

Dobrina Rivkind

Dobrina Rivkind worked until the age of 70 (2001). Now she attends various courses and circles, goes to the theater and cinema. She lives with her daughter Raya. Dobrina is a short woman, slim, with short gray hair, she likes to cook and does it very well. She adores her cat. She is a modern woman with a sense of humor and sober view of life. Dobrina loves her children and grandchildren very much.

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My family background

Everybody calls me Inna at home and in everyday life. All my relatives, whom I know, come from the so-called Jewish Pale (1) in Belorussia. They were born in boroughs not far from the town of Vitebsk. Vitebsk is a rather large city in Belarus. My mother's family was very poor. Grandfather Vulf Khodek worked for a container seller. His obligation was to mend the sacks and fix other containers. He earned about three rubles per month, which was very little. I do not remember my maternal grandfather well, he died in 1939, when I was six. He was a very kind man and loved me and my sister, his granddaughters, very much. I remember him and grandmother together: she was short and he was tall and bald. Grandmother's name was Tsilya Khodek, nee Rukhman. She was not tall, with gray, beautifully set hair. She did not work as many women did in those days, and took care of the family. Tsilya had a small store downstairs in the same house where they lived, which worked around the clock. It was not a store in today's meaning; it was really a very small shop. It was possible to buy bagels and cakes there and various other small things. People could knock on the door at any time and ask for her. She would open up and give them what they asked for. However, the profit was small. It is difficult to tell, what she did in it, as she devoted the largest part of her life to the family, children and household, and the shop was simply an extra earning. There were four children in the family: three girls and one boy. All four were born in Vitebsk. Mother was the eldest, her name was Pesya, she was born in 1899 and died at the age of 95 in 1994. Her sisters' names were Khana (1907 - 1993), Lilya (1908 - 1954), and brother's name was Lev (1904 - 1942). There were also other children but they died at a very young age.

Later, about 1897, they moved to Vitebsk. They lived near Vitebsk before in Smolyany shtetl. According to the family, they had a small house there, with a small garden full of flowers, because they had three daughters, who loved flowers very much. Certainly, there were no servants in the



household and they had to do everything on their own. Grandmother was very strict and demanding. Everybody had their own tasks. My mother Pesya was the eldest in the family and she had to drag the washing to the river, to wash and take care of the small children. All the rest had various tasks depending on the time of the year: someone was responsible for watering the plant in the garden in summer and washed the floor in the house, when winter came; the other one helped mother to clean the house, and another one helped to mend the clothes. But the house was very clean. However, in spite of poverty, grandparents tried to provide their children with some education. I remember they even had some teacher, who came to the house and taught children minimal literacy: to read, write and count. Later mother with her friends attended some courses, which were called “likbez” in those days [“liquidation of illiteracy”], which provided her with knowledge, equal to 7-year educational course. The brother did not get more education than the sisters, he was taught as much as they were.

Lilya married a military, a career officer and followed him everywhere in his trips. They had two children: daughter Nelya and son Boris. Lilya did not work anywhere. Her husband perished at the frontline at the very beginning of the war. She also died at an early age of a severe neurological disease (she was a little more than 40 years old). Khana finished a musical school and worked as a teacher of chorus singing in various musical schools. She lived in Leningrad for a long time and died here. She had no family of her own. Lev became an accountant and worked according to his profession in “Lenodezhda”, an important combine in those days. He perished during the war at the frontline near Leningrad.

After the Revolution in 1917 [They did not participate in the Revolution, it did not even affect them] they sold the small house where they lived, left Vitebsk and found themselves in Petrograd [today St. Petersburg]. The grandparents were old people by then and did not work. In Petrograd my mother entered a medical Institute. It was very difficult to study there, as she had no preliminary training and besides, she had to earn her living. Mother quit her studies after the 1st year and began to work. Pesya finished the “likbez” courses [equal to 7 years of secondary school] with her friends while in Vitebsk. After moving to Petrograd she passed the exams and entered the Medical Institute with her friends from Vitebsk.

The Khodeks had a lot of friends in Vitebsk and some of these friends, a family, left with them for Petrograd. Their name was Biynshtok. They had two daughters: Anya and Lyuba. Their father was an owner of a sausage store in Vitebsk, so they were richer. Anya and Lyuba studied with mother, but they actually graduated from the medical Institute and worked as doctors later.

Grandparents spoke only Yiddish. They were very religious people. I remember very well grandfather's praying clothes. Grandfather put something like a white towel or sheet onto his shoulders. On his head he had a leather strap, a band, in the middle of which there was a leather box. When he prayed, the small box rocked and, I suppose, must have had to hit the floor. I remember how he put it on and prayed in it. I saw him praying at home, but he also attended the synagogue. They celebrated all holidays and attended the synagogue. I also remember that they lit the candles for Hanukah. All common dishes were put away on Pesach and the house was very thoroughly cleaned and washed: there should not have remained even the spirit of bread. Various delicious food was cooked, matzah, for example, which we ate instead of bread. After the meal we had fun and danced. Besides, we celebrated very merry holidays like Rosh Hashanah and the Torah

Day [Simchat Torah], when we simply went to the synagogue and danced and had fun there. Grandmother cooked very well, she knew all Jewish cooking traditions. For example, she cooked very delicious stuffed fish. In general I remember grandmother to be very tidy, she was a very good housewife.

She died when I was an 8th grade pupil. Her health was very much ruined by the fact that her only son Lev was murdered at the frontline during the World War II. He had very bad eyesight, and we don't know for sure if he was taken prisoner-of-war or perished in the course of military actions. Grandmother lived during the siege in Peter [people's name for St.Petersburg] and died in 1948. Her second daughter Khana also stayed in Peter during the siege, worked all the time. Khana did not have a family, she was never married. During the siege she worked in a kindergarten as an educator and helped children as much as she could. She died in 1993 when she was 87. Another daughter, the youngest Lilya (Jewish name Liya) married a career officer who perished at the beginning of the war (1941 - 1942). She had two children: daughter Nelya and son Boris. She died when she was 40 something in 1954 of a severe neurological illness, multiple sclerosis.

Grandmother had a sister, whose name was Nekhama. She also had a brother, Simkho, he was deaf mute. I know nothing of Simkho's life. Nekhama married a Jew, they had three children, they lived in Vitebsk. They were evacuated to Tashkent during the World War II and stayed there after the war was over. Nekhama remained there with her daughters and son until she died. Her son Natan was a colonel, they said he was a very nice person. Her daughters, Raisa and Vera, lived in Tashkent for a long time after. One was a medical worker and the other worked as a teacher.

My father, Khlavno Leibovich (later – Klavdy Ivanovich) was born in Smolyany, a small town not far from Vitebsk, in 1898. There were ten or twelve children in the family. My grandfather, Leiba Rivkind, was a teacher in Jewish primary school. He was married twice. His first wife died and left eight children. Four of them emigrated during the „first wave” to America (1910s) and the rest stayed here. They came from Belorussia, there is no more information about them.

I knew four of my grandfather's children from his first marriage: father's two elder sisters and two brothers. Fanya, one of the sisters, had two children, a son Grisha and a daughter Lena. Fanya lived in Leningrad with her husband and two children. Her daughter Lena was an electrical engineer and also lived in Leningrad. Son Grisha served in the army for a long time, then retired and died in Leningrad in the 1990s. Fanya herself died in Moscow region during the war, where she escaped with her daughter Lena. Brother Moisey had daughter Gita. Moisey lived in Kuibyshev with his family [The city is called Samara now, it is a big city 1,200 km to the South-East of St.Petersburg]. He worked in the timber industry. Gita graduated from a Medical Institute and was a doctor.

Father's second sister, Beilya, perished during the siege together with her husband and son Mikhail. Their daughter Sara managed to evacuate to Kuibyshev and joined Moisey's family. She graduated from an Institute there and found a job. She did not get married, had no children, though she was very beautiful. My father's second brother Isaac worked in Gomel [in Belorussia, 250 km to the South of Minsk] as a financial manager at a big chocolate “Spartak” factory. His family lived there. He came to Leningrad (today St Petersburg) after the Revolution and tried to work here: he brewed beer at some factory; but later returned to Belorussia and stayed there. I also knew two

children from the second marriage: my father and his sister Lyuba, the youngest child in the family. The second wife also had other children, but I do not know them.

Father's family was very poor. They lived from hand to mouth on sorrel, herring, milk, etc. However, they were all very talented people. Many received a higher education after the Revolution and found jobs. Since their father, Leiba, was a teacher at Jewish primary school, they all received Jewish primary education. However, it is not known, if they went to school or father taught them at home. When my father found himself in St. Petersburg, urban life shocked him of course, as he lived all his life in a shtetl, in Vitebsk, and St. Petersburg was totally different! It seemed as if he got into a rich family out of a poor one, because he was given both bread and butter to eat. It was certainly a joke. Of course it indicates the poverty, in which he lived before moving here, but not to the extent as to be surprised by bread and butter. It was „top” for him - „pinnacle of dreams” - as he said.

Father graduated from the Mining Institute in Sverdlovsk, got married and moved to Petrograd in 1925. Mother and father had known each other since childhood. As children they had lived in one town, in Vitebsk, and had a big circle of common friends. Father was very witty and mother fell in love him. Since he had to study for a long time, he said to mother, “You may not wait for me.” “No, I love only you and nobody else.” So she waited till he came back and they got married, I think, in Vitebsk, I'm not sure. They certainly had a formal registration in the ZAGS [civil registry office], but it is not known if they had a wedding at the synagogue. Father worked at Scientific Research Institute “Mechanobr” (mechanical ore processing). The Kola Peninsula [In the Arctic on the Barents Sea] was developed at that time and the richest fields of various minerals were discovered there. A famous biologist in those days, professor Firsman (2), with a group of workers supervised the works. In 1932 father got enlisted for those works and left for the development of the apatite fields [a mineral used to make phosphate fertilizers], to the collective which was called “Apatite”. He was the Head of the scientific-research laboratory there; he set it up himself. He made important inventions during the war and before it. He worked there until 1960, 28 years all in all. Then he retired and returned to St. Petersburg. He died in 1972. Mother lived with him most of the time and we lived with my sister at grandmother's place here. However, the apartment was kept for father, as he was in a long-term business trip. We saw him several times a year: in summer he spent his vacation with us and in winter we visited him, there were very nice places for skiing and skating. He also visited us on holidays and sent us money. Me and my sister loved father very much, as well as he loved us.

Mother worked little. She worked most of the time in a drugstore. But on the whole she was a housewife. Mother worked about the household alone without any servants. She cooked very well and was a good hostess. Sometimes her friends came to visit her. Every summer she spent with the grandchildren at the summer house. They lived moderately, helped to raise their grandchildren and assisted me and my sister with the studies.

Our „home” was a room in a huge communal apartment, where six rooms were occupied by twenty-two people. First my mother's family lived in three rooms of this apartment: one room was occupied by mother, father and daughter, small room was occupied by younger sister. There were six rooms all in all. Initially three sisters (Lilya, Khana and Pesya) occupied three rooms. Lilya with her family in one room, Pesya with her family in another and Khana with parents in the third one.

with her husband and two children, and the third room was our: my parents with me and my sister. But since father lived in the North for a long time and mother visited him there often, mostly me, my sister and our grandmother lived in that room. Later grandmother died and we were left alone with Dora. We graduated from First Medical Institute named after Academician Pavlov. My sister set up a family and I lived behind a screen in the same room. Later I left for the North to work and I set up a family of my own there. Thus three families were registered in that room: our parents, my sister with her family and child, who lived there; and me with my husband and child, who lived in the North. But everybody had a „home”: the room. In a communal apartment each family has a room of its own. There is one kitchen, one toilet and one bathroom for all. There are two gas stoves in the kitchen and each family has its own table and a place with shelves for dishes. When fridges appeared, every family kept a fridge in its own room. Every family has its own burner on the stove. Toilet, corridor and kitchen are cleaned by families in turn. There are several doorbells at the apartment entrance door, each leading in each family's room. Sometimes the neighbors agreed on how many rings for each family, for instance, one ring – to the first room, two rings – to the second room and so on. Certainly it was not easy to live in such an apartment, everyone having his/her own temper and personality. However, we were friends with some neighbors; though with some of them we never had any relations except for neighbor ones.

We had a lot of books, mostly not religious, but the ones that were published at that time. Everyone tried to buy books, which were published in those years, in order to collect a home library. Mostly it was Russian classics: Tolstoy, Pushkin, Lermontov, Turgenev, Dostoyevsky and others. However, father had several books in Yiddish, though I don't know exactly what kind of books those were. My parents did not always attend the synagogue, as they lived for a long time in a town, where there was no synagogue, the town of Kirovsk [Murmansk region, 800 km to the North of St.Petersburg]. But they attended the synagogue on fall holidays: the New Year, the Torah Holiday –[Simchat Torah]. Besides, they tried to celebrate some holidays. They always celebrated Pesach. Since there was no synagogue in Kirovsk, parents celebrated at home: cooked delicious meals, invited friends and arranged a festive dinner. The day was simply celebrated, as far as I understood, by inviting friends, mother cooked food, everybody had a very good time... Mother cooked very well and observed all cooking traditions. She knew several recipes of national Jewish meals. I also remember that when father fell seriously ill, right before his death, he took a Jewish prayer book and began to read it. He turned to faith before his death. He was born in Vitebsk in a religious family. My father knew Yiddish since his childhood, he rarely used it, but he could read in Yiddish and in Hebrew.

Mother did not meddle with the politics, but father was certainly a concealed dissident. I know this for sure because, though it was prohibited, father listened to the radio receiver. And he was also controlled by an informer; he was “shepherded”. Yes, that is true, nobody told no one, who the informer was. But there was an enrolled KGB informer in every company and people in most of cases understood which person exactly who “squealed on”, though formally no one should have known about it. And that person, so to say, warned my father, told him to stop listen to the radio. He told father, “Rivkind, quit listening to the radio”. However, since father was a rather reserved and quiet person he did not get caught. But it is certain that he did not believe in what happened in this country. I was a witness to how he spoke to mother and how he listened to the receiver. Mother was too domestic a woman to be engaged in politics, but she trusted him. Father did not

join any Party. He did not trust the then power, however, in order to avoid problems, kept silent about it, so he was no open dissident. Father was released from military service since he was an asthmatic and he had ulcer besides. He was not enlisted to the army because of his asthma, even during the war.

My parents were kind people. Mother was a strong-willed, self-disciplined and practical woman, she cooked very well and later on helped me to raise my children. Father was a very talented person, he took great interest in his job, liked to play chess and was a witty person. I remember that parents had a very good attitude to each other, they were young and cheerful and loved each other very much.

My parents had mostly Jewish friends. Some of them were from Vitebsk. But of course there were Russian friends too. My parents often spent their vacation in Gomel, at the place of father's brother Isaac. They went to the suburbs of Gomel, rented a summer house there and traveled around Belorussian towns. Later they spent their vacation in Leningrad region. Dora and me were with them during the vacation and traveled in Belorussia with parents.

My sister Dora was born in 1927. I was born in 1932. I did not attend a kindergarten for some reason. I don't remember. I left my family only once, when I was six and sick with diphtheria, and I had to go to a children's sanatorium after the illness. Mother and grandmother raised me and my sister; my sister did not attend a kindergarten either. I remember how me and Dora played and scattered some sheets; sometimes we fought and she told me, "You are a table!" and I replied, "And you are a chair!", "You are a sofa!" But on the whole we were great friends. My grandparents lived moderately, helped to raise us, their grandchildren and assisted me and my sister with our studies. We lived from time to time in Petrograd, it was called Leningrad already at that time, periodically in Kirovsk, in the North. But we were both born in Leningrad.

During the war

I began studying at school here and finished the 1st grade before the war. Later we left for the Urals when the war broke out. We were evacuated in August 1941. My father was in the North at that time. Since he did not serve in the army, he was to take out all equipment of the factory he worked at with the ores, and deliver it to the Urals. Thus he delivered everything to the town of Solikamsk. They had similar production plant there and so he moved. We visited him from Leningrad. We left with one but the last train. The last one was destroyed by bombing. No person had left Leningrad since. Father worked and we went to school with my sister. I went to school there up to the fourth grade.

We were provided with a room, when we were evacuated. All our family lived in that room: mother, father, me and sister. Later we also sheltered Lilya, who escaped from the Germans with two small children from Ukraine, where she had lived before the war. Everybody worked in Solikamsk. Father worked as an engineer at a local potassium extraction and processing plant; mother was assigned to work at a sovkhos and Lilya, who already did not feel well at that time, stayed at home, raised the four children and kept the household. We led a very poor and hungry life during the first year. I remember how we, children, were fed according to time schedule. We were hungry, standing under the clock, watching the clock hands moving, waiting for food. By the second year we started to plant potatoes, cabbages and some other vegetables, thus our life became a little more satisfied.

Second and third years in evacuation were much better than the first one.

We returned to Leningrad in 1944 to the same apartment. Everything seemed to remain the same, except for human losses certainly. My grandmother had relatives in Poland, who all perished in Holocaust. An uncle died in Leningrad, and many relatives on father's side died, who stayed here. His sister Beilya and her son Mikhail, mother's brother perished. They all stayed in Leningrad. My grandmother did not want to go and they remained here to work during the siege. A lot of neighbors perished too. When we came back, new people lived here. But since my aunt had been here during the blockade, she managed to keep the room, so we had no difficulties when we returned. I remember how cheerful and delighted everybody was when we came back. It was war time, and then the victory, we had big hopes for the future and we believed in Communism.

When we returned I went to a regular girls' school. We returned in 1944. I liked biology at school and all natural sciences in general. I was most interested in natural science, though I had good marks in all subjects. I loved our English teacher, Maria Mikhailovna. She was a good-looking, very young and very beautiful woman. She came to work right after the war. I remember her very well. We met after I had finished school, graduated from the Institute, and was working for some years; as a doctor, I helped her a lot. We also had a wonderful teacher of history, Pyotr Petrovich Petukhov. He was a marvelous historian and taught in a very interesting way.

Besides standard school, I studied music I had been studying for a very short time, only for one year in a musical school. There were various public works at school, editorial board etc. I am a very industrious person and took part in it all. We issued wall newspapers for holidays and spent a lot of time on that. Everything was very strict in those days, not like now: we wore uniforms, black aprons and brown dresses. It was a girls' school, so we communicated with boys but once a year. I remember, we had a party in the 8th grade and we went to the boys' school. We danced there for the first time in our lives. All my friends were mostly from school. It was a hard and hungry time after the war. Food was distributed according to ration cards, there were lines everywhere and it was difficult to get anything, either food or clothes. There were ration cards, no feasts, we had no TV sets. All in all, we either studied or simply stayed at home and helped about the house. Sometimes I went to the skating-rink with my friends. Aunt Anya (Khana) encouraged me and my sister to go to the philharmonic society, even if there were the only the cheapest seats. We went to the theaters and to the Opera.

When I finished school (in 1951), I entered the First Medical Institute. My sister had entered it before me, and persuaded me to do the same. At first I attended psychiatric lectures as an outside observer, it was interesting to listen. Later I entered the Institute. Student life was very cheerful. We celebrated all holidays together, Soviet holidays presumably, attended demonstrations and student parties. We had a totally different life. Different as compared to the one at school. At school everything was very strict: girls' gymnasia, uniform, discipline, a lot of homework and studies. Our teachers had been proud that they had not given us too high marks. However, such training really favored us when we entered Institutes after school, as it appeared to be very easy for us. We also studied together and attended the Public Library. It was very happy time, especially the spring holidays, November 7th (3), when we went to demonstrations, had parties afterwards and sang songs during the breaks between lectures at the Institute. We went to the theater in our free time. The tickets were not expensive at that time. We also went to the

philharmonic society and sometimes to the skating-rink. After our 1st or 2nd year pigpens or cowsheds were constructed in the Leningrad region and we joined the construction groups. But I did not spend my free time only with my friends. I remember that after the 3rd year we went to the South with aunt Anya (Khana), to the Black Sea and had a wonderful vacation somewhere near Adler. I also visited Belorussia. All in all, I traveled around the Soviet Union during my student holidays. It was not expensive at that time. People traveled a lot to different cities. No special permits were required to travel inside the country, only the ticket.

My sister Dora also started to go to school in Leningrad; she later studied for some time in Kirovsk. As a primary schoolgirl she lived with father in Kirovsk and went to school there for one year. Spent some time in evacuation in Solikamsk and finished her 10th grade in Leningrad. She entered the First Medical Institute. In 1951 she got married and stayed in Leningrad. Her husband Iosif was an engineer, he graduated from the Aircraft Tool-production Institute. In 1952 her daughter Bela was born. Dora worked as a District physician for some time, and later got into a group of physicians who were engaged in the medical genetics field. She defended a thesis and continued to work as a specialist in the field of medical genetics.

After the war

After the war we had good relations with America. Suddenly we received a letter from one of father's brothers with pictures. We saw how they all lived there, how beautiful they all were. They were all wearing pants and shorts, we were so surprised they were all so beautiful! One of my father's nieces even planned to go to Hollywood, she was a beautiful girl. And when we saw it all, we were really shocked by the life they led there. Soon after that the „cold war” began and all correspondence with America ceased.

There was a lot of repressions until 1953 when Stalin died. Anti-Semitism was around when I was a schoolgirl. Some teachers were open anti-Semites. But at that time, one could say that state anti-Semitism existed. Stalin did not like Jews, it was evident. Later when I studied at the Institute, a case began, known as the „Cosmopolite” case, all Jews were labeled Cosmopolitans, that is, without a Motherland. This happened right after the State of Israel had been created. Stalin was ready to exterminate all Jews, but it did not touch us personally at that time. And in 1953 when I was a 3rd year student, he made up this case with physicians – the Doctors' Case (4). There were mostly all Jews, famous Professors, who also treated him and his company. He suddenly branded them as national enemies. I remember that not only Jews but also Russian physicians got caught up in this case. I do not know, why Russian physicians got caught up in the case too. Maybe they tried to defend the Jewish physicians. I remember only that Professor Zakusov, who later became an Academician, also got caught up in the Doctors' Case, though he was a Russian. Professor Zakusov from our Institute was arrested. He taught pharmacology. A wonderful Professor, who was suddenly a national enemy. There was also Professor Dembol, who had to hide. We, young students, began to think about what was going on. Before that we believed everything. We were members of Komsomol (5) and knew little about what was going on, all ideas were stuffed into us. And after that we began to reflect on it. It was the very first striking impression. I had a very good friend, when I was a student. He told me, „You know, I would not throw myself under tanks in such a situation.” And suddenly everybody as if regained sight. All of a sudden! Later in 1953 Stalin died, thank God. His secret letter was read out to Khrushchev (6) at the 20th Congress (7) and life

became better, we graduated from the Institute and left for different locations.

After the Institute I was assigned to work in the North, in the town of Kirovsk. I asked them to send me there. I worked there as a therapist for the first three years (1956-1960). In 1959 I got married to my half-relative, so to say: he was son of my father's half-brother. We got acquainted in our childhood and knew each other all our lives. Later we developed some relationship and got married.

My husband, Lev Isaacovich Rivkind, was born in Gomel in 1925. His childhood passed in Gomel, he studied at the Belorussian Construction Institute there. My husband was not religious. He graduated from the Belorussian Railroad Transport Institute in Gomel. After graduation he came to the North, to Kirovsk and we got married. He worked there in a big „Apatite-stroy” trust “Apatite” was a large industrial enterprise at that time. It consisted of mines and factories, where ore was processed into apatites. In 1992 he retired because of his health condition and passed away in 1997.

In 1960 our son Volodya was born. My mother and father helped to raise him and I worked a lot. But we had very good friends in the North so our life was very joyful. The town was small, every night somebody dropped in, we went for a walk and arranged parties. But there was also a lot of work. Later in 1960 I changed my qualification and became ophthalmologist and I wanted to operate. We set up a small department, I bought instruments and got engaged into ophthalmosurgery. I obtained a qualification certificate soon after several attestations, which was not easy at that time. Three years after my daughter Raya was born. Daughter and son lived in Leningrad in turn: one of them lived with my parents and the other one lived with us. The living conditions in the trans-polar region (Kirovsk) are severe: the polar night, the cold and difficulty with food products' supply. That is why my parents tried to help us and took children in from time to time to Leningrad. I remember when my son lived in Leningrad, I once came to visit him in winter, but he did not recognize me. They started to ask him, „Who is it? Who is standing over there? This is your mother Inna.” And he was shy. Later I took him in and he attended a day nursery and a kindergarten. But he left for Leningrad to study at primary school. Starting from the first grade Volodya studied in Leningrad. My daughter came to live with me at that time. When he was brought for school holidays after the 1st grade, he told me, „I wish I fell ill and stayed with you.” And I kept him with me. Thus I lived without any help, with two children, with enormous amount of work. It was very difficult, especially in the conditions of the North. My son also studied there and he was a good pupil at school up to the 8th grade. When we left at the beginning of 1969, his teacher told me, „I cried so much today, such a good pupil is leaving!” He was a very self-disciplined and responsible person. When he got a task, he sat down and completed it. We moved to Leningrad. We had worked in the North under a contract and when it had expired we returned home to Leningrad.

When we came to Leningrad in 1969 my husband worked in trust # 32 [a construction trust combination of firms or corporations formed by a legal agreement] as a manager. I could not find a job because of wars in Israel, though I was a complete physician with a category and wonderful recommendations. But I was not accepted to any hospital department because of state anti-Semitism. I was told into my face, „Your „fifth clause” helped you, the nationality, with a plus.” The plus was – wars in Israel. [Fifth clause in all documents questionnaires mostly was “Nationality”]. In

1973 [Editor's note: the year of the Yom Kippur war in Israel] I could not find a job because of the nationality factor either. I mean, I could find a job but it was impossible to get a raise. At first I had been working in a polyclinic for four years, later as a consultant at a hospital, where I was finally "enticed" to work as a neuro-ophthalmologist.. Or, for instance, entering an Institute. We had to CHOSE an Institute for my son. Yes, because not all Institutes accepted Jews. Though Volodya finished the best mathematical school in the city and was a good pupil, we knew that, for example, it was no use to even try entering the University. We would not be allowed within firing range to LIAP [Leningrad Aerospace Equipment Construction Institute] The Polytechnic was a loyal one and it was possible to enter it. It was the only reason why my son entered it, though he was a good pupil, finished a mathematical school and was able to study at the University. But the University did not accept him. I began to work at first at the polyclinic and later I was offered a position at the neurosurgery at the hospital where I had worked simultaneously (I combined jobs). They persuaded me and in 1973 I came to work there as a neuro-ophthalmologist.

Raya graduated from the Forestry Engineering Academy and now worked near St.Petersburg in Alexandrovskaya. While they grew up with my son, the environment was totally Russian, a few Jews. Neither of my children felt anti-Semitism, we tried with my husband not to let them feel it, though we knew that it existed. However, it should be mentioned, that Raya was the only Jewess at her faculty. Jews were not accepted, that's it! But she managed to enter because she was a wonderful pupil and was very well prepared. She was admitted, in spite of the fact that she was a Jewess, simply because she was a perfect student and was very well prepared.

I did not raise my children in any specific manner, nor did I accustom them to any traditions or nationalistic ideas. They already understood and saw, what kind of problems they might face in their lives. Volodya and Raya were raised like all Russian children

Life changed both to the better and to the worse. On the one hand, we received more freedom, especially, more speech freedom. Something one might have been imprisoned for before was easily discussed. People's psychology changed a lot: people stopped hoping for the state and began to rely on their own capabilities. It became easier for the Jews to find a job, to enter an Institute and to live in general, as there was less oppression. The society became clearly separated in two parts: poor people and very rich people. All in all, the society became pure capitalistic out of a semi-built socialistic one. However, it became more difficult for people to live, for instance, for pensioners.

My husband had a twin-sister, her name was Sima. She lives in America now. We keep in touch with them, write to each other, call and congratulate each other on holidays and. Sometimes they come here. She left in 1992 with her family: her husband, Larion and son Gennady. It was after the Chernobyl [Chernobyl explosion of the nuclear reactor in 1992]. Gomel was in the area exposed to radiation. My husband was in Gomel at the time the explosion happened, he walked along the street. After the explosion everybody left. Most of our friends from Gomel left for Israel. We have never been there with my husband, not even for a visit. I have no more relatives there. Some of my husband's nieces left for Israel and some remain in St.Petersburg. We find out about those who live in Israel through those, who stayed here. Some relations are kept with relatives on my father's side, who live in Samara.

My husband died in St.Petersburg in 1997. At the age of 69 I retired after 45 years of work. Now I live on my pension and my daughter's salary. My son Volodya supports us. We do not starve or live in misery. I have my favorite pet, my huge gray striped cat with a broad nape. I am now occupied with gardening, I attend a gardeners' circle. Between the end of spring and mid-fall I live at the summer house, I have a house and a plot of land there. Dora also spends her vacation there. I am not depressed and I try to live an active and interesting life.

GLOSSARY:

1. Jewish Pale of Settlement: certain provinces of the Russian Empire were designated areas for permanent Jewish residence and the Jewish population (apart from certain privileged families) was only allowed to live in these areas.
2. Professor Firsman: a famous biologist in those days; he was one of the first to start research of minerals in Khibiny mountains (near Murmansk). During the industrialization period extraction of minerals was commenced on the Kola Peninsula owing to his developments and discoveries.
3. November 7th: 7th of November was celebrated as the Day of the Great Socialist Revolution. There was a big demonstration arranged on that day, music played, people were celebrating with balloons, flowers and flags; everybody went downtown to watch the parade. It is not a formal holiday anymore.
4. Doctors' Case: The so-called Doctors' Case was a set of accusations deliberately forged by Stalin's government and the KGB against Jewish doctors of the Kremlin hospital charging them with the murder of outstanding Bolsheviks. The „Case” was started in 1952, but was never finished because Stalin died in 1953.
5. Komsomol: communist youth organization created by the Communist Party to make sure that the state would be in control of the ideological upbringing and spiritual development of the youth almost until the age of 30.
6. Nikita Khrushchev (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.
7. 20th Party Congress: At the 20th 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 was happening in the USSR during Stalin's leadership.