

# Rimma Rozenberg

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Odessa

Ukraine

Interviewer: Natalia Rezanova

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Rimma Markovna Rozenberg lives in a communal apartment [1](#) on the third floor of an old building in the center of Odessa. There is a narrow, steep, steel staircase leading to her floor. Three rooms with high ceilings make a suite, and the apartment seems huge. We talked in the first room which had a high, tiled stove. There is 1930s furniture in the room: two couches, a cupboard, a dinner table and a desk with a computer on it. There are many items of memorabilia and souvenirs on the cupboard and on the table. There are pictures on the walls. Two of them are colorful portraits of the hostess and her husband when they were young. Rimma is a fragile, but lively old woman with a young voice. At first her modesty inhibited her and she gave very official sounding answers, but then she got carried away by the memories of her youth.

My maternal grandmother Tsylia Rahman, whose maiden name I don't know, was born in a town near Chernovtsy [in western Ukraine, considered to be a cultural center] in 1875. She graduated from a private Russian grammar school. My grandmother was a beautiful girl and dressed with good taste. She was married very young to a man she didn't love. She divorced him shortly afterwards and never wanted to talk about him. She then married Isaac Rahman for love. I don't know where she and my grandfather met. The newlyweds settled down in the town of Konstantinovka in the Poltava province where my mother and her brother were born. Then they lived in Yelisavetgrad [today Kirovograd].

I knew my grandmother very well. She was the one who raised me, since my mother and father were at work from morning until night. She took me for walks in the park and to my music classes. My grandmother told me stories. When I grew up, I recognized the Biblical themes in them. My grandmother was a housewife. She was a great cook; I remember she often made Jewish cookies, kichelah [crispy honey cakes] and gefilte fish [balls or a loaf made of ground fish]. My grandmother was also good at sewing. She made me lovely suits and dresses. My grandmother was well-read too: she knew Yiddish and read Jewish books. Her favorite writers were Sholem Aleichem [2](#) and Bialik [3](#). Grandmother Tsylia was not religious: she didn't go to the synagogue, but she knew all the Jewish traditions and fasted on Yom Kippur.

My maternal grandfather, Isaac Rahman, was born in the early 1870s. I don't know where he was born. He was the manager of some land near Yelisavetgrad. Shortly before the October revolution [4](#) the family moved to Odessa. In the Soviet period my grandfather worked at the 'Krasny profintern' plant in Odessa. I remember that my grandfather looked like a typical Soviet clerk. He didn't have a beard. He wasn't religious. Sometimes he spoke Yiddish with my grandmother. My grandfather was a very industrious and dedicated professional.

During the Great Patriotic War [5](#) he refused to evacuate with his family. He only wanted to evacuate with his plant, but it was a small enterprise that failed to evacuate and my grandfather Isaac stayed in occupation in Odessa [6](#). To avoid Romanian captivity, my grandfather committed suicide. We didn't have any information about him during the war. When Odessa was liberated we received a letter from our neighbor who wrote that my grandfather had poisoned himself. My grandmother and grandfather had two children: my mother and her brother.

My mother's younger brother, whose name I've forgotten, unfortunately, was born in 1899. Right after finishing grammar school he was carried away by revolutionary ideas to such an extent that he found himself in a combat unit of the Red army. During the Civil War in 1919 his combat unit was involved in the suppression of an uprising of German colonists [7](#) in Lustdorf [a village near Odessa, today Chernomorka] and was killed.

My mother, Dora Rahman, was born in 1897. She graduated from a private grammar school for girls in Yelisavetgrad. When she was young she was a member of the underground association of young Bolsheviks [8](#) of Odessa for some time, as a result of her and her brother's common enthusiasm for revolutionary ideas. Once she was supposed to undertake a task with an underground group, but was late for their meeting at their secret address. There was an arrest that morning, and all the young revolutionaries were shot shortly afterwards. There's a memorial plaque at the location of the shooting in Preobrazhenskaya Street. My mother showed it to me and said that she survived only by chance. In 1922, my mother entered Odessa Medical College and after graduating, she received a diploma in psychiatry. She met my father Mark Rozenberg in college.

My paternal grandfather, Aron Rozenberg, was born in Ostropol [a small town of Novograd-Volynskiy district, Volyn province] in the 1860s. He was a tailor. I don't have any information about my paternal grandmother. My father didn't tell me about his parents. I never saw them and don't know when they died. They had five children, born in Ostropol. My father's two older sisters, whose names I don't know, perished in a ghetto in Vinnitsa during the war. They and their husbands and children were shot. This is all I know about them.

My father's older brother, Isaac Rozenberg, was born in 1886. Being a Jew, he couldn't get a higher education in Russia so he went to study in Vienna. Isaac became a wonderful doctor and worked in Vinnitsa for many years. He got married and built a house there. In 1925, his daughter Bertha was born, and in 1927, his son Pyotr. At the beginning of the Great Patriotic War, his family was evacuated to somewhere in Povolzhiye.

Pyotr, who was at university and was a promising mathematician, was taken to the front in 1943. Pyotr perished almost in his first combat action. When his parents received notification of their son's death, they fell ill from their sorrow. Uncle Isaac died in evacuation in 1943. His wife was severely ill and in 1947 she died in Vinnitsa where she had returned with her daughter Bertha.

Bertha Rozenberg graduated from the Medical College in Vinnitsa after the war and married David Druker, a military doctor. He went to serve in the town of Rubezhansk. Their older son Alexandr was born there in 1952, and in 1964 their younger son Roma was born. In 1969, their family moved to live in Odessa at my request. Shortly before his death my father asked me to give one of our two dachas [9](#) to his niece Busen'ka, as he called Bertha affectionately, and I did so. Bertha and David worked as district physicians in a clinic. Their sons each got a higher technical education and became engineers. Their family wasn't religious and didn't observe Jewish traditions. In 1996 they

moved to America and now live near San Francisco.

My father's younger sister, Clara Rozenberg, was born in 1890. When she was young, Clara moved to Kiev where she graduated from the Philological Faculty of the university. She spoke fluent Ukrainian. In Kiev she married a man who she felt grateful to for looking after her when she was ill. They divorced before long.

During the Great Patriotic War, Clara was in evacuation. Then she returned to Kiev and worked as a scientific employee in the library of the Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. She was valued at work, but when the struggle against cosmopolitanism [10](#) began, she had to quit. Aunt Clara moved to Odessa. She lived with our family for about two years and worked as head of department at the Odessa scientific library. All of a sudden her ex-husband, whose second wife had died, arrived in Odessa and proposed to Aunt Clara. They moved back to Kiev. We lost contact with her. Aunt Clara died in the early 1970s.

My father Mark Rozenberg was born in 1896. When he was a child he was influenced by his older brother Isaac who was a doctor. My father also dreamed of becoming a doctor and after the revolution he moved to Odessa. In 1925 he graduated from Odessa Medical College. He met my mother in college, and they got married in 1927.

I was born in Odessa in 1928. My parents lived in an apartment at 28 Kanatnaya Street. My first childhood memory is as follows: I am throwing toys out of the window. We were quite wealthy and I had many toys while other children, I noticed, didn't have any and I decided to share mine with them in this way. I didn't go to kindergarten, but I attended a group with Maria Ivanovna, a russified German lady, a Froebel tutor [11](#). For some reason we couldn't get together in her apartment, so we gathered in her pupils' apartments; every day with a different family. Maria Ivanovna taught us German and music. We had a noise orchestra where I played the castanets.

I learned to read at the age of four. We had Russian newspapers that were kept on a window sill, so I learned to read from them. I played with my friend Truda Zolotaryova, a Jewish girl, sitting under the staircase making up stories. I was quite a dreamer and plotted new games. When I turned six, I had a German teacher who visited me at home. As a result, I got a good grasp of German.

My parents celebrated Soviet holidays and on 1st May and 7th November [October revolution Day] [12](#), my mother and I went marching with the Medical College. Once I happened to march beside its director. He asked me, 'Whom do you love most of all?' and of course, I said, 'Mama.' He was surprised and asked, 'How about our comrade Stalin?' I was confused, but since I was a smart girl I caught on and said, 'And comrade Stalin after her.'

I was closer to my mother than my father, though I remember that he spent a lot of time with me teaching me swimming and cycling. I remember him as a strict, insistent and very responsible person. He couldn't show his feelings openly and was quite reserved. I wouldn't call him a jolly person, though when he was in the mood, he could tell a joke or sing a song. He had a favorite Jewish song: 'Girl, girl! Tell me what you need.' There were many questions to the girl and in the end it turns out that she only wants a fiancé; it's a very jolly song. I played the piano picking the tune for this song.

My father didn't like leaving his family, preferring to stay at home. He never took advantage of any opportunity to travel abroad to conferences. My father was a caring family man, a devoted husband and father. He showed no interest in Jewish traditions and was not religious.

My mother was a psychiatrist in a neurological clinic. She was so busy at work, that she practically forgot that I had to go to school at the age of eight. Then there was an epidemic of something a year later and my mother couldn't send me to school, so I went to the third grade in 1934. I studied in school number 25 [13](#) at the end of Kanatnaya Street, on the corner of Bariatinskiy Lane. It was at some distance from my home and I found it boring to go to school alone. To have company, I attracted our neighbors' children, telling them stories that I made up on the way. My mother came to pick me up from school and at times I had to wait for her for two or three hours when she was late from work.

All my marks were excellent. I was top of the class in Russian literature. I was the best at writing. I read a lot. Before going to school I studied the children's encyclopedia published before the revolution and knew many historical facts. I made my teacher feel uncomfortable adding information to what she was telling us in her history classes. I liked humanities, though I also had excellent marks in physics and mathematics, but they weren't my favorite subjects. I just had to carry on.

Besides my general school I also attended a music school and the 'school of drama recitation' that was in the same building in Langeronovskaya Street. My teachers in the school of drama recitation were Zinaida Diakonova and Nadezhda Budnik. They taught us to recite prose and poems and used hexameters to teach us to breathe. I proved to be good at composition. The composer Maria Zavalishina was head of our music group. Under her guidance I composed music for children's poems.

The arrests of 1937 [14](#) didn't affect my parents. As far as I know, none of our acquaintances suffered either. There may have been discussions in the family and they were probably scared of hearing the engines of a 'Black Maria' [police prisoner vehicle] in the yard, particularly considering that there was an NKVD office [15](#) across the street from our house in Kanatnaya Street, where they took their prisoners. In the late 1930s my parents joined the Party, but not for their convictions. They had to do it since they held official posts. In May 1941 my father defended his doctor's dissertation in the First Moscow Medical College. When he returned to Odessa, the war began.

We suffered few bombings in Odessa. When an air raid began, we went into the basement. I remember that my friend Truda was terribly scared and I comforted her. Somehow I wasn't as scared as other children, probably because I had to pretend to be brave for Truda. It was clear that we had to leave. We left with Mama and Grandma. My mother went to work as a doctor on the 'Sacco and Vancetti' boat. It was overcrowded and we stayed in the ward that also served as a medical office. Many passengers were overstressed and my mother stayed with them for a long time and I stayed on the ward to be on duty for her. I was a serious girl at thirteen years of age. I could apply iodine onto a scratch, apply a bandage and knew who needed what medications.

Our boat was bombed several times, but we managed to arrive at Rostov [one of the oldest towns in Russia, located on Lake Nero in Yaroslavl region] all right. My father also came there with his Medical College. Since my father was a Professor and Doctor of Sciences he got a job offer from the Rostov Medical College straight away. My mother also found a job. Everybody believed that the war

would not spread as far as Rostov.

I liked Rostov a lot, but I had a feeling that we couldn't stay there. I still can't explain this feeling, but I kept sobbing and saying, 'We need to go, we need to go!' My parents knew that I wasn't inclined to crying, but here I was hysterical. They tried to ignore it at first, but then my father said to Mama, 'There must be something to it. Let's go.' And we left. Two days later the bridge across the River Don was destroyed by bombing and nobody could leave Rostov; shortly afterward the Germans occupied Rostov. I actually rescued the family.

We took a train to Stalingrad and from there we went to Povolzhiye across the Republic of Germans [Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Germans of Povolzhiye, belonging to the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, (1918-1941)]. The train stopped at a station in a German settlement. Its residents were ordered to move urgently. The people were alarmed, hurrying to buy their belongings and food products. We bought a cheap hen from a German woman.

Our destination was Alma-Ata [the largest city in Kazakhstan, 4125 km from Odessa]. My father got a job in the Kazakh University. He became head of the Animal Physiology Department. My mother was appointed head of the town health department of Alma-Ata. She was at work day and night. Nevertheless, my mother managed to write a doctor's dissertation and defended it in the Kazakh Medical College during the war.

At first we rented a room in the suburbs and then my father received a room in the Kazakh University hostel. There was a shared kitchen where my grandmother did the cooking. Compared to others, our situation was more or less satisfactory. Scientific employees received food packages and could buy some food at the market. We didn't have plenty of everything, but nor did we starve.

I went to the 6th grade. There were children of many nationalities in my class. I got along well with my classmates. I've never faced any anti-Semitism, perhaps, because I was fair-haired and didn't look like a Jew. I remember walking with my Jewish friend who had black curly hair and people would shout after her: 'zhydovka' [abusive word for a Jew].

I liked our teacher Nadezhda Chernelovskaya a lot. She came to Alma-Ata before the war. From some of the things she said, I knew she was an exile. She was critical of Stalin. I remember when on Victory Day [16](#) everybody enthusiastically ran to listen to Stalin speaking on the radio, she demonstratively turned it off. My friend Tania and I often visited this woman. Tania was an orphan and the teacher was single. She actually adopted Tania.

I had excellent marks as usual, but I found it more interesting in the hostel than at school. There were professors evacuated from Leningrad and Moscow with their families. Odessa was a provincial town and at the hostel we had the opportunity to communicate with people from the capital. It was a different level of communication.

I went to the music school where I learned to play the piano. Since I composed a little my mother decided to check how good I was at it. Composer Yevgeniy Grigorievich Brusilovskiy [1905-1981] lived in Alma-Ata from before the war. He was a Jew, but he became the founder of Kazakh music and wrote the first Kazakh opera. We visited him and I played my children's songs for him. He asked me to improvise the 'Hen and chicks' and said that I was good, but that I needed to improve my skills in playing the piano. He sent me to study in the music school in the class of Nadezhda

Chegodayeva, a professional pianist from Odessa. I was playing a lot, although it was cold in the classroom and my hands were too cold. Then I ran to my friend who lived nearby, washed my hands in hot water and ran back to play.

In Alma-Ata I made friends with two sisters from Leningrad. Their last name was Dogil. They played and sang in two parts. I also made friends with Masha Seliverstova, a university student. I accompanied and she sang. She was a terrific mezzo-soprano. I wrote two romances for her that we performed at a university party. There were many activities in the Alma-Ata house of pioneers. One of the producers of the Mayakovskiy Theater from Moscow conducted classes for us and Marshak [17](#) visited us. At that time he was writing a fairy tale poem 'Seasons of the year.' I was so confident that I began to compose music to it, but I only managed to write few pieces. I wrote poems and staged plays with my classmates and my teachers valued me, of course. Before we left for Odessa they arranged a farewell party for me at school.

We returned to Odessa in 1945. The town was ruined. It seemed small to me compared to my childhood memories of the big buildings. Our neighbors told us how people had perished in the Siguranza [Romanian secret political police] across the street from our house. An artist of the Ukrainian theater lived in our apartment during the war. I've forgotten his last name. My father resolved the issue with him to everybody's satisfaction. The artist made two rooms available for us at first and then moved out of our apartment. There were broken windows and the furniture was broken, many pieces disappeared. My father constructed the front entrance into the apartment from the street. My father became a professor of the Department of Normal Physiology of the Medical College.

I went to the tenth grade of school number 70, and also entered the third year of a music high school. My time was filled with music classes. Polina Karpova, a wonderful singer, lived in our house. She was the star of Odessa opera in the 1920s. She was an elderly woman and was very poor. My mother and my friend Truda's mother agreed with her that she would teach us singing: it was good for us and meant some income for her. We came for our first class in the evening. She had such interesting stories of her life to tell that we stayed until very late and then stayed overnight in her home.

My mother was appointed chief of the psychiatric department for men in the clinic in Kanatnaya Street. Since we lived across the street from there she went there on call at all times of day and night. Some patients didn't want to eat when she was not sitting there beside them. My mother also attended to patients in a psychiatric clinic in Slobodka [a neighborhood on the outskirts of Odessa]. The trams commuting there were infrequent and she had to walk most of the time.

My mother had very little time left for me, but there was friendship and love between us. I didn't have secrets from my mother. She was a wonderful person. She had a strong will, although she was very soft with her family, but first of all, she was devoted to her profession. She wasn't particularly interested in what she was wearing; she just thought she needed decent clothes to wear. If she wore fashionable hats, it was because she believed that she had a certain status and couldn't wear a kerchief like the clinic attendants, her subordinates. My mother didn't have many clothes, but all of them were good.

My mother didn't have time to do housework, and my grandmother was ill, so we hired a housemaid to do it all: cleaning, washing and cooking. Her name was Manya. Manya was a kind

and decent old Russian woman, who was very religious. She lived somewhere near Odessa and commuted by a local train every day.

In 1946 at the request of the Ministry of Health, my father went to Stanislav [now Ivano-Frankovsk] to organize the department of physiology and pharmacology in the Medical College. He worked there for two years before he returned to his previous position in Odessa. The only thing my father brought from there was a wardrobe made of valuable wood that is still very solid. In 1948 the Pharmaceutical College was established in Odessa. My father became head of the department of human anatomy and physiology there.

My mother was awarded an order of Lenin [18](#) for her work in 1950, at the height of the struggle against cosmopolitanism. The thing is they couldn't help but recognize her outstanding work. My mother helped many patients with nervous problems to recover. I still meet her ex-patients who remember their doctor with gratitude. My parents' acquaintances and colleagues came to celebrate this high governmental award: there were tables all over the three rooms of our apartment. By the way, my parents never celebrated their birthdays, but celebration of the revolutionary holidays of 1st May and October was mandatory in our family.

I finished school with a silver medal in 1946. I was eager to go to Moscow to try to enter the Faculty of producers in Moscow Theatrical College, but my parents didn't let me go there. My father was particularly against it. He teased me a little about my creative ambitions. He generally had little belief in women's talents. We argued about it, but in a joking manner, for the most part.

I entered the Philological Faculty of Odessa University. There were very good and interesting lecturers there: Boris Shaikevich, Faina Zabaitseva and Nedzvedskiy. When I was a first-year student, I fell in love with someone: his last name was Furoms. He returned from the war without an arm. He was much older than me and was in love with another girl, but I was thrilled to see him. He showed some interest in me since I was a popular girl at the faculty. I performed at university parties playing my musical improvisations.

I graduated from the music school with honors, though, frankly speaking, I was a weak pianist. I couldn't play note literature confidently. I couldn't rely on my memory and for this reason I preferred to improvise on stage. In 1950 I entered the second year of two faculties of the Conservatory: the piano and theory of music.

At the university, the head of the Department of Russian language, Professor Butkevich, convinced me to write a diploma on the ancient Russian language under his guidance and promised to support me with my post graduate studies. This was the period of struggle against cosmopolitanism and it was a chance for me to pursue my scientific career, but I didn't take to it. A language career was boring to me. Besides, this was the beginning of a romance with my husband to be and I couldn't continue studying in three faculties, so I left the Piano Faculty.

My husband Ilia Kleiman was born in Andre-Ivanovka village, Ivanovo district, Odessa region, in 1921. His mother Claudia Kleiman was a teacher, and his father Bencion Kleiman was a party official. My husband's brother Vadim Kleiman stayed in the occupation in Odessa. He had a forged Russian passport by the name of Shestopalov, and this saved his life. Vadim kept this surname after the war and this enabled him to finish Navy College, where Jews were not admitted. After finishing 8th grade in 1937, Ilia went to study in Odessa Higher Military Artillery School. After

finishing he entered the Second Artillery School in Leningrad.

At the beginning of the Great Patriotic War Ilia went to the front where he was the commanding officer of an artillery squad of a regiment during the defense of Leningrad. He was wounded several times. He wouldn't throw away a piece of bread even now since he took part in the break through of the siege of Leningrad [19](#) and saw horrific scenes of hunger. Ilia was ranked captain at the end of the war. After the war he served in Simferopol for some time. He even thought of entering the Military Academy, but it was clear that they would not admit a Jew. Ilia demobilized, returned to Odessa and entered the History faculty of Odessa University where we met.

For four years before our wedding we had such a romantic relationship that our friends teased us. Once at a student party our friends were showing an amateur film about students' life, the events happening in the life of our friends: some were traveling, some doing this and that, and 'Rimma and Ilia at this time were addressing each other with the polite form of 'You!'; this was the refrain of the film.

After university Ilia got a job assignment [20](#) in the town of Nogaysk at the Azov Sea. He taught history at a secondary and technical school. In the winter he visited us and in 1953 we got married. There was no wedding party; we just had breakfast at the Londonskaya hotel restaurant. Since then we've celebrated our wedding anniversaries each year there. We even had a wedding tour from Odessa to Nogaysk. My husband's brother Vadim worked for the Odessa Shipping Company. He got boat tickets for us and we traveled in a ward where there was just the two us. Then I continued living in Odessa studying in the fifth year of the Conservatory.

I was calm about Stalin's death, I didn't feel particular grief or any alarm like many others. I had been critical of Stalin for a long time: I was a mature person during the period of struggle against cosmopolitans and the Doctors' Plot [21](#). Naturally, we understood that it was a lie. My father knew some of those who were accused. They were renowned professors, but it was not to be discussed. We didn't discuss this subject at home. The Doctors' Plot' didn't affect our family at all.

Ilia returned to Odessa from Nogaysk in 1954. Since he was a former soldier he had to teach military disciplines at school for some time. There was no vacancy for a history teacher. A year later he went to work at the Odessa archaeological museum. Ilia took part in archaeological expeditions, excavating the ancient Olvia and Tira [ancient Greek settlements in the Northern Black Sea region], and was head of the antiquities department at the Odessa archaeological museum. In 1954 I entered the extramural department of classical music of the Leningrad Conservatory. There was a big competition and my competitor failed to answer about Trotsky [22](#). I was good at the history of the Party and gave an excellent answer.

By the end of the 1950s our material situation improved significantly. My father was a professor and doctor of sciences and received a good salary, but we always bought only the essentials. We had guests, but not often and my parents didn't go out often. We had a big dacha on the 10th station of the Fontan [a resort area of Odessa], and in the summer we didn't leave Odessa.

In 1956 my mother had a stroke. We hired Katia, a Russian girl, to look after her; she managed very well and was like a member of our family. Katia came to Odessa from the Urals where her mother worked in a mine. She studied at evening classes and I taught her music at home. She respected me a lot and called me her niece. She told her admirers that she wanted to 'be like

Rimma.' Then Katia got married and moved to Moscow. I visited her and we kept in touch for a long time.

Our neighbor Frosia was also a friend of our family. She was a Russian woman, the wife of a pilot, a very hardworking and fair person. During the war she was in Odessa and kept an eye on our apartment. Later my mother helped her son get a good job.

Since 1956 I was head of the literature department of Odessa Philharmonic. My lectures on the history of music were popular, and there were posters advertising them all over the town. I lectured in a concert gown that a dressmaker I knew made for me. In summer, Philharmonic crews toured rural areas. These crews usually consisted of a lecturer, a male and a female singer, a violinist, a pianist and sometimes an elocutionist. We toured mainly to the southern areas of Odessa region: Izmail, Reni and Bolgrad. The public was very nice in Reni; there was a military settlement there, and many officers and their wives looked forward to the concerts.

Once a local newspaper wrote about my lecture. It said: 'A girl with blue eyes came onto the stage to lecture...' It was more difficult with holiday makers in Odessa recreation centers where we also toured giving concerts. Holiday makers were waiting for dancing parties, rather than lectures about classical music. I was proud when I managed to capture their attention.

In the late 1950s I became a real sportswoman. I was an amateur swimmer, but as for badminton, I took every effort to master it and received the 3rd grade. I was more proud of it than of my dissertation. My husband and I used to take cycling tours out of town.

In 1958 I began to teach at the Conservatory. There was more freedom there at the time. They began to teach Shostakovich to students and I believed it to be a clear symbol of Khrushchev's thaw [23](#). [Shostakovich, Dmitriy Dmitrievich, (1906 - 1975): famous composer of the 20th century. His work had been greatly criticized because of "anti-popular formalism" in the Soviet official press from the 1930s to the 1940s.] During this period, music was more popular than literature. Theatrical life in Odessa became more active, and my husband and I were theater-goers. We attended all skit performances at the house of actors. They were rather sharp. I particularly remember the one telling how a former warden of a prison became director of an opera theater. Sometimes we participated in those performances.

I had an ambivalent attitude toward Khrushchev. Undoubtedly, at that time denunciation of the cult was valued highly. Later, of course, we laughed a little about our leader's lack of culture. Our friends were musicians, journalists and artists of Odessa, all intelligent people. I had many Jewish and Russian musicians among my acquaintances. My friends were teachers at the conservatory: Maria Starkova, Alexandr Kogan, the wonderful violinists Marik Zinger, who lives in America now, and Sima Yaroshevich, who moved to Israel. I met Dmitriy Shostakovich several times. When the 14th symphony of Shostakovich was played in Odessa I wrote a review of it, and the journalist Lyosha Zimerfeld sent it to Shostakovich, who wrote back to me. I often met with Shostakovich in the Leningrad Conservatory. He was an uncommonly educated person, very vulnerable and strict at the same time.

I traveled to Moscow and Leningrad every year looking for artistic impressions, visiting theaters and exhibitions. I went on my first tour abroad in 1960. It was in Czechoslovakia. We walked around Prague at night singing songs loudly. A policeman stopped us very politely and said: 'You know, it's

nighttime and people are asleep. It's not a proper thing to do.' There was a very good attitude toward us. This was before the Prague events [Prague Spring] [24](#). I traveled there alone. I wasn't allowed to travel with my husband.

Iliia and I spent vacations traveling across the country. We visited Georgia and Armenia. Near the Elbrus Mountains my husband and I climbed some minor mountains. I climbed up easily, but I absolutely couldn't climb down and my husband had to drag me down, but this didn't mitigate my enthusiasm at all. We always had a camera with us. Our friend Isidor Goisman liked to photograph us in Odessa. He found very interesting compositions. My husband and I spent summers at the dacha. We had a rubber boat and often sailed far into the sea fishing. I never did any work at the dacha. All I did was write a dissertation or another article, but my husband grew grapes and made excellent wine each year.

In 1962 my grandmother Tsylia died. She was buried in the Jewish cemetery. In 1965 my father retired. Since he was used to working hard he became ill from idleness and died in 1968. He was buried in the Second international cemetery. My mother was buried near my father's grave. She died shortly after my father in 1970.

The Brezhnev epoch [25](#) aroused continuous protest inside me, primarily against the figure of Brezhnev in power. I had a negative attitude toward Brezhnev. His portraits and his tongue-tied speeches on TV irritated me. My friends and I often discussed the situation in the country. We felt there was a lack of information and we tried to make up for it as much as we could. Samizdat publications [individuals reproduced uncensored publications by hand and passed the documents from reader to reader, thus building a foundation for the successful resistance of the 1980s] circulated among my friends. I remember getting a copy of 'Doctor Zhivago' by Pasternak [26](#), an Italian edition in Russian.

My husband and I didn't have children and spent our time and money traveling. I've traveled abroad many times. I've traveled to Europe, India and Sri Lanka. My husband and I visited Israel. I have a very positive attitude to this country. Jews need to have their own state. I follow the events in Israel, particularly considering that a few of our close friends live there, but I've never considered moving to Israel. I always liked to visit foreign countries, but I've never been attracted to going to live there. Regardless of all the drawbacks of Soviet life, I've always felt good here, in my Motherland, in Odessa. I come from Odessa and love it.

I've never been touched by the envious sighs of some of our acquaintances about western wealth. My husband is also very much attached to this country, so we've never considered going to live elsewhere, though many of our friends have left. My friend Truda Zolotaryova and her husband worked at the plant of radial units. Her husband was deputy director there. When they decided to move to the USA, they were subject to terrible obstruction at the plant. He was expelled from the party and persecuted. Since they failed to move to the US at once, they moved to Vilnius and lived in Lithuania for some time. My husband and I visited them there. From Lithuania they moved to America and live near San Francisco. We correspond.

I was happy about perestroika [27](#). My husband and I were fans of Gorbachev [28](#). We still think highly of him. In my opinion, perestroika succeeded and failed at the same time. Many people's lives were destroyed by the circumstances they couldn't overcome. I remember the example of my neighbor Sasha, who was a driver at a cinema studio in the Soviet era. He went on business trips,

earned well and supported his wife and daughter. As a result of perestroika, Odessa studios decayed and the majority of its employees, including Sasha, were fired. He tried to find a job as a driver for some time, but he failed. He became miserably poor. His wife left him and now, at the age of 64 he is a degraded man who has lost any interest in life. There are many like Sasha.

Here is my point of view: the processes were positive, but regretfully, there is too much negative to this positive. My husband and I voted for separation of Ukraine, because we thought this would be the natural outcome for all former Soviet republics.

My whole life is tied to the conservatory. I've been manager of the students' scientific creative association for many years. My pupils are teachers now: Natasha Alexandrova, she's now a professor at the Conservatory, Maya Rzhetskaya is now pro-rector for scientific work of the Kiev Music Academy.

In 1995 my book 'Musical Odessa' was published. My work has been the main focus of my life, just as it was for my parents. I continue to teach at the Conservatory and I'm writing another book and this helps me to keep cheerful and interested in people.

My husband Ilia Kleiman, despite being 72 years of age, continues working on his scientific books and does voluntary work in the Odessa archaeological museum. A few years ago [in 2000], he was awarded honoris causa of Doctor of Historical Sciences in the Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. .

For me the rebirth of Jewish life in Odessa started with an International Festival of Jewish Music in 1992. Iosif Dorman, a renowned musician from Israel, a composer and pianist and a former pupil of mine, came to Odessa. There was a symposium where representatives of Israel, France and America spoke. In particular, the musicologist Mary Green came from America. I communicated with her very fruitfully after I wrote a report on the role of Jewish musicians in the musical life of Odessa. I regularly write articles on the subjects of Jewish musical history for newspapers. Thanks to those publications I met the chairman of the Odessa Jewish history club, Anna Kelina. Now I am an active member of this club: I help collect materials about Jewish musicians from Odessa; I compile their biographies and lecture on these subjects a lot.

In the past year [2003] my husband and I celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary. Gemilut Hesed [29](#), a Jewish Charity Association, invited us for the Sabbath where they warmly greeted us for this occasion. My husband and I don't use this organization's services, since we earn enough not to, but we enjoy attending some of their events.

Glossary:

## **1 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.

## **2 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.

## **3 Bialik, Chaim Nachman**

(1873-1934): One of the greatest Hebrew poets. He was also an essayist, writer, translator and editor. Born in Rady, Volhynia, Ukraine, he received a traditional education in cheder and yeshivah. His first collection of poetry appeared in 1901 in Warsaw. He established a Hebrew publishing house in Odessa, where he lived but after the Revolution of 1917 Bialik's activity for Hebrew culture was viewed by the communist authorities with suspicion and the publishing house was closed. In 1921 Bialik emigrated to Germany and in 1924 to Palestine where he became a celebrated literary figure. Bialik's poems occupy an important place in modern Israeli culture and education.

## **4 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.

## **5 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.

## **6 Romanian occupation of Odessa**

Romanian troops occupied Odessa in October 1941. They immediately enforced anti-Jewish measures. Following the Antonescu-ordered slaughter of the Jews of Odessa, the Romanian occupation authorities deported the survivors to camps in the Golta district: 54,000 to the Bogdanovka camp, 18,000 to the Akhmetchetka camp, and 8,000 to the Domanevka camp. In Bogdanovka all the Jews were shot, with the Romanian gendarmerie, the Ukrainian police, and Sonderkommando R, made up of Volksdeutsche, taking part. In January and February 1942, 12,000 Ukrainian Jews were murdered in the two other camps. A total of 185,000 Ukrainian Jews were murdered by Romanian and German army units.

## **7 German colonists/colony**

Ancestors of German peasants, who were invited by Empress Catherine II in the 18th century to settle in Russia.

## **8 Bolsheviks**

Members of the movement led by Lenin. The name 'Bolshevik' was coined in 1903 and denoted the group that emerged in elections to the key bodies in the Social Democratic Party (SDPRR) considering itself in the majority (Rus. bolshynstvo) within the party. It dubbed its opponents the minority (Rus. menshynstvo, the Mensheviks). Until 1906 the two groups formed one party. The Bolsheviks first gained popularity and support in society during the 1905-07 Revolution. During the February Revolution in 1917 the Bolsheviks were initially in the opposition to the Menshevik and SR ('Sotsialrevolyutsionery', Socialist Revolutionaries) delegates who controlled the Soviets (councils). When Lenin returned from emigration (16th April) they proclaimed his program of action (the April theses) and under the slogan 'All power to the Soviets' began to Bolshevize the Soviets and prepare for a proletariat revolution. Agitation proceeded on a vast scale, especially in the army. The Bolsheviks set about creating their own armed forces, the Red Guard. Having overthrown the Provisional Government, they created a government with the support of the II Congress of Soviets (the October Revolution), to which they admitted some left-wing SRs in order to gain the support of the peasantry. In 1952 the Bolshevik party was renamed the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

## **9 Country house, consisting of small huts and little plots of lands**

The Soviet authorities came to the decision to allow this activity to the Soviet people to support themselves. The majority of urban citizens grow vegetables and fruit in their small gardens to make preserves for winter.

## **10 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'.

### **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 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 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.

### **13 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.

### **14 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.

### **15 NKVD**

(Russ.: Narodnyi Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del), People's Committee of Internal Affairs, the supreme security authority in the USSR - the secret police. Founded by Lenin in 1917, it nevertheless played an insignificant role until 1934, when it took over the GPU (the State Political Administration), the political police. The NKVD had its own police and military formations, and also possessed the powers to pass sentence on political matters, and as such in practice had total control over society. Under Stalin's rule the NKVD was the key instrument used to terrorize the civilian population. The NKVD ran a network of labor camps for millions of prisoners, the Gulag. The heads of the NKVD were as follows: Genrikh Yagoda (to 1936), Nikolai Yezhov (to 1938) and Lavrenti Beria. During the war against Germany the political police, the KGB, was spun off from the NKVD. After the war it also operated on USSR-occupied territories, including in Poland, where it assisted the nascent

communist authorities in suppressing opposition. In 1946 the NKVD was renamed the Ministry of the Interior.

### **16 Victory Day in Russia (9th May)**

National holiday to commemorate the defeat of Nazi Germany and the end of World War II and honor the Soviets who died in the war.

### **17 Marshak, Samuil Yakovlevich (1887-1964)**

Writer of Soviet children's literature. In the 1930s, when socialist realism was made the literary norm, Marshak, with his poems about heroic deeds, Soviet patriotism and the transformation of the country, played an active part in guiding children's literature along new lines.

### **18 Order of Lenin**

Established in 1930, the Order of Lenin is the highest Soviet award. It was awarded for outstanding services in the revolutionary movement, labor activity, defense of the Homeland, and strengthening peace between peoples. It has been awarded over 400,000 times.

### **19 Blockade of Leningrad**

On September 8, 1941 the Germans fully encircled Leningrad and its siege began. It lasted until January 27, 1944. The blockade meant incredible hardships and privations for the population of the town. Hundreds of thousands died from hunger, cold and diseases during the almost 900 days of the blockade.

### **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 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.

### **22 Trotsky, Lev Davidovich (born Bronshtein) (1879-1940)**

Russian revolutionary, one of the leaders of the October Revolution of 1917, an outstanding figure of the communist movement and a theorist of Marxism. Trotsky participated in the social-

democratic movement from 1894 and supported the idea of the unification of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks from 1906. In 1905 he developed the idea of the 'permanent revolution'. He was one of the leaders of the October Revolution and a founder of the Red Army. He widely applied repressive measures to support the discipline and 'bring everything into revolutionary order' at the front and the home front. The intense struggle with Stalin for the leadership ended with Trotsky's defeat. In 1924 his views were declared petty- bourgeois deviation. In 1927 he was expelled from the Communist Party, and exiled to Kazakhstan, and in 1929 abroad. He lived in Turkey, Norway and then Mexico. He excoriated Stalin's regime as a bureaucratic degeneration of the proletarian power. He was murdered in Mexico by an agent of Soviet special services on Stalin's order.

### **23 Khrushchev, Nikita (1894-1971)**

Soviet communist leader. After Stalin's death in 1953, he became first secretary of the Central Committee, in effect the head of the Communist Party of the USSR. In 1956, during the 20th Party Congress, Khrushchev took an unprecedented step and denounced Stalin and his methods. He was deposed as premier and party head in October 1964. In 1966 he was dropped from the Party's Central Committee.

### **24 Prague Spring**

A period of democratic reforms in Czechoslovakia, from January to August 1968. Reformatory politicians were secretly elected to leading functions of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSC). Josef Smrkovsky became president of the National Assembly, and Oldrich Cernik became the Prime Minister. Connected with the reformist efforts was also an important figure on the Czechoslovak political scene, Alexander Dubcek, General Secretary of the KSC Central Committee (UV KSC). In April 1968 the UV KSC adopted the party's Action Program, which was meant to show the new path to socialism. It promised fundamental economic and political reforms. On 21st March 1968, at a meeting of representatives of the USSR, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, East Germany and Czechoslovakia in Dresden, Germany, the Czechoslovaks were notified that the course of events in their country was not to the liking of the remaining conference participants, and that they should implement appropriate measures. In July 1968 a meeting in Warsaw took place, where the reformist efforts in Czechoslovakia were designated as "counter-revolutionary." The invasion of the USSR and Warsaw Pact armed forces on the night of 20th August 1968, and the signing of the so-called Moscow Protocol ended the process of democratization, and the Normalization period began.

### **25 Brezhnev, Leonid, Ilyich (1906-82)**

Soviet leader. He joined the Communist Party in 1931 and rose steadily in its hierarchy, becoming a secretary of the party's central committee in 1952. In 1957, as protégé of Khrushchev, he became a member of the presidium (later politburo) of the central committee. He was chairman of the presidium of the Supreme Soviet, or titular head of state. Following Khrushchev's fall from power in 1964, which Brezhnev helped to engineer, he was named first secretary of the Communist Party. Although sharing power with Kosygin, Brezhnev emerged as the chief figure in Soviet politics. In 1968, in support of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, he enunciated the 'Brezhnev doctrine,' asserting that the USSR could intervene in the domestic affairs of any Soviet bloc nation if communist rule was threatened. While maintaining a tight rein in Eastern Europe, he favored closer relations with the Western powers, and he helped bring about a détente with the United States. In

1977 he assumed the presidency of the USSR. Under Gorbachev, Brezhnev's regime was criticized for its corruption and failed economic policies.

## **26 Pasternak, Boris Leonidovich (1890-1960)**

Russian poet and novelist, who stood up for independence in creation. In the times of the Great Terror (1934-38), Pasternak defended the repressed on a number of occasions. He translated modern and classic foreign poetry. His major work was the novel 'Doctor Zhivago', depicting the fate of the Russian intelligentsia with tragic collisions of the Revolution and the Civil War. The novel was banned in the Soviet Union, but appeared in an Italian translation in 1957 and later in other languages. In the Soviet Union it was published only in 1988. In 1958 Pasternak was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature, but the furor stirred up in the Soviet Union forced him to reject the award. It was posthumously given to his son in 1989.

## **27 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.

## **28 Gorbachev, Mikhail (1931- )**

Soviet political leader. Gorbachev joined the Communist Party in 1952 and gradually moved up in the party hierarchy. In 1970 he was elected to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, where he remained until 1990. In 1980 he joined the politburo, and in 1985 he was appointed general secretary of the party. In 1986 he embarked on a comprehensive program of political, economic, and social liberalization under the slogans of glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring). The government released political prisoners, allowed increased emigration, attacked corruption, and encouraged the critical reexamination of Soviet history. The Congress of People's Deputies, founded in 1989, voted to end the Communist Party's control over the government and elected Gorbachev executive president. Gorbachev dissolved the Communist Party and granted the Baltic states independence. Following the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States in 1991, he resigned as president. Since 1992, Gorbachev has headed international organizations.

## **29 Hesed**

Meaning care and mercy in Hebrew, Hesed stands for the charity organization founded by Amos Avgar in the early 20th century. Supported by Claims Conference and Joint Hesed helps for Jews in need to have a decent life despite hard economic conditions and encourages development of their self-identity. Hesed provides a number of services aimed at supporting the needs of all, and particularly elderly members of the society. The major social services include: work in the center facilities (information, advertisement of the center activities, foreign ties and free lease of medical equipment); services at homes (care and help at home, food products delivery, delivery of hot meals, minor repairs); work in the community (clubs, meals together, day-time polyclinic, medical

and legal consultations); service for volunteers (training programs). The Hesed centers have inspired a real revolution in the Jewish life in the FSU countries. People have seen and sensed the rebirth of the Jewish traditions of humanism. Currently over eighty Hesed centers exist in the FSU countries. Their activities cover the Jewish population of over eight hundred settlements.