant victory. At that time the novel Timur and his team by Gaidar, was very popular. We were timurovtsy [17](#). We helped people who were alone or old people. Then we got together and shared what we had done. At some place I fetched some water, in another place I lit a fire in the fire place, etc. This was all discussed. But somehow it

wasn't associated with the pioneer organization. We made tents or little huts and we were kind of different from the others. Our parents complimented us for this assistance.

After the War

As soon as Kiev was liberated we started preparations to leave for Kiev. We were back before the new academic year - in summer 1944. We traveled via Moscow - mama, papa and I. Sarra joined us later. We didn't have a dwelling in Kiev - our apartment was ruined. At first we lived on 3, Kruglouniversitetskaya Street. Then it was Krutoi Spusk Street, where we lived on the first floor, on the side of the yard. It was an amazing building, a real Kiev building, that is the neighbors felt and lived like a big family, shared things and supported one another. Rosa Sheitskaya, my friend, lived in the same building. I remember well one Ukrainian family - they were a very nice family. They got along well with everyone. We had a small room, 14.5 square meters. We had no neighbors, though. 1.5 meters were separated for gas storage. The apartment had very thick walls, and I could sleep on the window sill because it was so wide. Then we took my sister away from the hospital, so there were four of us living there.

My father continued working in commerce. He was the director of a vegetable storage base in Podol [18](#). He didn't work there long.

I studied in school #78, which was high standard. It was located in Pechersk, beside it there were mansions and ministries. Therefore I studied with the girls from ministry employees and the party elite. At that time girls and boys studied separately. There were Jewish children at the school but I didn't feel any discrimination. There weren't many Jewish teachers. One of them was our history teacher Isaak Lvovich and we all dreamed of having him teach us. He taught about the history of the USSR. Not once did I witness any anti-Semitism in all these years. I didn't even feel that nationality was of any significance when at school. The teachers treated me very nicely. When boys or girls in the streets tried to abuse me somehow, I would fight back since I was a strong girl. I was a big patriot and an active Komsomol member, although I knew what had been happening in the 1930s. When at school I heard a lot from my sister, she told me about things, and one of the things she told me about was Lenin's testament. But I still thought that if Lenin had been alive things would have been all right. It wasn't much that I knew about Lenin, so I blamed Stalin for everything. Only later, when I had to deal with things like these, I changed my mind.

I believed that communism was good, that we had a wonderful constitution, that everything was fine. I remember well the campaign against 'cosmopolitans' [19](#). I remember that I didn't quite believe that it was all against Jews. I remember mama preparing for the expulsion of the Jews. Mama understood everything. Once she bought three Orenburg headscarves - warm woolen headscarf to be worn in winter. We never wore headscarves. She explained to us that we were supposed to depart and needed something warm. And she ordered three pairs of warm, fur-lined heavy boots. She was preparing for departure and I rebelled and said that it couldn't be, and that she just heard some rumors.

I became aware of the struggle against cosmopolitanism in the institute. At that time KPI [Kiev Polytechnical Institute] proved that it was no better than university. Everything always started at university. But I knew what was going on at university because Sarra studied there. There was a girl there - Gershunina. Her father was a general and there were weapons in the house. She wasn't Jewish. Then all of a sudden that girl committed suicide. Back then they thought that girls who lost

their virginity could do that. But they said it happened because she attended some nationalistic meeting and was afraid. Then there was Reznik - they declared him a cosmopolitan, put his daughter in prison and killed him. He was a lecturer at the university. Then there was a young and very intelligent man studying with Sarra called Edinger. The works by Lenin and Stalin were discussed in the faculty of philosophy. When they were discussing one of Stalin's works Edinger said that he didn't think there was anything new in that work, that it was a repetition of what Lenin had said. But at least he was smart enough to go home and tell his family about what had happened. His parents put him on the train immediately and sent him to their relatives.

My sister entered university in 1947. One probably had to be a Gestapo man to reject my sister being accepted to university. [Editor's note: The term Gestapo man was used as a nickname for someone extremely cruel.] With her disease, and the signs of it were visible, and with her knowledge I can't imagine what kind of person could have rejected her. One could tell that she had bone tuberculosis. After she came out of hospital she wore a corset for three years; a plaster corset at first and a leather one later. The corset reached from her waist to the root of her hair. Mama used to take her to classes and pick her up again. My sister was very smart, they listened to her, she went to the academic library, read books in the original language and could read between the lines, as they say. She couldn't go to discotheques or meet with boys, so, she spent all her time reading. Afterwards she told me the contents of what she had read. She gave me to read whatever she could.

I was shocked when I encountered anti-Semitism during my entrance period to university. I couldn't imagine anything like that existed. I finished school with a gold medal. At that time this was sufficient to enter a higher educational institution without taking exams. So I submitted my documents to University. I wanted to study at the economy department. I liked The Capital by Karl Marx. In general, I was a girl with high ideological principles and very intelligent. When at school I read works by philosophers, Campanella, etc. I was familiar with this subject and wished to continue studying it. I submitted my documents and was rejected. They told me that I didn't make it. I have always been a fighter, so I made my way to the office of Bondarchuk, the rector. I went into his office and said, 'Competition! But we are out of any competition! Nobody called me in, nobody talked to me, I didn't take any exams. I submitted my documents, I have a gold medal - that should be it!' He said to me, 'It's because you are a Jew. We are only supposed to accept a certain percentage of Jews'. He said it openly. I went numb. This was the first case of anti-Semitism I experienced in my life. It had happened before that somebody would say 'zhydovka' and my response would be punching him with my fist. But nothing like that had ever happened in my life before. I left the rector's office. But with my high ideological principles and my faith in our system and justice I couldn't leave it at that. So I sat down and wrote a letter to Stalin without speaking to my parents.

It was a month or a month and a half later that I received a response from Stalin's reception office. Mine was a copy; the original letter was sent to the rector of the university. It said that nothing like that could possibly exist in our country. And they requested the rector to look into this issue personally, although I had written to them that it was the rector in person who had said that to me. My parents were horrified, when that response came, because everything could have ended in a very different way. If they had known, they would have sent me away from Kiev that very same day.

The rector of the university invited me to an interview. He asked where I studied and said that I should pass the exams of the term and then I could be transferred to university. But I was too indignant and proud and told him that I wouldn't study in their anti-Semitic university. This was the end of that issue. Nevertheless, I didn't want to study at the Economy Department and entered KPI the following year. I studied well. But that was the time of the struggle against cosmopolitanism and it also echoed at Kiev Polytechnical Institute. I faced it for the second time, when they wanted to expel Jews from the Komsomol first and then, consequently, from the institute. All those students were Jewish. As we didn't have such serious things as discussions of Stalin's works they were picking on anything they could.

I remember Stalin's death. First I was happy because my father was taken away and under investigation then. And it was my prior intention to let him know about Stalin's death. Secondly, I felt happy that Stalin had died. But I learned so well to conceal my feelings that one couldn't tell anything by my looks, neither happiness nor grief.

My father was arrested in 1952 on the charge of squandering. A big case was being prepared then and they wanted to cook up a counter-revolution. He wasn't alone, there was a group of them, 25 people, which was even worse. The manager of that office wasn't Jewish. The rest of them were Jews. My father's charge was that he named the amount lost and how much was to be covered. He participated in it. This case lasted long. After 15 years in prison he started collecting certificates from people, stating how much he owed and to whom. They all gave him a signed piece of paper and it turned out that he didn't owe anything to anybody. This means that this whole case was built on sand. There were no debts and no embezzlement, but there was a very big case. They were even going to enforce the death sentence to some of them but it was abolished then.

I remember well how they arrested him. They came to his workplace, he called home from there, but didn't return home on that day. And they sealed off his workplace and started searching. They took him to his workplace and then they took him away. He had to transfer his office to his replacement. The process lasted two weeks, and during those two weeks I went to his workplace and brought him some food and could see him when he was escorted past me. Mama had to steal away. They said then that wives would be arrested, too. I saw her secretly.

Then they came one day and took me away to a mansion in Pechersk, and into an office. And then they brought my father in there. My father was all swollen up, I couldn't understand what had happened to him. Stalin had died and I wanted to let him know somehow. I said to him, 'Our country is undergoing great changes. We all hope for the better'. I was interrupted right away. The investigation officer was Jewish; I could tell from his surname. He made such a hullabaloo to prevent me from saying too much. Papa said, 'Give them all our valuables'. We didn't have anything of value. My sister and I had a ring, a pendant and a watch each, and mama only had her wedding ring. I said, 'Papa, what can I give away? I don't have anything! I pawned everything we had. We had to live somehow! I have the receipt'. But he kept saying, 'Give away everything. Here, this officer will go with you and you give him everything'. 'All right', I said.

The officer and I made the rounds of our relatives, my father must have given them their addresses. I entered and said right away, 'Aunt Etlia, give them all your valuables, please'. She was staring at me. 'Do you have anything that belongs to us? Give it to them!' - 'But I don't have anything!', she replied. I went on, 'You have nothing that is ours? Then give them something of

yours, so that they leave me alone! Because they demand that I give them something but I don't have anything except my gold medal!' She still didn't understand what this was all about. Shurik, her younger son, was playing with his watch, so I said, 'There! There is a broken watch - give it to them!' The officer didn't take it. That way we made the rounds of all our relatives. They had to make sure that we hadn't hidden anything at anybody's place. Then our trip was over because we really didn't hide anything.

They took me back and then there was a trial. I attended the court hearing; it was very hard. Sarra worked in Khmel'nitskiy at that time and mama was away all the time. Therefore I brought my father parcels and tried to have him see me, to let him know that we were fine. Reality very soon destroyed my youngster's illusions. After my father had been arrested I went to the Komsomol leader at the institute and told him about it. He said, 'So what? Firstly, he hasn't been convicted yet, and, secondly, are you going to announce this at every opportunity now?' I said to him, 'Well, I just wanted to let you know, that's it'. Later, when the second wave of expels came, I was swept over by it for the reason that I concealed the fact of my father's arrest. However, my co-students at KPI were fighting for every person. We won and nobody got expelled. Only one person from the list was expelled for the reason that he smiled at the announcement of Stalin's death.

This was a difficult time. Mama didn't work and was hiding away. I didn't eat enough. There had to be something to keep me alive, and it was my future husband, Alexei Dmitriyevich Kaluzhniy, or Alyosha as I call him, who supported me. He came to the classes, and during the first break he stated that he hadn't had breakfast yet, unwrapped a huge package and said, 'Zina, let's have breakfast'. I accepted it, and we ate his huge breakfast. In the afternoon I walked to Volodarskogo Street for dinner at his aunt's. As for dinner - I cannot remember whether there really was any food though. I was a thin girl. As for mama - I don't know what she was eating. Later, after the court hearing, mama took a job at some dressmaker's shop; she was sewing underwear. In the evening she brought home bras and we sewed buttons onto them.

Alyosha helped us sewing on buttons. Mama thought nicely of him. After my father's arrest they stopped people coming close to our home and interrogated them. We were spied on. So all my admirers disappeared immediately. I valued highly how my husband treated me then. My mother liked Alyosha very much, but such a 'present', that is a second 'goy' in the family because he's Ukrainian was terrible. She was very afraid of papa's reaction. So, she said to me, 'You know, Zina, you will graduate from the institute, go on your [mandatory job] assignment [20](#) and you will get married there. Then I will tell papa that I had nothing to do with it'. But everything turned out to be much easier when papa returned because he accepted Alyosha.

Alyosha comes from an intelligent family. His ancestors were Cossacks [21](#). On his father's side they were a well-to-do family. And their grandparents on his mother's side were well-off, too. When the dispossession of the kulaks [22](#) began, they left their village for Dnepropetrovsk. His mother got higher education there. She was a candidate of Chemical Sciences at the Academy of Sciences. Her second husband was also a teacher; he worked in a military college. They didn't want Alyosha to marry a Jewish girl. They didn't accept me and we didn't keep in touch. Alyosha left his home before we got married. He stayed away from home for a year, we finished our studies and got married. Life was difficult, we hardly had anything, as our belongings had been confiscated. [Editor's note: if a member of the family was arrested, the Soviet authorities also confiscated the family's possessions.] Alyosha took nothing from his home. We bought a mattress and placed it on

four chocks. We had to start from scratch.

I started working in 1956. Kievpribor plant was hiring young specialists then. They needed 180 employees. Their representatives came to the KPI human resource department in search of specialists. They didn't want to employ me, but they took Alyosha's documents for review. He was called in for an interview with the director. My husband told them that he couldn't take this job. 'Why?', they asked. 'I'm married', he said. 'Well, in that case, your wife is hired, too', they replied. So that way I was hired, too and worked at Kievpribor all my life. At first I worked in the energy department, then I was transferred to the design office. I worked there as a designer for 15 years and then went to the standardization department. In total I worked at this plant for 33 years.

We earned little money, but our life was gradually improving. We all lived in harmony. At first we lived with my mama, then we got a child and later my sister joined us. And we all lived in that one room, 14 and a half square meters, and there were no rows or arguments. Then we received a one-bedroom apartment. We exchanged our room and this one-bedroom apartment for a two-bedroom apartment. My father returned and we continued living in peace. We lived like that for three years, and then we got ourselves a cooperative apartment. We left the two-bedroom apartment to my sister and my parents and moved into our cooperative apartment.

My father was in prison, which was a camp at the same time - prisoners were sent out to work in the woods and those who weren't strong enough stayed and worked in the camp in Soswa, Sverdlovsk region, for 15 years. It was located behind the Urals. It was a small village. I visited him there. The roads were planked with wood, there was terrible frost, but the people were friendly. I came to this prison, and the director gave us three days to spend together. My father did everything there, including dentistry. He was a dentist assistant. People treated him well. He loved life. There was always music in our home and records, and dancing. He was always the entertainer at weddings. So, he easily found a common language with the management and convicts in the camp. They didn't send him into the wood, he stayed in the camp. My father didn't tell us about the prison camp. He tried to forget it. Only rarely he would mention something, but never - about preliminary investigation. I tried to ask him but he wouldn't say a word.

Although my husband wasn't a Jew we still observed Jewish traditions. First Alyosha was surprised about some things. He couldn't get used to stuffed fish, for instance. Then he finally took to liking it. I don't cook Ukrainian food like his grandmother did. So, he likes to eat when we visit people. His eating manners are the same as they were in his childhood. At home I always give him a fork and a spoon at the table. But at the end of the meal he always returns a clean fork, as he eats with his spoon. After getting married I started buying pork because he likes pork. But he doesn't mind veal or beef either. He is very patriotic, he loves Ukraine and everything Ukrainian. But with due respect of each other and different traditions and habits there can be no conflicts. Whatever one likes is good.

Our son Alexander, or Sasha as we call him, was born in 1957. When I got a son, I couldn't afford to leave work for good. There were two months of maternity leave, one month vacation, and one month vacation saved from the previous year. That made four months altogether and then I had to go back to work. Mama arranged for herself to only work one shift. I arranged to work without lunch break. When I came home she had already left. So, mama wrapped my son into a blanket, put him to sleep and placed his pram under the balcony of our neighbor's, right next to her window. Sasha

was sleeping and I took him home when I came back from work. And the neighbor watched him all this time. If there was trouble she took him to her place, changed his nappy and the like.

Sasha was an ordinary boy. His friend was the neighbor's boy, Kostia, who was also a good boy. Once Sasha came home and whispered to me, 'Kostia doesn't want to be my friend'. 'Why?' I asked. 'I called him zhyd [kike]', he replied. I was paralyzed with horror. I said to him, 'Kostia is a Jew. Only bad people say zhyd. But at least he is a Jew whereas you are nobody.' He asked, 'How come?' and I replied, 'Your papa is Ukrainian and your mama is Jewish. So you are a nobody'. He was confused. Then I decided to draw his attention to this issue. At that time Kuznetsov's [23](#) Babi Yar was published, so I told Kostia about it all, and then I gradually introduced him to the Jewish history. I got the World History of the Jewish People by Simon Dubnow [24](#). I made some notes. As nobody knew about it, I decided to type it. We had a typewriter at home and Sasha and I were typing my notes. As a result, Sasha knew about the history of the Jewish people and their traditions very well.

He was raised Jewish, although not religiously, and with all respect to his Ukrainian origin. We all respected and accepted each other. My son's wife is Jewish. Of course, deep down in my heart I wanted him to marry a Jewish girl, but I thought I didn't have the right to decide. So I'm happy he did. My sister had books of the well-known writer Schopenhauer [25](#); three volumes. She said, 'Sasha, they will be yours if you marry a Jewish girl'. Of course this wasn't the reason why he got married to a Jewish girl. He simply fell in love with a Jewish girl, but at least he got close to the Jewry that way.

Our son was 13 when his grandfather returned. It was the most difficult thing to have them get used to one another. It took a lot of effort on everybody's part. It took about half a year, or maybe even longer. The difficulties lay in the behavior and manner of speaking. My son was used to a different manner of speaking; he didn't understand how a person could spit on the floor, and my father had forgotten what a normal life was like. But gradually it all improved, my son realized what his grandfather had gone through.

When my father returned he continued going to the synagogue. My father died on 2nd December 1990. In his last years we went to the synagogue on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. But he couldn't go there by himself. He went to the synagogue by taxi in the last three years of his life, and I brought him back. He was very proud to introduce his daughter to people. He liked the fact that his daughter was at the synagogue. And they allowed me to sit beside my father in the synagogue, along with his childhood friend Iosiph Mats. My father was happy. I have a special feeling when it comes to the synagogue. I don't go there but I would like to go there. I've heard psalms since my childhood. Iosiph used to sing them whenever he visited us.

Being Jewish didn't really interfere with my life. I never regretted being Jewish. I encountered anti-Semitism when I took my entrance exams to the institute, and another time when my boss told me she wanted me to be her deputy. She was told that it wasn't possible. I didn't feel sorry about it. I lived behind my husband's back, and we earned all right for that time. And that was all I wanted. Therefore, I cannot say that I had any problems in this regard. But once my husband had a problem. They didn't allow him to go abroad. They explained to him that it was because his wife was Jewish. My Jewry was of no assistance to me either, until we became very poor. Then HESD and Joint [26](#) started supporting us.

Of course, I dreamed about a different career. I could have chosen a different way. In this respect my Jewry interfered, of course. They once even cut my wings after this incident with my entering the institute. I lost faith in myself. My husband made a good career for a person without any support from 'above'. He defended his dissertation and became a candidate of sciences. He got promoted at work. But he decided he didn't care about titles. His degree allowed him an additional 100 rubles to his salary. I also wanted a quiet life after all we had gone through. We were content with what we had. We could only afford to go to a restaurant once or twice a year in Kiev. But we could afford to go to any theater, any performance of a theater on tour in Kiev. And buying a pair of shoes or a suit wasn't a problem either.

We also had many hobbies. My husband has always been very fond of music. He plays the guitar, and participated in amateur performances at the institute. He went in for sports. I was also fond of sports when I studied at the institute, but then I gave it up. My family and son were enough for me. We liked swimming, and my husband was very fond of skiing, he went skiing to the Carpathian Mountains in winter and took me with him. We often had guests at home. My son was a gifted boy, but he got ill in his teens. He spent almost a year in the same sanatorium where my sister had spent so many years. He studied a lot and finished the faculty of mathematics at university. He is a candidate of mathematical sciences and lectures at Solomon University at present.

I keep in touch with my relatives. I've found my relatives that had left in the 1920s. I've been to America to visit my two cousins. We went to my grandparent's grave there. I saw my cousin's son. My cousin was in a different country then. We correspond with those that emigrated. This year my last cousin died.

My sister Sarra died a long time ago. She was more patriotic than I. If she could she would have taken the first chance to move to Israel. Whenever she found out that somebody was a Jew she would tell me. She also made notes. Now we have a book of 'Famous Jewish people', but I had more names written down. Sarra always told me what new she learned about the Jews. I'm very glad that Sarra attended the first Jewish concerts at GVF [Institute of Civil Aviation] Institute. There was already a rabbi there at the time. The whole family went there: papa, myself, Sarra and Sasha. And Sarra was translating a little for us.

Sarra worked as a teacher all her life. She taught logistics and psychology first and then chemistry and mathematics. She changed her profession, as she couldn't find a job. All those who had a philosophical education took to public activities or teaching history. One could only teach history if a party member. And we never wanted to be party members. Sarra was a very smart woman and she reacted promptly to everything. What took me three days to grasp she got in three minutes. If somebody said something to her at the pedagogical council, and it was touching her indirectly, she would retort in such manner that they wouldn't want to speak against her again. It was noticeable that she had been ill, therefore, people were feeling sorry for her. I think, she was treated well.

Many of my relatives and friends moved to other countries for good, but I had made up my mind on this question a long time ago - the remains of my dear parents and all my close ones are buried here and I will always live here.

My granddaughter Lubov studied in a Jewish school for five years. She is a 4th-year student at KPI now and studies well. May God give her happiness. As for my son, I only wish him health and lots of it. My family has always been doing okay, but it has always been health that we lacked.

Glossary

1 Gangs

During the Russian Civil War there were all kinds of gangs in the Ukraine. Their members came from all the classes of former Russia, but most of them were peasants. Their leaders used political slogans to dress their criminal acts. These gangs were anti-Soviet and anti-Semitic. They killed Jews and burnt their houses, they robbed their houses, raped women and killed children.

2 Rabfak (Rabochiy Fakultet - Workers' Faculty in Russian)

Established by the Soviet power usually at colleges or universities, these were educational institutions for young people without secondary education. Many of them worked beside studying. Graduates of Rabfaks had an opportunity to enter university without exams.

3 Torgsin stores

Special retail stores, which were established in larger Russian cities in the 1920s with the purpose of selling goods to foreigners. Torgsins sold commodities that were in short supply for hard currency or exchanged them for gold and jewelry, accepting old coins as well. The real aim of this economic experiment that lasted for two years was to swindle out all gold and valuables from the population for the industrial development of the country.

4 Komsomol

Communist youth political organization created in 1918. The task of the Komsomol was to spread of the ideas of communism and involve the worker and peasant youth in building the Soviet Union. The Komsomol also aimed at giving a communist upbringing by involving the worker youth in the political struggle, supplemented by theoretical education. The Komsomol was more popular than the Communist Party because with its aim of education people could accept uninitiated young proletarians, whereas party members had to have at least a minimal political qualification.

5 Postyshev, Pavel Petrovich (1887-1939)

one of the most odious Soviet party officials. Since the early 1920s Postyshev held various offices in the Communist Party of Ukraine. Between 1932 and 1937 he was the main initiator of repressions against Ukrainian intelligentsia, who were accused of 'nationalism.' Arrested on Stalin's orders in 1938, shot in 1939, rehabilitated in 1956.

6 Great Terror (1934-1938)

During the Great Terror, or Great Purges, which included the notorious show trials of Stalin's former Bolshevik opponents in 1936-1938 and reached its peak in 1937 and 1938, millions of innocent Soviet citizens were sent off to labor camps or killed in prison. The major targets of the Great Terror were communists. Over half of the people who were arrested were members of the party at the time of their arrest. The armed forces, the Communist Party, and the government in general were purged of all allegedly dissident persons; the victims were generally sentenced to death or to

long terms of hard labor. Much of the purge was carried out in secret, and only a few cases were tried in public 'show trials'. By the time the terror subsided in 1939, Stalin had managed to bring both the Party and the public to a state of complete submission to his rule. Soviet society was so atomized and the people so fearful of reprisals that mass arrests were no longer necessary. Stalin ruled as absolute dictator of the Soviet Union until his death in March 1953.

7 NKVD

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

8 Enemy of the people

Soviet official term; euphemism used for real or assumed political opposition.

9 Rehabilitation in the Soviet Union

Many people who had been arrested, disappeared or killed during the Stalinist era were rehabilitated after the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956, where Khrushchev publicly debunked the cult of Stalin and lifted the veil of secrecy from what had happened in the USSR during Stalin's leadership. It was only after the official rehabilitation that people learnt for the first time what had happened to their relatives as information on arrested people had not been disclosed before.

10 Communal apartment

The Soviet power wanted to improve housing conditions by requisitioning 'excess' living space of wealthy families after the Revolution of 1917. Apartments were shared by several families with each family occupying one room and sharing the kitchen, toilet and bathroom with other tenants. Because of the chronic shortage of dwelling space in towns communal or shared apartments continued to exist for decades. Despite state programs for the construction of more houses and the liquidation of communal apartments, which began in the 1960s, shared apartments still exist today.

11 Froebel Institute

F. W. A. Froebel (1783-1852), German educational theorist, developed the idea of raising children in kindergartens. In Russia the Froebel training institutions functioned from 1872-1917 The three-year training was intended for tutors of children in families and kindergartens.

12 School #

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

13 Great Patriotic War

On 22nd June 1941 at 5 o'clock in the morning Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union without

declaring war. This was the beginning of the so-called Great Patriotic War. The German blitzkrieg, known as Operation Barbarossa, nearly succeeded in breaking the Soviet Union in the months that followed. Caught unprepared, the Soviet forces lost whole armies and vast quantities of equipment to the German onslaught in the first weeks of the war. By November 1941 the German army had seized the Ukrainian Republic, besieged Leningrad, the Soviet Union's second largest city, and threatened Moscow itself. The war ended for the Soviet Union on 9th May 1945.

14 Common name

Russified or Russian first names used by Jews in everyday life and adopted in official documents. The Russification of first names was one of the manifestations of the assimilation of Russian Jews at the turn of the 19th and 20th century. In some cases only the spelling and pronunciation of Jewish names was russified (e.g. Isaac instead of Yitskhak; Boris instead of Borukh), while in other cases traditional Jewish names were replaced by similarly sounding Russian names (e.g. Eugenia instead of Ghita; Yury instead of Yuda). When state anti-Semitism intensified in the USSR at the end of the 1940s, most Jewish parents stopped giving their children traditional Jewish names to avoid discrimination.

15 Gaidar, Arkadiy (born Golikov) (1904-1941)

Russian writer who wrote about the revolutionary struggle and the construction of a new life.

16 Morozov, Pavlik (1918-1932)

Pioneer, organizer and leader of the first pioneer unit in Gerasimovka village. His father, who was a wealthy peasant, hid some grain crop for his family during collectivization. Pavlik betrayed his father to the representatives of the emergency committee and he was executed. Local farmers then killed Pavlik in revenge for the betrayal of his father. The Soviets made Pavlik a hero, saying that he had done a heroic deed. He was used as an example to pioneers, as their love of Soviet power had to be stronger than their love for their parents. Pavlik Morozov became a common name for children who betrayed their parents.

17 Timurovtsy

the term derives from the name of the protagonist of the story by Soviet writer Arkadiy Gaidar 'Timur and His Team'. The book tells the story about pioneers who help elderly and sick people in their village. The book was part of the curriculum until the end of the Soviet Union, and inspired many children to follow Timur and his friends' example, thus the term 'timurovtsy' became a synonym of community service.

18 Podol

The lower section of Kiev. It has always been viewed as the Jewish region of Kiev. In tsarist Russia Jews were only allowed to live in Podol, which was the poorest part of the city. Before World War II 90% of the Jews of Kiev lived there.

19 Campaign against 'cosmopolitans'

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

20 Mandatory job assignment in the USSR

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

21 Cossack

A member of a people of southern European Russia and adjacent parts of Asia, noted as cavalymen especially during tsarist times.

22 Kulaks

In the Soviet Union the majority of wealthy peasants that refused to join collective farms and give their grain and property to Soviet power were called kulaks, declared enemies of the people and exterminated in the 1930s.

23 Kuznetsov, Anatoly Vasilyevich (pen name since 1969 A

Anatoli) (1929-1979): Russian novelist and short story writer, widely recognized for his documentary work *Babi Yar*, in which he depicts his childhood experience of the German occupation of Kiev and the Nazi massacre of Jews in Babi Yar. The work was censored in its Soviet edition. Kuznetsov found asylum in Great Britain, and published *Sequel to a Legend: Notes of a Young Man* in 1957, an account of his experience as a construction worker in Siberia. His *Babi Yar* along with the poem *Babi Yar* by Yevgeniy Yevtushenko were the first publications that opened discussions on the Holocaust in the Soviet Union.

24 Dubnow, Simon (1860-1941)

One of the great modern Jewish historians and thinkers. Born in Belarus, he was close to the circle of the Jewish enlightenment in Russia. His greatest achievement was his study of the history of the Jews in Eastern Europe and their spiritual and religious movements. His major work was the ten volume *World History of the Jewish People*. Dubnow settled in Berlin in 1922. When Hitler came to power he moved to Riga, where he was put into the ghetto in 1941 and shot by a Gestapo officer on 8 December the same year.

25 Schopenhauer, Arthur (1788-1860)

German philosopher, who maintained that human desires and forces of nature are manifestations of a single will. Since the operation of that will requires striving without satisfaction, life consists of suffering, and, only by controlling the will by intellect can suffering be diminished. Schopenhauer best expressed this pessimism in his work *The World as Will and Idea* (1918).

26 Joint (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee)

The Joint was formed in 1914 with the fusion of three American Jewish committees of assistance, which were alarmed by the suffering of Jews during World War I. In late 1944, the Joint entered Europe's liberated areas and organized a massive relief operation. It provided food for Jewish survivors all over Europe, it supplied clothing, books and school supplies for children. It supported cultural amenities and brought religious supplies for the Jewish communities. The Joint also operated DP camps, in which it organized retraining programs to help people learn trades that would enable them to earn a living, while its cultural and religious activities helped re-establish Jewish life. The Joint was also closely involved in helping Jews to emigrate from Europe and from Muslim countries. The Joint was expelled from East Central Europe for decades during the Cold War and it has only come back to many of these countries after the fall of communism. Today the Joint provides social welfare programs for elderly Holocaust survivors and encourages Jewish renewal and communal development.