

MY MOTHER, FATHER AND SISTER VALIA

On the 3rd of October this year it will be 13 years since Mama died, and now I want to talk about her. As I said earlier, she had received no education, but she possessed something like natural intelligence and culture. Bad language was never used in our house. Our overall style of life was such that we did not need to be ashamed of our illiterate parents. Mama was head of our family. Her loftiest dream and her life's purpose was to give her children what she herself lacked, i.e. education. Apparently, this trait reappeared three generations down, for my own children are very intent on giving proper education to my grandchildren – their kids.

Education was the issue of primary importance in our family. My own schooling fell on difficult years when Mama and Papa were considered «non-working elements». For Valia, however, Mama did everything possible in order to guide her through college. She paid for her private tutors and provided for her. Valia's plan was to earn a diploma at the Institute of Foreign Languages (English Faculty) – and then get married. Therefore, Ziama, her fiancé, had to wait for three years because she had promised to marry him after her graduation.

She did as she said – married him right before the distribution of work for college graduates. The wedding was celebrated on March 2, 1948. We came to the wedding from Riga. The reception was prepared in our apartment on Malyi Avenue; festivities lasted for two days. Then Valia and Ziama stayed to live with my parents. Ziama was a graduate of the Bonch-Bruevich Communications Institute. As an excellent student, he was offered a place at the Academy for Military Communications. Upon finishing the course of studies at the Academy, he started working as a military communications engineer. He was very talented and was quickly moving up the ranks. Very soon he became lieutenant-colonel. Girls liked the military back then, and Valia was proud of Ziama and his black marine uniform. Soon he was transferred to a former German town of Pilau while Valia was distributed to boys' school in Leningrad. They met only on school breaks or when Valia visited him. But to enter that zone one had to have a special pass. Sometimes they met at our place in Riga. Valia would come for a few days from Leningrad, and Ziama – from Pilau. Valia did not want to leave Leningrad for fear of losing her residence registration. For a very long time they had no children. Their daughter Rimmočka was born 9 years into their marriage, in October 1956.

Before Rimmochka's birth Ziama worked at the Military Marine School in Pushkino (Leningrad area) and then in Kronshtadt as deputy director of Kronshtadt communications. He could have brought his family there, but Valia loved Leningrad and no circumstances could force her to leave it. After Rimma's birth she stopped working and they lived on Ziama's income which was fairly high. They hired a housemaid, for Mama was of no help: during Valia's pregnancy she suffered a heart attack, and I had to come and take care of her.

Rimmochka was a charming, good-looking and smart girl, understandably, her parents fretted about her all the time. Until 8th grade they insisted on accompanying her to school. Her specialized English school was far from their home. To get there she had to take a trolley-bus.

Sofa's sister Valia.



**Sofa's sister Valia with husband Zyama and daughter Rimma.
Russia.**

OUR CHILDREN

Our kids were growing. Innochka was about to finish high school. She was looking forward to joining Young Communist League (Komsomol). In the Soviet Union it was meant as a big event in young life – and it was staged accordingly. A day before when she was supposed to be voted in, Tamara Ivanovna, the teacher of literature, asked them to prepare for class composition at home. Innochka wrote a draft, brought it to class, put the draft on her desk and started writing a clean copy. The teacher noticed and took her papers away from her. Later that day Tamara Ivanovna came to the YCL meeting and declared that, having done such an immoral thing, my daughter was not mature enough to join YCL. «Why re-writing one's own composition should be immoral?» Inna asked. But the committee just told her to correct her attitude and to come back in a couple of months.

She came home in tears. This was a first «slap» on her cheek; the first real trauma in her life. Committee members, however, kept their promise and 2 months later voted her into YCL. They even commended her for being compliant, correcting her behavior and not keeping the grudge at Komsomol as others sometimes do.

She was a modest girl. Her hair was always neatly braided into 4 braids instead of two to keep all her hair tucked in. At school she wore her uniform dress and a black uniform apron. It wasn't until their graduation ball that she put kapron stockings on for the first time. These stockings were the dream of all girls. And I made her a fashionable white kapron dress and ordered nice shoes on heels from a shoe-maker. I also took her to hairdressers. There they had her hair trimmed and curled. She was such a fresh, pretty girl, dressed in all white and with rosy cheeks. She looked like a doll.

As a member of Parents Committee, I participated in preparations for the ball. Mark and I were there and had a lot of fun. We lived in our summer cottage then: it was our last summer cottage season.

I forgot to mention that, while preparing for her finals, Innochka sprouted a painful boil under her arm. Home-made remedies did not work, and we decided to pay a visit to a surgeon. To give Innochka more time to study, I went to the clinic first, took a place in the line and then called her over. In the doctor's office we saw a young and handsome physician. First he took Innochka for a little girl: she was, after all, only 150 cm high. He changed his manner instantly when he learned that she was 17. Afterwards she had to visit him every day to change her bandages, and they came to know each other. He obvi-

ously liked her. He visited us more than once both in the city and at the summer cottage. During one of their walks together he pronounced such an inspiring speech about medical profession that Innohka, who loved chemistry and had been planning to study chemistry at the university, changed her mind and decided to apply to medical school. She started preparing for entrance exams with private tutors. Then it turned out that the Russian department in Riga was not going to admit any students that year. I took her to Moscow, and from Moscow – to Yaroslavl' where they were taking more students than in other cities. We were hoping that she'd study there for a year – and then we'll arrange her transfer to Riga.

Alas! – She was well-prepared, but she was not admitted. Apparently, school officials realized that Inna would never work in Yaroslavl'. We went back with empty hands, having spent a lot of money for nothing. For Inna it was very much like mourning. At first she did not even want to go out of the house. She was ashamed of her failure. Then I told her that, starting from September 1st she should take tutors and prepare for the second attempt. And she did work a lot in the fields of physics, chemistry, English and literature. In addition, we arranged for her to work at the pharmacy to get working experience related to medicine. All this taken together gave good results. In 1959 she entered the Dental Faculty of Riga Medical School. She got excellent grades on all exams and received a good scholarship for the first semester.

Josic had just finished his 7th grade. I accompanied Innohka to all exams, stayed with other parents in the waiting-hall and worried about the results. It was a considerable emotional strain. Also, by that time we had exchanged our 2.5-room apartment on Strelnieku for 3.5-room apartment on Rupnietsibas Street. Now each of our children had a room and we had a big 25 sq m bedroom. The area of our dining-room was 23 sq m; the area of Innohka's room – 16 sq m. Also we had a small 4 sq m servants' room by the kitchen.

We accommodated that space for our son, and he was very happy because before he had slept with us in one room. This apartment was the realization of my loftiest dreams. There we lived for twenty and a half years, until our departure to America. And in America my only nostalgia was for that apartment and for Riga Coast. Thanks God, I missed nothing else – only that.

The previous tenant of that apartment was a Latvian man, a widower and former NKVD employee who had worked for «The Organs» for 33 years. After the death of his wife he married a Russian

nurse. He met her at the specialized hospital for NKVD personnel. She, however, did not want to live in NKVD building where people could never leave her alone.

That building was like a fortress. Front entrance doors were always locked, and all tenants, even kids, had personal keys. The entrance hall was very clean and nicely decorated, and electricity went on and off automatically. We moved there on December the 18th, 1958. In that building we were strangers, even though all other tenants – both adults and children – greeted each other when they met. In the summer everyone, including us, used to leave for summer cottages. One incident made us realize what that «Loubianka» was about. The next day after our return from the coast three boys came to watch TV with Josic. Television set was still a new and rare thing to have at home. At 10 p.m. the kids were ready to leave. I turned on the automatic light in the hallway and decided to send them one by one to avoid extra noise. One boy started descending – and suddenly the light went off. In the dark he ran into someone and screamed out.

It turned out, our 2^d floor neighbors were returning home. Father was carrying a sleeping girl in his arms. She got scared and started crying. Two other boys were already out of our apartment, and I turned on the light once again. Josic suddenly had to go to the bathroom. This neighbor also worked for NKVD. He left his daughter by his door or gave her to his wife, walked up the stairs to our door and slapped Josic a few times. Josic was going to open the front door for the boys. A red mark from the man's hand stayed on his cheeks for a while. The man's name was Zuev, I think, he was lieutenant-colonel. His wife also walked up one stair-flight to our door, shook her finger at me and shrieked:

– You bastards, look at them, at these new masters!

From seeing and hearing all that I saw and heard I literally went numb and could not utter a word of response. In all our 20 years of life in that house I never looked at members of that family, never said «hello» to them. I did nothing when that man Zuev died. After this incident they were as good as dead to me. By the way, out of 14 families who lived in that house we were the only Jews. Apart from «Hello» and «Good-bye» we had no communication with our neighbors.

The former owner of this building, Madam Eglite, lived right below us. She had suffered a lot from the Soviet regime, but she was good to us. A family of Russians born in Latvia lived in the above apartment. Their name was Smirnov. Their daughter Marina was Inna's classmate. They were nice, intelligent people.

In 1959 Innochka became a student. Instead of studies, all new students were immediately sent off to help collective farmers with harvesting. In the meantime, Mark and I went to the Kemerli sanatorium, for we hadn't gone to the coast that summer and hadn't got any rest. Feeling rested and healthy, I decided to find myself a job. Mark had already discussed this possibility with a designer he knew. His name was Khavkin. He said that he'd try to arrange an extra position for me. I went to Leningrad for a couple of days. I had no idea that a huge disaster would befall our family in my absence, and that reverberations of this disaster would ruin our lives for years to come.

Interestingly, on the train I had a dream: as if I am standing in my dining-room, and suddenly I see large cracks run down the ceiling. The entire ceiling breaks up in large rectangulars. I hear the noise and I scream: «Look out! It is falling!» – I woke up from my own scream. The train was standing at some station whistling and puffing. My dream turned out prophetic. The next day I received an urgent call in Leningrad: «Mark is arrested, children are alone, return as soon as you can».

Mark's position was that of industrial director at Dinamo plant. The director of the plant was vacationing in Sochi. Therefore, search warrants were issued for Mark's apartment, for the apartment of head engineer and for other employees' apartments. They found nothing incriminating in our house: we had no savings, no summer house and no automobile. The latter was considered the top of luxury in the Soviet Union. Our furniture was picked piece by piece in antique stores, but we tried to keep it in style and it looked as if it was ready-made set. The only valuables we had were my «trinkets» as we called a few jewel items I had. Part of them I got from Mama, the others – from Mark, as gifts for my birthdays and wedding anniversaries.

After the war these things were cheap and many people could afford them. They were hidden in the closet, wrapped up in a handkerchief. Mark told Inna to take them with her. And they were preserved. Also, I think that people who searched our house soon realized that it was the wrong place to look for hidden riches.

Our kids were shocked by these events. On that day they stayed at home. Josic was totally lost. As for Innochka, when Mark was taken away, she went over to our closest friends Lisa and Gherman Mussel and called me from their place. The same night I boarded the train and arrived to Riga by morning. Then our troubles started. All money had been spent on vacation – there was nothing left. We started borrowing; then – taking things to commission shops. Every day I

had to run various errands that had something to do with Mark.

First they were bringing Mark to his factory every day: he had to pass the business over to other people. Every day I journeyed there too, in order to see Mark and hoping to find out what was going to happen. A month passed like this. I lived in a state of shock. Then I collected myself and saw that I had to find the kind of job that will leave me enough free time to keep making inquiries about Mark's case.

I called everyone I knew and begged them to find a job for me.

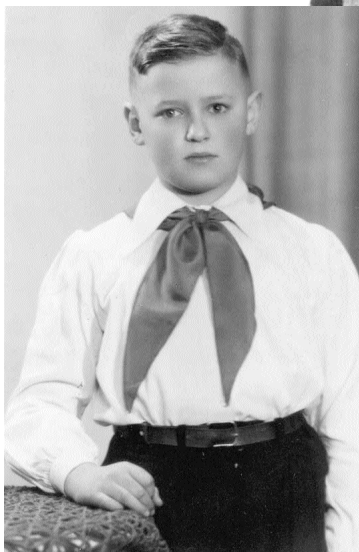
My childhood friend, Grisha Mochman, who was alive back then, offered me to sell ice-cream from a street-stall. He himself worked for the integrated dairy products plant. He apologized for making such a low-key offer and claimed that there might be enough money in this job to provide for my kids and help Mark. When he heard this, my son burst into tears and screamed: «No, you won't; I won't let you do it!» Truly, jobs like this were not respected in the Soviet Union. Besides, in Riga I was considered a classy lady. Even near strangers addressed me as «Madam Bekker». I promised Grisha to think about his proposition – but I knew in my heart that this job was not for me. Moreover, direct trade had never been my strong side.

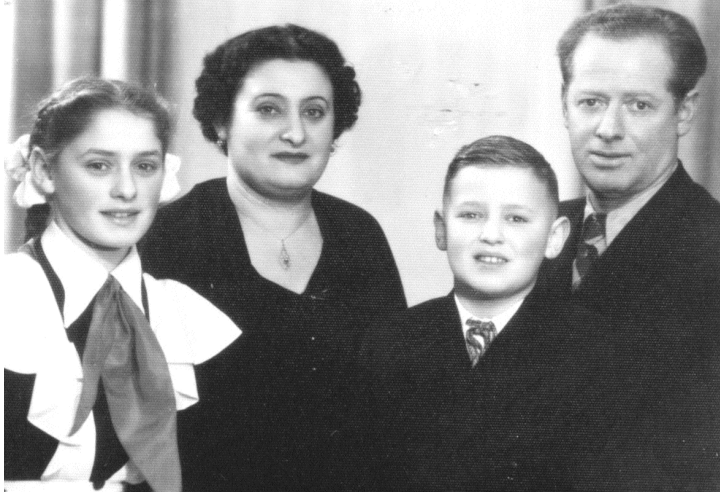
In a while someone arranged for me to work for the dress-making workshop where they specialized in men's fur jackets. One of the workers was assigned to instruct me on the specifics of the job. She was a kind, good person and was of great help. The best part was that all workers worked at home – and that was the most important factor to me. I did not earn much there: just 60-80 roubles per month, and that's because when dealing with thick fabric and fur we had to use thimbles, and I was not good at it. In the earlier years Mama repeatedly attempted to introduce me to working with thimble – and all in vain. Finally, trouble and need put it through to me. Now I cannot work without a thimble.

Inna and Joseph



Inna and Joseph





Sofa and Mark with children Inna and Joseph



**Mother and daughter.
1964**





Mother and son.
1967



STRUGGLE FOR MARK

My income was barely enough for us to survive and savings were out of the question. I did not feel like selling things from the house – I wanted Mark to return to a decent home. Therefore, I sold only non-essential things and that only when I needed to buy something for Mark. Ourselves, we fed basically on potatoes and cabbage. I did not want to borrow because that would have meant hanging debts on Mark.

All our old friends were very good with us. They invited us to all their parties and receptions. Josic used to tell me: «Mommy, I'll come pick you up. Maybe I'll get some nice food to eat.» My colleagues knew my situation. Sometimes they advised me: «Take your girl out of college and send her to work. And your son can learn some craft and earn money too. Then it'll get easier.» – «I'd rather starve than take my kids away from their studies», I answered. «My husband would never forgive me.» And I kept my word: when Mark returned, Inna was a practicing dentist and Jos was a fourth-year college student. I am proud that I managed to open the path to education for my kids without Mark's help. That was my great achievement.

But before that we endured a full load of hardships. In the summer of 1960 Mark stood trial and was sentenced to 8 years of prison camps. Then they transferred him a few times from one camp to the other. We followed him with parcels of food in row. Finally, we came to one prison camp located on the premises of a jailhouse, and guard at the reception desk told me that Mark was there. The next morning I picked up food and went there again, only to discover that during the night Mark had been sent off to Siberia. This news sent me into a screaming fit. The entire building must have heard me. I shouted that everything was finished; that I'd never see my husband again; that he had no clothes for cold climate – and so on. The receptionist walked out of her room and tried to sooth me. She said that Mark had received warm clothes.

Then my caucus race started. I visited investigators, prosecutors and other important persons. I wanted to find out why Mark had been sent to Siberia. After many efforts I learned that the Dinamo plant case was in the hands of MVD. They wanted to send director and head engineer to Siberia. As it happened, director was undergoing treatment in the prison hospital, so Mark was sent away instead to keep the count. This last blow almost killed me. Innochka, when she learned the news, was weeping and banging her head on the wall.

Mark confirmed our fear. He wrote that he was unlikely to survive if I do not find the way to pull him out of Siberia and to Latvia. And I once again started visiting different organizations – this time with the request to bring Mark back. I reached as far up as MVD Minister. I wrote one appeal after the other, and did all that on my own, without lawyers' help. I wrote what I felt – and then I insisted that important officials read these letters in my presence. Finally I succeeded. Approximately a year and three month after his transfer to Siberia (road time included), Mark was brought back to Latvia.

When I learned about Mark's transfer to Siberia, I called Leningrad and, sobbing, told them that Mark had been sent away virtually naked. Mark's brother Leva quickly filled suitcases with food and clothes and started off after Mark. I had Mark's note with the description of their route and with names of jailhouses they were supposed to pass. Leva used this note as itinerary . But he could not catch up with Mark's party. At every stop he heard that Mark's party had just left. At one place he almost caught up with them, but it took him some time to pick up suitcases and come back. When he returned, they had been gone. Eventually he gave up and returned to Leningrad.

When Mark's address became known, his relatives decided to provide him with everything essential and to free me from this burden. But how could I fail to send him things from home? – So, I continued sending him everything he might need or enjoy.

In Latvia Mark was assigned to one of Riga area prison camps located in the village of Olaipe. Life became easier. There were set hours for bringing packages for prisoners; every now and then we could see Mark for an hour or two, and twice a year I had a right for a personal date when they allowed us to be alone for 24 hours. At first I kept bringing kids along. Every time we dragged numerous bags with food and clothes – and were happy if the guards accepted them. At times our stuff was returned back to us. We stood there, begging to take one more item. These people, however, were not in the habit of wasting their time. They'd just slam the window shut in our faces. We felt terribly humiliated, and there was no one to complain to; no way to change things.

Once I asked Innohka to borrow 20 roubles from my workshop manager – just for a few days, until her stipend payday. We needed this money to buy something for Mark. The manager took the bill out of his pocket and handed it over in such a derogatory manner that Inna came back in tears. He did not believe that we'll pay him back.

I went to the market – and this bill got stolen from my purse. I wept openly from humiliation.

The other time they wanted to take away our arrested furniture. I put up a fight for every piece. I even appealed to the court because they wanted to take even our dinner table. I took everything I could out of the apartment or exchanged it, and by the time inspector arrived our apartment was stripped bare – to the point that telephone had to stand on the floor. I had a feeling as if a corpse had been carried out. But I found the way out. I bribed the inspector and she allowed one of Ina's suitors, M.G., to go to the store where they'd taken it and buy all furniture back. I told the inspector that they were about to get married.

I knew people working in that store and made an arrangement with them. The money for the purchase had to be borrowed. The next day our furniture was brought back. Then Mama came from Leningrad and wrote all furniture off to Inna as a grant. This was one other long and painful story, and it took a toll on our health. I mentioned earlier that the former owner of our building from the apartment below was very helpful to us in difficult times. She allowed us to store the rescued items – furniture, fridge and other stuff – in her apartment. Her two rooms were packed so tight that it was hard to walk in. For 8 or 10 months, until we found the way to take everything back, she slept on a folding cot in a walk-through room. This was very noble of Madam Eglite; my own mother wouldn't have dared to do such a thing.

I am eternally grateful to her and while she was alive I used every chance to express this gratitude. I attended her funeral, of course. May she rest in peace! – She did a great thing for us.

My children kept growing. Innochka turned into a beautiful young woman. She had many suitors, and they regularly visited our house in spite of our situation. Inna had to be properly dressed. My dress-making skills once again came in handy. I made and remade clothes for her, so she always looked nice. I recall, once she needed a winter coat. I purchased fabric for the price of 7 roubles per meter and made a coat for her. A 5-rouble tail made a great fur collar. To this I added a tall hat made of the same fabric. Everything looked so well on her that one of her boyfriends said: «It does not become you – it is you».

Mark's mother died in 1961. After her death we started receiving parcels from America. That helped us a lot. Grisha threw in many clothes for the kids, especially for Innochka. Part of them I sold, and

that added to my wages. And I am very grateful to Grisha, too. Then he started sending us money for foreign currency stores, and sometimes I could even afford to buy something for myself. I was running around like crazy in order to survive. In summer months I rented out one room in our apartment to actors on tour in Riga. Many nights I had to sleep on a folding cot –but I had my rewards in the form of tickets to my tenants’ performances. My passion for theater had not diminished – but I could not afford buying tickets for money.

Then I was fired from my sewing workshop. our new boss asked me to make jackets «on the side», i.e. for the black market. I refused, of course – and he fired me. I was left without a job and without income. Before leaving I told him just one thing: «I hope your wife will never be in my situation». Short time passed – and I learned that exactly the same had happened to his wife. Apparently, one who wrongs others will not go unpunished.

Then I decided that it was time for me to start working professionally. My job hunting lasted 2.5 months. For my family this was a tragedy. But eventually my efforts paid off. I was hired as standardization designer-engineer to one designers’ office. It had been 14 years since I last worked professionally, and at first I felt very intimidated. Very soon, however, I got used to it. I worked with enthusiasm and pleasure. Everyone loved and respected me.

Later our designers’ office was integrated with a factory and we were transferred to different premises located on the other side of the Dvina river. I had to get up at 6 in order to be at work by 8. My office was 2 trolley connections and 20-minutes walk away. I had to walk along railroad tracks in every kind of weather, be it snow or mud; frost or heat. Sometimes I slipped and fell. Still I liked my job. At 55 I had a right to retire, but I chose to work 5 more years. By soviet law, I was paid both my wages and half of my retirement pension. When they were hiring me, no one asked about my husband – and I said nothing. Still, my girlfriends at work suspected the truth.

Sometimes I had to bring bags with food and clothes to work in order to go straight to the camp from there. By the looks my colleagues gave me; by the manner with which they opened doors for me and saw me off, I could tell that they had their guesses. Sometimes we went to the camp with Inna, other times I went alone. Once I brought my bags to the prison, spent a long time standing in a line, then spent more time convincing the person on duty to accept extra bags. When I was finished, I looked around and saw that all other visitors had departed for the station. It was late, and I had to walk alone

through dark woods to the railroad station. Oh my, I was scared! Every little sound made me think about criminals stalking me. Tears of grief and horror were running down my face.

The other time I had a «personal date» with Mark and brought Inna along. At night they ordered her to go home and come back in the morning. She was scared of this lonely road to the station, and the person on duty suddenly took pity in her and permitted her to sleep in an empty room. We were surprised to see humane treatment.

My kids continued their studies and, in spite of all hardships, I never took my eyes off them. Or, as Inna put it, I was «lecturing» them while I was still making jackets at home, I used to ask Josic to come and sit by my side. Then I explained to him everything I considered essential for him. He was only 14 and I was afraid that he'd take the wrong road. Sometimes he'd tell me: «I need to discuss something with Papa!» This came from the depth of his soul. He reached puberty and it was taking a heavy toll on him, both physically and spiritually.

«Sonny, you know that your father cannot be with us right now. So, if you want to talk to your father, pretend that I am he. If you want to talk to your mother – I am her. Two persons in one body.» And eventually he did share with me all his problems – everything he had prepared for his father.

In time he got so used to personal conversations with me that he no longer felt awkward. And vice versa: when Mark returned, our son could not discuss personal topics with him. Once he told me that with Papa he could talk politics, life, studies – but not personal matters. And thus it went on – and it remains the same even now, when our kids are parents themselves.

To get away from sexual yearnings, Josic asked me to enroll him in a boxing group. I detest boxing: I think of it as nothing but ugly fighting. After a long argument I agreed to enroll him in sambo group hoping that it will be useful. There he learned that athletes could not smoke or drink alcohol. That was an important lesson.

Upon finishing his 8th school year, Josic decided to apply for a summer job to the local post office. He had to get up at 5 and go off to work. Often he had to visit apartments of people we knew. Once an old lady tipped him a few kopeks for bringing her a telegram. He put this money back into her mailbox.

He was against tips. If we went to the theater together, he'd grab my overcoat and stuff it into the hands of cloak-room attendant without tipping. «Mama, if you tip him, I am leaving at once». Same hap-

pened when we had to take a cab.

After 9th grade he firmly decided to transfer to night school because he could not stand teachers treating him like a small boy. I was against it, of course. I told him that at the night school he would not get enough knowledge to pass college exams. Also I thought that older students may teach him drinking and smoking. To that he said that night school students are all his age.

«Mommy, please, give me your permission, because I'll go there even without it, but I do not want it to look bad.» I had to comply. He arranged everything for the transfer without my help. Still, in order to study there he had to have a job: that was their requirement. But he was only 15.5 and by law could work only 4 hours per day. No one wanted such a worker.

Here I had to step in. I called an acquaintance of mine, head of department at the woodworking factory. Josic was hired as shift worker. Later I learned that he'd been able to master every machine he'd been assigned to in just 2 hours – and that his work was very high quality. With my permission, he found tutors to prepare him for college entrance examinations and paid them out of his own money.

After a long day at work and at school he was so exhausted that he'd come in and literally crash on his bed. But then he forced himself to get up and do homework. I urged him to sleep – and he answered that he could not appear at school without homework.

In his last year of school he was preparing me to his impending departure to Novosibirsk to study. He read about the Novosibirsk academic town in some magazines and decided that it was the only place to study. «You'd have to step over my dead body first» was my initial answer. Then he said that in that case he won't go to the university at all, but will work and provide for the family. Of course, I could not let my son give up his education. But he was only 16.5 – and we had no family or friends in Novosibirsk. No wonder, this plan scared me. He got highest grades in all school finals. When the exams were almost over, I suggested buying him a suit for graduation ball. He had no suits then. He said no. And explained: «If you buy me a suit, you won't let me go to Novosibirsk.» A couple of days before the ball I said: «Sonny, I want this suit to be a gift to you for successful graduation, and let's agree that it has nothing to do with Novosibirsk». To that he agreed. I accompanied him to the graduation ball. His boss from work also came and gave a speech, praising Josic for good work and presenting him with an honorary diploma. That's how my son finished school.

On July the 2nd – Josic was going to Novosibirsk to take university entrance exams. I could not let him miss a year of studies – and I had to agree to this trip. I tried to convince him, saying that it was very selfish of him to leave Mama at the time when Papa was not with her. He agreed, but replied I in my turn would be selfish if I didn't allow him to go. My soft heart could not stand this, and I succumbed. I cannot even think how much health it cost me. I was afraid that in Siberia, so far away from home, he'd take to undesirable habits like drinking and smoking, and that he'd marry a Russian girl. At home I prohibited him to smoke. I told him that a young man should be ashamed to ask parents for tobacco money. If you smoke – smoke at your own expense. And school students in general should not smoke. When Josic went to night school and started working – he also started smoking. He told me that he was paying for it with his own money. But for me he was still a schoolboy, and I did not allow him to smoke in my presence.

Apparently, he did smoke when I was not around. When he first came home from college, his first request was: «Mommy, please allow me to smoke in your presence.» When we arrived to the railroad terminal to see Josic off, I was in hysterics: I was screaming out loud, my head on his shoulder. And he had such a weird expression on his face that, in Inna's words, – «had the train waited 5 minutes longer, he would have cancelled his trip». He dropped his first postcards to me at one of the stations on the road. I even brought it with me to America. All other letters I re-read and cried over them – and then tore them up. I regret not bringing them along. I was told that letters were not allowed across the border. Jos told me then that those letters were far more important than my «crystals», because they were our history. There were Jos's letters from 16 years of his life in Siberia; letters written by Milochka, his wife; Mark's letters from prison camps, Innochka's letters – and letters from other relatives. Still, I have that first postcard my son sent from the road.

Here's what it says.

«July 3, 1962.

Dear Mommy! This is your prodigal son writing from the road. My sweet Mama, memories of our farewell scene make me sad. I think, it was the first time I realized how deeply you loved me. I'll try to never forget this. I'll do everything to make you proud of me. Please, don't be upset, do not cry. I beg you. Everything will be fine.»

Truly, whatever he achieved in the Academic town, he always

confirmed in writing and words that it was for my sake. In the meantime my life was very difficult. I did not earn much, but on paydays I used to go to the post office straight from work – and wire some money to my son. As a sophomore he had 20-rouble stipend, so I added 30 roubles more to make it 50. Later his stipend grew to 30 roubles – and I was adding 20.

Twice a year he came home for vacation, and then I bought all essentials for him. He was very undemanding and thanked me for everything.

Innochka still lived with me. Stipend was granted to her only for the first semester of her studies. Then she got married. Alik, her husband, was paid 120 roubles per month. She came up to me and said: «Mama, we'll be paying you 40 roubles for Alik's keep. As for me, you fed me before – so why don't you go on feeding me?» What could I tell her? –«Fine.»

Inna graduated as a dentist with a so-called «free diploma». That meant that she had to look for a job on her own. In Riga job market was hopeless for a dentist: she had to go elsewhere. And she decided to head for the North.

When she found a job in Murmansk, I was vacationing in a sanatorium. By the time I returned, she had been gone. It was October 1964. I was alone in my big apartment. My husband was in prison, my daughter – in Murmansk and my son – in Novosibirsk. I thought I'd lose my mind. But human beings are harder than iron. For a while I was very sick, but I survived. I was just lying there and crying, telephone by my bedside. My physician had trouble diagnosing me. Test results suggested that I had typhoid fever, and she said that she was obliged to hospitalize me. I responded that, even if she called the police, I'd go nowhere. And I did as I said. I survived this illness on my own, with God's help, and told nothing to my family members. One more challenge was behind me. I got better – and returned to work. Still, for many months I was not capable of answering Inna's letters. I had to visit Mark all alone, and dragging all these heavy bags was beyond my capabilities. Once my tenant Galia volunteered to help me. We took a train to the prison camp together. She carried part of my load to the office – and left immediately. Soon I discovered that I could neither see Mark, nor leave parcels for him that day. Thus I had to carry everything back to the station in the following fashion: take a couple of bags, walk 10 steps ahead, put them down – and return to pick up the rest. Thus I was crawling in the direction of railroad crying from pain and hurt feelings on the way. It was all the

more difficult since I had no one to share my feelings with; I had to keep everything inside.

Mark, when I saw him, remained true to his character: he blamed no one and kept reassuring me that everything will be fine; he'll come back and cherish me so tenderly that I'll forget past troubles. But I think, I'll never forget it. Even now, 20 years later, tears come to my eyes when I write about this. I feel everything anew: all bitterness and grief I had to endure back then. Still, I forgive everyone and I beg Lord to forgive them as well.

My lone existence lasted for half a year. Of course, I had plenty of things to take care of, and my devoted friends helped also. I am especially grateful to Boris Petrovich Muravsky.

Mark was released ahead of time.

On the 25th of March, 1965, I came home from work and found a short note in my mailbox. It was from Mark. He wrote that the issue of his release should be decided in court on the 24th, and that, if the decision is positive and he gets his papers in time, he'll be home on the 25th. I had no food at home, nothing at all. I rushed to the food store and was back in no time at all – but Mark was already waiting for me in the street. He went up to our apartment, rang the bell and when no one answered he went out to meet me.

At first I did not recognize him in his horrible prison rags. And when I did, my head swooned, my legs went numb and Mark barely had time to catch me. Thus we stood in the middle of the street, embracing each other, until I recovered.

Our apartment had not changed since Mark's departure. It was clean and tidy; all essentials were there. Most importantly, I did not have any debts. I immediately told the news to our kids and to relatives in Leningrad. We decided to get together in Leningrad. Innochka sent Jos a telegram and wired some money for the road. She herself flew in from Murmansk. Our relatives welcomed us and made receptions for us. After 5 years 5 months and 5 days (or 1985 days) of grief we were happy again. But it took all members of our family a lot of spiritual strength to survive. And, of course, not a single person was left unscathed: everyone had suffered both moral and physical traumas.

Very few Soviet families managed to avoid similar tragedies. Even the lucky few had to live in constant fear. They feared nightly telephone calls and painfully listened to street noises, afraid to hear a car halt in front of their house.

JOS

As I mentioned earlier, Josic left for Novosibirsk on July the 2nd, 1962. I'd like to recall his student years in more detail. When he left, he was sixteen and a half. He had no life experience whatsoever. Still, he was brave and energetic for his age. It takes courage to leave home and take full responsibility for oneself in such tender age. «I want to conquer life on my own», he used to tell me. «Right, but do not discover America for the second time, sonny».

Hence, he arrived to Novosibirsk University, submitted his papers and started taking exams. I asked him to inform us about his grades after each examination. He had applied to the Faculty of Biology and Medicine, therefore chemistry was his first exam. We received a telegram: « Chemistry 5, wire 10. Kisses, Jos.»

At the university he discarded his childhood name Josic and became known among his new friends as Jos. We also started calling him Jos. His second exam was physics. The second telegram repeated the first one in all but the amount of money required: «Physics 5, wire 20.» He passed all exams and was accepted to the university.

Instead of studies, he first had to work at the collective farm. Soviet students were habitually sent to collective farms to help out with fall harvesting, even though most of them could not do this kind of work and knew nothing about it. Instead of working in the field, collective farmers frequently used this time to take their private fruits and vegetables to local markets. In addition to college and school students, highly qualified workers and intellectuals also had to slave in the fields. The state had to pay dearly for this kind of aid.

On the farm boys and girls slept in one room. Jos spent the night with one of the girls and decided that he had to marry her. He waited till his coming of age at 18 and married Tania O. By that time their relationships had deteriorated so much that, as Tania's friend told me later, there was no point in this marriage. In 1965 Jos came to Leningrad to meet his father and told me that they had divorced.

Naturally, I was very unhappy about this marriage at first. Later my maternal feelings took over and I even prepared a present for Tania – a few pieces of nice lingerie sent by Grisha. At the news of their divorce I started crying. «Mama, why are you crying? You were so unhappy about our marriage. Shouldn't you rejoice now?» Jos said. –«Yes, I was not happy that you married at 18. But once it was done, you had to live with her, not divorce her!»

In the summer of 1963, even before they registered their union, he had brought Tania to Riga. I did not like her at all. The second time

they wanted to come when they were already a husband and a wife. One night Jos called me from Moscow. He said that he and Tania were at the railroad terminal and wanted to come to Riga. Did I want to see them? I said – no, I did not want to see them in Riga. «Well, then we'll go to Leningrad». I forbade him to stay at our relatives' houses in Leningrad. But he still called them and went there for the night. I was worried, of course, not knowing their whereabouts. Around that time I was scheduled to have «personal date» with Mark. Unwilling to deprive Mark of meeting his son, I called first Moscow, then – Leningrad; found out Jos's whereabouts and asked our relatives to tell him that he should come alone, without Tania. Inna and I were already with Mark, when Jos knocked on the window. They allowed him in and everything worked fine.

Many of Jos's friends, both boys and girls, visited us in Riga when they happened to be there for vacation, business or other reasons. They told us all about him, his life, his studies, etc. They all liked him and acknowledged his talent, wit and intellect. He lived in the dormitory and had friends there. At the end of his second university year he was noticed by Academician V. V. V., dean and director of the faculty. V. V. V. said that he needed a student majoring in three disciplines: biology, physics and chemistry – for these are all interlocked. He offered Jos to consider studying along specifically designed curriculum. Then he'd be able to stay at home (i.e. in the dormitory) or attend lectures of his own choice. Jos agreed and switched to this specialized curriculum. In the process two years of his studies were compressed into one. At twenty and a half he already received his college diploma. This was one of his first «presents» to me. «That's for you, Mama, to be proud of your son», he said.

In student years Jos was always short of money and, as many other students, he took extra jobs. He unloaded barges and train cars; worked as a waiter in a student café called *Under the Integral*, donated blood for money etc. Once he and his friend Zh. Gh. were sitting in the hallway of a blood donation center, waiting for their turn, they heard radio broadcast about «poor American students who were forced to donate their blood for money and work as street cleaners and waiters in order to survive». Zhenia, Jos's friend, worked as a street cleaner then. That's how they hit the nail on the head! This, however, did not prevent Zhenia, a poor country boy who had been brought up without a father, to earn his doctorate degree.

After graduation Jos was recommended to grad school. He was accepted after getting excellent grades in all exams. He continued working and studying in the same lab of the same institute where he had started his practice in his second college years. He stayed in this lab until his departure from Academic City.

Jos was literally infatuated with this Academic City. «What a pleasure to live and work with 3000 smart, educated people!» he always said. They had real democracy there and no sign of anti-Semitism – at least, in the first years of its existence. For example, once two young students who had never even seen Jews, got drunk and started wandering around the streets, pestering passers-by with the question «Are you Jewish?» They did not even know the popular insulting term for Jews: «Yid».

These guys were caught, beaten up and then put on trial. They were expelled from YCL, from University and from Academic City. Their Russian classmates were more outraged than Jews themselves. This, however, happened in the early years of Academic City. Because of his special curriculum, Jos found himself among first graduates of the University. Among them there were many Jews from different republics of the Soviet Union.

In 1980s anti-Semitism penetrated this academic enclave and non-official admittance percentage norm for Jewish candidates was established. I heard that from Jos's buddies who became professors and worked at the entrance exams. On the other hand, Academic City leadership changed, too.

In his student years Jos visited us in student vacation times, when he had a discount on flights and railroad tickets. Only his very first visit happened before vacations and exams, in December. He borrowed money from all friends and bought a ticket for the full price. We rushed out into the hallway and were astonished to see him.

– Jozin'ka, have they kicked you out? – Innohka asked and started crying.

He said that he had missed home so much that waiting an extra month had seemed impossible. It was then that he asked me for a permission to smoke in my presence.

He was the youngest student in his class and looked like a schoolboy. Therefore, he kept changing his appearance from one visit to the other: at times he'd come wearing a beard, at other times – sideburns, or even mustache. I could not get used to it.

On the first day of his stay he was usually very sweet, and I could do whatever I wanted with him. I'd take his hand and steer him

to the hairdresser he had known since childhood. There they returned him the looks I preferred. But if for some reason I could not do it on his first day of stay – it was a lost cause.

During his first visits to Riga Jos always found time to meet his night school girlfriend M. K. Then she got married. She continued visiting us when Jos was home, and once even came with her husband.

Then she gave birth to a son. On one of his visits home Jos declared that she was about to divorce her husband and that he intended to marry her. Perplexed, I asked: «Do you think you can father the other person's child and raise him?» He said «yes». I decided that there was no reason to be upset because they lived so far from each other. Jos introduced M to his school buddy A. Gh. and asked him to entertain the girl in his absence. Apparently, A. Gh. and M. fell in love with each other and decided to get married. A. Gh. regularly visited us and I sensed something unusual in his demeanor. Quite innocently, I started questioning him. Was he in love? – He said, yes, he was and he was planning to marry her. Then he told me the name of the bride. I was not upset. Jos, apparently, also took it easily because this incident did not disrupt his friendship with A. and M.

Then Jos showed me a photo of a typical Jewish girl and asked whether I liked her. I looked and said «yes». On his next visit to Riga he brought her along. We were just about to celebrate our wedding anniversary. I introduced her to our guests: «This is Milochka». We treated her very well, not knowing that she will become Jos's wife. Then he wrote that they were planning marriage. This was right before his thesis defense and I begged him to combine these two events. But they decided differently. Milochka wrote me a letter and I responded. I brought her letter and a copy of my response to America. Theirs was a student wedding and we did not go. We flew to Novosibirsk for Jos's defense. Milochka's parents also came. We met them and got to know each other.

I took my son's marriage close to heart, as every mother would. Milochka had already been married and had a child. I could not imagine my young son as father of a child who was not his. This issue was constantly on my mind, and I was not in the best of moods. My colleagues noticed that. One day, during our dinner break, I was writing a letter to Milochka in response to her letter. Not surprisingly, tears were rolling down my cheeks. My friend and colleague Katia B. noticed that. We were alone in the room and she started asking questions about my bad mood. We had the following conversation.

K: «S. M., why are you so upset recently?»

I: «There are reasons for that, Katia.»

K: «Maybe Josic is planning marriage?»

I: «Yes, he is.»

K: «Maybe his bride was married before?»

I: «Yes, she was.»

K: «And she has a child?»

I: «That's right.»

Katia started crying: she was a very emotional woman. Then she screamed out loud: «Then why are you sitting here?! You should fly to Novosibirsk and break up this arrangement!» She was weeping bitterly and I was trying to calm her down. «I am not going anywhere and I do not intend to upset their plans», I said. «It won't work anyway – they have made their decision. If I meddle in their affairs, I will lose both my daughter-in-law and my son.» It took time to restore her presence of mind.

My letter to Milochka was all soaked with tears, and I had to re-write it. That's the draft of that letter that I brought with me to America. After this episode Katia always called me «an exemplary mother-in-law». Her own mother-in-law was not good, and she had no relationships with her. Katia had one son who was then 17. If social activists from Management Committee dropped by our department, inquiring what kind of lectures we wished to hear, Katia always replied: «Let S. M. lecture us on becoming as good mother-in-law as she is.»

Jos and Milochka got married and Jos adopted Pavlik. I asked him if he felt capable of being a father to this child. Jos said «yes». He spent a lot of time with him, took him to daycare and to school, and eventually Pavlik adopted Jos's manner of speech. When they first came to Riga together, I asked Pavlik: «Do you know who you are visiting?» – «No», he said. – «Haven't Mama and Papa told you?» – «They have, but I've forgotten», he found the way out. Milochka whispered in my ear: «We did not know how you want him to call you». –«Well, if Jos is his father, we are naturally his grandmother and grandfather», I responded. And that's how he called us since then. We got used to him, and I make no difference between our grandchildren. We regard him as our oldest grandchild and love him as well as the others.

Now he is already a student and is very proud of it. In all the years of my son's marriage I never had conflicts with my daughter-in-law. I never complained, never badmouthed her and always took

her in her face value. No matter whether I liked their lifestyle or not, I never reprimanded Milochka, never made personal remarks. On the contrary, I always took her side of the argument. That's why we still have warm, normal relationships. She is always attentive and polite – and I am the same to her. I did for her everything I did for my son. I used to send her birthday presents, same as to Jos; I baked the same kind of strudel for her; gave her food and clothes. She also wrote me rhymed greetings on cards for my birthdays.

Some of these cards are here with me.

One reads as follows:

«We congratulate our dear mother, we kiss her, and love her, and wish her many happy returns for many years to come.

Let your kids bring joy to you;

Let them bring you strength, not wrinkles.

We praise your tenderness and wit.

Pavlik, Mila and your loving son.»

Jos defended his thesis in early April, 1970 and received Ph. D. in chemistry. He was only 24 years old. Mark, Innochka and I flew to Novosibirsk for the occasion. Mark and I were still working and we registered this journey as a business trip. I went in the official position of factory treasurer for a scientific society, and Mark received a commission from his VEF factory. We did not get a chance to see the defense because it was held in the «closed» research institute. To get onto its territory we needed special passes, and Jos had no time to arrange that – and probably was not very willing to do that. He probably thought that our presence would intimidate him.

Our relatives and friends sent us many telegrams with congratulations. I preserved them and brought them to America. For us it was a joyful occasion. All our labors and worries were awarded. I was particularly happy, since it was me who had to take care of our kids' education in the hardest of times. I endured every hardship because my sense of duty and my desire to see our children educated were stronger than all other wishes and feelings.

After Jos's defense we had a banquet in the restaurant for friends and defense committee members. We were happy to hear speeches of our guests, poems and songs, dedicated to Jos, and warm words addressed to ourselves. I had prepared a speech in which I wanted to express my gratitude to everyone who mattered in my son's life. I remember putting it together in my mind, long before the occasion, while I was traveling to work. On our way to Novosibirsk we stopped

in Moscow and told our relatives about this speech. They advised me against it, because that had to do with Jos, and not me.

Still, after Jos's boss made a kind remark about his parents, I stood up and thanked everyone who had helped him to become a scientist and a worthy human being. I finished by honoring them with my maternal bow. I was very happy to get this first reward for my efforts.

Milochka's parents came to Jos's defense from Kemerovo. They were nice people and good parents. They were helping out their three kids as much as they could; never meddled in their affairs and took their kids as they were. After this initial meeting we exchanged letters and phone calls with them until our very departure to America. They visited us in Riga a few times for vacation.

Milochka's parents were originally from Kiev. There they both went to construction Institute; there they married and had their first son. At the start of the Great Patriotic War they were evacuated to Kemerovo (Siberia). In Kemerovo they finished college and stayed there to live and work. Both had nice responsible jobs. In Kemerovo they had 2 more kids: Milochka and Zina. All three received college education and started their own families. Milochka's parents had 3 grandsons and 2 granddaughters. Unfortunately, Milochka's father died of cancer in April 1985, several years short of 70. Her mother's life changed drastically after her husband's death.

For a long while Jos, Milochka and Pavlik lived in a dormitory. Finally, they received a one-room apartment in Academic City. This happened after Jos's defense. Several years later they had a new baby, Danichka, and moved to a two-room apartment. Still, their place was crowded and they were very poor, in spite of Jos's senior scientific worker's income of 100 roubles.

MY SISTER VALIA

In April, 1967, we decided to celebrate our 30th wedding anniversary. Our silver anniversary fell on 1962, but Mark was in prison camp then. We sent out invitations to all relatives and friends. Many relatives arrived from Moscow and Leningrad; Innochka came from Murmansk and Jos – from Novosibirsk. We had a very solemn and nice reception for our most favorite and biggest family occasion. This day was one of the happiest in our married life – and this is how it stands out in my memory, unscathed by troubles.

My sister Valia, her husband Ziama and their daughter Rimnochka also arrived. They gave us an electric tea-pot (samovar), and I treasure it as a memorial present. For the summer they went to the Lithuanian town of Druskenikai. Ziama was very busy in his research institute, and, though he felt unwell, decided to forgo medical examination that all Soviet people had to pass before going to a resort.

He persuaded a physician to give him OK without actually examining him. That was a mistake he paid with his life for. Ziama spent a month in that resort and returned to work. Valia and their kid stayed for another month. When they came back and Ziama met them on the platform, Valia got scared: his face was absolutely yellow. She started persuading him to check into the hospital for complete medical exam, but he kept postponing it. He wanted to finish his job fast in order to get full money reward.

Eventually, things got to the point when Ziama had to be checked into emergency room. They took him to the OR, opened up his abdomen and found his intestines all tied up in knots. They took part of his intestines out. My sister asked me to come and look after Ziama in the hospital. I was still working and had to take a leave at my own expense which also reduced the amount of my retirement pension.

When the most critical period passed and Ziama improved, I returned home. Ziama spent 3 months in that hospital. Before discharge he was tested and the tests showed that he had cancer of the stomach. Valia called me in Riga and, sobbing, told the news of this diagnosis. After many consultations with different medical doctors, he was transferred to a different hospital, to cancer ward, in order to remove the tumor. Ziama did not know his diagnosis. On December the 21st I took a second leave and once again went to Leningrad. Unfortunately, Valia was down with grippe.

Those days were terribly cold. It took me an hour and a half in

an unheated trolley car to get to the hospital. I had to leave early in the morning and return late at night. 8 days passed. Everyone said that, if Ziama survives 10 days after the surgery, he'll recover. One day, at around 7 p.m., Ziama said that he was hungry and I warmed up some home-made chicken soup for him. Then he said that he felt unwell and asked me to give him medicine instead of food. I poured his medication in a shot-glass, put it into his hand and went to get some water for him to drink with medicine. My absence lasted less than one minute, but when I returned, the medicine was spilled on his blanket and he was unconscious.

I immediately called the nurse on duty. She gave him oxygen. «Where are the doctors?» I asked. She said, they were busy in the OR and there was no one to go and fetch them I went running from one floor to the other looking for the OR, having no idea where exactly to find it. Finally I found it and burst in there, crying. «No one is allowed!» – they tried to tell me, and I screamed: «A man is dying!» One of the doctors came over to Ziama's room and started artificial respiration and heart massage. Nothing worked. He died in my arms and was taken to the morgue right away, because in the bed next to his there was another terminally ill patient, a young artist. (He died a couple of months later.) Presently Valia came to replace me by Ziama's bed. But it was too late: Ziama was gone. And I had to tell this horrid news to Valia.

While she was still on the way, I called relatives and friends with the news of Ziama's sudden death and begged them to come for us. This happened not long before New Year Eve.

Mark came from Riga, Innochka – from Murmansk. Funeral could not be arranged before the holidays. Therefore, we buried Ziama on January the 2nd, 1968.

Rimmochka was 11 then, but Valia refused to tell her about her father's death. She sent her to stay with their friends, the Kuslik family, for winter break. They lived on Lesnoi Prospectnue. Only after our departure, when winter break was over, Valia went to the Kuslik's house and told Rimma what had happened. The girl took it very hard. She was very much like her father – both in appearance and character. Even her handwriting was like his.

Life became difficult for Valia and Rimmochka, both in terms of physical survival and spiritual climate. We helped them as much as we could. Our children did the same. Even now we are sending Rimmochka money. Valia had always been sickly, albeit no physician could diagnose what was wrong with her. Therefore, for a long time

she did not work. A year before Ziama's death she started teaching English at foreign language courses offered at the Officers' House. And there she worked until the end of her life.

Ziama was only 46 and a half when he died. After the funeral we were about to head back home. «Take Papa along, at least for a while», Valia begged us. Mark and I offered Papa to go with us. He refused, arguing that he was blind and could not travel. He had cataract in both eyes. I do not know if he ever visited an eye doctor in Leningrad. Mark talked to him very convincingly. He said that in Riga we'll take him to a good doctor, he'll have a surgery – and will see normally again. Papa was 77 and a half. Finally, we persuaded him and he went with us. Mama stayed behind in Leningrad with Valia and Rimmochka.

Papa had never traveled by air before, and the plane we took was quite small – only for 25 passengers. The flight lasted only hour and a half. I was worried about Papa's reaction, but he said it felt as if he'd been riding a bus. Presently we took him to the best eye specialist – Dr. Ferber, the one who once operated our son Jos. When emigration became possible, he and his family were among the first to leave for Israel. He lives in Israel and is still a practicing physician.

Dr. Ferber checked Papa into the eye department of 1st City Hospital. Then he operated one eye and said that at Papa's age the second surgery is unnecessary. In spite of diabetes, Papa recovered well. He spent more than a week at the hospital. Once he received special glasses, he was able to read whatever he wanted, walk around on his own and, generally, feel like a human being again. He even asked Mark to find him a job.

First he lived in Inna's room. When she returned to Riga, he moved to servants' room, claiming that it was more comfortable and, most importantly, from there he did not have to pass dining room on his way to the bathroom. Everything was at hand. Papa had never been very sociable, and with age he came to dislike people in general. When we had guests, he wouldn't go into dining-room at all. Making him sit at the common table with the guests for our family occasions was extremely difficult.

He lived with us for ten and a half years – until our departure to America. And then we had to bring him back to Valia.

In October 1972 my mother died. It happened 3 years after Ziama's death. Thus, for 5 years Mama and Papa lived separately. Before their separation they did not get along well: kept quarreling and refused to understand each other. It seemed to me that by the end

of her life Mama did want him to come back, but Valia was against it, claiming that it would be too difficult for her. Also, their apartment was far from comfortable. All rooms were walk-through. Parents had to take their night pots through all these rooms to the toilet in the morning.

When my sister informed us that Mama had died, I went to work to arrange my leave. I asked Papa whether he wanted to go with us to the funeral. He quickly said «no» and explained: because he felt indisposed. I was very surprised – and, apparently, Papa sensed it, and he changed his mind. He went with us. Leaving little Ilushen'ka and Leva behind, Inna arrived on the day of funeral carrying a huge wreath and flowers.

Grandmother was crazy about Inna. Inna frequently expresses regret that she did not spend more time with her.

BIRTH OF OUR GRANDSON ILUSHEN'KA INNOCHKA'S FAMILY EMIGRATES TO AMERICA

Innochka worked in Murmansk for 3 years. She worked extra hours and double shifts, and she was paid extra wages for working in a polar climate. By Soviet standards, she earned quite a lot. She used this money to go traveling abroad. First she went to Bulgaria, then – to Czechoslovakia. She has always had a passion for traveling and seeing the world. In Murmansk she had boyfriends and girlfriends. She even had a room there, but in a while got tired of harsh climate, of freezing temperatures and polar night, and decided to go back to Leningrad.

She acted upon this decision in the winter of 1968, when Ziama died. It also helped that Papa was with us in Riga. Still, living together with others proved not comfortable, and Innochka had to rent a room. She was granted the status of resident in Pavlovsk – and started working there for the local clinic. But she missed home. Therefore she enrolled in tour guides' courses for Leningrad – Tallinn – Riga tour route. After finishing these courses, she started taking tourists to Riga on weekends in order to spend more time with us.

In this fashion she came for my birthday on July the 7th.

In Leningrad Inna's wages were just 120 roubles: not enough to live comfortably. Besides, she had to pay rent. When she had run out of her Murmansk savings, we started sending her a little money to pay rent. When she came for my birthday, Inna said that she was ready to move back to Riga. She quickly ran through all the necessary papers and came home on August 1st, 1970. We moved Papa to the servants' room; renovated her old room, bought furniture for her and made the place look modern.

Innochka started working for the local clinic. Soon she acquired a number of new suitors, Lev Grozovsky among them. In a short while she married him and gave birth to a baby-boy, Ilushen'ka.

They lived in our apartment, while Leva rented out his own apartment – a place without accommodations – to a friend. He had no close relatives in the USSR. His sister Zina, married to a Polish Jew, lived in Israel with her husband and her small son. Innochka had long nurtured a dream to leave the USSR. They asked Zina to send them an invitation – and she obliged. This invitation arrived in the summer of 1972.

I was still working then. From work they sent me on a 16-day tour of Romania. Innochka, in the meantime, rented a summer cot-

tage on Riga Coast and lived there. The next day after my arrival from Romania I opened my mailbox and found an invitation from Israel for Leva, Inna and Ilushen'ka. I was horrified. Back then very few people managed to leave, and we knew nothing about life in Israel. Besides, Inna and Leva's marital life was far from perfect: they were always quarreling and could not live in peace with each other. Once they had such a row that Inna, who was pregnant then, asked him to go away and let her give birth in peace. She was very nervous during pregnancy and had frequent crying bouts. I had a serious conversation with Leva and soothed out this conflict. In a while they started making plans about emigration. I could not get into my head how people of our age could possibly go to a strange country, where they speak a different language and have different lifestyle.

Mark and I were both still working. Our retirement pension added handsomely to our wages. We had a wonderful apartment and a very comfortable lifestyle. I could not imagine anything better than that. Besides, there was our son and his family in Novosibirsk. All in all, it was very painful for me to part with my daughter and her family. Still, I said nothing against their departure, and, when they asked me, I went to the notary and signed their release papers. Once back at home, I had a crying fit. In the meantime, Inna and Leva started collecting papers for OVIR.

I was very upset, but I kept a straight face at work. I was ashamed of the fact that my daughter wanted to leave the country. Not long before I got news about their imminent departure a funny episode happened. One youngish factory worker, T. M., complained to me that her mother would not permit her and her family to emigrate. «Tanechka, I sympathize with you, but wouldn't like to be at your mother's place». That was the exact wording of my response. And very soon I found myself in a similar situation. Yet before her son's birth Inna left her old job and transferred to a military sanatorium in Lielupa. There she had a room and kept working until it was time to go on maternity leave. After maternity leave she refused to return to work. They hired a different dentist. When Ilushen'ka was 9 months old, Inna got a job offer from our local medical center. She was asked to replace a lady dentist who was going to Canada for 6 months. When that lady returned, Inna was offered a permanent position. She refused, not willing to lead medical center or sanatorium administrators into trouble for hiring a refugee. (And they would have had a lot of trouble: in those years it could not happen otherwise).

Besides, the principal doctor at the medical center was our good

acquaintance. Thus, preparations for departure were going at full speed. Suddenly Leva felt unwell and decided to undergo medical examination at the hospital where his friend Yakov Treyzon worked. Thus, Inna had to go herself and get his documents for OVIR from his workplace. He was a teacher at the music school. Music school director was taken by surprise. He was their sixth professor to become a refugee. She and Leva were studied together at the Conservatory and were old friends. She and her husband were at Inna and Leva's wedding.

Eventually, Innochka collected all papers and took them to OVIR. She was studying English with a tutor who had lived for a while in Canada and had been driven back by nostalgia. Also she was taking private driving lessons – and all that with a small baby on her hands. At one they sent him to daycare to make life easier. Mark and I still worked.

My only contribution was to cook meals for the entire extended family. Food was provided by those who managed to find it. In the Soviet Union one could not just go and buy consumer goods, including food products: one had to find them first.

And even just cooking was too hard for me after a day of work. Don't forget that I was almost 60. Sometimes I'd come from work, undress in the hallway, walk into the kitchen – and stay there until 11-12 p.m. My fridge had to be filled with ready-to-eat food. Dishwashing also never stopped, because all of us were eating at different times.

When Inna took her papers to OVIR, I informed my supervisors at work that I was going to work 2 more months and resign on July 7, 1973, on the day of my 60th birthday. Back then applicants had to wait about two months to receive an answer from the Riga OVIR office. Inna and her family received an affirmative answer in exactly 2 months.

I was in a horrible mood, but at work I was pretending like a professional actor. I could not tell a single person that my daughter was going to Israel. One can only imagine, how I felt and how I worked. I was convinced that we'd never meet again. It could not even occur to me that some time Mark and myself may join our daughter. In any case, I had to make a reception for friends and colleagues to celebrate my birthday and my retirement. This could not be done at work – and I decided to make a party at home.

On the first day 29 guests from work came; on the second day – 20 souls of friends and Leningrad relatives. My last day at work was

Friday, July the 6th. I arrived to work – and they congratulated me and gave me honorary letters from our factory administration and from the Republican Scientific Society where I worked as a treasurer for many years. Chairman of this Society arrived specifically to honor me and to present me with a bouquet of fabulous roses. In addition to financial bonuses, factory administration wrote thirty-third encouragements into my work record card. I thanked the director personally when I came to say «good-bye» to him.

Then I went home, and at night my colleagues came and the feast started. There were a lot of speeches and a lot of fun. My co-workers gave me 51 carnations – because, they said, I looked rather 50 than 60. I did look younger than my age and liked the company of younger people. So they thought I was younger, while I was the oldest worker in our department.

My son also was there. He took a leave to attend my birthday and to say «good-bye» to Innochka. My co-workers took all honorary letters, flowers and other awards from my arms and said that they'd like to repeat the ceremony at home, in order to show my kids that I was not just a mother, but also a worker and social activist.

Still, the climate in my family was heavy. Ilushen'ka was a year and 10 months old. He was very moody, hard to get to sleep. Innochka had to stand by his crib all the time, lulling him to sleep. She could hear everything through the door. My friend Lisa Musel' – she helped me to prepare for the reception – was impatient to go to the Coast because her grandson Danya turned 3 on that same day. She had a lot of fun and wanted to stay with us, but she had to go shortly. She had never worked; had never been engaged in social activities, and voiced her regret that her 60th anniversary would not be as festive as mine. I understood her very well. Half a year later Mark and I arranged a surprise for her. I will write about it in due turn.

That July was unusually hot: temperatures rose above + 30 Centigrade. In the Soviet Union there were no air conditioners. I think, even now they are a rare occurrence not only in private apartments, but also in public offices. Our fridge was overfilled with food. The next day we had to throw some things out. On Saturday the 7th we had 20 guests. Once again we celebrated my retirement and my 60th anniversary.

And then – daily routine resumed. Inna and her family continued their preparations for departure. Grisha and his wife came to Leningrad from America, and we went to meet them. Inna, Leva and Ilushen'ka joined us.

Normally we'd have stayed at my sister Valia's place, but this time Rimmochka was preparing for her college entrance exams and Valia was afraid that so many overnight guests might disrupt Rimma's studies. She was even more afraid that people who shared an apartment with them might see Inna and somehow learn that she was about to leave for Israel. As Inna wrote later, fear was our social curse.

Our Moscow relatives also came to Leningrad and all places were filled. By pure chance, we learned that Ofelia Amirkhanova, daughter of our friends from Tbilisi, and her three children were staying in a hotel in Leningrad. She took Inna, her husband and child into her hotel room.

Our Leningradian relatives made receptions for Grisha and his wife, and we met there. On his last day we assembled at Raia's place. The day before Innochka asked if Grisha could take a violin to America, and he agreed. In the morning she took a flight to Riga and returned the same day. She took a taxi from the airport to Raia's place. Leva was so happy that he started playing that violin. We took Grisha and his wife to the airport and returned to Riga – we had plenty of things to do and there was just one week left. For Leva and Inna however, one week was enough to change their destination: now they were going to America instead of Israel. They had information that musicians could find job easier in America. Inna as a dentist would have been better off in Israel: there she wouldn't have needed to take license exams.

They started re-packing everything, because it was not necessary to take as many things to America as to Israel. In the last days before their departure I was stupefied. First I refused to even go to the airport. But mother's heart is not made of stone: it is harder than iron. I gave to Innochka my diamond earrings. Once my mother was wearing them; then she gave them to me for the 20th anniversary of my wedding. She said, they would look better on me than on her. I always admired them when Mama put them on.

Time passes, everything changes. When I gave these earrings to Inna I knew that they would look better on my daughter than on me. But I had one other reason for giving them to her: this was a memory of their late grandmother – and of me. I thought I'll never see Inna again. Our gift to Leva was American electric shaver sent by Grisha. Of course, they were going to America, but this was a useful present.

Eventually I did get to Moscow to see them off. I was very upset. At the airport I was in hysterics: I screamed out loud, and cry-

ing. My face was swollen from tears for a week after that.

Mark and I stayed for a week in Moscow. I was in such a terrible condition that we were reluctant to return to our empty apartment. Ilushen'ka's words kept ringing in my ears: «Granny, come with me!» I was holding him in my arms while they were waiting for the customs officers to inspect their luggage. Then Mark put him in a light two-wheel stroller and went to the counter with Inna and Leva. While their luggage was being inspected, he was driving the kid around. Generally they did not allow anyone but the passengers there, but the kid would have disrupted their work otherwise. The airplane was already 1 hour and 20 minutes late – all because papers for two violins were incorrect. In the end, everything was settled and they were allowed to take even more than they'd expected.

Mark and I stayed for a week with our relatives in Moscow – and returned home. Then we went to the Bulduri sanatorium on Riga Coast, rested for two weeks – and returned to our routine. All we had left was to wait for our daughter's letters.

Our daughter was in America, our son – in Novosibirsk, while Mark and I lived in between them – in Riga. All three families had different time zones, different climates and different lives. A human being can get used to almost anything, but nothing passes without trace.

We also did not go through this event unmarked: Mark suffered paresis of a facial nerve (curable, thanks God!) – I had a stroke, and its consequences bother me until now.

STROKE

Exactly five and a half months after Inna's departure to America I fell seriously ill. Mark was still working at the VEF factory. In winter he was granted a 24-day pass to a Riga Coast sanatorium for cardio-vascular patients. He had to leave on January 9, 1974.

I was left alone in the apartment. The next day I went for a walk, but my feet kind of pulled me back and I returned soon. I lay down on the sofa and dozed off. I awoke from spasms in my left arm and leg – they felt kind of numb, or «asleep», as they say. It was weird because I was lying on my right side all the time. I started rubbing my limbs. At that moment telephone rang. Our friends Lisa and Gherman M. wanted to come over to take a bath and to stay overnight. They shared their apartment with another family; rooms were heated by nothing but woodstoves, and hallways were cold. On their way from bathroom to their room they were constantly getting colds. They were both kind of sickly.

Thus, they came over, I cooked dinner and made their bed. Then, while Lisa was taking a bath, Gherman and I played cards. I still felt pain in the top of my head. My left hand was so weak that I could not hold the cards. Mark called from his sanatorium, but I chose not to complain – I did not want to upset him. My symptoms were getting worse. I could not sleep all night. In the morning Mark called again to say that he'd drop by after his therapy session. Then I burst into tears and said that something was wrong with me and I could not even go to the clinic.

Mark called a cab and on his way home dropped by our medical center and brought a neurologist, a young doctor. He immediately diagnosed my condition: stroke. He said that to arrest the developing paralysis I had to take Japanese drug called Gemalon. Two other physicians confirmed this diagnosis. Now we had to find the medication.

Our doctor friend Yakov Treyzon used his Ministry of Healthcare contacts to get me the first 50 capsules of Gemalon from children's reserve. Then shipments of Gemalon started arriving from different cities and corners of the USSR. Our son checked the description of the medicine and said that all its ingredients could be found in his lab. He could send them over if we found someone to put the drug together. «If it is so», – I reasoned, – «then the USSR will soon produce its own medication. It is better than paying hard currency to Japan.»

I was correct. A few months later the same medication appeared

in the Soviet pharmacies under the title of Aminolon. It was easier to find than the Japanese stuff. I took thousands of those capsules and – thanks God! – they helped. I did not go to the hospital: Mark took good care of me at home. Doctors and nurses visited daily doing everything necessary. We paid them, of course, in spite of the official notion that Soviet medicine was free. Physical therapists and rehabilitation massage specialists also visited me at home. For a long time I could not walk – I just kept falling. It was very difficult to keep my head up: I had to uphold it with my hands. Gradually, love for life and strong will started winning over the disease.

As soon as I felt better, I called my dress-maker and ordered a new dress for the summer. Mark actually took me there for fitting. He also took me to my hairdresser's. For a woman, there's nothing like good looks.

While I was still sick we received a mail notice that our dining-room furniture set was waiting for us. I ordered this set while I was still working. In the Soviet Union everything is so hard to find that no one ever refuses such offers. I told Mark to go to the store and inspect the set. He took a few friends and went. He made sketches, paid the money and described to me everything in detail.

The total area of our 3.5 rooms was 66 sq m. Norm of residential area for one person was 9 sq m. In order to register someone else as resident in one's apartment, one had to have at least 12 sq m per person, or 72 sq m in our case. In other words, we were 6 sq m short. Mark wrote a letter to the regional residential management office. As a veteran of war and a retiree, he asked their permission to register our son and his family as our apartment residents. He was granted this permission and on March 25, 1978, Jos and his family came to live with us.

Previously he also visited us in Riga, and every time tried to convince me that we have to emigrate to the West. He got this idea approximately a year after Inna's departure. In spite of his successful career (as a senior research assistant he had a group of students and researchers under his supervision), he did not want to live in the country where he could not speak and act freely. By that time they had their second child. The boy was born on March 22, 1977, and was named Dan. «An» came from my mother's name – Anna.

In October we decided to go and see the new baby. Transportation discount season started on October the 1st. We stopped over in Moscow for a few days and then proceeded to Novosibirsk. The baby was already 7 months old. Right before our

arrival Jos received a new 2-room apartment to replace their old studio. Around that time Milochka started working again. She worked part-time (4 hours a day).

It was apparent to us that, in spite of his degree and position, they were very poor. When Jos asked me whether I liked his family and lifestyle, I said that I liked everything about his family, but that it was time to start living better. «I agree – if you go with us», he said, thrilled. I said that I could not promise that, but he already stopped listening. From that moment on we started preparing for the departure.

Of course, we could not stay in the Soviet Union without our kids. It would have been silly and pointless.

Besides, Innochka kept writing tearful letters, begging us to come. My initial idea was to go visit, and we did everything possible to act upon it. We had 3 invitations: 2 from Inna and one from Grisha. We sent our papers to OVIR three times, asking for permission to visit our daughter in America. And 3 times they refused us. Then we decided to go for good together with Jos and his family.

For 5 years I resisted my kids' urges. I could not imagine building a new life in a new country where everything was strange: language, people and customs. Still, I knew that my family did not want to stay.

Mark never pressured me on this subject, but I knew that emigration was his long-cherished dream. When I asked him whether he wanted to go, his answer was short: «Yes, very much so!»

I knew that resistance was useless. Had something happened to me – Mark would have left the country. I knew plenty of such stories: one spouse dies, and the other emigrates. There was no point in sitting and waiting for death to come. And I decided to go along my family's wishes.

The die was cast – and I collected all my calm and courage to take apart the place we called our home for 20.5 years. I sold and gave away everything we could not take along. I worked calmly, without regrets or tears. It was as if I turned to stone. Back then emigrants were still allowed to take furniture and other household items. Therefore, we packed most of our garb into boxes and took it with us to America. Experience showed that many of those things did not come in handy in American life: they just take up room and get in the way. But I do not have the heart to throw them away. As I say, – «We are from a poor country».

When Jos and his family arrived to Riga, preparations started off

at full speed. We collected papers for OVIR; translated our diplomas, work record cards and other documentation into English, sent many of our and Jos's books to Inna's address in 5-kg boxes – and sold the rest. Our crystal houseware also had to go off in a box because there was a limit on what one could take through the customs. On April 27 we took our documents to OVIR. I single-handedly filled out questionnaires for myself and Mark, and Jos did the same for his family.

While we waited, we decided to go to Riga Coast. Jos rented a room in Maiori and we moved in with our acquaintances in Avotu. Milochka's parents also arrived to say farewell to their children and grandchildren. They stayed at the resort hotel on the coast.

Two months passed – and permission to leave was granted to us. We returned to the city and started final packing.

Our departure was set for August 7, but Moscow relatives asked us to spend a few days with them.

On July 23 Jos and his family left Riga by air – it was more convenient with a small child. We followed them by train. Jos and Mark's brother Senya met us on the platform.

In Riga all friends and relatives came to say farewell to us. We held no farewell parties – on the contrary, they organized parties for us. My sister and her daughter Rimmochka also came to Riga to say good-bye. We gave them many items we could not take, including our television set. We had a smaller one. Mark had to sent all these items to Leningrad as cargo. At the terminal Valia was sobbing bitterly, and I told her: «Don't cry over me, I am going to America to live, not to die.» Little I knew that my sister was going to die 2 years later. That same day she and Rimma went to see our friends, and at night they took the train back to Leningrad.

Mark's brother Arosha, his son Leva, Mark's sister Raia with Seryozha and Mark's nephew Jorge all came to Moscow from Leningrad to see us off. Jos left on the 1st of August, 1978 and we followed him on the 4th. We did that because we'd heard that flying separately was better, otherwise they could count us as single family.

Initially Jos arrived to Riga with a huge load of stuff. Part of it they gave away on the coast, other things were abandoned in Riga, Moscow, Vienna and Rome. To New York they came with 2 suitcases, a sleeping bag, 2 kids and one dog – Jinni.

And now I will interrupt the story of my own family in order to talk about the 5th Bekker brother – Leva.