**LINE FIVE: THE INTERNAL PASSPORT**

**The Soviet Jewish Oral History Project of the Women's Auxiliary**

**of the Jewish Community Centers of Chicago**

**TATYANA FERTELMEYSTER**

**Journalist**

**Moscow University, 1984**

BIRTH: April 8, 1959, Moscow

SPOUSE: Igor Fertelmeyster

June 22, 1956, Moscow

Married, February 6, 1982

CHILDREN: Marina, September 2, 1982, Moscow

Eugene, November 18, 1986, Moscow

PARENTS: Lenina Andelman Ochokovsky, August 29, 1924, Moscow

Moscow University, Philologist, Russian Literature

Julien Ochakovsky, October 17, 1924, Obuchava

Oceanologist, Moscow University

Both now residing in Haifa, Israel

SIBLINGS: Galina Ochakovsky, Haifa

MATERNAL GRANDPARENTS:

Basya Brestin, 1900-1981, Ukraine

Simon Andelman, 1900?-1964, Ukraine

PATERNAL GRANDPARENTS:

Grandmother (first name unknown) Belkin, Kharkov

Both grandfather and grandmother died before 1950.

JEWISH ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATIONS (IF GIVEN):

Hadassah

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Women's Auxiliary of the Jewish Community Centers of Chicago

**INTERVIEW: TATYANA FERTELMEISTER**

**DATE: August , 1990**

**INTERVIEWERS: Ruth Goodman and Gail Neiman**

(When and where were you born?)

I was born in Moscow, on April 8, 1959. There was nothing special about this, it was just my birthday. My parents, before I was born, and when I was born, lived in a common apartment where a few families lived together. But, they were lucky and got a new apartment when I was small. They could get it because my father participated in the construction of the building and all the people who worked on the building had the opportunity to have one of the apartments.

So, it was a very good situation for kids, because when new families came to this building, they all knew each other. It was like a big village! So, -- because usually, Moscow is a big city, and if you live in an apartment build­ing you don't even know the names of your neighbors, you say 'Hello' and that is all. But in our building, everybody knew everybody, and it was very good for kids because we had a large group, twenty or thirty altogether, and we played in a playground and our parents had a lot of interest in this building so they made a very good yard. Just after they began to live there, they put in trees, and other things, - that is what I don't have here for my kids. It was a very big part of my childhood be­cause we could be out of our apartment, out of our families, we could play and have a good social life, and our parents could be alone together.

(Could you tell me what you know of your family histo­ry, about your great-grandparents, or grandparents?) I don't know anything, or approximately anything about my great-grandparents. The only thing I know about my mother's parents was that they lived in this special part of Russia that was just Jews. The Pale of Settlement. My grandmother was the oldest one and she had four siblings and when her mother died and her father decided to re-marry, they didn't like the new mother.

My grandmother took all the siblings with some packs on their backs and said that she would take them away from the house, and they would ask for food and then they went away and I think that all of them had good educations, at least, and they were educated people and I knew, other than my grandmother - only one sister. The three brothers they had were killed in the Second World War.

They were alive during the First World War but my grandmother was born during the 1900s, you know. That is about all I know about her parents. Also, I know about the parents of my mother's father, he was a shoemaker and once he took his very big family and moved to Argentina, because of the situation in the Ukraine, there was nothing to eat, etc., and he took his family to Argentina. He then brought them back, after a few years.

About my father's grandparents, I know nothing in particular.

(What made this grandfather decide to go to Argenti­na?) I only know that the situation was connected with *pogroms*. And with the poor situation and lack of food. I'm not sure all of the family came back, but my grandfather did.

So my mother's parents were the only grandparents I knew in person, and my grandfather died when I was about five or six years old. I don't remember him much, I just know that he loved me a lot. But my grandmother died when I was about twenty, so I knew her. She was the usual sort of representative of her generation, because she believed strongly in the Soviet. A lot. She was a member of the Communist Party. It was a big part of her life and it - the system - was very important to her and it was difficult to argue with her. We had to do this, though, because when I was fifteen or sixteen, the situation in the country was awful. Now, I think it is even more awful, but at that time, it was also very bad.

My mother worked as a journalist and she knew a lot. She saw a lot of what life was like in different parts of the country so we discussed this a lot at home. When we tried to say anything to my grandmother about conditions, she would get angry and say we should not talk like that. etc. But, at the end of her life she began to change a little bit and to understand that something was wrong with the system. I didn't discuss this with her, this change, but she was a smart woman and I think this change was very difficult for her, because the Soviet system was her whole life. Even after all the situations the system placed her in.

In the middle of the thirties, she was near arrest, when Stalin put in prison all the members of his party, all Communists and he like, cleaned his party. It was like a regular process, "Today we clean this office, tomorrow we clean that office." And it was awful for people. My grand­mother was saved from a very unpleasant situation, because, when it was her turn to be arrested and the time of the editorial office where she worked -- She wasn't a journal­ist, she was a technical editor.

And it was the time of their editorial office to be cleaned, it was like a meeting where everybody should come and stay and say "I am guilty, etc., etc." and when she was on the stage and made her speech, it was like a panic in the auditorium because they saw blood. Because of the nervous pressure, she started bleeding and she was hospitalized immediately from this hall and after she was back at work it was the turn of the next office, so they forgot about her and she was saved.

(Could you tell us more about this process?) They called it 'cleaning' the same word, and the situation was that everybody in this time could be called the "enemy of the people" and in the morning you could wake up and read in the newspaper that you are such-and-such enemy that you are a traitor and anything. For example, the newspaper saved once my father's mother. She was a professor and she made some lectures and that day she was to read a lecture about some writer about his books, etc., and in the morning before the lecture, she opened up the main newspaper and read an article about this writer, that he is an enemy, etc., and she called to the university and said that she was very sick and she could not come! It was a situation in the country and everybody was afraid and there was maybe twenty years of fear when you were afraid everyday. It was the life of two generations, maybe. The life of one and the beginning of life for another generation.

We got these warnings from our parents. You should be afraid, you should be very careful when you open your mouth. This was for everyone. For Jewish people, it was at the end of Stalin's life, in the 1950s when it was the case of the Jewish Doctors. But this was the end of his life. Earlier, it was the period for Georgians, for Tartars, and for every­body, Russians, Ukrainians, Byelorussians, whoever you were. First of all he (Stalin) was afraid of old Bolsheviks, so people who made the Revolution, who were of the same party, who knew him not as a big leader, or something not so impor­tant, and people -- I think that my grandmother's genera­tion were the main population of his prisons at the time. But it was people who were between seventeen and twenty-five during the Revolution, so they were the main power, and they were first in prison.

The system was that some commission came to each of­fice, plant, school, anywhere, and each member of the Commu­nist Party had to explain himself, what did he do? where were you before the Revolution? who were your parents? blah, blah, blah. And you could be out of the party be­cause, for example, your father had a small business and even if you decided not to go with your father when the Revolution came and even if you were a great activist in the Revolution, the most important thing for them at this moment was that your father had a private business or something like this. This was a very good time for, like dirty, people where they could take places of those accused. To be supervisors, to take places in the Party, and they used this a lot. A lot of people wrote letters, "My neighbor did - - - -" ; "My comrade was - - - - -."

They turned people into the investigative commissions. It was very common at that time. And, if you opened your mouth to say something you didn't know who would know about it, not tomorrow, but even in five minutes. So it was a very bad time for my country.

When it was a Jewish company, I think that my grand­father felt it a lot because he was a very educated person, he was an economist and sometimes, he was often a journal­ist. During the Second World War he was an editor of the Army newspaper and he participated in the War together with the Army, but he made the newspaper. Once, they had a very funny story, not funny, at least it was funny to them. They made up the newspaper and the messenger took it to the front, which was only a few kilometers from the editorial office and somebody in the office opened the newspaper and saw, you know how immediately you can see a mistake? With­out even reading the newspaper, he saw that the mistake was instead of "Stalin's Signs - How to Win" it said, "Stalin's Signs - How to Run". In Russian language, there is only one letter difference between the two words. "To Win" is Po-dish-die and "to Run" is Po-dish-eye. They were so afraid that someone would see this, they would all be killed, and they found someone with a motorcycle and this man stopped the messenger and brought the papers back. They brought together everyone from the editorial office and made a big fire and not even one copy of this newspaper went anywhere!

I don't know if you know about it but there is one University or Colleges, they called it the Institute of Red Professors and my grandfather was graduated from this Insti­tute. He was really a very well educated person. But, when it was in the 1950s, he left his job and he couldn't find anything and he was going to be, like his father was, a shoemaker. Because he couldn't find any other job. Some friend of his gave him, I'm not sure what kind of job, but he gave him a job. My mother was thirty-eight and in Moscow University, her specialty was the Russian language. She couldn't find any job. (Why couldn't they find jobs?) At this time, my mother was graduated in the beginning of the Fifties, and at that time, the State Anti-Semitism began to blow up, immediately, like a mushroom. So she couldn't find a job either. She applied at a lot of schools and only one woman, who was a director of a school, took her and my mother, at least, got a job.

But with her specialty she could find nothing. There were no specifications with her specialty, at least none that she could find.

(How were they able to go to such impressive schools? Especially your father?)

My grandfather was in this place, the Institute for Red Professors. He was from the Ukraine originally, and it was the beginning of the Soviet State, in the nineteen-twenties and it was a pretty good time for the country and for the Jewish people. It was absolutely Okay. The difficulty for Jewish people was in education, again back in the 1950's. Because just after the Revolution a lot of Jewish people participated in the Revolution and one of the motivations, I think, was that they wanted to change their lives to where they could have education, so that they could move to some cities, that they could be many different kinds of profes­sionals.

At the beginning, nobody, I think, could stop them and really a lot of Jews were in good Universities and had good jobs. Now it is one of the slogans of the Pamyat organiza­tion that the Jews had all the positions, etc., but they really could do it then.

(This is your mother's parents?) Yes, I am more famil­iar with them because -- My grandmother did not live with us, but she lived nearby and it was really the one grandpar­ent I knew. About my father's parents, I know only that they were divorced and my father lived with a stepfather and I know something about his mother that she was a profes­sor, that she --

Maybe it was because my father left his family when he was pretty young, he wanted to be a sailor. And he went to -------- He was Ukrainian, and he moved - his home is on the Black Sea, and he started in this special school, and he was going to be a sailor but then the war began. He was seventeen, I think, when the Second World War began and he was in the evacuation with his family and they were sent to Siberia. People from the Ukraine and other parts of Russia moved to the Urals and Siberia and Uzbekistan during the evacuation of civilians from the Western part of Russia.

My father lived there in Siberia with his mother and when he became eighteen, from this age he could participate in the Army and it was his dream. When he came to the medical commission, they found that he had a heart disease, so he couldn't fight. Then he asked his friend to go for the physical instead of himself and they went to another commission and he friend passed the medical exam for him. He worked in some military school and took courses, and he became a lieutenant of artillery. But his participation in the war wasn't so long because he was a lieutenant and the time of lieutenants at the front was usually very short. My father also was saved from the front when - they lived like underground - and once, he went out with one of his friends and his friend was killed and my father loved this friend and he was hospitalized and then he couldn't stay in the army anymore and he became a student at the University.

Because he was just from the Army, he could do it because when he had an exam, his school was a Ukrainian school and his Russian was awful, and when he read for the exam, some professor came and asked, "Who did this?" Be­cause it was absolutely awful. My father said, "I did it!" But he was in full uniform with all his medals, and they said, "Do you have any friends here?" And he said, "Yes," and they said let your friend sit here and correct all your mistakes. Because it was partly Russian and more Ukrainian, it was a big mistakes. So, my father became a student at the University and it was the Geography Department of Moscow University. And, as a result of all this, he became an Oceanologist. He worked with the sea, like he always want­ed. He was really happy, but he really had that heart disease. His active life was over when he was forty-nine. He is still alive, but he is mostly disabled. They wanted him to have surgery when he was forty-nine and they ran some tests. But the tests were traumatic, not good. He was paralyzed and he could not talk. Later he could, but he cannot use his hands. It was very bad.

(Is he in America now?) No, he is in Israel. I am going to visit him this October. (How long has it been since you saw him?) I haven't seen them since we left Russia in October of 1988. So it will be two years. They went to Israel this past January, 1990.

(Let's go back a little bit. After he was a student, how did he meet your mother?) Oh, it was a funny story. They had one common friend, a very nice woman, I liked her a lot. She is dead now. Once they met each other there, in Moscow, in her house, they introduced each other and they gave their names, like their friends usually called them. Nobody called them Julien or Lenina, friends usually called him Yuri, it is a Russian name with the same first letter; and my mother they called Lena. Both were usual Russian names but just a little different from their real names. So they introduced themselves as Yuri and Lena.

Then they met again at the same house, maybe two years later, and I don't know why, but hey introduced them more officially and she said that she was Lenina and he said he was Julien, and "If so, I need to marry you! because we have the same name!" They were married. They were not so young for marriage, not the way people usually are in Russia, because I think they both were thirty or thirty-one, for a first marriage in Russia, this is rather late.

Maybe because it was so soon after the war, it was not so usual to be married young. My sister was born when my mother was thirty-three and I was born when my mother was thirty-five. And when one of my friends says now, "Oh, I'm thirty already, I don't have kids." I always say, "Come on, you will have time. You will have time for all the troubles my mother had!"

(Can you tell me a little bit about your mother? her childhood? where she was born?)

My mother was born in Moscow. She was in school and she was the only child in the family. I think that my grandfather was very important to her and she began to read very early, because he read a lot. So she began to read the same books very early also, and they had a lot of things to discuss. I think that it was important for my mother that when she had just graduated school and she wanted to be a medical doctor and everybody said, "No, it is impossible." Even her father said it was impossible, it would be diffi­cult, you shouldn't do this. Even now, I think that she is sorry that she didn't try.

So, she decided to go to the University and to study Russian Language, Russian Literature. But, at the same time she graduated her school, the War began. First she was in the evacuation with my grandmother, they were someplace in Siberia, also, I think. My grandmother worked there, not like an editor certainly, but because she was a Communist, they put her into some collective farm and this place was awful. They had nothing.

My grandmother, maybe, was the first boss there who didn't want something for her own pockets. So, maybe that is why they began to work good and they began to make some products and they began to have something for themselves. When it was possible to come back to Moscow, and my grand­mother wanted to do that, all the women there cried and asked her to stay because she was the only one who gave them some life.

But my grandmother and mother came back to Moscow and my mother began to study at the University. It was not so difficult to become a student because Moscow was empty and even if my mother wasn't so smart and so talented. I do not think that it would be difficult for her at that time. It may have even been without special exams. She became a student, and there were a lot of Jews at Moscow University at that time and a lot of friends she met there she kept for the rest of her life. One of them now, for example, is in the same city in Israel where my parents are, one of her best friends.

It was not so difficult then. My father had a lot of Jewish friends, who started at the same time as he in Moscow University. Now, I don't know today, maybe, there is a lot of policy against Jews in the University. I was a student of Moscow University but I worked in the evening classes, it was a little bit easier to get into. I don't know exactly how many, but I know that only a few Jews now graduate from Moscow University, in my department, in the daytime classes.

So, my mother became a student, and she became a member of the Communist Party at the University. They have -- all of them were members of the Communist Party, all of them believed in the Communist Party. She and all her friends. When Stalin died she sat in her room at the common apartment and a neighbor came and told her, "Yes, you should cry. But I will cry with you about why he didn't die a long time ago!" Because this old woman was a prisoner and so she knew more than my mother knew at that time. Even though my mother was an adult woman, and she was a teacher already when Stalin died, but it was like the end of an era for her. She didn't understand all the bad things Stalin had done.

She hadn't seen when the neighbors came and put another neighbor into the prison; it is impossible for someone to think that another human being can be put into prison with­out any cause.

So when people saw some one taken away, they thought he must be guilty. Only when they took you did you begin to think that it was a mistake. It was a big mistake that everyone made. Even though they were taken prisoners, some people thought, "I'm here because of a mistake." But all of them were there because of some reason. It took years in these labor camps and prisons for people to understand. And some of them still do not understand why it happened. Not even after twenty years in these camps, or in prisons. Some, certainly, were there for some crime. But a lot of people were there because of the system. It was difficult for them to understand that all of them were there because of the system.

All my grandparents and parents were Communists. There was nothing in my life that was religious, that was Jewish. I don't think that this was because they were Communists, I think that for my grandmother, for example, it was important for her to take her siblings and to go away from this kind of life that they had. To go to some city, to get some educa­tion, to get some new life, and it was very important for her. It was the same for my grandfather who was the son of a very poor shoemaker and became a professor, became an editor, became a very educated person. It was important to them to make their life different from what they could have if they were only Jews, the way it was with their parents.

I think that is why my grandparents assimilated so actively in the Russian Population, in the Ukraine, in the army. I grew up thinking that there was no difference between the nationality, religious, etc. I had Russian friends, and Jewish friends, and Armenians, Georgians. I had different friends and to today I do not think that it is important what kind of nationality and religious beliefs people have. What is important is what kind of person you are.

(You didn't experience a lot of anti-semitism when you were growing up?)

You see, certainly, I had some of this. I had it, maybe the older I became I understood that there were some limits for me because I was Jewish. Limits of education, limits of job, these kind of limits. I don't know why or how it happened, maybe it is natural for Jews, but most of my close friends were Jews. Maybe there is something common between us. All my good friends were successful, they were journalists, which is not easy for Jews to become. Some of them were engineers like my husband and all of them were educated. I didn't have even one friend who was not educat­ed. Like my husband got and education, not what he wanted, but he had an education. He had a diploma, he had a profes­sion, he could work. I had more problems when I became a journalist and I began to look for a job. It was really difficult.

At least I found one newspaper. It was humorous but we called it a Junior newspaper because it was a newspaper for young people in Moscow. For example, for more than a year I worked there without any salary. I only got some money for articles I wrote. For example, this size -- it was three rubles. It was a system only in this newspaper, because it was a paper for young people and not like a Pravda. If they took an article, it depended how many lines they printed. Each line printed in the newspaper paid me five kopeks. So, this was not much.

For example, if you wanted to buy nice shoes, if you could find them in the store, would be at least fifty ru­bles. My salary was nothing. I worked without salary for more than a year and then I got a very good salary of sixty-five rubles. But I had a very good life. It was an abso­lutely free life. I should have been in my office from nine to six. I could be in my office one hour, two hours, twelve hours, it depended on the situation. I began there when I was twenty. I still lived with my parents, then I got married; I met my husband through my newspaper.

I wrote about economic problems and because I needed to do something every day it was impossible to leave my office, I should take information from two phones and hear my type­writer go like a machine. Once, I told my supervisor that it was enough, I could not work that way any more and I should go to see real people. He said, go ahead, find something interesting.

I found this one plant in Moscow. There was a branch there of Komsomol, the Communist Youth Organization, from fourteen to twenty-eight years old. Everybody joined Komso­mol - it was like, you are fourteen? go ahead and join. Each organization, each plant should have its own Komsomol Committee. There can be two, three, four, or more people, who do nothing really, but write papers, etc. I came to this committee because of my newspaper, its name was "Makow­sky Komsomolitz", Komsomolitz is a member of Komsomol. So we worked a lot with these committees.

I came to the committee and said, here is an article from your newspaper, I would like to know more about it, about these people, etc. They tried to explain to me. But it is like if I tried to explain to you what my husband does on his job, you will understand nothing, because I don't really understand his job! It was the same. They tried to explain to me but you should be a good expert in the engi­neering field to explain something to a person who is not an expert. So, I told them that I couldn't understand what they meant, let somebody from the team come here and explain it to me.

So, two guys came, one was my future husband! That is how we found each other. I had rules with my profession, I usually took all telephone numbers of people who I met there because it is possible to not really understand something and I gave my phone number also. I did the same here. I was twenty-two, then.

We lived together two weeks after our first date. (How did your parents feel about that?) They didn't have time to feel anything. And one week of those two weeks, he spent on a business trip. And in two months, we were married offi­cially. My older daughter was born September 2nd and Sep­tember 3rd was like exactly nine months since we first met each other.

(Lets go back a little bit, do you have brothers or sisters?)

I have a sister, she is my great enemy. We had only two years between us, she was older, I was younger. It was maybe my mother's mistake, because my mother began to ex­plain to her, "You are a big girl, (when she was only two)." Now I begin to see how big she might have been because my younger is three and a half and for me, he is awfully lit­tle. So, maybe that is why she didn't like me very much because it was difficult for her to understand.

(So you were born in Moscow and you lived in this big apartment complex. Did you walk to school with your sister? What are some of your childhood memories?)

We walked together to school and my sister was so awful for pictures that maybe that is why they liked me more because she was not easy to live with. I wasn't too easy to get along with either. You see, I was in a very special school. The biggest concern of our director was the face of the school. What was under this face was not important for him. But, he liked to show the school to everybody, even when the former president of America, came to Moscow, Nixon, it was decided that his wife would visit one school and it was our school. We didn't study for three days, we cleaned up our school from basement to roof. Then Mrs. Nixon changed her mind and she didn't come.

We had a lot of vacations like this. I worked after I graduated my school, I was a great cleaner. It was a spe­cial school in English. I hated English in this school, as much as possible. My mother was a teacher and she was in English, and when she came to a regional school department and asked them about the best school in their region, sud­denly they told her about this one, because it was so clean. My sister and I were both in this school and only when we were inside, my mother could understand that it wasn't such a wonderful place.

For example, a teacher could begin the lesson with "you all are pigs, you all are stupid, you are all this and that, etc." Maybe it was a good school for me, because one day I understood that I could stand up and say, "No, we are not!" We took Russian and all regular lessons but we had a special class for English. Regularly, study of a foreign language began in Fifth Grade in Russia, and we had it from Second Grade and we had it every day. But it was a very bad school, and a very bad teacher. We had special, like Chief of the Foreign Language Department, and his only concern was to make his office as perfect as possible. Every year he took the ten best pupils from Eighth Grade and he taught them and their level was very good.

All the others, he would absolutely not worry about. We could have a new teacher every year, and one teacher we called Ameimber, because she pronounced the word "remember" like "remeimber". At least, with this lady I made an agree­ment.

I came to her and said, "Let us do it this way. You will put me in Mark Three and I will not participate in your lessons." (I was in Ninth Grade.) She said, maybe I will give you more. And I said, No, just give me my Three. A Three is like a "C", not good.

You know who was the director of this school? His last name was Megrav (?), he was a Jew, and maybe you could have a chance to see him on Channel 11. They had some programs about Russian *perestroika* like four days in a row, and we have it on a tape. I am going to take it and watch it and if you are interested, I have permission to give it to you. Now since it is about *Perestroika*, he is in the first row anywhere. Yes.

And his wife was a woman whose mother was a busi­ness woman and had her own business and her father was a very active member of the Italian Communist Party. So it is an interesting family.

(Where is your sister?) She is in Israel with my parents. (What does she do?) I think that she is studying Hebrew now and in Russia, she had a different education. She worked like a jeweler but she didn't like that job; she worked like a clerical, but she didn't like this job. The problem with her, is that she doesn't like to be in an office on time. She is thirty-three, she is divorced. She has a son, he is with her. He is sixteen, and yesterday I got pictures from my mother and this boy is some thing.

(Did your family discuss politics as you were growing up?) We discussed it a lot, but I am not sure that my parents told me about it, but somehow I knew that there were things that you could discuss at home which you cannot discuss outside. And, it is very difficult to grow up with these feelings when you are sixteen. It is unnatural for a sixteen year old girl to divide what you can say here, and what you can say there. For people in Russia, you get this like with your mother's milk. Maybe now it will be better --

Especially in intelligent families, I participated in all discussions with my parents friends from a very young age. My mother always took me along because there weren't baby-sitters in Russia, and my grandmother was too tired to be with us. One time, together, we were something very special. Once, my father took us, like into a bank, and we were there five minutes and then a clerk there said that if he didn't take us out they would close the bank because they couldn't work. Together, my sister was like seven and I was five, and together we were awful.

(Were you aware of the worries your parents had?) Yes, I knew of them, yes. I knew the truth that there were things for yourself and things for everybody. My parents were honorable and preferred to tell the truth. They are honest people and even then it was true that you can say this here, but you should not say it there. That means that you might have to lie somewhere, but -- (What were they worried about?) You see, they lived in their youth, maybe, during the time where they were different in personality, it was Stalin's time.

Even when I was sixteen, it was not dangerous and it was not a time - (?), and I don't know anybody who would tell an anecdote without being afraid of who would hear. In my time, people were afraid to open their mouths and to say something because of this experience. Until today, I am surprised that now there are a lot of people who like to openly, in general, talk so. Please, until today in Russia there are people who are afraid.

(Why did you decide to leave Russia, and how did your parents feel about this?)

When we decided to leave Russia, Igor tried to push me about six years, to do it. From the beginning of our mar­riage. I said no, I couldn't do it because as soon as we bring our papers to OVIR the organization that gives you permission to leave, immediately, I would lose my job. And how will I live without my job?

There were several reasons which came together at one time which helped me to make the decision. First of all, I had two kids already and I was aware in my family. I under­stood that my family is my own hope and the most impor­tant thing for me, more important than my journalism, or any other professional ambitions. So, I understood that I can be refused and I will sit home and I will do anything, I will find something, but I need to do this for my family. (Why?) Why, is not a question. It is one of the reasons.

First of all, *perestroika* began, and I understood that now I don't have any hope about my country. Because when it was Brezhnev's time, I thought, Okay, some day he will die. Some day everything will change and when the *Perestroika* began and they began to say, "Everything is new, we will make *Perestroika*, we will rebuild - etc., etc." I saw that there were a lot of new words but not a new reality. That is what I told Igor, now I see that nothing will get better for this country.

Maybe, Igor and I had some disagreements during the six years but not really fights. Maybe he was not so active because he could see that this, and this, and these people already got permission. But everybody that we knew who asked for the permission to leave, were refused. It wasn't too excited, because he knew the main responsibility for us was raising the children.

Also, my mother worked, because my father is so sick, and she was at this time the wage earner for the family. So I understood that if I brought in this application, tomorrow she would lose her job. And she will have nothing, and she will not be able to support the family.

Then, we thought about his father, who is a big chief in his business and also, he could lose his job if we had applied three or four years ago.

(What happened when you did apply?) Nothing. Because the times had really changed. What pushed me to make a decision was a job I did at that time. I was at home with Eugene, he was a small baby, and in Russia you could be at home with your newborn child, a year and a half and you will have thirty-five rubles a month. It is really nothing but at least, you can buy new clothes for the baby, and you will have your place, you could go back to work.

And when Eugene was born, they changed the rule and you could stay even to two years, but the last half year was without any money. It was nice, and I was at home with Eugene, and I took a job with a magazine, named "Feminine School" (? ? ?) and they needed somebody who could answer letters for them. They got a lot of mail from all over the country, from mothers, and that was something that pushed me a lot to make this decision. Because, every day, I read letters from mothers, maybe 90% of them were mothers of many children, and there are some rules for them in Russia. The history of these rules for them at the end of the War when it was a big problem because a lot of men were killed and the government tried to do something to push women to have more children. So they made special rules. If you had more children, you can have this, and this and this. (Like a baby bonus? )

You can have an apartment, you can have more food - and it is important but, the letters I read were something like:

"I have three kids, and in my district you should have four or more if you want to buy meat and milk and what not in a special store. What shall I do with my three kids? I don't have time to buy something for them, but I should, etc. etc., what is your advice?"

I don't have time to stay in line, if you have to stay in line like three hours to buy two pounds of meat. For example, if you have one kid, you can go to a special store to - Because, in the regular store, you can stay in line and get nothing.

Also, there was a letter like:

"I just delivered my fourth child, so according to rules we have in our area, now I can apply for a washer, but only two mothers can get washers during one year. I will be fifty-fifth in this line, so I will get a washer when my newborn baby will be twenty-eight."

The more I read these letters, and the more I had to answer them, that they should go to this government office. That they should go and how they should ask for things, where they should write but the more I read these letters the more I understood that it was impossible for people to make something with this system. Because the system is like a wall, and you can kill yourself fighting with this wall and still change nothing in the life of your children.

Then, I understood that I should change something in the life of my children, and if I cannot change that system, and I was absolutely sure that I could not change the system I lived in; I should take them away.

The last point was that Igor's friend, who was refused during eight years finally got permission, so I saw that it was real, that it was possible and we gave them our names and they made for us the Israeli invitation. This was the only one official way to leave the country.

(Did you try to change the system?) Yes, I tried. I tried to change it like a journalist and it also showed me that it is impossible to change. (Were you allowed to write whatever you wanted?) No. For example, when I had the economic page in the newspaper and I needed to make the whole page once a month, it was a lot of work to do. And, once, I came to one small factory and I talked to the direc­tor and he told me that they made fabric and he said that the main problem they have is that they have nothing to clean the air. Women, a large part of the workers were women, had to work in this dirty air, it is awful, it is dangerous, etc.

When I brought this material to my supervisor, who was a very nice man, a very good one, also a Jew, and he said, "I'm sorry, we cannot write about this." So -

(You accepted that?) Yes, because, you see, that word I took from my mother. That it's your right to write what­ever you want and it is the editorial right to put into the newspaper whatever we want. So, now, they have opened a lot of newspapers and magazines and maybe, now in Russia, I could have my own magazine. I don't know.

They have even started like a Russian Playboy, now. The name is Alexander. (Do you ever feel sorry that you are not there now?) I don't think so. Because, I think that I am too lazy to be a real journalist. Because, real journal­ists should run around a lot. Maybe I could be a good editor. I have a lot of ideas and I can share them with everybody, I can make any kind of advice, I can explain to you what to do from the beginning to the end but, if I have to do it myself, that is a different question.

(Are there any Russian publications here in Chica­go?) Yes, there are three. If it is like an immigrant newspaper, I don't like them, the level is not so good. American newspaper, I don't thing I am familiar enough with them. I am not a big newspaper reader, I never was in Russia, ei­ther. I think that Russian journalism is more interesting than American. (In what way?) It is more - good Russian journalism is like literature. It is a special art and nobody knows this art because here you can tell openly everything you think. In Russia, there is a special art to write what you think in such a way that they can put it in the newspaper. You cannot come right out and say things, you have to let people infer from what you have written.

Here there is more information: A, B, C. In Russia, for the most part there are a lot of good articles.

(If you had to do all over again, would you come to America again?) Yes. I don't know why but I feel very comfortable here.

(Is there anything you miss?) Only my friends, that is the only thing I miss. A lot of them are still there. (What kind of a person stays? Do they have less hopes?) No. You see, not everybody can leave, even if they are Jewish. For example, I have friends, they both are Jews, they both are very good journalists, very professional. And they really live by their work, it is the most important thing for both of them. And they are going to leave now, they are going to Israel and I don't think that it is the right decision because I am not sure that they will be able to find good jobs for them. And for them, the job is the most important thing. So, they may be unhappy because of this.

In Russia, in all these awful situations, they found themselves, he works for some newspaper and she created her own like society, like an Anti-AIDs committee and she was here in Chicago one night. She went through Chicago to San Francisco and there was a conference about AIDS, and she participated in the conference so we had a chance to see her. I had another couple of friends, they are also both journalists and I came here, I knew that my husband is an engineer, and he will find a job and he will provide hous­ing, food and everything for me, and the kids, and I will look around. If there are two journalists in the family, the options are not good.

(When did you start hearing about AIDS in Russia?) It was maybe two years before we left, 1986, 1985, maybe. Pravda did not have articles about this. Before, I don't remember who was the first, maybe it was TV or radio, they began to tell about it. That it was an English or Capital­ist word and it was a homosexual problem and we don't homo­sexuals and we don't have drug addicts so we won't have AIDS here.

Then it began and they wrote in the newspaper that they had five cases, and four of them were foreign citizens. There are a lot of foreign students. It was a possibility because before they realized that this did not depend on the social system, they didn't check foreign students and for­eign citizens and Russia really got it from the foreign countries.

The first Soviet person who got it, he worked somewhere in Africa, or somewhere, and he had some homosexual contacts while there. Then, when you found one person with AIDS inside the country, how could you know how many social contacts he had or what else he had done? And what is really dangerous in Russia is that, you can get it not from a sexual contact but from medical equipment. Because they use it many times.

(Is there much I.V. drug usage in Russia?) There is now and now they begin to write about it. When I grew up, I was absolutely sure that we didn't have persecution, that we don't have drug users, and we don't have this, or this or this. My mother, for example, told us she was sure that there was not tuberculosis in Russia. Before she herself got it after the War and she was put in a special hospital or sanitarium. And she found there a lot of people with the same disease. She recognized then that there was such an illness in Russia. Before, she had thought that this was impossible because we didn't have it.

We now have AIDs in Russia, and what is really danger­ous is that Soviet medical equipment, needles and such, they use a lot of times.

(What do you think has kept your family together? and strong?) I don't know. We fight a lot. I think that in both my parents family and in my family the most important thing is that we have what to think about together. We have thoughts and feelings to share and I think this is important because if people who live together with you are not inter­esting for you, their personalities, it cannot be family. I think that all the difficulties we had in my family, with all the difficulties we have now, it is very important that we can sit and talk. After eight years of marriage, we can sit and talk and we can be interesting for each other like people with different opinions.

Sometimes my husband can say, if there should be only one opinion in this situation, it should be his! It is typical. I think that it helps to talk.

(What advice did your mother give you? I mean, you come from such a modern family, from such a line of journal­ists.) You see, my mother did not give me any advice. The only thing I remember from her was, when I was in school and I wrote something sad for my literature lesson, she read it and said, "I'm sure this girl will never be a journalist." And for her it was probably a greater surprise for her that I became a journalist and a really good journalist.

(Why did you decide to become a journalist?) When I graduated school I was crazy for math, I thought I would be a mathematician and I thought that I should be like a com­puter programmer or something. I passed exams and I became a student in one institute in Moscow and it was one of the few institutes where girls were, that was pretty much open for Jews. Anyway, they understood that it was impossible to absolutely no Jewish students because they should make statistic, I think. There are a lot of Jewish students and Jewish students usually were in the technical schools, not like universities but like engineering. I stood in this Institute one semester and that was enough for me. No more math!

My mother told me that only one thing must be done if I left Institute today, tomorrow I should work. You will not stay at home and do nothing, it was the only reaction from her. I took a job like messenger in Pravda. I worked in this part of the editorial office where the newspaper is built from metal - typeset, and I worked there between the factory part and the directors and I took a lot from this process and I decided, why couldn't I try to apply for the Journalism Department at the University?

I was accepted, and then I became a journalist, to my own satisfaction. I studied for six years in the evening courses, and it would be five years in the day courses.

(What do you miss from the Soviet Union, besides your friends?) Besides my friends, maybe I miss the kind of friendship between people which exists in Russia. BEcause, Americans, as I see it, I may be wrong, are not supposed to be very close friends. Such close friendships are common in Russia. They are, I don't know, everybody is like a "good guy" to each other, but it is very difficult for people here to come closer. Maybe because you are so rushed. If you were born in Moscow, you will be buried in Moscow. And you will graduate from school there, from the Institute, and you will work there, so you will spend your whole life there. Here? you can be born in Chicago, you will be in school there, and you will work over there, you are much more mobile. It is difficult to be close when people keep mov­ing.

For me, myself, I found here very good friends. But I am not sure if I will be able to be so close with any Ameri­can person as I am close with the people from Russia, be­cause we are familiar with another kind of friendship. We also share another kind of relationship. Maybe because of this history, we know that if you are my friend, we should be ready to stand back-to-back and to fight for each other. Here it is maybe not so necessary.

(What are your aspirations for your children?) For my children? I don't know. I prefer them, especially my daughter today, to be less American than she is, because she is a very difficult person. I think that I adapted to living here very fast, she did it twice as fast. Any ques­tion, that she asks and any thing she wants, and if I say No. "The big idea. I want what I want and I will have it!" So, it is difficult, because - - - (?)

(As a Russian mother, how do you handle this?) Russian mothers don't have such problems because in the family they are something like this, and in school they are like this. That is why, it is a little bit easier for parents there. Here? we came with our system of discipline, it can be absolutely stupid. Because sometimes she asks why do I say NO? Why? In her school she will sit on floor with her teacher and they will let them do whatever they want and it is absolutely another kind of relationship, different than Russia, and we are not familiar with this. We have to learn to handle this child's freedom, it is not so easy.

I work for Jewish Family Service. I work with the re-settlement of new families. Now I write out papers, and papers and papers. Filling out forms, it is awful. Our Federation, I think, delivers a new kind of form each second day. And we need to fill these forms out for each case, etc. Number, dates, future. I write it in English. I hope nobody will read it.

I would like to write a book someday about America, how I see it. I remember when we - and it is also my mother's idea, when we, last year we got an invitation from our friend in America, she is Catholic......(end of tape.)