

History and life in letters



Hinka (Nina) Kogan (Spivak)

letters from Tzur-Shalom, Israel to Newton, MA, USA, 1994-2008

I don't remember exactly how I got the idea to ask mom to tell me stories from her life, starting from Galatz and Kaushany, Bessarabia before and during the war, and the evacuation. I was interested to find out about their parents and relatives, what they did, how they made their living, what they did and how they rested. Here are a collection of stories from letters sent between 1994 and 2008. In some places, I've added commentary in parentheses "(*Yefim:*)"; in other places, it's exactly as written in the letters. Some of these, I have read aloud to my family.

- Yefim Kogan, Newton, MA, USA, November 2004
- Translated by David Kogan, San-Mateo, CA, Waltham, MA, April 2008

Parents: Leva Spivak and Fania Spivak (Chaimovich)

My mom was born in the township of Tarutino, near Kaushany. My father lived in Kaushany, and there worked at a store from the age of 14, training to work the register. My mom was some distant relative to my father; she was a very beautiful and attractive woman. They courted for 5 years, and got married in 1920. After their wedding, they lived in Tarutino, where my brother Joseph and I were born. After that, we moved to Galatz, where dad worked in a dry goods and toys store owned by mom's cousins. I remember, whenever a new shipment of toys came in, ones with even small flaws were given to the workers. That way, I acquired a whole collection of "invalid" toys.

Nearby Townships

When I spoke with you on the phone, you told me about Kaushany (*Yefim: this is after receiving maps of Bessarabia from USA's Library of Congress*), it seemed that all the nearby places were familiar. On the day of the bazaar, people came from all over, from large and small places around, to buy and to sell whatever they needed. From the townships around, I've only been to Zaim - a relative of mine lived at the train station there, and I visited for a couple of days. I remember I was very bored, because there were no kids there.

Tarutino

The township of Tarutino was near Kaushany, about 60-70 kilometers away. This had once been a German colony, and there were mostly Germans and Ukrainians there. During Soviet rule, that part of Bessarabia was considered part of the Odessa region of Ukraine. By the way, my mom (*Fania Spivak*) spoke German and Russian fluently.

I don't know Tarutino at all. One time, we passed by it on the way from Galatz, and dad told me that I had been born there.

Galatz

I remember Galatz well; I was 9 by the time we left it in 1932. It was a large port on the Dunabe River. We first lived on Eminesku Street (this is the last name of a famous Romanian poet), number 26. The street was hilly, and we sledded on it in the winter. We had two rooms, and a kitchen separate in the yard. There, Izia was born in 1928. Later, we moved to number 62 on the same street, where we lived till we left. I remember the main street of Galatz - Domniaska, and a large statue of Kastaki Negru, he was probably a governor. I was in school when King Carl II came to Galatz, and all the students greeted him. His son Michael was with him.

At the time, mom's parents - Haim and Golda - also lived in Galatz, and with them lived Golda's mother, my great-grandmother - Sheva. Grandfather - Chaim - worked with cattle; that is: traded it. At some point, they had lived in Monzyr, near Kaushany, but I've never been there. I consider my homeland during childhood and adolescence to be Kaushany, and my home after marriage to be Kishinev.

Episode with my mom Fania

Mom was very kind. My parents weren't very well off, but never complained about life. I remember one time... in Galatz; we had neighbors - a husband and wife, and two daughters. The daughters were grown up and engaged. It was Purim, and we had a masquerade. The girls rented costumes - one a gypsy, the other Arabian. One of them had a coat, the other didn't. So mom lent her only coat to one of the girls, and the girls went to the masquerade. They had no money to use the coatcheck, so they asked some boys to look after the coats. When they had their fill of dancing, and came back for the coats - the boys were long gone. That's how my mom was left without a coat, and was only able to sew one for herself when we moved out of Kaushany.

Izia's birth - 1928

I remember very well how Izia was born. It was in Galatz, and I was 5. He got a "krishmeleynem", a Jewish ritual. The tradition is, on the day before the Brit Mila-circumcision, the kids of relatives and friends are gathered for a festival, and the kids get presents: torbaleh - little packs made of colored paper filled with candy, apples and tangerines. Right before the party, I got sent with our girl-servant to the butcher, so that he would slaughter some chickens... By the time we came home, the ceremony was over. I cried a lot - "Why didn't they wait for me?"

Kaushany

There were a lot of Jews in Kaushany. I don't know exactly how many, but probably around 5000 to 7000 (*If fact before the war there were about 2000 Jews in Kaushany, Yefim*). We had 5 synagogues. My dad and grandfather went to "Shnaidershe" - tailors'. It's not that they were tailors... it's just that it was right across the street from us. My mom knew the prayer book well, and was able to translate. On holidays, she read in the synagogue among the women. There were also the New, Old, and Zionist synagogues - I don't remember what the fifth one was called. The synagogues weren't large, or

particularly richly appointed, but they all had Torah scrolls, and were always clean. Of course, women sat separately from the men. Before every holiday, the attendees would donate what they could for the needs of their synagogue.

We lived in New Kaushany. Old Kaushany was behind the church which separated the town. In Old Kaushany, there were Moldovans, in New Kaushany - our people.

My studies

In Galatz, I finished the 1st and 2nd grades. By the way, the school was number 9, just as yours (*Yefim: I studied in Kishinev for 8 years in school number 9, from 1960 to 1968, as did my brother Miron, Dima and Miron Tismenetsky*). On arrival to Kaushany, I went to 3rd grade. After 4th grade, I went to secondary school, which was the same for boys and girls. The subjects were the same as in Russian (soviet) schools, plus two foreign languages: French and Latin, and also religion.

The director of the school was Chernenko, a very dour man - I don't remember him ever smiling - but fair. All the students were afraid of him. We were allowed to be around until 8 o'clock in the evening, and when the director came out to check on us, word of it would spread instantly, we'd hear "the director is coming" and would be gone like the wind, going home. From 2nd grade of secondary school (1935-36), we got a new director, Lipkan, a more sociable man, who maintained a good relationship with the students.



I had a teacher of Romanian, Lidia Zhirege; she was very beautiful, with a long braid. She liked me very much, and gave me a photo of herself to remember her by, on which was written "A heartfelt symbol for my student Spivak, from Lidia Zhirege, October 30th, 1935."

That very photograph:

Lidia Zhirege, October 30th, 1935

We also had a music teacher, Mr. Moroshan. We mocked him however we could. We Jews also studied religion with a rabbi by the name of Usim. He was intelligent, but slovenly, so we made fun of him for that. The Moldovans had a priest, but he was handsome, and all the girls made eyes at him. He was tall and well built, with a nice haircut... I forget his name. But he didn't have many students - 80% of the students in the school were Jews.

When I was in 3rd grade, the secondary school became partly private; so half the money came from the government, the other half from my parents. It cost a lot, and studying became difficult. Government representatives came to exams. A director by the

last name of Boldir came from a boys' secondary school in Bender. My uncle Boris (dad's brother) had once studied with him, and then Boris had been arrested in 1933 for 'communism.' When Boldir learned my last name, he asked if I was Boris's relative. I fumbled, and admitted that Boris was my uncle. After that, Boldir grilled me at an exam for half an hour straight, till one of the parents, who was in the committee, said, "enough tormenting her."



1937, Gymnazium,
Kaushany

Hinka Kogan (Spivak)
(3rd class) sits in 2nd row
second from left.

Buma Kogan (4th class)
Sits in first row, first from
left.

In center – director
Lipkan, physics teacher
Tsukman.

Left from **Hinka Kogan** – **Sarah Gibrich**, left – **Basia L'vovich**, both died during the war. **Niuma Kogan**, **Udel Blitshtein**, died during the war (**Udel** – sister of **Petya Blitshtein**, mother's good friend). See witness lists from Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, written by **Lev Bruter**, cousin of **Udel** and others.

In the fourth grade of the secondary school, the director was a fascist (about whom I already wrote), but not for long, because the school closed, and I finished fourth grade in another township - Volontirovka. After that, I didn't get a chance to study, and I was left at home till 1940, at which point we were "freed" by the soviet army. At that time, I couldn't speak Russian at all, but I understood it some. The other students were the same. So all the students were shifted back two grades, so instead of 9th grade, I went to 7th. I was already 17 at the time. I went to school for a year, and then the war started. After coming back from the evacuation, it wasn't a time for studying, and in 1946, I got married and moved to Kishinev. Thus ended my schooling.

Shloime Spivak moves across the ocean...

In 1940, Shloime Spivak, along with the first husband of Pesse Bronshtein (Levit) left for America (or Argentina) to get away from the Russian-Japanese war. Shloime came back after half a year; they say because he didn't want to work on the Sabbath.

Bronshtein was a tailor, worked at the factory apparently on Sabbath as well, got rich and got his own sewing factory. He left Pesse and two kids in Bessarabia. After some time, he sent divorce papers, and in 1907, got remarried and had five daughters. In 1928-

29, he sent a call for his son (from Pesse) Meir to come to Argentina, and Meir did. In 1931, Meir came to Bessarabia to get married. After returning to Argentina, he soon moved to Chile. Apparently, he couldn't forgive his father for leaving his mother. Meir came to visit in Kishinev in 1968. One day, his sister (daughter of his father) relayed to him that his father was on his deathbed, and accepts Meir as his heir, along with Bronshtein's daughters. Meir went to his father, they made their peace, and Meir got an inheritance of 50,000 dollars, and with that built a furniture factory in Santiago, Chile.

About mom - Fania Spivak (Chaimovich) and all of us

Izia was born in 1928. Around 1929-30, there was a crisis and much unemployment, and the store where dad worked went bankrupt and closed - dad was left without a job. He got some money from it, and he and a partner bought a small truck "Ford" and drove cargo from Galatz to Kaushany. It was a very difficult time

As I wrote before, I had a brother, Joseph. He was a very capable boy, and went to a commercial gymnasium. But he had abrupt appendicitis, and died at the age of 11 in 1932. My mom took his loss very hard, and was sick for a long time after. She fell into depression. A girlfriend of hers who lived next door took care of her and got her out of that state.

In 1933, dad got offered a job in a big manufacturing store in Kaushany. He agreed, and we moved to Kaushany. My grandfather on my father's side - Spivak Shloime - gave us an apartment on his property. In Galatz, we left Fania's mother Golda Haimovich (Srulevich) (my grandmother), and her father Haim Haimovich (my grandfather), and also my mother's grandmother Sheive Srulevich (Golda's mother, my great-grandmother). Moving and getting settled was very difficult - Galatz was a big port city on Dunabe, whereas Kaushany was a small township. Here, winter was full of impassible dirt, and summer full of dust, but we had to get used to it. Also, I didn't know any language other than Romanian.

A year later, my grandfather died, and mom went to Galatz and brought her mother and grandmother to us in Kaushany, because they had no one left in Galatz. After that, my father was nicknamed "Leva with two mothers-in-law."

My grandmother - Golda - had a stroke, and mom had to take care of her: move her, help her, and my mother's heart starting giving out. By that time, we had found grandmother's cousin Srula Srulevich (one of Sheiva's 12 kids) in Shanghai, where he had gone in 1918. He started helping us - sent us dollars. The dollar was very valuable at the time; you got 500 lei for one dollar. So with that money, we started getting mom better. The first time, she went to a resort - Vatra-Dornei - that's in Carpates, where there are hot

springs especially for heart trouble; the second time she took Izia with her; the third time in 1939 I went with her. She also started having female health troubles, and bleeding. This happened in Vatra-Dornei, and the doctor said: "Take your mother and go home." - we stopped all treatment, stayed until the end of the month, and left.



Hinka Kogan (Spivak) and Sheiva Kertsman (right) – daughter of shop owner where Lev Spivak worked August 14, 1939, Vatra-Dornei, Romania

By this time, my grandmother Golda had already died (1937) and Sheiva was left. Then, we had some hired help, and things were easier on mom, but her health kept deteriorating.

Thanks to the money from Shanghai, we were able to get mom into a hospital in Kishinev in March 1940, and I was with her all the time. The treatment cost 400 lei a day. We were there for 13 days, but they couldn't do anything. A council of four doctors got together and decided that she needed an operation, but the cardiologist said she wouldn't be able to take it, so we went home.

As is known, in June of 1940, the Soviets came, and all stores closed, but dad found work in a office storage organization for egg-bird supplies ('yaitse-ptitse-prom').

Mom understood that she was badly off, and tried to kill herself several times. One time she ran out of the house and wanted to throw herself into a nearby well. Dad's friend was coming home for lunch and saw her; she was very close to the well. He yelled, and mom stopped. We kept watch over her.

Even in that state, she was a very beautiful woman. In the end, she lived completely on drugs - pantopon, which took away her pain. She died on November 6th 1940, at the age of 44 (then were the first November celebrations in Kaushany). When the war was over, I went back to the cemetery in Kaushany, but did not find anything - the cemetery had been destroyed.

So that's the sad story you wanted to know about.

On the wedding of an un-wealthy girl

My dad had a sister, Esther, a very beautiful and interesting girl. She was proud, and none of her many suitors pleased her. There was one, whose last name was also Spivak, who was forced to leave Kaushany because of her.

Time passed, she didn't get married, and got close to 30 years old. So, through a shotchen – matchmaker, she was introduced to a guy from the township of Petrovka, 35 km away. But he wanted a dowry.

My grandfather had a house on the street, and three apartments on his property, so he promised the fiancé one of the apartments, and 20000 lei. But he first needed to get the money. My father (Esther's brother) borrowed 10000 lei, but that was all he could get, and they still needed 10000.

One day before the engagement, we got our first letter from China from mom's uncle (about whom I wrote earlier). In the letter were 10 dollars, and then one dollar was 500 lei, which made 5000 lei, and my dad immediately offered this money for the dowry. The engagement day arrives, Esther is dressed up, but the fiancé isn't coming... they were 5000 lei short.

Then aunt Esther says: "I feel something happening. You know, if I go and take off this dress, then that's it - I'm not putting it back on!" The fiancé was some distant relative of the owner of the store where my father worked, and my father went to the owner and asked him for a loan of 5000 lei, or to be a guarantor. The owner agreed; all the guests got together, and the deed was done.

The fiancé was Boris Shafir. They later got married in Kishinev, and Esther left to his place in Petrovka. In a year, she gave birth to her son Monia. During the war, Esther evacuated with her husband's family. She died in Guriev from pneumonia when she was

45. Her husband was conscripted into the work army, and Monia was left with his father's family. After the war, Monia lived with his aunt Betia until his father came back. Boris got remarried, and soon took the boy to live with him. Around the end of the 70s, they all left to Israel. Boris Shafir died here, and Monia now lives in Beer-Sheva. He called us once, while his father was still alive. I don't know anything else about him. That's the story that happened, and many such happened to girls who had no dowry.

On how names were given...

As to what you wrote about names, you were correct when you wrote about you and me. (*Yefim: I was named in honor of mom's grandfather Haim, and mom's mother Fania, and mom was named in honor of Hinka Levin, Leiba Spivak's maternal grandmother.*).

Uncle Izia's name has a different history. My mother had a second cousin (not sure what the relation is exactly), Basia Fishman. Her husband died in an accident, and she asked to give his name - Isaac. That's how Izia got his name. Basia Fishman was Sarah's daughter, and they both died during the war.

Seder on Passover

My father was an atheist, and never led Seder, but we went to grandfather Shloime for Seder. We lived on his property. I remember how grandfather sat on his pillow; the table was covered in extremely white tablecloth, and on the table were Matzoth, glasses and plates, but no food. Grandfather prayed, and my father helped him, while we sat hungry and waited to be given something to eat. Grandfather hid the matzoth, and someone had to find it and bring it for ransom.

We were practically falling asleep when grandfather allowed grandmother Sheiva to serve the food. Then there was gefilte fish, chicken soup, matzoth balls, and everything in general appropriate to Passover. I remember that before Seder, I got sent to the rabbi for "charotzet". That was something edible, but I don't remember what it was exactly. Then this "charotzet", grandfather ate with matzoth. My mother was religious, so we had special Passover dishes, which were stored in the attic, and several days before Passover, it was taken out, cleaned, and the regular dishes were hidden away. There was no bread, of course, but mom made different tasty things from matzoth. Jewish stores were closed for the first two days, and worked for the rest. That's what I remember about our Seder. Once I got married, we didn't do Seder, but we had matzoth, and in the evenings during Passover, Tisminetcky and grandma Elka usually came to dinner. That evening, we didn't eat bread, but we didn't have special dishes.

On tasty things and other food

I remember the small halas baked by my grandmother Sheiva. Every Thursday, she baked bread, and always gave small halas to the kids. They had a big Russian oven - and Sheiva could bake bread and make very tasty cookies at the same time. After that, they'd put on water for bathing in a big zinc tub. I also remember regular food: bouillon/soup, roasted beef with potatoes, cutlets, gefilte fish for Sabbath and holidays.

Also, grandmother occasionally made 'mamalyga' - Moldavian food - corn porridge with butter, fried onions, cottage cheese, milk.

For dessert, we had baklava and fludn, which I later also made and sent to Moscow for Purim.

My grandfather and grandmother lived relatively poorly, and when there was no meat, they made "lazy roast", which is to say, would roast onion as if it were real meat, added potatoes, and used garlic for seasoning... and it was an excellent dinner.

About dad and what we did when we were young

I wrote you already that we studied together, but your father was a year senior of me. He did very well in his studies, and at the end of the 4th year of the gymnasium, he went to study at the commercial gymnasium in Bendery. At first, Buma and the guys from his class went out with girls from their class, but then those girls went to older guys, and so they "attached" themselves to our class. One day, my dad brought me a card where four guys wanted to go out with us. It was signed BLOK - **Bruter**, **Lipkanski**, **Ochakovski**, and **Kogan**.



BLOK –
Bruter Srul, died in 1941 in Odessa
Lipkanski Aron
Ochakovski Irihem
Kogan Buma

1938

Why the card came to me, I don't know, although, I was considered "head" of the class. After that, we became one group. We had a good time, organized "literary trials" over books, where we picked prosecutors, defenders, and judges. It was very interesting. Later, in 1938-39, I came over to the left - of course, not just I. Buma was the most quiet, long and thin. After the war, he changed so much, that I barely recognized him. About how we started courting, I already told you [*Ed note: see later*]. I want to add that Buma was a very good man; we loved and respected each other greatly. He was a wonderful husband, father and son. He was, as they say, for God and for people - strangers respected him.

Buma's studies and award

Dad - Buma finished the commercial gymnasium with a gold medal and got an award from the king of Romania. About the award, I only know from stories - he got 7 books, but which, I don't know. He was going to go to Bucharest because his father's brothers lived there - Leon, and I think also Boris. But the "Soviets" came (June 1940),

and his relatives from Bucharest came here - that is, to Bessarabia (where they lived, I don't know). That's how the story of his award from the king of Romania ended.

Who in Jewish families was allowed to study before the war

We didn't have a rule that boys studied and girls didn't. So aunt Mara (dad's sister) studied at a commercial gymnasium together with dad, and they lived in one apartment in Bendery. Their parents were able to afford to keep them in Bendery, but mine couldn't keep me. My Izia also studied for one year in the same gymnasium as dad. Those who had money went to school. Usually, after finishing a gymnasium, people had to take an exam for the baccalaureate, and then they could go to some university. But there was none in Kishinev at the time, so you could only go to Yassa or Bucharest, and for a Jew to be accepted in was not easy even with a baccalaureate.

Kishinev before the war

I was 12 the first time I went to Kishinev, with my aunt Betia (1935). There, lived Ruhel Levit and Ershel (Gersh) Levit, who was my grandmother Sheiva Spivak (Levit)'s brother. They lived on Old-Market Street 18; this was not far from the 9th school. The main street in Kishinev was Lenin, back then called Alexander. This was a very beautiful street with many stores that had wonderfully decorated display windows.

Along the street went horse-driven carriages, and along Armenian and Alexander Streets went trams. Pushkin Street (called the same back then), and below were Shmidt Street, Nikolai Street, and near 9th school - Ecatherine and then Old-Bazaar.



Levit's family

1934

Sitting from left to right: **Enna Spivak (Levit), Ershl Levit, Srunia, Ruhl, David, Levit (Ruhl's husband) Sima, Niunia Levit**

In Kishinev there were movie theaters: Odeon, Birunitz, Orpheum along Alexander Street, and Coliseum along Michael Street (later called Podolski), Pushkin Corner near the gymnasium of queen Maria; later, school #2 was there. In the Coliseum

was a movie theater, and between shows - an operetta theater. I was there and watched Vertiski.

Our uncle Gersh had a bakery. From the street, you'd enter the store, where there different kinds of bread, and in the back, they baked breads. They also delivered bread to the outer parts of the city. I remember that uncle Gersha's son, Niunia took me with him to show me the lower part of the city - from Kagulska down - Asian (Aziatskaia) and Ryshanovka. From Alexander (Lenin) Street down were mostly residential areas; there weren't any institutes during Romanian rule. There was a commercial gymnasium, a French gymnasium, and men's gymnasium and women's gymnasium.

After the war, we returned to Kishinev on September 17th, 1945. Clara and I walked along the streets and cried. Alexander Street, which was immediately renamed Lenin, had been completely destroyed - only building frames remained. There was only one whole building left, with two lions, on the corner of Lenin and Sinadivsokia, where later there was a bank and then a concert hall. Along all the streets were only the frames of shattered houses. On the entirety of Lenin Street, there were only one or two stores. The city was rebuilt in time, and became as how you knew it.

1938

This happened in 1938. I was in 4th class of the gymnasium (8th grade). Fascism had already been in many countries in Europe, and had come to us. Fascists came to power in Romania, and the director of our school became one of them. The gymnasium back then was part government, part private, so you had to pay twice as much as before. In our class, only 12 students remained - two Moldavians and the rest were Jews. Once, one boy did something wrong, and they had him stay after for two hours. Out of solidarity, we stayed with him. When the director came by and saw us, he asked "why are you here?" We answered that we just stayed with him. So the directory turned that act into a political one. He yelled "Ah, so you're communists! You'll be expelled." We got really scared, and changed our answers, saying that the boy asked us to stay because he had a headache. The director still expelled us for a week, first questioning all of us



separately, like criminals. The chairman of Parents' Committee, doctor Feldman stood up for us - he's the father of Ozia Fledman, the professor from Moscow, whom you know. After that, we were taken back, but soon the school was closed due to financial troubles, and we were left overboard. Everyone went their separate ways, and some stopped studying altogether. I moved to another township - Volontirovka, near Kaushan. Right around Purim, fascism was overthrown - the Soviet Union put forth an ultimatum that if Romania didn't get rid of the fascist party, the Soviet Union would move into Bessarabia.

Aron Dvoirin, left June 29, 1940
(*Aron and his wife Rosa were very good friends of Hinka and Buma Kogan.*)

Thus it continued until June 29, 1940, at which point we were "freed." That's the sort of uneasy youth we had, and it was great.

Concerts in Kaushany

Many European artists came to us. I especially remember Sidi Tal', a very famous singer. After the war, she worked in the Chernovitsky Philharmonic, and before the war came to us with her troupe. There was also Tina Zlataia, Joseph Kamen' or Kamneev, I'm not exactly sure.

Jewish-Zionist organizations in Kaushan before 1940

My mom (Fania Spivak (Haimovich) was a public figure - she was a member of the Zionist organization "Keren - Kasmes." They helped the poor; collected money for Palestine. Mom was a Zionist, but didn't stop me from doing anything against it. Dad stood with the left, but forbade me; was afraid I'd get caught.

In Kaushany, there were three Zionist organizations - Betar, Maccabee, and Terdania. Betar, we called "fascists," because they thought that the government (Israel) had to be taken through battle. I was a Maccabee. This was largely a sport organization. We also studied Yiddish twice a week. We had different sport sections, and an art activity. And once every two months, we had a ball. We had a bit of show, then dances, games and buffet. One times, a woman from Palestine came to us; she collected money for the country, and we had a ball in her honor. I was given two Yiddish poems to learn, but I didn't know Yiddish back then, and so they wrote the text for me in Romanian and I memorized it and recited it with a good "Jewish" accent. The woman wanted to meet my mother, and asked her how I know Yiddish so well. But mom answered that I didn't even know what I was saying. The woman was surprised and suggested that I should be taught the language.

Time passed, and around 14-15 years, the left took me, and I left the Maccabees, and started doing "leftist" things, so to speak "underground," and spent my time, as it turned out later, with nonsense. This was another period of my youth. Dad (Buma) was never a Maccabee. With him, I became acquainted in the gymnasium.



Girlfriends.

Hinka Kogan (Spivak) far right, **Rosa Dvoirina** far left, **Basia L'vovich**, **Sara Gibrih** and **Tsilia Litigevet**

1937(38)

Another episode from my "leftist" life. I read illegal literature, but we didn't have much of it in Kaushany. So a friend from Bendery sent me books. And so one Sunday,

came a person who took people and packages from Bendery, gave me a package and a note. My friend decided that my dad wouldn't be home, since he usually worked on Sundays. But it so happened that on this day, dad was held up, and saw that I was brought something.

I quickly read the note; "If there will be trouble, take the books to whomever you see fit." I immediately started tearing up the note, and dad started shouting, ordered me to show him the books, and started going after me. He found pieces of the note, and put together part - "there will be trouble"... started yelling that he'll go to the director of the gymnasium, and tell him what his students were doing. I quickly took the book to another friend, and then later of course read them, but such that dad didn't find out. Father, of course, didn't go anywhere, and didn't tell anyone. And then the Soviet Rule came, and you didn't have to hide anymore.



Girlfriends. 30s

Hinka Kogan (left), Basia L'vovich and Sarah Gibrih, both died during the war.

*(Read below about death of Basia and Sarah from Pages of Testimony, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, written by **Hinka Kogan** in 2005.)*

Evacuation

On July 8th 1941, evacuation began in Kaushany. Every family was given a cart with horses or oxen. Kaushanians were forbidden to go through Bendery to Tiraspol', because of fears of too many people gathering on the bridge across Dnestr. Everyone was told to go to Jaloveni, and from there, on pontoon bridges across Dnestr.

My step-mother had a daughter Clara - you probably remember her. So Clara worked in Kishinev, and by then had left to Tiraspol, so aunt said - we are only going to Tiraspol'. So, on two carts - we, and aunt's sister-in-law went through Bendery to Tiraspol'. We were on horses, and the second cart was on oxen. The road was filled with servicemen and evacuees, and on approach to Bendery, we stopped to wait for the second cart. In the morning, we came up to the bridge, and there was no one there. We calmly crossed Dnestr, and came into Parkan. By 9 o'clock, we were in Tiraspol', with aunt's sister-in-law. There lived her brother, whom she had not seen for 22 years. They greeted us very well. After dinner, we went to look for Clara, but we had no address. We knew that in the evening, people went around on the main street, even in such times, and we met her there and brought her back with us.

We spent five days in Tiraspol', and when the Germans (and Romanians) advanced close to the city, we went to the train station. This was July 15th, and the last passenger train from Kishinev arrived at the train station. Of course, we didn't get in: everything was overfilled, and we had a lot of baggage. In the evening came a cargo

train, and we loaded ourselves into a train car with some sort of vats, and by morning arrived in Odessa. In Odessa, we stopped in the port, which is to say, transferred to another cargo train and sat there for 5 days. But they fed us very well: 3 times a day for free, and gave us passes so we could go to the city, which we did in turns. On July 21st, Odessa was bombed the first time. We naturally got very scared, and that same evening, our train left and we moved into Ukraine's depths.

Thus we arrived in the city of Stalino (later called Donetz), where the police surrounded us and ordered us off the train, so that we would help gather the harvest. Thus we ended up in an agricultural commune, 35 kilometers from the railroad. A woman farmer took us in, and we started working in the fields. There was plenty of food. There we spent over a month, and again the Germans approached, and we had to move on.

The chairman of the commune said that he had no carts for us. My father then told him "You can keep us here, so that the Germans kill us, but our people will find out, and you'll be sorry." The chairman got scared, and gave us a cart with oxen, and all night we traveled to Stalino, and in the morning, again ended up in a cargo train car, which brought us to Krastnodarsky lands, Eja station. There, the same story repeated itself - the police took us off the train and brought us to a commune, but this time only two kilometers from the train station. There we worked until around September-October, I don't remember exactly, and then moved on, got as far as Stalingrad. There, was an already established evacuation-center, with thousands of people.

We were soon given passes to a barge to cross the Volga. With great difficulty, we got on the barge, and in the morning, were already on the other side, in the city of Vladimir. There came a whole echelon with closed train cars. People were divided 50 people to a car. As soon as it arrived, we had to grab a car, which we did, but ours had evidently been used to transport fish, because there were 20 cm of water in it. We wanted to go to another, but they were all full.

We were forced to scoop the water out, and it was already November, and cold. I froze my feet; during the day, they got numb, and I didn't feel much pain, and at night, we covered up and got warm, but my feet hurt in the warmth, and I cried like a baby. In those train cars, we arrived to Andijan. There, everyone was split up among agricultural communes. I forgot to mention that step-mother had a boy Liuska, five years old. He was very pretty, but immediately got the measles, then pneumonia, and died in a hospital eight kilometers away. This was a heavy blow to us.

Liuska, 1939



In the start of 1942, we found out the address of my grandfather (Shloime Spivak) and aunt Betia. They lived in Djezgazan, sent us a summons, and we sold all we had that

was worth anything, and went to them. In Djezgazan, we lived until September 1945, but that's another "sippur" (story).

At first, dad (Leva Spivak) went with us in evacuation, but when we arrived in Djezgazan, he was recruited into the labor army. He was not very far from us - near Karaganda. There, he had an operation for a hernia, and was let home for 3 months. With us, he got a job in a grain warehouse as the head accountant, and with the help of his director-Kazakh, he did not go back to the army. The Kazakh later said that army recruiters also "wanted to eat." After that, we didn't go hungry, and dad worked there until we left for home.

We lived in Djezgazan on the north of Karagandiskoj area. I worked at the postal office on the telegraph - twenty-four hours at work, then two days at home. There were camps around Djezgazan, where different people were held - from bandits, to artists and "traitors" of the motherland. Those who behaved themselves had passes and could go around. We knew several carpenters and installation men who came to us to work. The post office had two entrances - a central one into the main area, and one on the side, into the telegraph area. The telegraph entrance led into a small hallway, then to us. The door had a little hook for a lock; the first door was locked with a broom. One time on my shift, late at night, I hear knocking on the door. I didn't think much, undid the hook, and see there's a man on the street, pulling the door, and I'm pulling it back toward myself. He's pulling and I'm pulling! The others that worked with me said "Nina, have you gone mad? Open up; it's Molchanov from the mine." I let him in, of course, and he laid into me. "How could I have opened the door?" "What would have happened, if he had been one of 'them?'" He was our repairman, came to fix the broken line. That's how it was, when someone forgot themselves for a moment.

I worked at the post office, and Clara (daughter of my step-mother) worked at the radio station. I needed shoes - I had nothing to wear. I gathered up money - 1500 rubles, and we went on a trip to Karaganda. I had to mark myself off in the Ministry of Communication, as did Clara.

So, Sunday morning, we arrive at the flea market, where you can find anything. There are locals, evacuees dealing there, and of course thieves. We noticed that some youth is watching us. Clara and I are speaking Romanian, so that no one will understand. Clara says to me: "Hold on to your money." The youth keeps on after us. So we decide to go first to the Ministry, in the new city. We have to take a train, and the youth follows, even helps us climb into the wagon. We decide to switch wagons, the youth comes after. We decide not to try to run anymore, but sit and wait and see what'll happen. We sit down on a bench, the youth across from us. Clara says: "If this was at night, I'd have gone mad!" The youth starts laughing, and we realize that he understands Romanian... he was just lonely, was looking for people from back home. He spent the day with us, showed us the city. Later, we got separated, and never saw him again... don't even know what his name was.

Meeting 1944

We got together at an acquaintance's, by the name of Naina Veksser. Her father was a German, docent of Kujbyshevsk University. He got sent away because he's a German - him to the taiga to cut down trees, and her mother, Nadezhda Ivanovna, was

Russian, she got sent to Djezgazan. Naina worked in a bank, and her mother was a commandant in a hotel. They lived in a three-room suite: two rooms for guests, and the third for them. So we were around 5-6 girls. We gathered all the foodstuffs we could, and decided to meet the New Year.

Among us was a woman from Moscow, whose fate deserves a few words. Her name was Galina Hodosova, her husband was arrested in 1937, and she never heard of him again. She was arrested as well, and was given 5 years, as the wife of an "enemy of people." She was locked up in Petrapavlovsk, Kazahstan. There, she became friends with an Odessan by the last name of Kizhner, and had his daughter. Kizhner had been given 25 years, but it was replaced by getting sent to a penal battalion. There, he performed some act of heroism, was wounded and sent to Moscow. He sent her money, and a request to come to Moscow, and she went away. Such is fate. Galina worked with us as an accountant; she was a very interesting woman.

Coming back to the New Year. We had a gramophone and records, and we danced and fooled around - all "gals." Suddenly, around 2 o'clock, a call came: a Korean on a trip had arrived: little and sickly. After Nadezda Ivanovna put him up in the "hotel," she asked him to spend some time with us. He agreed, and it got even more fun. He danced very well with all women in a row, told us about his country, and thus we spent time till 6 am. That way "one pair of pants" changed our fun, and we were very happy, and for those times, that was a lot.

About grandma Sheiva and grandpa Shloime, my father's parents, and a bit about other grandmother and grandfather

My grandfather Shloime was a small-time merchant, that is to say, he had no money. In Kaushany, the bazaar was on Tuesdays, and to buy grain, farmers needed money. That money, grandfather borrowed from wealthy merchants at a percentage for one day. He bought grain at one price, and sold it at a bit of a profit, thus earning a living. In the bazaar's receiving area, there were many competitors, and each pulled these farmers to themselves - they were all bitter enemies. Thus they lived.

Grandma Sheiva was a housewife: baked bread, and looked after the house. They lived in their own house, where they had three rooms and a kitchen. Those are my grandparents on my father's side. On my mother's side, I remember little. Grandpa Haim traded cattle - bought and sold. He died in Galatz, his wife (my grandma) Golda and her mother - Sheiva Srulevich moved to us in Kaushany. Grandma died in 1937, and her mother Sheiva in 1941 at the age of 104.

I wanted to write about my grandmother Sheiva and grandfather Shloime, how they ended. It's a sad story...

We all lived in Djezgazan, in the Kargandiskaja area. Grandpa and grandma lived at my aunt Betia's; she was with Fanechka, and uncle Litman was on the front. In Djesgazgan, there was no bazaar; nothing grew there - so they lived on rations. This wasn't even hunger, it was real starvation. Aunt Betia was thin like a board; she had no chest. The old men were also always hungry. We couldn't help in any way - we were in the same situation.

Uncle Litman got wounded, and had to come home from the hospital. Aunt Betia asked him to bring produce (he had money), and nothing else was needed. Aunt Betia and

I went to the train station to meet him. Uncle Litman was on crutches, and in each hand held a backpack, and one more on his back. How he made it, I don't know.



He brought a lot of food, and because we didn't know how to feed grandma and grandpa, they started to eat a lot... and couldn't stop, and after three days, grandpa couldn't eat anymore...

Litman, Betia and Fania Roitshtein
1944, Djezgzagan, Kargandiskaja area

Aunt Betia cried and said: "eat, now that there is something," and he answered that it was too late; he couldn't get it down anymore. In a couple of days, he died, and two days after the funeral, grandmother Sheiva died. They were a pair, from God it seemed, and died one after the other. Thus they remained in far-away Djezgzagan.

How we met Victory Day

In 1945, Clara and I worked at the radio station. So on the morning of the May 9th, the street was filled with people, though I knew from the evening of the 8th of May - a woman from Karganda relayed it to us over the radio. So needed to get something ready for the celebration. We decided to make 'napoleon,' but had no eggs. We did have egg powder. We made the cakes, and for crème, took the powder, mixed it with milk and all the rest, and made wonderful crème. So we had great Napoleon, and for the first time, I drank some vodka, and we of course we were out till morning.

The war is over - we're going home

The war is over, but how do we get home, when there's no money? Money had to be obtained somehow. And most likely dishonestly. We might have wanted to do it honestly, but this was not possible.

We were given rations for tea - 50 grams per person, but the tea was American. The tea was in packages of 1/2 kilo, and didn't cost much.

The warehouse overseer sold packages on the side for 250 rubles, and in Karaganda, you could get 800-1000 rubles for the same. So my father borrowed money from his brother Yasha, bought 30 packages from the overseer, and went to Karganda with his wife Hona.

On the second day, they went out to the bazaar: dad with 3 packages and aunt with the same; the split up, standing not too far apart. A policeman came to dad immediately, and took him to the police station.

The chief questioned dad: "... where did you get so much tea?" and dad answered that we had four laborers, and in two years we collected this, and were going to buy winter boots, and so forth along those lines. He also said that he was the main accountant of "Zagotzerno" (grain procurement station), and that the chief could call the controllers and check. My aunt meanwhile went to the apartment where they were staying and hid

the rest of the packages. The chief didn't know what to do with father. Father then said: "You also need tea, so take a package and let me go." The other thought about it, and did just that.

After that, they sold all the tea, but not at the bazaar, but to a reseller for 800 rubles a package. Of course, the profit was still sizeable. They bought various necessities and headed home. Father also bought vodka, which sold at 500 rubles for half a liter. But the vodka was not in bottles, but in two large cans, poorly sealed. So the vodka gave off a strong smell in the train, someone snitched, and dad was again taken into custody, a bit before Djezgzagan. But there was a chief who wasn't above taking a drink... thus ended that adventure. So we got home with this "dirty money."

One time in life, my father undertook such an "operation," and all ended well.

More about Uncle Izia and my father

As you know, my mother died very young at the age of 44, and we remained alone with dad. After a year, our dad married the wife of a former owner of a store in Kaushany. The war started, and we all evacuated together. Izia at first studied, and then worked at a war factory. It was very difficult for him there - he worked 12 hours, and he found work as a master at a radio station. In September, we returned to Kishinev. We lived a year in Tiraspol, then I got married and left to Kishinev. Father moved to Izmail because his wife's daughter got married there.

Dad worked as an accountant in a timber depot till his death. He died on March 31st, 1964. He was sick for a year. Izia and I went with him to Moscow to an oncological center, but sadly, it did not help.

After the war, Izia started studying at an auto technical school in Kishinev. Father wasn't able to help him, and Izia came to me for dinner every day. It was difficult for him to study; he lived constantly hungry, and decided to move to father in Izmail. He worked there as a junior accountant, and when he was 18, joined the army. There, he ended up in an officer's academy in Chernovtzi, and studied there for three years. He finished the academy in 1953, and married Nella. He was left in Chernovtzi for some time, and then moved him to Kamenetz-Podolsk, then above the Arctic Circle - Pechenga, in the Murmansk area. There, Alla was born, and in 1965, Izia was moved to Chmelnitski, where in 1966 the accident happened.

I don't really know till now what exactly happened. If you recall, we, along with you, were returning from Truskovtzi, the resort in Carpati mountains, and stopped by in Chmelnitski and visited Izia in the hospital. He was in a cast, and he seemed to have bad pains in his shoulder, and he was crying all the time. Thus he remained an invalid in his hand, and his fingers couldn't bend well. He left the army, of course, and tried to get better for a long time, but to little avail. After the demobilization, he finished a trade technical school, and started working at a timber warehouse. He retired in 1988. Now he's turning 70 - on May 9th, 1998, and he's thinking of celebrating the date in Israel. We'll see how it'll go. So that's a short biography of my brother Izia.

[Ed note: Yefim: We celebrated mom's 75th birthday wonderfully on May 4th in Tzur-Shalom, and then uncle Izia's 70th in Natania]

How I met Buma and how our romance began

I knew your dad (Buma), when I was still in the first grade of the gymnasium, and I was 11 and dad was in second grade. We were the same age, but dad started school when he was six, and I when I was seven. After the third grade, we went around in the same clique. Dad was very shy, thin and tall boy. He studied very well. After finishing four grades in the gymnasium in Kaushany, he went to Bendery, where he entered a commercial gymnasium, and finished it in 1939 with a first prize - seven books from king Karl II of Romania. I couldn't go study there, since my parents couldn't support me in another city, and instead I went to study sewing from this one woman, but that was soon interrupted because June 28th 1940 came, and the Soviets "liberated" us.

During Soviet rule (June 1940 - June 1941), dad worked as a teacher in a village near Kaushany, and I studied in Kaushany in the 7th grade, since everyone got two grades taken off because we didn't speak Russian. When the war started, our school was taken over by the military, and we went there to stand watch. Then we were all evacuated - in different directions, and for a long time, I didn't know what was going on with dad.

Anyway, at the time, dad liked another girl, and I liked another boy. But they died during the war.

Around 1943, one of Kogan's relatives sent me dad's address, and we started writing to each other. My family and I came back from evacuation on September 17th 1945, and dad exactly a month later. My dad was offered a job in Tiraspol', and we went there. I also started to work, and sometimes stopped by Kishinev to aunt Betia. When I was in Kishinev, I went over to dad's, and we went out, to the theater, cinema, dances, and with other guys from our group. Then dad started visiting Tiraspol' on the weekends. Our grandma Elka (dad's mother) badly wanted me for her son, and said "Buma, you go to Tiraspol', or guys will start coming over, and Nina'll end up married." So we got married, and I went to Kishinev. I wish that my children live as happily, as I with your father.

My father with his wife left to Izmail, since her daughter had a guy from Izmail. Your dad was a good husband, good father and son. With grandmother Elka, I was also familiar. We lived with her pretty well, though she had a difficult character, but wanted to live only with me. Her husband Meir died in 1944 in a mine in Osinniki, Kemerovska region.

Wedding



Wedding picture, 1946

Hinka and Buma Kogan

Our wedding was December 22, 1946. It was a Sunday. In the morning, we registered at civil registry office on Armenian Street, corner of 25th October without any witnesses. The woman that took our registry was also from Kaushany. Later, dad and I went to the bazaar, to the flea market - this was on corner of Armenian and Lenin Street near the bazaar entrance. Dad bought me boots with overshoes. I had no shoes, so this was a big present for me; and, by the way, that winter had bitter freezes. I was very happy - "a rich bride" - my dowry was one suitcase and a pillow with a blanket. In the evening was a huppah - in the yard of our place on Kagulskaja. The huppah was officiated over by rabbi Epelbaum; the ketubah, unfortunately, later disappeared. My aunt Betia with her husband Litman were there, and uncle Boris with his wife Ester, and grandmother's sister Elka Ochakovskaja Lejka with her husband Ruvim, Yefim and Dora Ochakovskij and Rosa Kogan. Izia was also at the wedding - he studied at the auto technical school at the time.

Aunt Betia prepared baklava, leykeh and cookies, and we made a Napoleon cake... it so happened that I bought two liters of milk to make cream for Napoleon, and the milk... went sour! But I went through with it anyway: added butter and spread over the wafers, and imagine this - no one noticed; they ate it just fine. After that treat, dad set the table with nuts and wine. And that was the whole wedding. We had a gramophone for music - not even ours - it was aunt Mara's (Buma's sister).

After all the guests were gone, grandmother Elka served "de goldene juh" - gold bouillon - and we had supper. Rosa Kogan and Izia stayed with us. In a week, I prepared cookies and wine, and we invited friends, and then we danced to the gramophone.

Our bed was a mattress on top of some boards on a pair of sawhorses, and in a week, my uncle Boris bought us an ottoman, which is to say, a couch, and dad ordered a wardrobe at his factory. Thus we started our family life, and we were happy and satisfied with what we had.

After that, in time, we had everything, and the most important was a happy life with dad. I don't remember that we fought, or ever shouting from him. It's only sad that he left us so soon, especially me, when I needed him so much in our old age. I suppose it was meant to be...

Kids

I soon became pregnant with Miron, and around the start of the 9th month, I went into early labor. I was taken to the hospital [*ed note: 'birthing house'*], and Bumka came to visit me after work. One day, I told him, bring me candles, since we had no light, and I'm scared of the dark. He brought them, and that night, I went into labor. When they took me on the table, it's like God helped - the lights went on! The midwife was a young woman, also Nina. Everything passed well, though I was very scared. This was November 18th, 1947. Miron was born really small, and Buma was told to bring two kilos of cotton, to bundle up the baby. When I went home, they told me to bundle him for two more weeks. At our place, though, it was very hot from the metal stove (see Kagulskaja). Miron got a rash all over his body. The doctor paid a home visit and asked, "What kind of a sauna is this?" He ordered us to stop bundling the baby, gave some medicine, and it passed. After, Miron got bigger well; I had excellent milk.

Miron got his circumcision on January 2nd 1948 - at Zhenia Fuks's room, because there was more light there.

You were born, as you know, June 6th, 1953. I was advised to get an abortion, since the Jewish situation at the time was very uncertain - there was talk of expulsion. But dad didn't allow it, and thank God you were born. Your circumcision was also around the 6th week from birth.

About my aunt Betia

I remember as it was in Kaushany - aunt Betia was a tall, fashionable lady by the standards of that time. As I've written, we knew people involved in illegal activities, and aunt Betia was in one such group. She collected money for political prisoners. For that, they held lotteries, and made lists of people who gave money for such needs, and of course Betia was always in those lists and gave money.

She was also a seamstress, and made underclothes and drawers for men, and bed sheets. Among her clientele was one from the police, who respected her and always had her do his sewing. I don't remember how exactly, but the police found the lists of donators, and one day scheduled a raid on these young people. So that acquaintance policeman came to aunt Betia and said "My lady, it would be good if you didn't spend tonight at home." She of course got scared, slept at our home in the attic. That day, several people were arrested, and aunt Betia got off with just a bit of a fright. She had a lot of fight in her: worked hard, sewed, and still helped grandmother Sheiva around the house.

35 Kagulskaja

Our apartment was small - one room and a small hallway, which also served as a kitchen. The room was 13 square meters [*ed note: 140 sq feet*], the heat came from a metal stove. When it was stoked, it was very hot; if it was off, it immediately became cold. A year after Miron was born, we put in a stove with an oven, and after that, we had a normal temperature.

I remember how I hosted our first celebration at Kagulskaja. This was the November holidays of 1960. Up till then, we had only one room and of course, we couldn't have guests there, but in 1960, we added 2 rooms: one 15 square meters, and the other 9. And the one that we had became dark, but we opened it up to daylight. So we became "right" with three rooms, though without luxuries - we only had water and sewer.



35 Kagulskaja, Kishinev

Elka and Hinka Kogan

Standing at the doorway of grandmother Elka; you can see her embroidered curtains in the windows. On the right is the basement entrance.

Начало 60х годов.

So we decided to invite friends and close relatives. This was November 6th, 1960. There were tables in two rooms. What was on the tables, you probably faintly remember. One of our friends greeted guests, and whenever someone new showed up, everyone exclaimed, "Aah! Just like in the movies!" Guys said that I was the first to get the idea to invite our friends together. There were a lot of photographs, and memories for the rest of our lives. Many of us are gone, but those who remain, continue to keep in touch. After that, we met up many times, but the first is especially memorable.



Standing from right **Raia Pistol** with her husband? **Buma Kogan**, , **Lenia Tismenetsky**, **Niuma Kogan**

Sitting from left **Mara Kogan (Ochkovskaya)**, **Hinka Kogan**, **Petia Blitshtein**

November 6, 1960

More on Kagulskaiia and about Fuxes and Rakovers

You want to know about Aunt Zhenia (Fuks), so, I knew her a long time ago. She had an aunt in Kaushany, and Zhenia lived in Bendery, and she often visited in Kaushany. She was friends with Mara Zelman and her sister Haika. Zhenia was a beautiful, dark, very appealing woman. After the war, I met her in Kagulskaiia and met her husband Lucia. About him I knew little - I only remember that Lucia's mother was a relative of our grandmother Elka. About our life on Kagulskaiia, you probably remember some. We were very close. What I baked - I brought over to her, what she baked - she brought to us. When we moved to Christo Boteva, aunt Zhenia came to us to bathe. Your "bris" - Brit Mila (circumcision) was at aunt Zhenia's apartment. Our place was dark; theirs had more light. We always helped one another, especially when the kids were small. I'll never forget our trip to Rochester and meeting all the Fuxses and Rakovers in 1992. That's what I can write about aunt Zhenia... I'd like to know, how Lucia is. [*Yefim: Lucia died on December 8th, 2004 and I was on his funeral.*]



From left: **Boris Teylor (Fux)** (changed the surname), **Raya Teylor, Lusia, Jenia, Klara and Shuric Fux**

January 16, 1971

Kagulskaya 35
Behind Fuxes apartment.

More about dad - Buma Kogan and his health

Now I'll write about what you wanted to know about dad. When he was a boy, that is, before the war, he was very thin and tall. During the war, he was conscripted into the work army, where evidently he worked hard and was poorly fed, and he got dystrophy. Because of this, he was given six months off. Our grandmother, that is, dad's mother - Elka, worked in a kindergarden, and quickly got him back on his feet.

Of course, after the evacuation, we didn't see one another, but the first time I saw him after the war, I almost didn't recognize him - he had matured, gained weight, and was a very interesting young man. During our life together, he almost never got sick. He had some issues with his kidneys, but it quickly got better.

Then in 1962, he fell and broke his leg, and was in a cast for 4 months, but still went to work - a car came for him, and he went on crutches, and wore special boots on his feet - "goodbye youth" - that's what they were called.

His diabetes started after Meir's - Salo's father's - death - at the time, grandmother Elka was very sick, and we had to hide from her the death of her brother Meir. Dad took pills for diabetes, and when Miron left at the end of 1980, he had an infarction [?инфаркт? ed note: unsure of what - stroke, heart attack, kidney infarction, etc...]; he stayed in a hospital for three weeks, then at a sanatorium in Vodu-luj-Vodi for a month, and didn't work for two further months. His diabetes was not overly difficult.

When we came to Israel, his heart started giving him trouble - he was in hospitals several times, and he was transferred to insulin, but they couldn't figure out the right dose - sometimes his blood sugar rose, other times it fell. Then he got fluid in his stomach and that was it - after that, there was nothing anyone could do...

Pinia Griberg - a relative on Elka Kogan's side of the family

You were asking me about Pinia Grinberg - that's a relative from the side of my mother-in-law [Yefim: *what the exact relation is, we haven't thus far been able to find*

out]. He was a very interesting person with a complicated fate. He was a lawyer, and lived in Benders with a wife and three kids - two sons and a daughter.

During Romanian rule, he was a secretary in some party on the right, and when the Soviets came, someone turned him in - and Pinia even knew who did it - and he was arrested, and his wife and kids were sent to Semipalatinsk, where Elka lived at one point during the war. (Evidently, the family wasn't exiled till the war.) Thus Elka met them, and the wife and kids lived a tough life, and didn't know anything about Pinia.

He had been given 10 years, but during unrest in the jail, he was accused of trying to incite the prisoners against Soviet rule, and he was given a second 10. He served 10+2; 8 years were taken off, and he was released after Stalin's death.

At the time, he had pneumonia, and a nurse from Estonia was taking care of him. She got him healthy, and they started living together, and then she got pregnant - but she was also a prisoner. She was fully rehabilitated, but Pinia was exiled to the Krasnoirsakia area. So she refused to go home, and stayed with him in the Krasnoirsakia area.

Somehow, Pinia found out our address, and we started writing to one another. We also sent him some packages with food. Soon he was rehabilitated fully (apparently around the start of the 60s) and the four of them - they already had two kids - came to live back in Benders.

Pinia was allowed to work as an arbitrating lawyer, but was forbidden to defend people. He met up with his first wife; his kids recognized him, and they met occasionally. In what year he died, I don't remember, and what happened to his kids, I don't know. We sometimes would listen to his stories for a whole night through, and as a lawyer who went through many "universities," he was able to speak very well. Such is the fate of Pinia Grinberg.

Elka Kogan's side of the family

On Elka Kogan's side, I remember her niece Mara Zemelman (Kogan) and her husband Avrum - he was a big joker. In his presence, you couldn't calmly sit or eat at the table - everyone was laughing, literally all the time. He would say "I do it on purpose, so that you can't eat and I get more." He died in Hulon, where his wife, kids and grandkids live.

About your [Yefim's] birth

That was a hard time (1953). People were saying that Jews would be exiled to Birobidgan, but those were only rumors. But Jews were not being hired, and many got laid off, especially doctors... Thus it was until Stalin's death (March 5th, 1953), and then everything went back to normal.

When I was around six months pregnant, the soccer season in Kishinev started. Dad was an ardent fan, as was I, and we went to see a match. The crowd was immense, and when we came to the stadium, the gates were already closed; evidently the tickets were sold out. A large crowd of people who wanted to get in had gathered, too. We wanted to get out of there, but couldn't make it through them. Dad spread out his elbows and was protecting me from the crowd.

The gates opened, and the wave of people pulled us into the stadium. Everything turned out okay, but grandmother Elka chewed us out a lot - "How could we have gone to a soccer match in that state?!" You were born, as you know, on July 6th - you were small, but gained weight well - I had excellent milk. By the way, I breastfed you till you were 1 year and 3 months old - at our place (Kagul'skaia 35) was closed for renovations, and we were living in the shed - dad, you and I. Miron with grandmother Elka slept at aunt Mara's. It was hot in the shed, and there were many flies, and you got diarrhea [Ed: Yefim: apparently there was something serious]. The doctor said that the only thing that saved you was that I had not yet weaned you. So here's another sippur [Ed: Yefim: mom is writing in Hebrew - sippur means story], which you didn't know.

Trip to Evpatoria

All of us, together with grandmother Elka, made our first trip to a resort, to the sea. We flew to Simferopol, and from there took a taxi to Evpatoria. On the road, you got badly carsick, and you "arrived at Riga" (*Russian expression for carsick*)... In Evpatoria, we found a large room for all of us, and started going out to swim and sunbathe.

A few days later, Miron got sick with a high temperature, and I didn't know what to do. Our host was a nurse, and she started giving him penicillin shots. The next day, I found a doctor and brought him over by taxi. He listened to Miron, and suspected no less than Typhus. He gave us directions to a lab to drop off for analysis.

I went to some sanatorium, and persuaded a lab worker, with tears in my eyes, to come with me and do the analysis. She agreed, did the lab work, and soon happily told us that there was no typhus. She ordered to continue penicillin. Miron of course had stopped swimming, and had lost a lot of weight.

We went to the sea in turns, someone staying with him. We were supposed to leave Evpatoria on a ship on September 5th, and on the fourth, you and dad went out to swim. When you came back, dad says, "It looks like Fimka [Yefim] is sick." We took the temperature, and it was 38.5 [101.3 F], and we had to leave in the morning. We decided - no more taking temperature. We left on the ship; it was a beautiful day. The kids swam in the pool [Yefim: *hah, with fevers, no less!*] and had a great time. In Odessa, we spent the night with B. A. Rozenfeld's, dad's vice director's relatives, and in the morning, we went home by train. Thus ended our first trip to the sea.

Hinka Kogan (Spivak), Tsur Shalom, Israel, 1994-2008

There are many events from the past I would like to know about in details. I hope that our correspondence will continue for many years.

Yefim Kogan, 2008,
Newton, MA, USA

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