

Hava Goldshtein

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Ukraine

Interviewer: Zhanna Litinskaya

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Hava Goldshtein is an elderly and very ill woman. She lives in a small apartment with stove heating, typical for old houses in Lvov. She is poor and has to keep a tenant - a student that also looks after Hava and her deceased sister's husband living in this same apartment. Hava has dim memories of some periods of her life. She had a stroke after her son died that had its impact on her memory. Regardless of this great sorrow Hava is an optimist. She jokes and laughs a lot, but this is laughter through tears. Her apartment is poorly furnished. Old pieces of furniture were bought approximately in 1950s. She has no books or pictures on the walls. She has old cracked dishes in the kitchen.



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My family background

My father's parents, whom I never saw, Moisey and Golda Goldshtein, were born 1860s, in the town of Yassy in Bessarabia that belonged to Romania before 1939 ¹. There was a big Jewish community in Yassy before WWII. There were 10 synagogues, yeshyva, few cheders and a number of stores selling kosher products. Jews were mainly involved in crafts and trade.

My grandfather Moisey was wealthy. He didn't study in grammar school, may be he went to cheder in the childhood, but he was smart and business-oriented. He was the older son of his parents. He inherited a fur factory and in due time expanded his business and opened a shop and a store in the factory.

Besides, he owned an apartment building in the center of the town for lease where his family lived in a 6-room apartment. The rooms in their apartment were big with stucco molding ceilings, tiled stoves and beautiful furniture. There was a Viennese grand piano 'Karl Hamburg' of mahogany tree with ancient candelabra in the living room. My grandmother Golda played the piano. My father said

she had a good education unfortunately, I do not know what kind.

My grandparents were religious. Every morning grandfather went to the synagogue near their house. My grandmother went to the synagogue on Saturday. They spoke Yiddish in the family, but they also spoke fluent Romanian. They strictly followed all Jewish traditions. They bought kosher meat and had chickens slaughtered by a shochet at the synagogue. My grandmother had a housemaid and a cook. One of the girls, a Jew, was responsible for shopping and keeping food stocks for the family. The second girl, Romanian or Moldavian, made dinner on Saturday, stoked an oven and did all work that Jewish women were not allowed to do on Saturday. Before Sabbath the house was thoroughly cleaned. Pillows, blankets and carpets were beaten to remove the dust and floors and furniture were polished. The cook made a Saturday dinner following my grandmother's directions. They had Gefilte fish, chicken or turkey, rich broth, pastries and cookies. On Friday and Saturday we had kosher wine from stocks in the cellar. Grandfather sat at the head of the table with his tallit on. My grandmother wearing a fancy dress, wig and a lace shawl lit candles saying a prayer over them. Then we took to a festive dinner. Our housemaid and cook had a meal in the kitchen. There were also poor Jews that couldn't afford to celebrate Sabbath invited to a meal. It was an ancient Jewish tradition to serve a meal for the less fortunate Jews. On Saturday grandfather went to the synagogue and my father carried his book of prayers being the oldest son. My father told me this in every detail adding that celebration of Sabbath was the brightest memory of his young days.

The family celebrated all Jewish holidays according to all rules. They prepared to celebrations in advance. Chickens were purchased and kept in a shed in the backyard. The apartment was cleaned more thoroughly than ever. It was particularly important to clean the house before Pesach. Kosher dishes were taken out of boxes: silver tableware and fancy china. Dinners were lavishly served at Pesach. Grandfather conducted seder and the older son asked him traditional questions. However, Jews had their problems in Yassy. Romanian authorities suppressed them allowing or banning their trades. Jewish children were not always allowed to study in grammar schools. In the end of 19th century when my father was just a child there was a horrible pogrom in Yassy [2](#). My grandfather's family survived hiding in the basement with a heavy lock on the door.

There were seven children in the family: my father had four brothers and two sisters. The boys studied in cheder, all children finished a grammar school. I know very little about my father's brothers or his parents.

Duba, my father's older sister, born in 1890, married a rich Jew from Yassy after finishing grammar school. They had two children. Her husband owned a garment shop. Their son, I don't remember his name, took over his father's business. He became a tailor. I have no information about their daughter. My father's sister Hava, born in 1896, finished grammar school. She was single at the period when we heard from them - before middle 1930s. Regretfully, this is all I know about them. My father's brother Srul, born in 1893, was recruited to the Romanian army during WWI and returned to Yassy after the war. He assisted grandfather Moisey with his business and soon afterward grandfather actually left his business to Srul. In 1922 Srul married a local Jewish girl named Feiga. We even have her picture that Srul sent in one of his letters. Srul and Feiga had two children, but I have no information about them.

I don't know anything about my father's younger brother Naum, born in 1898. . Beginning from the middle 1930s we hardly communicated with them, and we got letters from them very rarely. We stopped hearing from them after 1939, and lost track of my father's family, when the Soviet power was established in Yassy. As far as I know they were all religious people. They never again got in touch with us and I think they shared the fate of thousands other Bessarabian Jews that were exterminated and sent to ghettos and Transnistria [3](#) where they starved to death or died of diseases.

My father, born in Yassy in 1894 finished cheder and grammar school. My father was very fond of animals (horses, in particular) and became a veterinary doctor after graduating from an agricultural or veterinary institute.

In 1914 when WWI began my father went to the Romanian army. He was at the front and was captured and sent to a camp for prisoners-of-war in Poltava, a provincial town in the center of Ukraine in 300 kms from Kiev. My father was in captivity between 1915 and 1917. Inmates of the camp worked at road construction. I do not know about a life of the father in the conclusion, he did not like to tell about it. A young girl often came to sell cigarettes to prisoners. This was Sonia Epelbaum, my mother.

Mother was born in the family of Moisey and Frieda Epelbaum in Poltava in 1897. Her father was an assistant forester. My mother's family was poor. They lived in a small house with thatched roof and one room with a big stove in the middle of it, any part-time farm at them was not. The house was in the outskirts of the town. My mother was the first and only child. Her mother, my grandmother Frieda died of consumption in 1900. Grandfather Moisey didn't remarry. Although there was a big Jewish community in Poltava – the Jewish population constituted one fifth of the whole population of the town: 80 thousand people, there were quite a lot synagogues and Jewish schools, grandfather Moisey communicated with Ukrainians for the most part. Perhaps, this was because he spent most of his time in the woods staying on sites where Ukrainian woodcutters worked for few months in a row. He got on well, there was no anti-Semitism among his neighbors and employees. Moisey wasn't religious, at least I can't remember him praying or observing any Jewish traditions. He spoke Ukrainian and Yiddish. My mother Sonia also communicated with Ukrainian children. My mother only spoke Ukrainian and didn't know one single word in Yiddish, her parents speak Ukrainian at home. She didn't go to school and couldn't write: she put a cross if she had to sign a paper. The only thing Sonia learned to do before she turned 17 was making cigarettes. She sold cigarettes in town with a box on her neck. She was very pretty and my father fell in love with her at first sight. I don't know in what language he told her about his love – my father only spoke Yiddish and Romanian, but they got married in Poltava in 1918 after he was released from captivity. Later they spoke Ukrainian. My father told me that they had a traditional Jewish wedding under a chuppah at the synagogue and then had a civil ceremony at the registry office. Only grandfather Moisey attended the wedding ceremony since there were no other relatives of my parents in Poltava. My parents didn't tell me any other details.

My parents couldn't go to Romania where my father's family lived since after 1917 the Soviet authorities didn't allow Soviet citizens to leave the country. My parents rented a room in a basement in the center of Poltava. My parents were very poor. This was a period of famine and unemployment. My mother sold cigarettes and my father got occasional jobs at construction sites.

In 1919 my older sister Sheindl was born and on 24 February 1924 I, Hava Goldshtein, was born. My grandfather Mosey often came to stay with us, children, while our parents were away. He told us stories and fairy tales about wood goblins, witches and house spirits in Ukrainian. My mother told me that after pogroms made by Denikin troops [4](#) during the Civil War [5](#) grandfather did his best to conceal his Jewish identity. Grandfather never went to the synagogue that functioned in Poltava even after 1917. We didn't observe any Jewish traditions at home, only father prayed quietly in the corner of the room.

Grandfather died in Poltava in the late 1920s, he was buried in a Jewish cemetery. In 1926 my sister Sheindl went to a Russian secondary school. I don't even know whether there were Jewish schools in Poltava. Our mother took us to a photo shop in the central street to get photographed just out of curiosity and this was the first time in my life that I was photographed.

Life was hard in Poltava: my parents couldn't find a permanent job. In 1926 our family moved to Odessa that was not so far from Romania. Mother told me that my father was hoping to cross the border of Romania somehow where his family resided, but he failed. At that time Joint [6](#) began its activities in the Soviet Union. In 1927 our family moved to a Jewish settlement in the Crimea that was formed with the help of Joint.

Growing up

We settled down in the village of Kalay, Djankoy district. There was Ukrainian, Russian and Crimean Tatar population in this area. People treated us kindly. Jews formed an agricultural cooperative association. We were accommodated in houses (four families resided in one house with a common kitchen), toilets and water were outside, there was no power, they cooked on primus stoves and lighted rooms with kerosene lamps. There were initially 50-80 Jewish families in this area. Joint built cottages in the outskirts of the for them. We bought food products at the village store. Jews worked at the collective farm. All collective farm products belonged to the state. I remember a big family of the Bershaks that were our neighbors, but I can't remember other tenants. In few years the cooperative association with a Jewish name became a collective farm named 'Oktiabr' [October], and Joint was forced to leave the USSR [6](#). There was even a song in Yiddish about Zionists that didn't like the name 'Oktiabr' and left - I can't remember the lyrics of this song, I didn't understand the song and my father explained it to me. In the Crimea life was gradually improving: my father began to work as veterinary and my mother became a milkmaid at the farm. My father was the only vet in the area and often went on trips. He could leave home even at night if his work required - it wasn't an unusual thing to work at night, besides, my father was a very responsible man. Sometimes he traveled to Simferopol, central town of the Crimea and I went with him - we traveled on a horse-driven coach. I liked going to a big town with crowds of people, cars, traffic police - this was all knew to me. In Simferopol father went to the synagogue after he finished his business and purchased medications in a pharmacy. He left me in the yard and sometimes I went upstairs with women companions. There was no synagogue in Kalay and religious Jews including my father and our neighbor Shmul Bershak got together for a minyan to pray. They often got together in our house and Bershak's son Syunia and I often watched them. We found it funny how they prayed swinging with their talit and tefillin on their heads and hands.

We began to observe some Jewish traditions in Kalay. My father didn't eat pork and often argued with mother who didn't follow the kashrut. Every Friday there was a general cleanup of the house and we, children, got involved in it. We washed the floor, dusted the furniture and scrubbed casseroles and kitchen utensils. We laid the table in a big room and our family and all other tenants of the house got together at the table. Sima, Bershak's wife or their older daughter Tsylia lit candles, as a rule. Saturday was a working day in the collective farm. We celebrated holidays together. Before Pesach we baked matzah and cooked Gefilte fish, chicken broth, meat stew and made pastries and pudding from matzah flour. Shmul Bershak conducted seder. I remember him sitting at the head of the table and one of the children was looking for a piece of matzah and posed traditional questions about the holiday. At Purim mother and Sima made triangle pies with poppy seeds - the so-called 'Haman' ears' [hamentashen] that we liked. My father fasted at Yom Kippur and my mother joined him. Children didn't fast - our father believed that we would learn everything when we grew up. I don't remember other holidays.

We made dolls from rags, played with a ball and ran in the streets.

My father became an activist in the collective farm: he took part in construction. My father wasn't a member of the party, but he was a 'non-party communist' as such people were called at the time. He didn't think he was spiritually prepared to become a communist. My father gave up his idea to move to Romania. He liked communist ideas and liked living and working at the collective farm. Only when my father got a letter from Romania that came through America he stayed in his room in silence for a long while. I don't know how they found us - perhaps, through Joint.

In few years we received a small house of our own with two rooms, a kitchen and an open terrace. We didn't have a garden or livestock. Our father provided well for the family and life was inexpensive. There was a plot of land near the house that my father planted with diminutive fruit trees. The most amazing thing was running water in the house: there was a water pump facility built in the village that supplied water to the houses. My mother was very happy about it remembering how during the Civil War and afterward portable water in Poltava was sold from street pumps.

In 1931 I went to a Jewish school my sister studied. This school was built at the time the Jewish colony was established. It was built at the Jewish neighborhood and was not far from our house. The only difference of this school from others was that teaching was in Yiddish. I learned Yiddish gradually and my sister helped me. I studied in this school for a year. In 1932 when famine began in Ukraine [7](#) I was sent to a boarding school for orphaned and homeless children in hope that I would at least be getting some food there. All children whose parents were not able to provide for them were admitted to this school. My sister stayed with our parents. These were horrific years when all grain was taken away from collective farmers, there was no food for cattle and my parents had no job. I remember my father and Shmul Bershak took me and Bershak's younger daughter to the silage facility at nighttime to come there unnoticed. We were tiny and thin girls and my father and Shmul lowered us into the silage pit on a rope tight on our feet where we picked silage: pressed grass prepared to feed cattle. Mother made pancakes that smelled of rot. I remember seeing a cart with dead people when my father was taking me to the boarding school: their swollen legs were sticking from a cover. The boarding school was in 15 kms from Kalay. We got soup and potatoes and some black buns. This was a Russian secondary school where we studied.

In 1934 when famine was over I stayed at the boarding school and finished the 10th form there, my sister finished Jewish school in 1930. The school was closed in late 1930s. There were Jewish, Russian, Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar children in my class. We never cared about one another's nationality. We were friends. I became a pioneer in the school, but I took no interest in any public activities. Besides, I was not quite successful with my studies. I didn't like reading or writing or mathematics. I much preferred to spend time with animals helping my father and help my mother in the chicken yard and on the farm.

In summer 1936 when I was on vacation at home few men wearing military uniforms came for my father. They searched the house shuffling my father's papers. They took pictures of my father's parents and relatives from Romania. I remember that when my father was taken away I held one of the military's leg like a tick and he could hardly get rid of me. My father was taken to Simferopol, but he returned home after two months. I don't know how he happened to escape: in such cases people were charged with espionage and ties with foreign intelligence agencies and they disappeared forever. Father never told us, children, what happened to him and what were charges against him, but he never prayed again and put his tallit away. At that time we stopped receiving letters from his relatives in Romania. Only in 1939 after Bessarabia joined the Soviet Union my father received few letters from his family, but father never responded - he was probably afraid of being arrested again.

In 1938 after finishing school I entered Medical College in Kalay. I finished it in 1940. My schoolmates Sonia Krol and Syunia Bershak - he became an assistant doctor - studied there with me. My older sister Sheindlia graduated from Teachers' Institute in Simferopol. She worked at a school in Kalay as a teacher of mathematics. In 1938 Sheindlia married Shura Friedental, a Jew, our neighbor. He was a driver in the collective farm. The whole collective farm celebrated the wedding in our yard under the tents. There was no chuppah or religious ceremony at the wedding since Shura and my sister were convinced atheists and Komsomol members [8](#), but there was Jewish music played and guests danced Jewish folk dances. The newly weds lived in our house. In 1939 their daughter Rita was born.

During the War

After finishing medical college in spring 1941 I became a medical nurse at a school in Kalay the same where my sister worked. I worked there for about half a year until we heard on the radio about the beginning of war on 22 June 1941 [9](#). We didn't quite understand what was going on - we were convinced that our country was so powerful and a war was something we couldn't believe might happen or that somebody dared to attack us.

Few days after the war began our village was bombed. In the middle of July 1941 the collective farm began evacuation. The Party district committee assigned my father to stay in occupation and work as a vet in a partisan unit. We bid farewell to father carelessly laughing and cheering one another - we didn't believe we were parting for long. Newspapers and radio broadcasts were convincing us that the war would be over soon. Shura Friedental, my sister's husband, was recruited to the front. My mother, my sister and her little daughter and I evacuated with the collective farm. We walked about 100 kms watching the cattle of the collective farm until we reached Kerch. During frequent air raids we hid in wheat fields. There were vehicles passing by, but we couldn't get a ride since we were responsible for the cattle that belonged to the collective farm.

It was hot: there was no water and the grass was dry – the cattle were hungry and thirsty. Bershak's family walked with us: Shmul, Sima, their son Syunia that was the same age with me and their younger children. Sima was a sick and very fat woman. She couldn't walk and was driven on a cart. After another air raid Sima died of heart attack. The men dug a grave in the stony soil, said a prayer and buried Sima. In Kerch we got on a ferry with cattle and other belongings of the collective farm. Bombardments were continuous in the sea and later we got off in Taman in 600 kms from Kerch where we got on trucks and drove for about two days. We arrived at the town of Khanlar, Azerbaidjan in the Caucasus, in 900 km from home. We settled down in the village and the cattle was transferred to the local collective farm.

We were accommodated in local stone houses that were richer and had more comforts than Ukrainian houses. We got a room that belonged to a big Azerbaidjan family. They welcomed us cordially and shared everything they had with us. In Khanlar I was called to the military registry office where I received an assignment to a hospital. I was a surgery nurse in evacuation hospital 1852. There were many patients there and numbers of surgeries during which doctors amputated extremities: legs and arms. Surgeries went on round the clock and nurses had to assist surgeons handling instruments. At first I made mistakes and the surgeon swore. After the surgery he kissed me on the forehead and apologized. It was hard work, but I received food packages and we got meals in hospital. My mother, sister and Rita lived in the apartment worked at the cattle farm in the collective farm. We stayed in Khanlar for about half a year. Germans were approaching the town. We got on a freight train and moved on. We were heading Middle Asia. The trip lasted about 3 months. We stayed at stations for long letting military trains to the front pass by. Shmul Bershak and his younger children were with us. Syunia was already at the front.

We came to an aul [a village in Middle Asia] near Chimkent in Kazakhstan in 2000 kms from home where we were accommodated in apartments in the collective farm named after Lenin. There were clay houses with thatched roofs in the village. There was no water or sewerage. Food was mainly cooked on stoves. In summer we spent most of the time outside sleeping in little huts made of vine branches, cooking and having meals in the open air. Summers were hot and dry. Local people and newcomers worked in the collective farm. There was a school, kindergarten, hospital and pharmacy in the village. There were many people from different parts of the USSR there. There wasn't sufficient space, but they all got along and I can't remember any national conflicts. We lived in a very friendly Kazakh family. We slept all together on straw on the floor in a small room. Our landlords were trying to help us and shared their food with us. It was hard at the beginning before mother began to work on a farm. I also worked at the collective farm: on the farm and in the field. My sister Sheindlia went to work at the kindergarten of the collective farm and her daughter Rita was there, too. We worked from dawn till dusk, but we were not afraid of hard work. Three years passed. It was most terrible to have no news from father when we knew about barbarity of Germans and their brutal attitude and mass shootings of Jews from people that escaped from occupied areas. Mother kept crying at night reprobating herself for letting my father stay.

In summer 1944 almost at once after Crimea was liberated we moved home. The whole collective farm was returning. We went back by a freight train. We were given grain by local authorities that we were exchanging for bread and food products on the way.

When we arrived we heard the frightful news. Germans killed Jews in the vicinity of Kalay and my father was among them. People said he was hiding in the cellar, but Sushko, a local policeman, reported on him to Germans. This Sushko was in good relationships with our family before the war. After the war Sushko was sentenced to 10 years in camps. I heard later that some time in 1950, when we left the Crimea, he returned home and lead his life as if nothing had happened. I tried to find my father's grave. I remember that during one of diggings and reburial of the dead I saw the corps of Manya Tseitlina, our neighbor. She was half-sitting in the pit holding her granddaughter Ida. The child had a soother in her mouth. This horrible scene had such an impact on me that I refused further search of my father's body.

After the War

I remember celebration of Victory Day on 9 May 1945. All farmers got together in the center of the settlement in front of the village council building. There were tables installed there and all people brought what they could. Chairman of the collective farm said a speech remembering the deceased including my father. On this day laughter was mixed with tears: it was a happy and a sad day.

We needed to begin life anew. Our house was in place, but it was occupied by the family of Abraham Modergeim. They returned from evacuation before we did and since their house was destroyed they moved in ours. Abraham didn't want to move out of our house and we had to sue him. We temporarily stayed with Bershak family. Only at the beginning of 1946 the court took a positive decision for us and we had our house back, but those people took with them all our furniture and kitchen utensils. We moved in an empty house, but we were too exhausted to sue Abraham for theft.

Life was more difficult than it was in evacuation. In Kazakhstan we had sufficient food, fruit and vegetables and we did not starve, at least, while after the war there was famine. Germans removed all food stocks before retreating and we didn't have any grain left for sowing.

Right after arrival we had one trouble after another. My mother got cancer of uterus. She had a surgery in Simferopol and after surgery mother stayed at home. She got tuberculosis that she had had a long time before. This was not the end of our problems. My sister's daughter Rita became infected with tuberculosis. There was nothing we could do. She died at the end of 1945.

Shura Friedental, my sister's husband, returned from the war in April 1946. He knew that his daughter died and didn't even come to our home. Instead, he went to his mother and sisters that lived in another end of the village. Sheindlia that seemed to have turned into stone when her daughter died didn't say a word when she heard that her husband arrived. I ran to see Shura. I cried and yelled telling him that there was no fault of ours that Rita died, but Shura didn't even want to listen. He said that Sheindlia was alive, but she failed to save their daughter and he wasn't going to live with her, they divorced shortly afterward. Shortly afterward Sheindlia moved to Lvov where her friend Sarah lived. Sarah was married to Arnold Tseitlin that came from Kalay. Arnold's mother Manya Tseitlina, his first wife Tsilia and daughter Ida were shot by occupants. After he returned from the war Arnold married Sarah and left for Lvov with her. Sheindlia began to live with Sarah and Arnold. She finished an accounting course and went to work. In some time she married Arnold's brother Ruvim Tseitlin they lived with Sarah and Arnold, having no other place to live.

I finished a short-term course of vine-growers and began to work at the vineyard. Was a dexterous worker and earned good money. In 1946 Boris Cherniak that returned from the front proposed to me. Boris' parents Isaac and Gesia came from Byelorussia. They moved to the Crimea in middle 1920s. Boris, born in 1922, was the oldest son in his family with many children. He worked as a driver before the war. After returning from the front Boris' father became director of a greengrocer store and Boris was director of the buttry in the collective farm. Their family was wealthy and my mother wanted me to marry Boris. I knew Boris before the war and tried to avoid him. He had the fame of a drunkard and womanizer. I didn't want to marry Boris. I couldn't forget Syunia Bershak that was my friend before the war. Syunia didn't return from the front.

Finally I agreed to marry Boris giving up to my mother and Shmul Bershak. We had a civil ceremony and a small wedding party for close relatives and friends at our home. I had an ankle long wedding gown made at the tailor shop in our collective farm. There was no synagogue or a rabbi in the collective farm. My husband's parents insisted that we had a chuppah installed where I was lead by Shmul Bershak. One of older religious Jews conducted the wedding ceremony. This was the first Jewish wedding after the war and the whole collective farm celebrated it.

I put a big tub filled with grain in my room and covered it with bed sheets. This was my bride-bed. My son was born in 1947. We named him Victor. This was a very popular name in those years after Goddess Victoria given in commemoration of victory over Germany. We didn't have our son circumcised since there was no rabbi in the village or anyone else, who could do it. Besides, I didn't feel any need to have him circumcised.

Boris failed to make a good husband. From 2nd half of my pregnancy he began to carouse and went on a spree. He didn't come home at all sometimes. When our son was one year old Boris left me for another woman. I hated to stay in Kalay: I believed people were pointing fingers at me to say 'Look, her husband left her'. In 1949 my mother, Victor and I left Kalay for good. We went to Lvov where my sister lived. Before we left Boris came to apologize. He begged me to stay promising to come back and be faithful, but I didn't forgive him. I never saw him again. He didn't support us and Victor never saw him. I know that Boris stayed in Kalay, but I don't know how he is now.

In Lvov we stayed some time with our friend Lyova Gershman that also came from Kalay after the war. Later we got an apartment. We lived together: my sister and Ruvim in one room and my mother, Victor and I - in another. Except for few moths when I went to work in Brody, Lvov region and Khmel'nitskiy I lived my life in this apartment. We were a close family. My sister and her husband supported me treating him to a meal, giving him toys and clothes, entertaining and spoiling him. My life wasn't easy. I went on my first vacation when my son turned 18. I never had any recreation before: I received my 'vacation pay' (I always needed money) and stayed at work. I got along well with my colleagues. I had Jewish, Russian and Ukrainian friends. We celebrated birthdays and Soviet holidays together. We didn't observe any traditions or celebrate Jewish holidays. I didn't remarry. After Boris betrayed me I didn't trust men and never let any of them to come near me. We stayed at home in the evenings having discussions and drinking tea. Sometimes our friends and acquaintances visited us. I spent time with my son and was busy doing housework: cleaning, cooking and washing.

After her daughter died my sister didn't want anymore children. She was afraid that she might lose

another child. Sheindlia and her husband were cheerful and sociable people. They had many friends, went to theaters and cinema and spent vacations in the Crimea or Caucasus.

My mother died in 1957. We buried her at the town cemetery in Lvov.

Director of the factory at the shop of which I worked was Semyon Averbukh. He was kind with me. He understood how hard it was for me to raise a son. Semyon trained me and I was soon promoted to supervisor. We made rubber boots and went to sell them in other towns. We had a multinational collective at work. In early 1950 state anti-Semitism was at its height. Radio and newspapers broadcast news about Jewish cosmopolites and doctor poisoners. One could hear abusive 'zhydovka' everywhere in the streets [10](#), but we had good relationships in our collective. We went on parades on 1 May and 7 November [11](#) and celebrated all Soviet holidays in our club, had parties drinking and singing Soviet songs. Semyon was a deputy of the district council and helped many of my colleagues to have their issues associated with housing problems, installation of telephone, giving higher education to their children and arrangements for recreation resolved. Later the shop was converted in a factory and Averbukh was its director. In early 1960s he was arrested and accused of manufacture and sale of 'left' products (illegally manufactured product sold through private agents: all profit was received by director and sales agents) and bribing. The court lasted few months. Semyon was sentenced to death and executed. I felt very sorry for him. He was the only person that treated me so kindly. After he died there was another director appointed. Until now nobody knows whether it was true that he was selling goods in private.

I took absolutely no interest in any politics. I was too busy with my personal issues. I had Russian and Ukrainian friends and never cared about nationality. When my son grew old I began to spend more time with friends going to theaters and cinema and reading Soviet magazines. In late 1970s my sister and I bought a TV and spent evenings watching it. I went on vacation to the Crimea several times.

My son Victor had Jewish, Ukrainian and Russian friends at school. He wasn't great success with his studies, but he was a cheerful and sociable boy. He didn't face any anti-Semitism. After finishing school he finished a barber school and became a skilled barber. He was promoted to director of a barbershop. Victor married a Russian girl Valia. They had two daughters: Sonia and Natasha. His first marriage failed, though. My son always identified himself as a Jew, but he came to the Jewish way of life after he got Jewish friends at 16 that observed Jewish traditions and were religious. He could not celebrate holidays at home since Valia teased him about it and happened to not turned out to be - no be anti-Semitic. The majority of his colleagues were Jews and they didn't have any objections when Victor became director; they liked and respected him. Perhaps, he wouldn't have made such good career if he had worked in a Ukrainian collective. In 1992 Victor divorced Valia and married Alla, a Jewish woman. Victor and Alla decided to move to Israel. Victor was always interested in this country and listened to foreign radio stations that were jammed during the Soviet power to conceal the true situation in Israel and the rest of free world from people in the Soviet Union. Victor and Alla submitted their documents for obtaining permission to move to Israel. I was planning to go with them when Victor fell severely ill. He got arthritis and he was confined to bed. In 1999 my son died. I buried him near my mother's grave at the town cemetery.

In 1979 I began to receive pension, but I continued working. I retired in 1989 when Perestroika began and our factory became unprofitable. Perestroika didn't bring anything good into my life. I get miserable pension enough to buy bread.

My sister Sheindlia died in 1986. She didn't have children. I live in this apartment with her husband Ruvim. We wouldn't survive if it weren't for the Jewish charity center Hesed. They support us. All elderly Jews get charity meals and free medications. Sometimes they take us to the Daytime center where we can communicate with other old Jews. I observed Jewish traditions only after the war when I lived in Kalay. Recently we began to celebrate Jewish holidays: Pesach, Purim, and Rosh Hashanah thanks to charity organizations. We get together in Hesed where we have visitors who tell us about Jewish rituals and traditions, they say prayers and conduct rituals, make traditional Jewish food, buy special kosher wine at a store near the synagogue. We watch films about Israel and Jews. We read Jewish newspapers. My granddaughters Sonia and Natasha often come to see us. They celebrate Jewish holidays with us. Natasha and Sonia identifies herself as a Jew. Sonia wrote her nationality as Jewish in her passport. She is a member of the Jewish cultural association and sings in a Jewish group. She married a Jewish man. My great granddaughter was recently born and Sonia named her Sarah-Revekkah. Natasha is married to a Russian man. They have a nice family. They don't have children as yet, but I am sure they will. Natasha is an accountant in a company. She does not take much interest in Jewish life. Valia, Victor's ex-wife was against such tendencies and even didn't communicate with her daughter for some time, but in due time she resigned herself or pretended that she did. In any case, I am happy that my granddaughters understand and support me.

Glossary

1. In 1812 Russia managed to annex the eastern half of the Romanian Principality of Moldavia. From then until the First World War, the territory known as Bessarabia (Basarabia in Romanian) changed hands between Romania and Russia several times. After the First World War, Bessarabia joined Romania, but Moscow never accepted this union. In June 1940, Moscow delivered to Bucharest an ultimatum to evacuate, in four days, Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina (Bucovina). Romania had no choice but to yield. The two ceded provinces had an area of 51,000 square kilometers, or some 20,000 square miles and 3.9 million inhabitants mostly Romanians. It was then Romania's turn to reject the settlement and in June 1941 joined Germany and attacked the Soviet Union. In 1944, however, the USSR reannexed the area, occupied the entire country of Romania and, shortly thereafter, imposed a communist government in Bucharest.
2. During the Civil War in 1918-1920 there were all kinds of gangs in the Ukraine. Their members came from all the classes of former Russia, but most of them were peasants. Their leaders used political slogans to dress their criminal acts. These gangs were anti-Soviet and anti-Semitic. They killed Jews and burnt their houses, they robbed their houses, raped women and killed children.
3. Transnistria: Area between the rivers Dnestr and Bug, and the Black Sea. It was ruled by the Romanians and during World War II it was used as a huge ghetto to which Jews from Bukovina and Moldavia were deported.
4. Denikin, Anton Ivanovich (1872-1947): White Army general. During the Civil War he fought

against the Red Army in the South of Ukraine.

5. CIVIL WAR 1917-1922 By early 1918, a major civil war had broken out in Russia--only recently named the USSR--which is commonly known as the civil war between the 'Reds' and the 'Whites'. The 'Reds' were the Bolshevik controlled Soviets. During this time the Bolsheviks changed their name to the Communist party. The 'Whites' were mostly Russian army units from the world war who were led by anti-Bolshevik officers. They were also joined by anti-Bolshevik volunteers and some Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries. During this civil war, the Bolsheviks signed a separate peace with Germany and finally ended Russia's involvement with the world war. 8 to 13 mln people perished in the war. Up to 2 mln. people moved to other countries. Damage constituted over 50 billion rubles in gold, production rate reduced to 4-20% compared with 1913.

6. Joint - World Jewish Distribution Committee), the main task at that period was to provide assistance to Jews that suffered from WWI in Russia and the Dual Monarchy. In 1924 American Jewish united agricultural corporation was established (Agro-Joint). Its purpose was establishment of Jewish settlements in the south of Ukraine and Crimea. They had full support of the Soviet authorities. This was a way to save Jews from poverty and help them regain their civil rights. This association funded housing construction for poor Jewish families in the Crimea and provided them with agricultural equipment and tools. By 1934 many collective and Soviet farms in Jewish settlements funded by Agro-Joint were established in the Soviet Union. In 1938 Agro-Joint had to leave the Soviet Union and terminate any activities in the country that was on the edge of war and entered into a treaty with fascists Germany.

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

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

9. On 22 June 1941 at 5 o'clock in the morning Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union without declaring a war. This was the beginning of the so-called Great Patriotic War.

10. "zhyd" - abusive nickname of Jews in the Soviet Union.

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