Isabella Karanchuk

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Interviewer: Tatiana Chaika
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Isabella Karanchuk requested that we met some place other than her home mentioning that her daughter-in-law and her two children are at home and we can hardly have any privacy considering the circumstances. Isabella came to our office. I could hardly believe she is over seventy looking at her. She is slim and has her fair hair neatly done, wears nice high-heeled shoes and a suit. She has a very sweet and kind smile making the zest of her character. Now I could understand why she said that she's only met nice people in life – that was how she's always been with other people: nice.

My family backgrownd

My paternal and maternal ancestors came from Mogilyov in Byelorussia (editor's note: Mogilyov is a rather big town in Byelorussia. In the early 20th century the number of its population counted to – 30,000 people. There was an active Jewish life in the town. There were 38 synagogues and prayer houses, Jewish primary and general education schools for boys and girls, charity community and Jewish hospitals). I visited this town with mama in my early childhood, but I don't remember anything, naturally. My maternal grandfather Yankel-Avrum Ziskind and my paternal grandfather Gershl Lerman were stove setters. I guess they knew each other well.
My mother's parents Yankel-Avrum and Cherna Ziskind (I don't know my grandmother's maiden name) came from Mogilyov. They were born around the 1860s, though I don't know for sure and this judgment of mine is based on my mother brothers and sisters' age. The thing is there were 18 children in the Ziskind family! Four of them died in infancy. My mother's oldest sister Mata moved to America with her husband and sons Yankel and Boruch in1914. Yankel was the same age as my mama – he turned 6, and Boruch was one year old. I don't know Mata husband's name. I know that the family lost trace of Mata during the revolution of 1917 1 and never heard from her again.
Of the remaining thirteen children I knew six, who moved to Kiev in the 1930s. I also heard about four others – so in total I can tell about 10 of my mother's brothers and sisters. My mother's sisters Olga, Dora, Sonia and brothers Mikhail, Zusia and Grigoriy lived in Kiev. Perhaps, the Jewish spelling of their names was different, but I'm telling them as my mother called them. I also know

that two of my mother's brothers Mulia and Solomon were in Minsk and sister Hava – in Gomel. The rest of them lived in Gomel, and I only remember the name of my mother's sister Sarrah. I knew my aunt Olga better than anybody else (her Jewish name was Golda), though I've forgotten aunt Ola's family name. Grandmother Cherna lived with her in Kiev since the early 1930s. All I remember about Olga's husband is that his name was Boris. He perished at the front during the Great Patriotic War 2. She raised two daughters: Zhanna and Sopha, who live in Australia now. Olga worked as an accountant. She died in the early 1970s. My mother's sister Dora's Jewish husband Lazar Sneider had two daughters from his first marriage. Lazar was a logistics official and provided well for Dora. During the Great Patriotic War they were in evacuation in Siberia where Lazar died. Dora didn't return to Kiev after the war, but stayed where they lived during the war. Mama wrote her occasionally and I know that Dora died in the early 1960s. My mother's brother Mikhail perished at the front. Grigoriy lost his arm to the war. He was single and lived near us. Grigoriy died in the middle of the 1970s. I lived in aunt Sonia's family few years after the war. Their son disappeared and they had no information about him. Sonia and her husband Ruvim died in the middle 1950s.

My mother told me that grandfather Yankel-Avrum built his own house. There were four rooms in the house full of their children, grandchildren, relatives and friends. My grandfather earned well, but there were too many of tem in thee family and therefore, they lived a modest life. Though they had everything they needed for life, grandfather Avrum could not afford to give his children education. The boys finished cheder and few forms in the Jewish primary school and had to study vocation to help the family. The girls also studied at school. My mother told me that the family was very religious. Grandfather started his days with a prayer and on Friday, Saturday and holidays went to the synagogue. He wore a kippah and a hat in winter. Grandmother Cherna wore a wig. My grandmother prayed every day, even though Jewish rules do not require it from women. On Friday the family prepared for Sabbath cleaning and scrubbing the house and cooking for Saturday. They followed kashrut and celebrated Jewish holidays, of course. Grandfather and grandmother fasted on Yom Kippur and on other days of fast, and so did the older children who had had bat and bar mitzvah.

My mother Haika (she was called Raya in the soviet period) was the youngest in the family. She was born in Mogilyov in 1908. My mother finished 6 or 7 forms of the Jewish school. She could read and write and learned Russian and Byelorussian. At the age of about 15 mama had to go to work. She found a job at the confectionery. She was very fond of theater. There was a Jewish amateur theater at the club of a factory in Mogilyov and mama was one of the leading actresses in it. They staged Jewish plays, mainly of Sholom Aleichem 3. My mother must have been very talented. She was praised high and even the local Jewish newspaper wrote about her talent. My mother Haika and my father Haim Lerman met at this theater.

I know very little about my father's family. My paternal grandfather and grandmother Gershl and Revekka Lerman were born in the 1880s. Gershl was born in Mogilyov, and grandmother Revekka, whose maiden name was Manevich, came from the small Byelorussian town of Chausy. Grandmother and grandfather Lerman were religious. They went to the synagogue, followed kashrut and celebrated Saturday and Jewish holidays. However, I don't know any details of my father's childhood. I don't remember my grandfather or grandmother either since I only saw them in my early childhood. I know that grandmother Revekka died in 1934 and grandfather Gershl lived till the beginning of the Great Patriotic War. Believing that Germans were cultured people like many other Jews in Mogilyov he stayed in the town and perished in 1941.

Lerman, the stove setter, had four children: three sons, born two years one after another, and a daughter, born when grandmother Revekka was over 40 and did not expect more children. The boys finished cheder and went to study vocations. Aron, the oldest, born in 1903, became a barber. During the Great Patriotic War Aron was at the front and was awarded many orders and medals. His wife Mary and daughter Yeva failed to evacuate and perished with grandfather Gershl. Aron remarried after the war. He lived in Mogilyov with his wife. They had no children. He was a skilled barber. In the late 1980s Aron and his family moved to Israel where he died shortly before turning 90.

My father's younger brother Zinoviy, born in 1907, joined the Communist Party and held official party and trade union posts. In 1937, during the period of Stalin's arrests 4 he was arrested in his office of Chairman of the regional trade union committee of Mogilyov. His wife Lisa was also expelled from the party. They had no children. Only after the 20th Congress of the communist Party 5 Zinoviy Lerman was rehabilitated 6 and we got to know that he had died in a Stalin's camp in Magadan in 1942. Lisa didn't remarry. When in the 1950s she got an offer to resume her membership in the party after her husband's rehabilitation Lisa refused. Lisa died in the 1980s.

My father's parents Revekka and Gershl had three sons for a long time before they got a daughter. So, the sons could do any work about the house. So, my father could do a chicken or fish and could do many things about the house. His mother taught him to do it. In 1924 Revekka's daughter Zina was born. Zina also perished in Mogilyov along with grandfather Gershl, her father, in 1941.

My father Yefim (Jewish name Haim) Lerman was born in 1905. He studied in cheder and then became a shoemaker's assistant for a Jewish shoemaker in his shop. He met my mother in the club where my mother acted in the theater and my father played the tuba in the orchestra. The young people fell in love with each other. They were photographed together for the first time in Mogilyov in 1924 – my mother was 16, and father – 19 years old. I don't know exactly, when my parents got married. My father was already a Komsomol 7 member and protested against having a wedding at the synagogue. They registered their wedding in a registry office and had a small wedding party with relatives and friends at home.

Shortly after the wedding my parents moved to Kharkov where my father went to work in a shoe shop. I was born on 8 August 1928. I was named Isabella and all I know about it is that I was named some aunt Beti. At first my parents wanted to name me Bertha, but then decided for Bella that developed into Isabella. My parents rented a room in a communal apartment 8 where my parents slept behind a curtain. Soon my father received a small two-bedroom apartment in a one-storied house. I don't remember any details of our life in Kharkov. All I remember is a big yard with many children, whose names I don't remember, playing in it. I don't remember the famine in the early 1930s 9, probably because my parents tried to protect me from knowing it.

My mother said that one of the first words I pronounced was Europe. My father was reading the weather forecast from a newspaper sitting by the stove one evening. The forecast predicted severe frosts in Europe and I repeated the word often making my parents laugh. My parents spoke Yiddish and my mother told me that I also knew few words in Yiddish, but forgot them in the course of time. One of my first childhood memories is a trip to Mogilyov with my mother. I remember my 60-year old grandfather, who seemed very old to me, and my grandmother Cherna. I also remember how my aunt Zina (she was 6) and I picked little cucumbers in the garden and brought them to grandmother Cherna and she told Zina off for picking such little baby cucumbers.

My mother was a housewife, when we lived in Kharkov. My father was a member of the Communist Party that he joined in 1928. Thought he had little education he was a born manager. From a plain

worker he was promoted to supervisor of the shoe shop providing services the families of government officials. In 1934 the capital of Ukraine moved from Kharkov to Kiev and our family moved there, too. My father was appointed director of the 'Kommunar' governmental shoe shop. In 1934 we moved to Kiev. My mother's sister Olga and grandmother Cherna had moved to Kiev from Mogilyov one year before us after grandfather Yankel-Avrum died. When we got off the train, we went to their place and I remember sitting by our luggage outside with my mother, when my father got a telegram. It said that his mother Revekka was dying. My father left immediately, but before he arrived his mother died.
We stayed few days with aunt Olga and grandmother Cherna before my father received a big room in a seven-bedroom communal apartment on the fourth (last) floor of a brick house located in the yard. This was a big apartment with high ceilings and two small rooms where servants stayed during the czarist times. Now there were seven families living in bigger rooms and two single women in the smaller rooms. There were 7 tables in the big kitchen with primus stoves [Primus stove -a small portable stove with a container for about 1 liter of kerosene that was pumped into burners] on each of them. We kept all utensils in our room and each time we had to take them to the kitchen to do the cooking and at the end marched back taking them back into the room. There was a tap and one toilet with a schedule for its use on the door. There was a bathtub in the apartment, but nobody wanted to use it. Our neighbors only did their laundry in it. Once a week we went to the public bathroom – this was a mandatory ritual with all Kievites. There was a doorbell on the front door to the apartment and the list of all tenants with indication of the number of rings – our visitors had to ring twice. Basically we were doing well. In 1938 we bought a wireless and a radio player – expensive acquisitions at that time.

I remember our neighbors. Across the corridor from us there was the Levin family: Luba, her husband and their boy or girl, I can't remember. Our next-door neighbors were the Chernichenko family, a husband and wife, they had no children. They were Ukrainian. I had a friend: Yulia Chernichenko, who lived in the apartment with her parents. Three families of four in the apartment were Jewish. We got along well with our neighbors. I don't remember any arguments or conflicts, but we were not friends either.
My mother was a housewife and sometimes on Friday we visited my aunt Olga and grandmother Cherna. My grandmother put a nice old silver dinner set on the table and silver wine cups. My grandmother spoke Yiddish to my mother, though she picked Russian living in Kiev. My grandmother recited a prayer, lit candles and we sat down to dinner. Nobody mentioned to me that this was celebration of Sabbath. We never celebrated Jewish holidays at home – my father was a communist and had an official position. I liked Soviet holidays, when our relatives or my father's colleagues got together in our room. They usually got together after a parade, sang Soviet songs and danced to the record player. Some of my parents' friends were Jews. My mother made Jewish food on bigger holidays: gefilte fish, though this wasn't even a tribute to tradition, just delicious food.

Growing up

One year before I was to go to school my mother sent me to a Frebelichka 10 group: graduated of the Frebel College teaching children were called so. My Frebel instructress was German, though she spoke fluent Russian. There were four kids in the group. My mother took me there each morning and gave me my lunch to go. We spent our days with our Frebel teacher: went out, had

lunch and slept in the afternoon. In the park we met with another group. Their Frebelichka didn't speak Russian and had a teenage girl with her who was her interpreter. Our Frebelichka also taught us reading and writing.
In 1936 I went to the first form of a nearby Russian school. I knew that there was a Jewish school in Kiev – my father's distant relative studied there, but my parents probably didn't think it necessary for me to get education in the Jewish language. In five years that I studied before the war I changed 5 schools: every year the district educational management transferred us to another school. I don't remember my teachers – so often they changed. I studied well and at the end of each academic year I was awarded a certificate and a book. I was one of the first in my class to become a pioneer. The ceremony usually took place on the eve of Soviet holidays: I became a pioneer on the October revolution Day 11. I remember that my mother arranged a party for me and my schoolmates. She served cakes, cookies and lemonade to us. There were also my favorite sweets: my mother often made sugar and honey sweets at home for me. It was one of Jewish foods, but I don't remember the word for it. Generally, I had a happy and fair childhood. I cannot remember anything sad about it before the Great Patriotic War. I had Russian, Ukrainian and Jewish friends, but I never thought about the nationality then. Of course, I knew that I was a Jew, but I didn't think anything special about it: just another nation like any other, no worse and no better.
My father and mother switched to the Jewish language when they didn't want me to understand the subject of their discussion. We lived in thee very center of the city near the Ukrainian Drama Theater. My parents went to this and to the Opera Theaters. My mother and father often went to the Jewish Theater located quite near from us. They never missed one performance. My parents also took me with them, probably trying to fill up the gap in my Jewish education. There was also a Jewish Theater for children in Kiev, where my parents also took me, but I can't remember it as well as I remember the one for adults. The actors spoke Yiddish, but somehow I could understand what it was about. My father bought performance booklets in Yiddish and Ukrainian: I read a brief summary of the performance and could guess what was happening on the stage. This theater staged Jewish classics and modern plays. I remember the titles: 'The Witch', 'An Enchanted Tailor', 'A girl from Moscow' that was my favorite. It was a story about a girl from Moscow who came to a Jewish town and learned about everyday life and ways of Jews. I particularly liked Jewish songs and dances in this play: they taught the girl dancing. Then I decided to become an actress. Since the 1st format school I took part in school performances, the so-called 'staging', when children recited slogans taking turns, like 'five in four, five in four, rather than five..' about completion of five-year plans 12 in four years. I recited the 'rather than five' line. I liked reciting poems and dancing in the school ensemble. I remember, when I had a dark pink tutu made for me for a celebration, but I fell ill and this tutu was never used. In the evacuation I missed it. In 1939 we had a New Year Tree at home for the first time: this was when Soviet authorities allowed the New Year celebration that was forbidden before as vestige of religion. My father brought home a huge tree, as high as the ceiling. I remember Ira Mezhibovskaya with whom we spent a lot of time together. My parents and I went to the cinema. We watched the 'Circus' and 'Merry Guys' that I liked a lot.
I remember my father's concerned looks, when he came home from work. He seemed to not notice me at once. Only when I grew up, I realized that my parents were protecting me from everything evil and fearful that was happening in those years. I didn't know that uncle Zinoviy was arrested until after the war. My father also feared arrest, but fortunately, this did not happen.
In May 1940 my brother Roman was born. At first I cried since I was expecting a sister and my parents teased me, but then I loved my brother.

During the war

I was too small to get involved in adult discussions. I heard about fascists, but I didn't think there would be a war. I remember that my mother was a member of the civil defense team of housewives of our house. There were frequent trainings and my mother often ran away at the signal of training alarm. She was a member of the unit of chemical defense. She showed us how she put on an anti-yprite suit telling us that she managed it quicker than anybody else. Therefore, when at 7 o'clock in the morning of 22 June 1941 the radio broadcast the signal of alarm – 'the threat of air raid' my mother prepared to go to the yard for training as usual, but this was a real alarm and the radio repeated announcing the threat of an air raid. My father grabbed my brother and we rushed to the basement. I don't even remember feeling any fear. It seemed like a game. Kiev was bombed on this day, but not in the center and we didn't hear any explosions. At 12 o'clock there was an emergency message on the radio and our neighbors came in to listen to the radio. Molotov 13 announced the treacherous attack of Hitler on our Motherland. We stayed in Kiev a little over ten days from the moment the war began. There were few air raids, when we took shelter in the bomb shell in the neighboring yard. There was no organized evacuation and nobody said that Jews had to leave in the first turn, because fascists were killing them. I remember my father saying that Germans were killing communists, but not a mention of Jews. On 3 July 1941 my father sent us in evacuation. He stayed in Kiev. We took a boat down the Dnieper with other families of governmental officials. We didn't have much luggage: my father said we were not leaving for long. Besides, my mother with me, a little girl, and my little brother, could not carry much.

There were mainly old people and women with children on the boat. We arrived in Dnepropetrovsk and were accommodated in a school building. We were provided one hot meal per day. There was a bomb shell in the basement of a house near the school. Three days after we arrived there was an air raid. My mother with me and little Roman could run as fast as the others to the bomb shell. My mother stood by the wall in the corridor of the school and we were with her. This was where we stayed during the air raid: the bombs were falling around, but none of them hit the school. Then we heard a terrible crack: it turned out a bomb hit the house where the bomb shell was. There were no survivors. Few days later we went to the railway station. It was overcrowded. There was a freight train on the platform. My mother and were looking for a railcar to get in, but people were shouting from there that there was no more space left inside. Then the commandant of the station helped us. He ordered that they opened a railcar and let us in. The people inside reluctantly let us in. We put our suitcase on the floor and sat on it. When the train started, another air raid happened, but we moved on. We got little food on our way, and when the train stopped, I jumped off to fetch some boiling water fearing to miss the train. We arrived at the Tikhoretskaya station in Stavropol Krai [2500 km east of Kiev]. We were accommodated in a house. He owner of the house and the head of the family residing in it was Stephan, a German man. I don't know whether he was an anti-Semite, but he was looking forward till Germans came and kept threatening that when they came we would have a hard time. We were having a hard time. We were robbed in this house: a watch, my mother's nice dress and a suit were gone. Roman got poisoned with something and had bloody flux. Fortunately, my mother still breastfed the boy and tanks to this Roman survived. My mother breastfed him till he turned 2 years old and this saved his life in the evacuation.

My father found us in end July. When he arrived, he had a military uniform: he served in some logistic unit. He took us to Ufa in Bashkiria and went to the army. We were accommodated in an apartment with two rooms. The owners of the apartment lived in a smaller room and let us a corner

with no bed, so we slept on the floor. My mother went to work at a plant and received a worker's card [editor's note: the card system was introduced to directly regulate food supplies to the population by food and industrial product rates. During and after the great Patriotic War there were cards for workers, non-manual employees and dependents in the USSR. The biggest rates were on workers' cards: 400 grams of bread per day]. I went to school for few works. Then winter came. I didn't have warm clothes and had to quit school. My father had sent us a parcel with clothes, but it was half a year before it arrived. I stayed with my brother and made some soup with beetroots and turnip. We starved. The mistress of the house – a kind Russian woman, gave us some food occasionally. The family of a high-rank official from Kiev lived in another room. He was at the front and his wife and son were having a good life in evacuation. She often threw candy wraps in the garbage. I remember, when she wanted to throw away some soup leftovers, my mother asked her to give it to us. It was meat soup, a delicacy for us. Since then she gave us their leftovers, but she never offered us any food. I remember she said that if her husband was going to die she didn't want victory and my mother was very angry about it. This was a very hard year. We didn't have washing facilities and had lice.

In spring 1942 my father came to take us to Nizhniy Tagil. Our life improved a little. We had a room for ourselves and the mistress of the apartment lived in another room. My mother went to work in a dining room and often brought some food from there. I took care of my little brother. He called me mama at times. When he grew up, Roman often said that I was his second mama. My father stayed with us for some time. He received a nice military food ration. In early summer he was sent to Sverdlovsk military political school and before he finished his studies they sent him to the Stalingrad front. Before going there he was given a leave to stay with us few days. I remember one early morning, when my mother left for work, my brother stood up in his little bed, stretched his hands toward our father and said: 'This is my Papa!' This was amazing how considerately he pronounced this. My father took him in his hands and kissed him. On that same day he went to the front. In middle August we received a death notification: my father took part in combat action for just a couple of weeks, but they were the hardest days near Stalingrad. I think I will never forget mama's screaming. Some time later we received a letter that my father wrote before a battle and my mother decided he was alive. She wrote a letter to his unit and received a reply that Yefim Lerman had perished. He perished in that battle, before which he wrote his last letter.

I finished the 6th and 7th forms in a Russian school in Nizhniy Tagil where there were many evacuated children. There were also Jewish children, but I didn't segregate nationalities then. There were good equal attitudes also. I joined Komsomol in the 7th form. I was an active Komsomol member helping other children with their homework and conducting political information classes. There were already publications in newspapers about fascists' atrocities against Jews on the occupied territories, and my mother understood that my father's relatives in Mogilyov perished. I also went to the cinema to the club of the railcar depot where they showed newsreels before a movie. My mother never went with me. She became secluded after my father perished doing everything mechanically.

In 1944 we moved to Kusaroy town near Baku in Azerbaijan where aunt Olga and her two daughters were staying. Grandmother Cherna died in 1942, and my aunt invited us to join with them. My mother obtained a permit required for any moves in the evacuation and we joined Aunt Olga. I became very close with my cousin sisters Zhanna and Sopha. I finished the 8th form there in 1945. I remember Victory Day: how our mothers were crying and so were we – they were mourning for their deceased husbands and destroyed youth and we were crying for our fathers. My

mother wanted to stay to live in Azerbaijan, but the climate did not agree with me whatsoever. There was malaria, and I was the only one in the family, who suffered from it. I often felt cold and had attacks of it at exams that I pulled myself together to pass and then came home and to bed.

After the war

I insisted on going back to Kiev, but according to existing procedures, we had taken advantage of obtaining one permission to relocate and now we could only go back to Nizhniy Tagil. There was a train via Kharkov to get there. Then at the family council we decided that I would get off there and then try to get to Kiev. So I did, the thin 17-year old girl that I was. I still wonder how my mother let me go alone, but I didn't have negative thoughts. From Kharkov I took a local train to Kiev. In this train I met young officers. They were taking some supplies to the military hospital in Kiev. We decided to stick together. They were kind and friendly. We changed trains before we arrived at Darnitsa (editor's note: Darnitsa was a railway station on the left bank of the Dnieper in the outskirts of Kiev, now it is a district in Kiev). We said 'farewells' there and I took another local train to get to the railway station in Kiev. I arrived at 7 am and went across the town. I didn't recognize my hometown, its ruined streets. I had a suitcase with me and went to Kreschatik [Kreschatik is the main street of Kiev], to go to Podol from there where aunt Sonia lived. I walked for a while, but couldn't find Kreschatik. Then, when I started going up the street, I realized that I passed Kreschatik and didn't recognize it, so much ruined it was. I turned back and then descended to the Podol.

My relatives gave me warm reception. They lied in their apartment in Igorevskaya Street, but they only managed to get one room back after they returned from the evacuation. They gave me a folding bed to sleep on, I slept in the corridor. Next day I began to think of an educational institution to enter. My dream of becoming an actress strayed in my prewar pink childhood. I knew I had to get a profession and earn my living. I entered a Construction technical School, finished it and went to work.

A year later my acquaintances helped me to obtain a permit for my mother and aunt Olga, though they were only allowed to stay in Borispol near Kiev. In 1946 mama and Roman, aunt Olga and Sopha and Zhanna arrived in Kiev. Uncle Grigoriy, who joined them in Azerbaijan after she was released from his hospital, also arrived with them. On the way home my mother's suitcase with her documents about her and the children's pensions, my father's last letter and her best clothes was stolen. Fortunately, the thieves returned the documents concerning my father's history and my mother managed to obtain a pension for us. We all lived in the Podol. Aunt Olga soon returned to her apartment and Grigoriy' wife and their two children returned from the evacuation. My mother, Roman and I slept in aunt Sonia's corridor till 1951. These were hard years. There was famine in 1946-47, as hard as the one in 1932-33. We were provided pies with pluck filling at school. I sold them to buy some food for my brother.

I finished my technical school in 1949 and got a job assignment 14 at the department of construction and management of governmental buildings. This was a very good job. It is strange, but the anti-Semitic campaigns of struggle against rootless cosmopolites 15 or poisoning doctors 16 in the late 1940s had no impact on me, probably because I always treated people nicely and they returned this attitude. Nobody abused me or allowed any expressions against Jews in my presence. After two years of work I received a room in a communal apartment in a two-storied house in Kreschatik. It's hard to say for sure, but there were more than fifteen neighbors in this apartment. We all had our own doorbell, a bulb in the corridor and electric power meter. There was

no toilet, bathroom or kitchen in the apartment. There was a tap and a sink. We ran to the toilet in the yard, washed in a tub in the room and cooked on the primus stove in the room, but we were happy to have a room for us. I lived in this apartment for many years.
Two years after finishing the technical school I entered the All-Union Extramural Construction College. There was an academic center of this college in Kiev and I attended classes every evening. I also went to work at the Giprozdrav design office responsible for development of designs of health care institutions: hospitals, recreation centers and polyclinics. I worked there as an engineer till I retired. I joined the party here and this was a contentious move of mine: I believed in communist ideas and like my father I believed it to be my duty to join the first rows of its builders. Many of my colleagues were Jews, but I still did not segregate people by their nationality. I believed in good attitudes all my life.
My mother went to work as a seamstress at the factory and worked there till she retired in 1955. Again I had to take care of my brother: watch his studies, attend parents' meetings at school, and orientate him at some vocation. My brother loved me dearly and introduced me to his friends. We were hard up in those years, and besides, it was hard to buy anything in shops. I bought my first dress at the 'flea' market where people were selling things that they received in parcels from abroad at fabulous prices. I paid my moth's salary for this dress. Later my mother made my clothes and I always dressed nicely.
I had many friends. We got together on holidays and went to the cinema. There were also guys among them, but somehow I never tried to develop closer relations with any of them and they called me a 'good pal'. I even decided I was not made for a family life and dedicated myself to my mother, brother and work.
In 1961, when I was over 30, a colleague of mine introduced me to an interesting young man. He had divorced his wife few years before. We saw each other for some time before he proposed to me. We got married in 1962. My husband Vladimir Karanchuk, Russian, was born in 1934 in Kiev. His parents were workers. They received me well in their family. We never discussed any nationality-related issues. Vladimir finished a technical school. He was a talented engineer and a very handy man. He worked in a laboratory of Kiev Automobile Road College and developed many experimental applications that were successfully implemented. We had a small wedding party in his parents' home. After the wedding Vladimir moved in with us into our communal apartment. We could not stay at Vladimir's home since his younger sister was growing up there. My brother was in the army at this time. When he returned, we lived together for a long time. Vladimir and I slept behind a screen in the room. In the middle 1960s I received a one-room apartment from my work in Darnitsa, a new district in Kiev then. We moved into this apartment with one suitcase: this was all we owned. Then we gradually renovated the apartment, polished the floors and bought furniture on installments. This apartment seemed paradise to me. I remember opening the door coming from work and standing in the threshold admiring my room. We earned sufficient for the two of us and could afford to buy crockery and clothes, but of course, we couldn't even dream about a car, for example. In 1968 our son was born and we named him Victor – the 'winner'. In 1969 we received a two-bedroom apartment. We were very happy together: we went out of town, in summer we rented a dacha near Kiev, and often went to the cinema or theater. My mother looked after our son and we went to work. In the 1970s my mother began to feel ill and we exchanged our apartment and her room for a three-bedroom apartment, but regretfully, my mother didn't move in it. In 1981 she died. My husband Vladimir, a nice and kind man, died suddenly from cancer in 1982. Since then I've been alone. Sopha and Zhanna moved to Australia and I have cousin sisters and brothers in

USA and Germany.
My brother Roman worked as an electrician after finishing a technical school. He married a Jewish girl, but it didn't work out. They had two children: son Yevgeniy and daughter Yelena, when Roman divorced his wife. However, they kept good relationships. In the late 1970s they moved to Israel and Roman followed them there some time later. Roman didn't remarry and began to live near his children. When Yelena remarried and moved to Moscow with her family, Roman followed them there. Now he lives in Kiev, having a citizenship in Israel and an apartment in Kiev.
We've never discussed the issue of emigration in our family. We've always taken interest in Israel, but I was a member of the party and feared that if I decided to move there, I would have to go through all these humiliations that the people who submitted their documents for departure faced in the 1970s. They were shamed at meetings and I also spoke at the meting calling them to think it over before they left their Motherland. After my husband died, I wouldn't venture to move alone. I retired in 1990. Now I have an opportunity to watch my grandchildren growing up and take part in their education.
My son Victor finished the Radio Electronics Technical School. He is a cable TV specialist now. Victor's wife Yelena is Ukrainian. She is an accountant. My granddaughters Anna, born in 1996, and Olga, born in 2000, are sweet little girls. I live with my son and his family and will share my life with them. If he decides to emigrate – and he is thinking of moving to Germany, I will go with him.
We were enthusiastic about perestroika 17 and the changes it brought along. Finally they removed bans on art and literature, people got an opportunity to travel and communicate with people in other countries. Of course, the material part of life became more difficult, but I believe that these are temporary difficulties.
We've never observed Jewish traditions or celebrated holidays in our family. After Ukraine gained independence there were conditions for development of the Jewish self-conscience created and I began to celebrate Jewish holidays. I am a client of Hesed. I like its cultural programs. I watch Jewish programs, read Jewish press and enjoy it. However, I am probably a real cosmopolite: I dream of traveling to other countries despite my old age, meet new people and cognate other cultures. I hope I will have a chance.

GLOSSARY:

1 Russian Revolution of 1917
Revolution in which the tsarist regime was overthrown in the Russian Empire and, under Lenin, was replaced by the Bolshevik rule. The two phases of the Revolution were: February Revolution, which came about due to food and fuel shortages during World War I, and during which the tsar abdicated and a provisional government took over. The second phase took place in the form of a coup led by Lenin in October/November (October Revolution) and saw the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks.

2 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.

3 Sholem Aleichem (pen name of Shalom Rabinovich (1859-1916)

Yiddish author and humorist, a prolific writer of novels, stories, feuilletons, critical reviews, and poem in Yiddish, Hebrew and Russian. He also contributed regularly to Yiddish dailies and weeklies. In his writings he described the life of Jews in Russia, creating a gallery of bright characters. His creative work is an alloy of humor and lyricism, accurate psychological and details of everyday life. He founded a literary Yiddish annual called Di Yidishe Folksbibliotek (The Popular Jewish Library), with which he wanted to raise the despised Yiddish literature from its mean status and at the same time to fight authors of trash literature, who dragged Yiddish literature to the lowest popular level. The first volume was a turning point in the history of modern Yiddish literature. Sholem Aleichem died in New York in 1916. His popularity increased beyond the Yiddish-speaking public after his death. Some of his writings have been translated into most European languages and his plays and dramatic versions of his stories have been performed in many countries. The dramatic version of Tevye the Dairyman became an international hit as a musical (Fiddler on the Roof) in the 1960s.

4 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.

5 Twentieth Party Congress

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

6 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.

7 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.

8 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.

9 Famine in Ukraine
In 1920 a deliberate famine was introduced in the Ukraine causing the death of millions of people. It was arranged in order to suppress those protesting peasants who did not want to join the collective farms. There was another dreadful deliberate famine in 1930-1934 in the Ukraine. The authorities took away the last food products from the peasants. People were dying in the streets, whole villages became deserted. The authorities arranged this specifically to suppress the rebellious peasants who did not want to accept Soviet power and join collective farms.

10 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.

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

12 Five-year plan
five-year plans of social and industrial development in the USSR an element of directive centralized planning, introduced into economy in 1928. There were twelve five-year periods between 1929-90.

13 Molotov, V

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

14 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.

15 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'.

16 Doctors' Plot

The Doctors' Plot was an alleged conspiracy of a group of Moscow doctors to murder leading government and party officials. In January 1953, the Soviet press reported that nine doctors, six of whom were Jewish, had been arrested and confessed their guilt. As Stalin died in March 1953, the trial never took place. The official paper of the Party, the Pravda, later announced that the charges against the doctors were false and their confessions obtained by torture. This case was one of the worst anti-Semitic incidents during Stalin's reign. In his secret speech at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956 Khrushchev stated that Stalin wanted to use the Plot to purge the top Soviet leadership.

17 Perestroika (Russian for restructuring)

Soviet economic and social policy of the late 1980s, associated with the name of Soviet politician Mikhail Gorbachev. The term designated the attempts to transform the stagnant, inefficient command economy of the Soviet Union into a decentralized, market-oriented economy. Industrial managers and local government and party officials were granted greater autonomy, and open elections were introduced in an attempt to democratize the Communist Party organization. By 1991, perestroika was declining and was soon eclipsed by the dissolution of the USSR.