Nikiforova, Marksena Mikhailovna

Interviewer: Flige, Irina Anatol'evna

Interview nr. 1

Cassette nr. 1, side A

- Tell me about your family – where you lived, how you all got on with each other, how you were brought up…
- Well, first of all, I should say that I was born when we were living in… We had this small two-room flat on Smol'nyi Lane, by the Smol'nyi [in Petrograd]. Then my parents divorced, and a year later Mama married Petr Leont'evich Nizovtsev. He was given a flat on Tverskaia Street with three or four rooms – I've forgotten how many it was exactly – and so we moved to Tverskaia. Now, the thing is that when they married, it wasn't just Mama who brought with her a child from her previous marriage – that is, me – but Petr Leont'evich too: he had had a son by his first wife, who died a few months after giving birth. He had sent his son, Lesha, to live in the country, with his sister's family, but after moving in with Mama, he brought him back to Leningrad. My brother, Lesha, was just two years old at the time, and when Petr Leont'evich went to fetch him, Mama said… you see, as a matter of fact, I had never called my stepfather "Papa" until then – to me he just seemed a stranger who'd come into our house… But when he returned from the country with my brother, Mama said to me: "Look, he may not be your own father, but for Lesha he is, and the boy is so little that he doesn't understand these things yet… So please promise me to call him Papa." And I remember how the first time I found it so difficult to do as I'd been asked and call him Papa – but only the first time, though. I remember what happened: I needed some paper and a pencil, so I walked into his study and just stood there, unable to bring myself to say "Papa" … [*laughs*] Eventually, though, I did take courage and said it… My stepfather really was an excellent person. He did as if he hadn't noticed my awkwardness and just gave me the pencil and paper, and from that point on I ceased to feel this inhibition… Yes, he was a magnificent person. My own father wouldn't have treated me better, that I'm in no doubt about. I remember there was this episode, when I was about ten and we were walking in the park, where he bumped into a friend of his. I was walking next to him, and Lesha, my brother, was at the other side – I've always called him brother, as you can see – and that friend asked Papa: "So that's your son, is it?" He said yes. And just as his friend was about to say that I, then, must be Anna Iakovlevna's daughter, Papa put his arm around my shoulders and said, beaming with affection: "And this is my daughter." He didn't even let that fellow finish his sentence, can you imagine?! So my earliest distinct memories go back to more or less that time when Papa went to fetch Lesha and brought him to live with us. Now, Papa was a Party executive: in those years, he was working in the *obkom* [oblast Party committee], as Kirov's deputy. Mama, on the other hand, was Chairman of the Cotton Workers' Union's [Leningrad] oblast committee. It's interesting to bear in mind, though, that at that time there weren't any personal dachas yet for leading officials. What there were, were these holiday homes: for example, the [Leningrad] *obkom* had its holiday home, the *ispolkom* [Party executive committee] had its own, and so on – and all of us would live

together in these homes during holidays, including us, the officials' children. That's why I got to know all the children of our leading officials – I became friends with them, and later, after the parents of many of us were arrested, we tried to stay in touch and help each other with some advice or whatever, and we would also visit one another now and then. Yes, we all got on very well and stayed good friends… Some years later, we moved to the Karpovka [river embankment], into a house of flats which had just been built for workers from the various departments of the Lensovet [Leningrad City Council] – that was around 1935 – but before that, we lived for a while on Labour Square. It was, in fact, when we were living there that I first started going to school: to get there, I had to walk down to Theatre Square and then past two blocks of houses before finally reaching the lane where the school was: it was in a building which had once housed a gymnasium. You can still see it from Theatre Square today: the athletics hall has this glass roof… Yes, that's where it was. As to your question about how Mama brought me up, I should first of all say that Mama and Papa were away at work all day long; they would come home very late, somewhere about eleven o'clock. So I was left at home with our domestic servant and, being the eldest member of our family present there during the day, I somehow felt responsible for everything that took place in our flat. Now, when it was time for me to start attending school, Mama actually took me there on the first day, the 1st of September, having said to me beforehand: "Do you know what, Marksena? I'll take you to school today, and I want you to try to remember the way, because there's no one who can take you there otherwise. And this afternoon, you'll also have to get back on your own, as there's no one who can fetch you from school either." Now, if you can picture that area to yourself, you'll see that it was quite a long walk to my school from where we lived! Anyway, she left me at the doors of the school that morning, and afterwards I did manage to find the way home by myself, and since then I always went to school on my own. No one ever took me there. Nowadays people say this nonsense about how the Party executives would drop their children off at school by car – in actual fact, there was nothing of the kind! I always went to school on foot. When we moved to the Karpovka [embankment], in the Petrograd district, my new school was on Peace Street, so that meant I had to walk to Lev Tolstoi Square and then go down Kirov [now Kamennoostrovskii] Prospekt until I got to Peace Street: the school was in the third building round the corner. I started going there when I was in the fourth form.

- What were your favourite books as a girl? Who were your heroes?

- Mama would buy me books, and I read all the children's books that came out in those years – all of them! She bought me these volumes of selected works of all the classics: I still have them to this day – on that top shelf over there. I've got them all, starting from Pushkin – they're all there: Herzen, Gogol, Chekhov… Mama always made sure to buy them. And apart from those, all the books which appeared at the time – I read all the children's ones: for example, Perel'man, [Yakov Perel'man (1882-1942), the author of a number of highly successful books popularising physics, mathematics, and cosmology], and "Zemlia Sannikova" ["Sannikov's Land" (1924), a science fiction novel by the geologist and explorer of Siberia, Vladimir Obruchev (1863-1956)], which I liked very much then. You see, I started to read very early on. We had this stand which went round all the walls of the dining room, without any glass doors or anything, and there were always lots of books on the shelves. And as I was sitting at home with nothing to do, I was naturally drawn to these shelves. That's how it all began: I would climb up on a

chair, pick out some books and leaf through them to start with – the ones that seemed promising I would hold on to, whereas those that had something I couldn't understand, I would just put aside or return to their places. And it's quite interesting, you know, that the first author I read was Pushkin – his *Tales of Belkin*. Oh, that enthralled me ever so much! I remember myself… it was when I was in the third form, so that means I must have been ten years old – I remember myself sitting on the floor in front of that stand and reading Pushkin. I still know many of his verses by heart. Some volume of his works would always be on my table, and not just that – when I was in the higher forms, this volume over there, which is an anthology of his poetry, would always lie on my couch, in my room. And I would open it at any page and read from there: I was so terribly fond of Pushkin's verses, you see – I read them with such delight. Overall, I spent so many hours of my childhood reading! For example, as I said, all the children's books which came out in those years and which Mama would buy for me. I've still got all the books she brought me. As for school, I didn't get very good marks there: I was always given *troiki* [the mark three (out of five) – equivalent to 'satisfactory'], because I just didn't have any particular eagerness to learn. I did like drawing, though, and had a good hand, but as for the other subjects, I wasn't at all keen on preparing for lessons [*laughs*]. Later, when we moved to the Karpovka [embankment], we had a second house-maid… Mama took her on, because there were now three children in the family. She'd recently given birth to a son, you see, and it was clear that our cook wouldn't be able to cope with looking after three children on top of her other work, so that's why she decided to engage a second house-maid, just to take care of us. But, all the same, I was already then a very independent-spirited person: I've been so all my life!

- Where did these house-maids come from?

- Well, our first domestic servant was this Auntie Masha – it was Mama who found her. She was working, you see, and I was little and there was no one whom she could have left me with, so she started looking for a servant. Now, one of her colleagues, an official whose name escapes me… perhaps it was… but, then again, I don't want to make anything up… Anyway, this acquaintance said to her: "You may be interested to know that in my village there's a relative of mine who's keen to move to the city." So he telegraphed her, and she came to Leningrad: Masha was her name, she was from Vologda Oblast. We took her on, and it's amazing how strong her affection for Mama became: she was literally prepared to, I don't know, prostrate herself before Mama! She wanted to satisfy her in everything: whatever Mama wanted, she would go and fetch it; for dinner she would prepare any dishes that Mama asked for; no errand was too small for her… In the mornings, she would even run to the bakery just to fetch some fresh buns, so that Mama could have them with her tea at breakfast – that's what she was like! Auntie Masha, as a matter of fact, was an Old Believer, and she therefore knew a great deal about herbs – she was a proper herbalist, she was, and it's no exaggeration to say that all of us in our family owed our good health to her! She fed me and generally looked after me – in fact, she fed me so generously that my aunt would say, full of indignation: "One shouldn't keep on feeding a child like that once it starts becoming chubby!" [*laughs*]. Oh yes, I was a rather roly-poly child, I must admit! But, as I said, it was thanks to Auntie Masha that I grew up healthy and strong. And something else that comes to mind: when Papa came back with Lesha from the countryside, with my brother… we were brought up that way, you see: even though no one had ordered me to, I still considered him my

brother and felt responsible for him, that's how it was. Even though he wasn't my own flesh and blood –and I knew that, of course – I nevertheless always treated him like a brother. That's how we were brought up, you see. So, as I was saying, when Lesha turned up here in Leningrad, he was all covered in scabs – from one of these children's illnesses, chickenpox, I think… and Auntie Masha made up these herbal baths which… I can still remember how she brought this wash-tub into the kitchen and filled it with a brew of something… and that's how she managed to cure him. Can you imagine that?! Oh, she was wonderful! But a few years later, in 1935 or thereabouts… when we got back from our dacha, she was gone!… I asked where Auntie Masha was, and was told that she had gone to work somewhere else… Soon afterwards, this Grusha came to work for us… As I later found out, it was Beria who was responsible for all this: he had given orders that all domestic servants devoted to their employers were to be sacked, and then had his own people installed as servants everywhere. [In fact, it was Iagoda who instructed NKVD officers to recruit the servants and chauffeurs of Party functionaries as informers on their employers – Beria did not take charge of the NKVD until 1938] People he could rely on, you see. So from 1935 we had this Grusha, and she was with us for two years…

- Where did she come from, then?

- Grusha? I don't know, I couldn't say where she came from… Someone sent her to us and she just worked for us. As for Auntie Masha… do you know where Mama managed to fix her up with a new job? With the actor Babochkin! [Boris Babochkin (1904-75), who played the title-role in *Chapaev* (1934) and was a notable stage actor] She worked as his servant for some years, and then, after she was sacked, she married and went back to the countryside. However, after the war she would often come here to visit me. That Grusha, on the other hand, she was so… I hardly ever talked to her, in fact… You see, she was such an unwelcoming person… They had deliberately assigned her to us so that she would spy on my parents. That's how it was.

- Could you say a bit more about Auntie Masha? You said that she was an Old Believer – did she actually tell you that she was a believer? She didn't try to hide it?

- No, she didn't hide it at all. Besides, she had some relatives here in Leningrad – I've forgotten what their name was; they were a husband and wife, both more or less of the same age as Auntie Masha. And on days off, she would go to visit them. Like her, they were Old Believers too. As a matter of fact, she had quite a few other relatives here who were also Old Believers. I actually visited a couple of them myself, after the war. It really was fascinating to see how they had their own types of towel, their own crockery, and so on… As I said, Auntie Masha would come here to visit me in later years, and she was also frequently invited to read the burial services for various deceased members of the Old Believer community here in Leningrad: they were, of course, buried according to their special rites… So no, she didn't try to conceal her faith: she had her own towels, her own plates and cups, and she would eat separately, on her own. We didn't have any problem with that, if you see what I mean – even though she stood out from us in this respect, we didn't treat her any differently for that… We were aware of these things and just took them in our stride.

- But how did your mother explain to you why she lived like that?

- The thing is she didn't! We simply considered… that that was the way it had to be. There wasn't any need to explain anything! That was simply how things were in life: what was there to explain there?! You see, I never had any problem with these kinds of

things – my attitude towards religion, for example, was never aggressive or whatever… That was evidently the influence of my upbringing: this way of looking upon religion, say, or races different to ours, as things that were legitimate in their own right, if you see what I mean. I never… for example, after my parents' arrest I lived with my aunt, and she was a believer, whereas I have always been an atheist – I can't force myself to believe in God; all that, you see, was so alien to me… But my aunt, she was a believer – even before the war, she had been going to church and attending Easter eve services. I remember how for Easter she would always prepare *pashka* [a sort of cheesecake traditionally eaten at Easter] and *kulichi* [another traditional Easter cake], and I would get up very early on Sunday and could hardly wait for her to return from church: to keep my impatience in check, I would lay the table and get everything ready. You see, she could only break her fast after having attended the Easter vigil. Then, after she came home, we would sit down at the table and have dinner: the service would finish a few hours after midnight, you see. And I liked this a lot, I gladly took part in these preparations for the Easter dinner – it didn't seem strange to me at all, far from it. I don't know why, but I've always looked at these things dispassionately. For example, Mama had two Jewish girl friends – now, I would never have so much as dreamt of thinking in such terms as: oh, they're Jewish, whereas I'm Russian!… After the war, when I was working in a library, our head librarian, Liubov Zakharovna Rubina, was Jewish, and to this day I remember her with gratitude. She was very nice to me… She knew that I'd lost my parents and showed me as much affection as she would her own daughter. She was so kind to me that… for me it was always simply irrelevant whether someone was Jewish or Russian… That's how we were brought up, that's what I learnt from my family as a child: that someone else might have a different nationality, be Georgian, say, or Jewish, or a Tartar, or whatever, and yet that these were all perfectly normal people, in no way different to me. Yes, my attitude in these matters was always truly dispassionate.

- Was it both your parents who brought you up to think in this way?

- Yes, both Mama and Papa – that is, my stepfather – brought me up like that… My own father… After divorcing my mother, he… Why did they divorce? – Well, he'd taken up with another woman. At the same time, he left for Novosibirsk Oblast, where he'd been mobilised by the Party, to work as First Secretary of a *raikom* [district Party committee]. He worked there until 1948, when… but I'll tell you about that later. So, anyway, he left us to take up his new post. Moreover, he treated me very badly: he didn't do anything to help Mama… that is, it wasn't so much that he was unwilling to help us as the fact that Mama just didn't want to have anything to do with him. That's how strained their relations were. And I remember what happened once as we were having breakfast: Milia came in with a postal order for 100 rubles – this must have been in 1934 or 1935 – it was from my own father: he'd apparently sent this as a birthday present for me. Mama had a look at it and then calmly said: "Milia, please take it back to the post office and ask them to send it back." Do you see how…

- Who was this Milia?

- Milia – that was our nurse. It must be said, though, that our family circumstances were rather complicated… Because my own father's sister and mother, who lived together, were both very fond of Mama, and her divorce didn't change anything in that respect… At the time she met my father, which happened around 1920… or 1919… or perhaps even earlier – at any rate, at some point during the Civil War – Mama was working, or,

rather, serving as a nurse in the Red Army units being trained in the outskirts of Petrograd. And that's where she met my father. When they moved in together, my mother didn't have anything or know anyone here in Leningrad at all. She was Polish, you see – a native of Warsaw. But since Warsaw then was part of the Russian Empire, after finishing a gymnasium there, she was sent to Russia to work as a school-teacher. And when Poland became independent, she stayed on in Russia. That's how she ended up as a field hospital nurse: as a matter of fact, she served as a nurse with Voroshilov's troops. Until the last years of her life, she was actually on very good terms with Voroshilov, and he even came to visit us once or twice. Auntie Masha later often boasted of how she had cooked for no less a person than Voroshilov! So, as I was saying, once the Civil War was over and they could return to Leningrad, my parents went to live with my grandmother. She received Mama just as if she were her own daughter and always treated her like that. So when Mama divorced father, she stayed very good friends with Grandmother and my aunt. Now, my aunt didn't have any children of her own, so she also treated me like a daughter. When Mama was going through a bad patch, just before marrying [for a second time]… my aunt took me in for a while – in fact, she always did that whenever I was taken sick. In those years, I would be at my aunt's place half the time, and she came to regard me as her child. Later, when Grandmother fell ill, Mama helped them a lot materially: you see, it was very difficult in those times to get hold of things like fruits and medicine – they were simply beyond the reach of my grandmother and aunt, but Mama, on the other hand, could get these things for them. And she regularly did, I know that… Now, Grandmother was from… or, rather, not she herself, but her husband was from Kostroma Province, and she had lived there in the house of her father-in-law. Even though she later moved to Leningrad, she would often go back to that village: Milia, whom you asked me about, was from a peasant family in that village and was Grandmother's goddaughter… When the countryside started going through hard times and there was this famine, in the 1920s that is, Milia went to Leningrad to work for Grandmother and my aunt as a domestic servant. But, later, when we needed some help in the house too, Grandmother let us take Milia on, whilst she and my aunt found themselves another maid… So that's how Milia came into our house: properly speaking, she was Grandmother's godchild. And she worked for us until my parents' arrest – even after that, she stayed with me.

- Did you have a lot of contact with your grandmother?

- With Grandmother? Oh yes, I was at her place a lot; they would let me stay there for long periods … I spent half of my childhood with Grandmother, in fact, and it was she who taught me how to embroider, even using coloured beads… When we hired a dacha, it was Grandmother who would live with me there for a number of weeks, because there was no one else who had the time to look after me, even though I was so little… Something I've just remembered is what happened when Grandmother became seriously ill – she'd had a stroke which left her unable to speak – and Mama took me to see her and, I suppose, to say good-bye to her for the last time: she was lying still in her bed, and, as I walked up to her, she looked up at me and said: "Marksena!"… This made such an impression on my aunt, who was there of course, that for the rest of her life she never tired of recalling this scene and telling me how much her mother had loved me, since something like that… I mean, Grandmother was already paralysed, but when I walked up to her bed, she recognised me – just imagine! – and called out my name: "Marksena!"

Everyone in the room was astonished, of course… As I said, it really was the case that my grandmother and aunt felt this affection for me which the fact that Mama had divorced my father couldn't weaken in any way. As for my father, well, to be honest, I have to say that he was something of a windbag – or, perhaps, I'm being too unfair to him… I don't know. But this incident has stuck in my mind: it was when I was at Grandmother's place once, and he happened to have arrived in Leningrad on some commission, so he decided to call in at Grandmother's and have a look at me, since he knew that I was there too. He stepped into the room and greeted Grandmother like this: "Why, hello! Mummy dearest! Do you know what, I've brought you this wonderful shawl! Oh, but it's in my hotel-room… I'll bring it to you next time, don't worry." Well, Grandmother never set eyes on that wonderful shawl – neither then, nor later. So you see how he was? – all this "Mummy dearest" stuff which was, of course, no more than hot air. That's the kind of person he generally was.

- Do you know anything about your grandmother's family origins?

- Yes, she came from a merchant family. I think she was a native of St Petersburg – at least, I'm pretty sure she was. My grandfather, on the other hand… that is, Grandmother's husband – he divorced her somewhere between 1923 and 1925 after meeting a younger woman. Grandmother, thank God! had already reached an age at which such things… Anyway, my grandfather was a very fascinating person. He was the son of a blacksmith in Kostroma Province: in those days, a village blacksmith, depending on the circumstances, might very well be considered a member of the local intelligentsia, and that was the case with his father, who actually sent him to St Petersburg, to study. Well, my grandfather arrived there and, highly talented as he was, he soon made his way and found employment in a bank – as a clerk, I think. Then he married Grandmother and… Oh, but I forgot to mention that he also worked as an attorney – is that the right word? – for this wealthy landlady who owned a number of houses of flats. It was a position of certain responsibility, you know – being in charge of all these legal matters – and, of course, it provided him with an extra source of income, which meant that my grandparents were quite well-to-do – very much so, in fact. They had a five-room flat and three children: my aunt, father, and there was also an elder brother. Yes, my grandfather was quite a compelling figure: he was so sprightly and affable, he had this splendid way of telling anecdotes – they made such an impression on me, even though I was so little at the time, that I can still remember quite a few… For example, he would tell Jewish anecdotes in such a splendid manner… Yes, he was always the life and soul of any gathering. That's how my grandfather was.

- What was his name?

- Nikolai… I've forgotten the patronymic.

- Would you say there were any differences between your mother's ideas as to how to bring you up and those of your grandmother, or your stepfather? They probably had different priorities, didn't they?

- Well, not really, I wouldn't say there were any such differences. When I went to stay with Grandmother for these longish periods, I didn't have the impression that I was entering a completely different world. No, it was just the same everywhere. At least, I didn't feel any difference.

- There wasn't any difference?

- No, all the more so as I hardly ever got to see Mama – that's why I was so terribly envious of the other children whose mothers didn't work. Yes, I remember this terrible envy which I felt: I so wanted Mama to stay at home and be with me! I saw her so rarely because she would come home late in the evenings, when I would already be in bed. The only chances I had to see her were effectively on rest-days or on some other special occasion… so, as you can imagine, I missed her a lot. And even when I went to Grandmother's place, I was, subconsciously perhaps, trying to draw some warmth and consolation for seeing so little of Mama at home. Because she was, after all, very close to me; we were chips off the old block, so to speak… Of course, Auntie Masha was a wonderful person, but it just wasn't the same with her… My aunt looked after me a lot, too. She was a doctor, you see, and would treat me whenever I was ill: as soon as I was taken sick, with whatever I might be, I would immediately be packed off to my aunt's place, and she would take charge of my treatment… When I was about three, my parents hired a dacha in Martyshkino [a settlement some 35 km west of Leningrad] and Grandmother would stay with us there, looking after me whilst everyone else was away at work. One evening, my father – that is, my own father; this was before my parents had divorced – he arrived from work late in the evening and found me lying in bed with a high temperature. Grandmother was literally panicking: she didn't know what to do and she hadn't dared leave the house to try to fetch someone to help – partly because she hadn't wanted to leave me on my own, and partly because she had great difficulty walking, as there was something wrong with her legs. Anyway, father immediately set off to look for a doctor – it was quite late in the evening – and knocked at the doors of a couple of our neighbours in Martyshkino, but none of them seemed to know anything about a doctor in the area. However, he then saw this man walking on the street and asked him: "Excuse me, do you know if there's a doctor in this place at all?" And the man said: "What's happened?" My father explained: "You see, my child's got a high temperature and is just lying there, and I don't know what to do." – "Show me the way to your house – I'm a doctor." As it turned out, he was the well-known paediatrician Furman, who was quite an important figure in medicine at the time! [Probably Prof. Emanuil Berngardovich Furman (1874-1942), who, together with his son, was arrested in Leningrad in 1930, in connection with the purge of the Academy of Sciences] And from that day on I became a regular patient of his: my aunt would take me to consultations and check-ups at his practice, as he didn't make house calls. But it wasn't just for the illness I had at our dacha – you see, my aunt later told me that not long after being born, I had caught a serious infectious disease which left me with a cardiac defect. I can tell you, in fact, what I had: it was a myocarditis of the left ventricular wall. And as a consequence, I would often experience shortness of breath, so I wasn't able to run around with the other children and take part in all these boisterous playground games – if I tried to run or jump around, I would very soon start gasping for breath. However, as I later found out, Furman had said to my aunt: "If you don't want to turn the girl into an invalid, you must on no account tell her that there's something wrong with her heart. Just let her believe that all that is as it should be." And I really did believe that everything was as it ought to be and that there was nothing strange in my not being able to take part in all these games. My school friends were, fortunately, a very tactful lot and they understood this. So, whenever they decided on some game, such as tag, or whatever, they would always put me in a place where I wouldn't have to move or run very much. Moreover, although in a sense

they did have to bear with me and my restrictions, they never made me feel as if I was being marked out or something when I was sent to these 'safer' points. And I am very grateful to my aunt and to all my relatives and friends, because none of them ever told me or hinted at the fact that I had a heart condition. Especially since, as I got older, it actually somehow went away by itself. As for Furman, I should add that he was arrested in 1937… no, earlier than that… and sent into exile in Medvezh'egorsk [the headquarters of the notorious White Sea Canal construction project built by Gulag prisoners between 1931 and 1933: a labour camp continued to be located near this town for several years afterwards]. But many parents in Leningrad travelled there with their children to ask him to examine them – it was a real pilgrimage, you might say! And in the end, the camp administration had no choice but to allow him to give consultations. Can you imagine?! I was told this by a friend of mine who'd gone there with her little daughter. We were having this conversation, you see, when she suddenly happened to mention that she knew Furman and that she'd been to see him in Medvezh'egorsk. Just imagine!

- What were Furman's name and patronymic, do you know?

- No, I don't remember. I simply don't know – I was just an infant then. Because, you see, he didn't treat me that long either: when the Sverdlov Hospital [The Hospital of St Evgeniia, founded in 1882, was renamed after Ia. M. Sverdlov in Soviet times and was reserved for leading Party and government officials. It is in the Smol'nyi district.] opened, Mama decided to have me treated there and nowhere else. She didn't confide in Furman any longer. But that hospital wasn't the best choice, mind you!

- Tell me, how did your family celebrate public holidays?

- Public holidays? Well, they usually turned out like this… The way we celebrated them was… Actually, I'll give you an example: you see, Auntie Masha would always cook some… That is, first of all we would order a jellied sucking-pig from a restaurant – that's the first thing that came to mind when you asked me about holidays1 – and once they'd brought this jellied sucking-pig to our flat, Auntie Masha would make something extra to garnish it – I don't remember exactly what she would cook, but, anyway, on public holidays we would always, without fail, have a jellied sucking-pig for lunch – oh yes, with horseradish sauce, that's what I wanted to say! – and for me this was the most delicious dish one could think of!!… So, for example, in 1936 I think it was, on the First of May, I got up and everyone was already sitting at the table – for some reason I'd overslept! I walked into the dining room and saw that they'd all started with their lunch. Well, so I took my place at the table and had my lunch, and then we…

- Did all of you always have lunch together on these occasions?

- Yes, we would all have lunch at the same time… So, as I was saying, after we'd finished our lunch, Papa phoned and asked a chauffeur to pick us up, and off we went to… You see, on November the Seventh [October Revolution Day] and the First of May, we would always drive to Palace Square, where these large tribunes had been erected. The chauffeur would drop us off very close to them, since he'd always come issued with a special pass that allowed us to drive onto Palace Square itself. Well, after getting there, we would all – except Papa, that is – walk out onto the tribune next to the main one: that's where Papa would be. I've even got a photograph on which you can see Kirov, my stepfather, and Wilhelm Pieck, who was visiting us at the time. Or rather, not us as such, but Leningrad! Yes, and he was standing there on the tribune, too. [Wilhelm Pieck (1876-1960) was one of the co-founders of the German Communist Party in 1918 who fled to

Moscow in 1935]. Well, and then there would be a parade, a mass demonstration, and… One interesting detail is that in a basement room of the Winter Palace, directly behind the tribune, some tables had been set up, and during the intervals between the parade and the various mass demonstrations, people could go in there and get something to eat. Oh, there were all kinds of spice cakes, lemonade, ice cream, and a couple of other treats as well! So we too would go down to that room every now and then – it was all completely free! – and try some of those things. After the last demonstration, we would all get into the car and drive home to have supper. On public holidays, my parents would always be at home in the evenings.

- Did you often have guests coming round to your flat?

- Oh, when we had guests, I would always be banished to my aunt's place! So I don't remember any of the guests whom my parents invited round for dinner. The only thing I do remember in the way of guests and invitations is what happened once when Mama was about to leave for a holiday or on some official trip, and my birthday was coming up soon – October 12th – so Mama gave me 50 rubles and said: "That's for your birthday: you can buy anything you'd like to have." I thought over it for a few days, but didn't seem to be able to make my mind up, so my stepfather eventually suggested: "Marksenochka, don't worry, you just invite all your friends round." And he told our domestic servant – that was Grusha who was with us then – to prepare something… I've forgotten what it was exactly, but, anyway, the table was prepared, and I invited half the children in my form to come and celebrate my birthday with me!…Now, the thing is that we weren't actually supposed to invite outsiders into the block of flats for Party officials where we lived!... A few years before that, when we were living on Labour Square, I had this girl friend whose mother worked as a cleaner in the Palace of Labour, which is also on this square. She and her mother actually lived in the basement of the Palace of Labour. So one day I invited her to come up to our flat, but Mama said: "You know, Marksenochka, it would be preferable if that girl didn't come here." All right, I said – but I couldn't help thinking: Why was it preferable for her not to visit us? – when I myself had visited their place in that basement many times and had almost spent whole days there!… I've forgotten what the name of that girl was, but I do remember what it looked like from inside her little basement room: the windows looked out onto the pavement and you could see the feet of all the passers-by on Red [now Galernaia] Street.

- Why didn't your mother want that girl to come into your flat?

- Well, you know, it was the higher authorities – some NKVD officials, I suppose – who strongly advised the residents of that block not to let any outsiders come into the house. Other Party officials and their family members could visit us freely, but those who didn't belong to this circle weren't supposed to enter the building… So just imagine: I got to invite half of my class-mates to our place! And it was Papa himself who'd told me to invite as many as I wanted to! Because he really did care for me, and that's why he arranged this wonderful surprise feast for me! Mama had give me those 50 rubles so that I would just buy some… whereas Papa put on a whole table with food and everything for me and my friends! I remember how that day I had 12… no!… 15 guests round and how we all ran around the flat, played hide-and-seek and lots of other games – I can just imagine the fearful din we must have made!! Well, and later in the evening, Papa phoned the chauffeur and asked him to leave the car parked outside, and he himself then drove my friends to where they all lived, dropping off each and every one right by the front

door or the staircase entrance of their various apartment blocks. In that respect, I mean, he was just tops! He didn't particularly go out of his way to obey all those laws which were demanded in those days of… hmm…yes, of those who occupied positions of authority. Well, and that's…

- Could I ask whose idea was it to call you Marksena?

- Oh, that was my own father who came up with that. You see, there was a Red Army university in Petrograd and he was the principal of this institute… And when my younger… no, elder brother was born – he died very soon afterwards of pneumonia – father brought this little white kitten home and placed it next to my new-born brother in his cot. Grandmother was terribly furious when she found out – she really keelhauled him for having taken it into his head to put a kitten next to a baby… Well, so he had no choice but to pull out the kitten from the cot: it stayed with us, though, and became a member of our family. Father decided to call him Kruntik – from the opening syllables of each word in *Krasnoarmeiskii universitet* [Red Army University] – and this Kruntik lived with us for eighteen years, at Grandmother's place… Yes, and when I was born, he called me Marksena [from Marx and Engels]. He was quite keen on coming up with these kinds of names…

- And what's your brother's name?

- Leonard. Of course, it was my stepfather who called him Leonard. And the thing is that I never… What I want to say is that when Papa fetched Lesha from the village where his sister had been looking after the child, he was so little that he, of course, had no way of knowing whether I really was his sister or not. And I never told him that he wasn't my own brother – that's how things were in our family. When our parents were arrested, he still wasn't aware of the fact that I wasn't his own sister. I would never have told him something like that, because for me he was simply a brother, full stop.

- Did you have different surnames, though?

- Well, as you know, children aren't ever called by their patronymic… so the fact that my surname was registered as my mother's maiden name, whereas my brother had Papa's surname, wasn't anything unusual as such. His surname was Nizovtsev, and mine was Karpitskaia. So there really wasn't anything to arouse suspicion – and besides, he was so young still. I mean, when our parents were arrested, he was just ten or eleven years old. Then there was our younger brother, Volodia – he was six when that happened… Lesha's younger than me by three years, whereas Volodia was a whole six years younger. But the way we got along with each other… You see, I always considered and felt myself to be their elder sister in every respect – and that I was responsible for them and their behaviour… For example, I would force my brother to sit down and do his homework when he got back from school. If it hadn't been for me, he would've almost certainly left his satchel at home and dashed off somewhere… But I would take him by the scruff of the neck, so to speak – that is, I sometimes had to use a bit of force to make him see reason, but not too much! And I would never tell Mama or Papa if at school he'd been told off for some… Well, anyway, the main thing I wanted to get across to you is that I never had the sensation that he wasn't my own brother – on the contrary, I always regarded him as such. I can't explain why exactly it was like that – it just was so, if you see what I mean.

- Did you ever talk about politics at home?

- About politics ? No. You see, my parents would arrive home very late and… When I was a bit older – I was in the sixth form, I think – they did allow me to have my dinner together with them every other evening, and on these occasions I never heard anything about politics as such… Mama would tell my stepfather about those things that she was occupied with at work at that moment, but I didn't even bother to pay attention to what she was actually saying… All I do remember is that once she did voice some complaints about Ugarov [A. I. Ugarov (1900-1939), First Secretary of the Leningrad *gorkom* (city Party committee)]– about how he hadn't signed something properly, hadn't done this or that, and various other things. Yes, she told Papa about that, but on the whole she would talk with him about work matters and that kind of stuff.

- Was the Kirov murder discussed in your family?

- The Kirov murder… When that happened, we were living on Labour Square, and Mama was actually at home, getting ready for some report she had to give. Then, suddenly, the phone rang – I was in the dining room at that moment, right next door to the study where the phone was ringing… And I heard Mama talking with someone on the phone. After a while, she walked into the dining room and said: "He's killed him", "He's killed him." – that's the way she said it. She then evidently noticed me staring at her, and added: "Marksenochka, Kirov's been murdered in the Smol'nyi."… Now, I must say that I really felt this great respect for Kirov then – because Papa thought very highly of him, you see… A few days before Kirov's coffin was taken to Moscow, it was displayed in the Tauride Palace, if I remember correctly, so that the public could pay its last respects to him, and Papa was in the honorary guard next to the coffin. He even had this black band, this mourning-band which he later gave to me, and I held on to it for quite a long time… Yes, I also remember how in the morning, my parents were getting ready to go to the Tauride Palace – and I was standing at the door of our nursery room, watching them put on their coats in the entrance hall. I heard Mama say: "I don't understand how he had the nerve to turn up here after all." I later understood that she'd been referring to Stalin: "he turned up here after all!" [On 2 December 1934, the day after Kirov's assassination, Stalin arrived in Leningrad and joined the guard of honour at his coffin] Yes, that was something that stuck in my memory, even though I was still so little then.

- And you knew straight away whom they were referring to?

- Yes, I did, I knew whom they were talking about – perhaps because Mama had said something inadvertently. Otherwise, though, in our family, as a rule, such things would never be discussed, nor even mentioned…

- But still you must have been aware of quite a lot, if that was so obvious to you?

- Well, I did understand some of these things – it's just that they were never a subject of discussion. You see, I had this ability, in general, to grasp things very quickly – including those snippets from my parents' conversations which I might overhear now and then. After all, when you're in daily contact with someone – however sporadic it may sometimes be – you can't avoid hearing and finding out many things which they perhaps hadn't intended to reveal… But I would keep quiet about it – yes, I would think over what I'd heard and try to come to my own conclusions, but I'd never let a single word on the subject pass my lips. Similarly, I wouldn't ask any questions either if something was unclear to me… Here's one of the conversations I overheard, for example: a friend of Papa's had come over from Moscow and called in on him, and I remember them sitting on the divan in the dining-room and having a conversation about… You see, our room –

the nursery – was immediately adjacent to the dining-room, and I was sitting on my couch, busying myself with something or other, and could hear every word they said… He was telling my stepfather about the preparations for the *Cheliuskin* expedition. [The *Cheliuskin* steamship cast off from Murmansk in 1933 with an expedition-team led by the famous scientist and Polar explorer Otto Shmidt, who wanted to repeat his successful navigation of the Northern Sea Route aboard the icebreaker *Sibiriakov* the previous year. However, the *Cheliuskin* became trapped in the Arctic ice fields and sank in February 1934: the crew and expedition-team managed to evacuate the ship and salvage most of their equipment but were left stranded on the ice floes. They were rescued in April in a famous operation by seven pilots who became the first Heroes of the Soviet Union] His point was that the ship had been so badly fitted out from the outset that it was bound to go down at some point, and he explained in detail what had been done here, what had been omitted there, and so forth. I happened to hang on to every word, and that's how this conversation, in particular, stuck in my mind.

- Did you also hear about all the arrests in connection with the Kirov case?

- No, I heard nothing about the arrests – it wasn't something my parents talked about, so I didn't hear anything in that respect. As for Kirov's death… oh, as a matter of fact, I've got two books about him lying around somewhere. One is this collection of reminiscences about Kirov, with contributions by those who knew him personally or were his colleagues. Yes, it's a volume which was published a while back and I've got a copy of it somewhere. I mean, people in general said just good things about Kirov – Why, he was so clever and had quite a fascinating personality. It seems that he took many decisions only after having first sought advice from various experts. That is, he would never thrust himself into things that he didn't understand properly. Although, to be honest, I'm surprised that he could make such a blunder as… I only found out about this much later… What I mean is the demolition of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour: I simply don't understand how he could come up with such a proposal. [At the first Congress of Soviets, on 31 December 1922, Kirov had suggested the construction of a huge venue for future congresses on the sites of various Moscow palaces. The realisation of this idea did not get under way until 1931, when the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour was demolished to make way for the projected Palace of Soviets. The excavation of the foundation pit was plagued by groundwater problems and was not completed until 1939. The German invasion cut short all construction work on this project, and it was not resumed after the war. In 1958, the decision was taken to convert the foundation pit into an open-air swimming pool] To this day, it's still incomprehensible to me, because everything I'd heard about Kirov before I found out about that confirmed that he was always so thorough in these matters. As I said, if there was something he didn't understand in some project for which he had to give his approval, he would always consult the specialists – especially when it involved something scientific. But in that case [the project of the Palace of Soviets]… well, what can one do? After all, don't they say that sometimes even Homer nods?! So, as I was saying, there were quite a lot of things which I'd heard about and was aware of, although it's true that it wasn't until I'd grown up a bit more, that I began drawing some conclusions. Nevertheless, children do have a very good memory which holds on to much of what they've heard here and there, and so it was with me… For example, in… let's see, when was this?… yes, around 1935 or 1936, when all these arrests started taking place, Stalin sent from Moscow a number of…

There aren't actually that many people who know this… He sent a number of leading officials from Moscow to replace those who'd been arrested. They came to Leningrad with their children, and these started going to the same school as I did. This was the first model school [in Leningrad], and was attended by all the senior officials' children. Because, you see, we all lived in the same area, on the Karpovka [embankment] – most of us, in fact, in that block of flats on Kronverkskaia Street which had been built for the officials of the Leningrad City Council… And these children told me how in Moscow they'd been in the same school as Vasilii Stalin [Stalin's second son, born in 1921], and what a hooligan and lazy-bones he generally was!

- Who were your favourite heroes when you were little?

- My favourite heroes?… As a matter of fact, it's quite possible that I didn't really have any as such. I remember, the only thing that… Well, this book: "Sannikov's Land" did make a very strong impression on me and I greatly enjoyed reading it… but I wouldn't say that I had any particular favourite heroes...

- Neither in real life, nor in the books you read?

- No, I suppose there just weren't any in my case – neither literary heroes, nor real ones.

- Did your parents allow you to make friends with anyone you wanted? Or did they impose certain restrictions?

- No, they didn't impose any. The only thing is that Mama, as I mentioned earlier, simply gave me to understand that I shouldn't bring that girl home: I took notice of that and didn't start bickering or arguing with her. If I wasn't supposed to do that, then all right, I wouldn't. I told Mama that, instead of asking her round, I would go to the girl's place myself. That's how straightforwardly I settled the whole thing, if you see what I mean.

- Were you aware that other children didn't lead such an easy life?

- Yes, I was aware of that.

- How did you come to know about that?

- Well, at school my friends were generally from ordinary families. I had this girl friend, for example, who lived right next to our school, and I would often go round to her place – partly, no doubt, because it was so near the school… Well, hers was an ordinary worker's family: her father was just a bench-worker in a factory, and her mother a housewife. There were two children in the family. Back then, you see, before the war – or, rather, before 1937 – women generally didn't work in paid employment… After my parents' arrest, when I had very little to live on, I actually went to see that friend of mine and her mother, in order to ask their advice about how to make ends meet… I suppose I hadn't really thought about such questions until then, but I had seen how her family lived… When we were still in that flat on Labour Square, I was also very good friends with two children from the next floor up from ours. Their father was a militia-man and they lived in a communal apartment: I went up there very often to play with them. I would say that, in general, I didn't take these things to heart. You see, for some reason I was never drawn to make comparisons between myself and other children. I considered that things were as they should be, and that's all really. It wasn't like me to go round and compare my circumstances with those of my friends, whether they were better or worse… But I did visit ordinary families – the families of my school-friends very often. It's just that I wasn't so much interested in who their parents were or what jobs they had: if I liked a girl, I would make friends with her, and there was nothing more to it as far as I was

concerned. Now, as it happened, I didn't really have such close friends amongst the children of the senior officials – except for when we were at the dacha in summer.

- Where was this dacha?

- Oh, the dacha was… Well, in the last three years [before my parents' arrest], we lived near Luga [a town 140 km to the south of St Petersburg], on the former estate of Count… Prince L'vov. That's why the dacha settlement was called L'vovo. [Actually, before the Revolution, the estate had belonged to the industrialist Georgii Aleksandrovich L'vov, not to his namesake, Prince L'vov, the head of the Provisional Government] It was a very nice and spacious estate – as a matter of fact, there was a film called "Velikii Grazhdanin" [The Great Citizen] which appeared before the war, and it was shot on that very estate, the L'vovo. [A four-hour film, directed by Fridrikh Ermler (the script was checked by Stalin personally), with music by Shostakovich, about the Soviet government's struggle, led by the late Kirov, against the Trotskyists. It was the first film to be broadcast on Soviet television, in 1938] I remember there was a summer-house on top of a hill; then, of course, there was the large manor-house, with a marble staircase leading down to the lake and this pier which had many boats moored to it. In the quiet of midday, I would often steal down to the pier, take one of the boats, and row towards some spot on another shore where there was a patch of reeds, and I would sit there for a while, reading. Now, let's see – I spent my summers there as a ten- and eleven-year-old, and I think also when I was twelve. And no one ever restricted my freedom to go where I liked… Oh yes, I forgot to mention that on this estate there were ten of these typical Finnish houses – you know, these small dacha-like cottages – and we occupied one of them, since, after all, we were quite a numerous family: three children and then our servant, too. So we had this comfortable Finnish house with three rooms, a kitchen and shower. Those families with just one child would stay in a room in the manor-house itself. I should also add that, after my parents' arrest, my own father said, with a note of reproach: "How much, I wonder, did the *obkom* spend on running this place, the L'vovo?" – in other words, he was convinced that we'd been living there for free. However, when I was going through my parents' papers, I found this receipt or note in Mama's hand, which said: "Payment for L'vovo – 3000." Just imagine, in those times! – given that the average salary then was 1000 rubles a month. True, I don't know whether this receipt was for a one-off payment or whether it was for several years of staying at this dacha of ours. But at any rate, the fact that I found this receipt shows that my parents did have to pay money for it. In this settlement there was also a public dining-hall, where we had our own little table: the food you could get there was, of course, very good. But we also had a stove in our little cottage. Yes, and once a week a carrier would come with a cart and drop off a bundle of firewood – it could get cold there, you see, so it was necessary to heat the rooms a little. So that's where we all lived – we, the children of the senior officials – and we were all friends and would play together…

- Weren't your parents able to come over too?

- Yes, they would come on holidays – not on the train, though, but by car, as a rule. However, they didn't come over every holiday – and in the summer, besides, they would also go on holiday to the south, whilst we stayed on at the dacha.

- So that L'vovo was more like a summer camp for children?

- Yes, like a camp, except that we were living in a separate cottage, with a servant. To eat, though, we would go to the public dining-hall. So those were our living conditions

there. It was exactly the same in all these holiday resorts. Now, in the last year [before my parents' arrest], Mama decided not to send us to L'vovo… It was so marvellous in L'vovo, you know – especially on the shore of that Cheremenetskoe Lake, which is about one kilometre wide and eighteen kilometres long, approximately. Well, after the war, a friend of mine called Kima, who was then living in the Ukraine, came over here just to revisit all those places near Leningrad where we had spent so many months as children. Unfortunately, she told me that L'vovo had been destroyed completely during the war – including the manor-house – and that the whole area was desolate. Yes, they destroyed L'vovo… Oh, and then there was the holiday resort in Petergof – it was based in the Lower Park, in the former summer dacha of the Tsars: a small palace, you know. Half of it was occupied by a museum, and the other half by this resort of the VTsSPS [All-Union Central Trade Union Council]. We used to go there in the school winter holidays, as well as on rest-days. Kima also visited the place after the war and even took a photograph – everything had been destroyed… We also had a room to ourselves in that section of the palace which belonged to the holiday home, and we could go and stay there whenever we wanted. Again, we would eat in a dining-hall, seated at a common table together with all the other lodgers. The food there, however, was quite expensive – I know that because there was this boy I was friends with over there and whose father was Secretary of the *raikom*, and I remember that his mother was chatting to one of the matrons who looked after the holiday home – I happened to overhear their conversation, you see, and I remember her saying that she would have loved to go there every rest-day, but that it was a bit too expensive for her. So that means that it definitely can't have been that cheap there. I mean, just imagine – the wife of a *raikom* First Secretary not being able to afford to go there with her two children every rest-day!

- Could I ask – did your parents' arrest come as a total surprise to them?

- Well, I wouldn't say that it came as something unexpected, no. In fact, I was just saying how in 1937 Mama decided not to send us to L'vovo – now, that happened to be the time when Stalin was dispersing all the Leningrad Party workers, whom he had always disliked very much. For example, he sent Smorodin [who had been Secretary of the Leningrad *gorkom* under Kirov] to Stalingrad as First Secretary of the *raikom*. Likewise, he transferred my stepfather to Vologda as First Secretary of the *obkom*, and we were all supposed to move there. Mama had even ordered some storage boxes from a carpentry workshop to pack all our things in, and that's why she didn't send us to a dacha that would be too far from Leningrad. She chose one in Sestroretsk, where there was a similar holiday camp to all the ones we'd been to before. It was situated on a large fenced-off park and consisted of several old wooden dachas. The dining-hall, however, was newly-built, and, again, that's where we would have our meals, together with everyone else. Anyway, we arrived there and I soon made friends with the many other children who were staying there. I remember how on Whit Sunday we decided to go to the church and see how the locals celebrated this feast – being children, we were of course quite curious to see this for ourselves. So five or six of us set off for the church in Sestroretsk – I've forgotten in which part of the town it is now – and on the way there a conversation started up about… That is, someone said that so-and-so had been arrested, and other names were soon added by the rest of our company… As we walked to the church, we didn't talk about anything else… The mass arrests… And I couldn't help thinking that there was no way to be sure that they wouldn't come and arrest Papa on one of these days…

Cassette nr. 2, side A

… We knew that all around us people were being arrested.
- So you were aware of it yourself, were you?
- Yes, I knew what was happening.
- But how did you come to know about it? Just from what the other children were saying, or did you also hear something from your parents?
- It was from both actually: from my parents and from my friends. I don't remember who said what exactly, but at any rate we children were all aware of it… Good heavens! I mean, someone would disappear just like that and… You see, we were all at the same school and on any day we might suddenly notice that this or that child – from the other forms, too – was missing. That meant that his or her father had been arrested and they'd been put into some children's home or whatever. So yes, we understood all this – arrests had been taking place all year long.
- Did you discuss these and the reasons for them with the other children?
- Yes, we did talk about these arrests amongst ourselves… That is, we were all of the same opinion that this must be some misunderstanding; that there was no way that… Yes, I remember there was this conversation: someone's father had just been arrested, and everyone was saying that there was no way that he could be an 'enemy of the people'. It was just impossible, we didn't believe it for one second.
- Did you think, though, that there were such enemies around, in general, but that that person just didn't happen to be one?
- No! No… I thought that there weren't any enemies at all. That is, I generally thought that there weren't any! Well, perhaps there were such enemies in some places – that I was ready to admit – but certainly not amongst the people with whom we'd been in daily contact… I simply couldn't believe that they were enemies, as I knew them all so well. For example, I knew Smorodin very well… Do you know what I called him?… Uncle, Uncle Boria! See what I mean – for me he was almost like a member of the family. And we were on much the same friendly terms with all of them. For example, if I went round to the Akatskiis' place, Auntie Lida would treat me just as if I too belonged to the family – she would say: "Marksenochka, come to the dining-room and have some lunch with us." So these were all people who belonged to the same circle of friends and acquaintances, and there was no way they could be enemies! Besides, I knew all the senior officials in Piter [the affectionate name for St Petersburg], in Leningrad… It was simply impossible. Although we didn't actually say this openly, the general view was definitely that there'd been some misunderstanding – that all this simply couldn't be true and that it would soon stop once they'd realised this. Now, let's see – the way it happened was as follows: it was the 5th of June. On the night of the 4th, I went to bed… I was still but a child, you know, a thirteen-year-old girl… and I was lying there, unable to sleep. And it was after that…
- Was it the 5th of June or July?
- June or July… Oh, I've already mixed things up again… But it doesn't matter, we can check afterwards… although it's more likely that it was in July. In fact, I'm sure of it. Yes, it was in July, of course. Well, as I was saying, I just couldn't fall asleep and decided to go out onto the veranda. I remember there was a volume of Shakespeare on

the floor and I sat down on the steps and opened it at some page. However, I didn't feel at all like reading and so I walked out into the garden, or, rather, the park of the holiday home, and climbed up onto a hammock which had been hung up between some trees, but after I had sat there swinging to and fro for a while, I jumped down again – I just couldn't keep still, you see. So I decided to stroll round the park. I remember I saw this night-watchman with a rattle – you know, these wooden rattles which watchmen used to have – who was making his rounds of the park. Finally, around five o'clock in the morning, I felt sleepy at last and walked back to the house. I got into my bed – normally, I would have taken off my watch from my wrist and put it on the chair which stood next to my bed, but for some reason I didn't do so that night. Then, suddenly, at about seven o'clock Milia woke me up: "Marksena, Marksena, where's your watch?" It was on my wrist, of course. I asked her what had happened: as it turned out, our house had just been searched. There had been two or three agents searching through our dacha, but they'd told Milia that there was no need to wake us children up, so that's why we didn't hear anything. Well, everything was pretty clear by then – I cottoned on very quickly to what had happened but didn't tell anyone… I didn't discuss it with Milia either… The subject was out of bounds, as far as I was concerned. Then, a few hours later, when…

- So Milia was staying at the dacha with you?

- Yes.

- What about your family's other servant… Grusha? Did she stay on in Leningrad?

- No, my parents had allowed her to go on holiday, and she'd gone back to her native region. But because Mama didn't like to leave the flat unoccupied during the summer months, she would let a close acquaintance of hers – a dressmaker who used to make all our family's clothes – live in our flat and generally keep an eye on things. That dressmaker lived in a hostel otherwise. Well, on the evening of that day when I'd woken up to find out that our dacha had been searched overnight, we were expecting our parents, because the following day was a rest-day. They would usually come by car and park it somewhere behind the fence. So that evening I walked down the avenue which led to the park gates, where I would usually wait for my parents' car to drive up the forest road. However, before I reached the gates, I was met half-way by Pozern [B. P. Pozern, who, like Smorodin, was one of the secretaries of the Leningrad Provincial Party Committee. In 1937, he was moved into the judicial system, where he was Prosecutor for Leningrad Oblast until his arrest in June 1938. He was shot on 25 February 1939] and… now, what was his name?… he was the Executive Secretary of the newspaper "Leningradskaia Pravda"… just hang on a second, it's on the tip of my tongue… Oh, I suppose I have forgotten it after all… Doesn't matter – anyway, they came up to me, took me by the shoulders from both sides, turned me round and led me back to the dacha colony. Now, that was the Chief… I've forgotten the exact name of the post, but, anyway, he [Pozern] was Prosecutor for Leningrad Oblast. So they both led me back, and neither they nor I said a single word the whole way. But, without them telling me, I already understood that my parents had been arrested. After having accompanied me in complete silence, they left me at the door of the public dining-hall, from which I immediately ran off to our dacha. A bit later in the evening, we all went to the dining-hall to have our supper, and suddenly Liusia – that was a friend of Mama's – arrived in her car and told us that Papa had been arrested last night. Now, he had gone to a holiday resort in Tolmachevo, [a settlement some 120 km to the south of St Petersburg] where he'd been planning to spend

one or two weeks – so that means he must have been arrested there at night. Mama, on the other hand, as Liusia told us, had been arrested at 11 o'clock in the morning, when she was at work. Well, that was it. Everyone else at the dacha colony did as if they hadn't heard or noticed anything. There wasn't much point in talking about it anyway. But I really didn't know what to do, and a whole day went by, whilst I thought and thought about it – but the main thing was that I was so… Under no circumstances did I want people to be able to see what I was going through, or to guess what had befallen me. So this is what I came up with… The following day, I organised a children's show – that is, we rigged up a stage and put on a fairy-tale of some sort. The text was completely improvised and all the parts were played by us children. Our audience was made up of various parents and the other children who weren't involved in the play. Well, and do you know what? Some parents actually said that I must be an unfeeling brat if I was capable of walking out on to a stage to act when our family had been struck by such a misfortune! Can you imagine?! [*laughs*] But the point is precisely that I didn't want anyone to see what I was suffering deep inside, even though I was just thirteen years old. Yes, and one of the holiday visitors there was the wife of that… oh, if I could only remember his name?! Good Lord, what was it?! – that Executive Secretary of "Leningradskaia Pravda"… Well, anyway, his wife and daughter Tamara were also staying there, and I happened to be friends with that Tamara. She continued coming round to our dacha, whereas some of the other children started shunning me…

- Why?

- Well, that's obvious, isn't it?!… I mean, I had parents who'd just been repressed… If they stayed in contact with me, they would be sullying themselves! I must say, though, that not all the children were like that… Oh yes, I almost forgot – the Kuznetsov family was also staying at our dacha colony. The family of that Kuznetsov who later became… our delegate at the United Nations. [Vasilii Vasil'evich Kuznetsov (1901-90) – in his capacity as First Deputy Foreign Minister from 1955 to 1977 – often represented the USSR at meetings of the Security Council] That's who he was, and he had this daughter who walked with great difficulty because of some illness that had affected legs – even so, she would always take the longer path round the whole garden, just in order to avoid passing by our dacha and, worse still, coming across me! Well, Kuznetsov certainly managed to survive and even came to be our delegate at the UN – all thanks to the fact that he conducted himself like that from the very beginning… Anyway, what I wanted to say is that he had forbidden his daughter to associate with the children of arrestees… Tamara, on the other hand, who hadn't broken off relations with me, came to our dacha one day and said to me: "Listen, Marksenochka – Mama told me to ask you if you need anything?" But I replied that I didn't. After a day or two, the warden of the holiday camp came round to tell us that we had to leave our dacha. I really was at a loss as to what to do next, because I didn't have a copeck of money and I had no idea how to make the journey back to Leningrad. You see, I'd always been taken everywhere in a car. So I really didn't know what to do… But, as it happened, when Tamara came to our dacha later that day, she said that she'd been told by her mother to ask me once again if I needed any help. This time round, I did ask for help, explaining that I was in an awful situation, because I'd been told that we had to leave the dacha but I didn't know how to go about arranging for our transport. Tamara then ran off to her mother, told her everything, and she sent her back to our dacha to reassure me that I needn't worry. What

she did was to phone her husband – who hadn't himself been arrested yet – and he promised to send a car over to pick us up. The following day, when we were supposed to leave, we got up in the morning and I saw that my little brother, who was just six years old, was crying. He showed us where it hurt, we took off his trousers and saw that his testicles were swollen. I don't know what he had, but when the car arrived and Tamara turned up at our door, I told her that I was worried because Volodia was unwell and I didn't know what to do. Her mother soon came running up to us, had a look at Volodia, took him in her arms and put him in the car. She told the chauffeur to drive to the Sverdlov Hospital [in Leningrad] and had him admitted there as her nephew or son – I've forgotten what exactly she told the doctors. When she got back to Sestroretsk, she said to me: "Don't worry, Marksenochka. I've left him in good hands, and when they cure him, I'll bring him over to you." It's not always easy to imagine, but there really were such kind-hearted people… I so wish I hadn't forgotten the name of Tamara's father… What was it, oh Lord?… Oh, it's no use – I just can't remember. Well, it doesn't matter so much…

- What was the name of Tamara's mother?

- I don't remember that either. I remember Tamara's name, that's for sure, but not hers.

- Was she a friend of your mother?

- No, not at all. They didn't even know each other, if I'm not mistaken.

- What was it, in your view, that made her want to help you?

- What a question! I don't know why she decided to help us! She evidently understood that all this was… oh, I can't answer your question – I simply don't know. At any rate, it was thanks to her help that this car picked us up, together with all our stuff, and took us home. A bit later, when Volodia had recovered, she did as she'd promised and brought him to me… So there we were, back in the city. Mariia Aleksandrovna, the dressmaker, was living in our flat… But the things is that when Milia and I got back to Leningrad, we didn't have a single kopeck of money on us… However, the day before Mama was arrested, she had ordered a food basket from the distributor.

- What do you mean by distributor?

- Oh, it was this special closed distribution point which was near Kazan Cathedral, you see… Let's say you're facing the cathedral's colonnade – in the first house to the right there was this shop, a closed distributor, as they were called, and you could only go inside if you had a special permit. Well, there you could buy all kinds of things and goods. I know that because, as a matter of fact, Mama went there with me once. Otherwise, though, it was always our maid who would collect the shopping for us. One could also leave orders there, you see, and it would be delivered to the house – they literally had everything in stock…Yes, and when they came to deliver that basket, we found a receipt inside which said how much all the items had cost. And it turned out that the shop actually owed us quite a large sum of change: something like five hundred rubles, which was definitely quite a lot. But, of course, I didn't go there to ask for the money which they owed Mama… So, anyway, thanks to the basket we had a certain quantity of victuals to last us quite long, but it was still necessary to buy bread and a couple of other things, too. Now, I had a money-box in my room, and I decided to smash it open: in all, there were about fifty rubles inside, which was enough to buy ourselves bread for quite a while. But it certainly wasn't enough for us all to live on! After all, there were three of us children; then there was Mariia Aleksandrovna, who didn't want to

abandon us in such a difficult situation, and, of course, Milia. That means there were five people to be supported, and none of us had any money whatsoever! So what I did was to ask Milia to go to a commission shop [for second-hand goods] – you see, I'd decided to sell our piano, but it was Milia who had to go to the commission shop, because I didn't have a passport [Children in the Soviet Union did not receive their own passports till the age of sixteen] and so I couldn't sell it myself. The transaction had to be done in Milia's name, using her passport. So she went to the shop, made an appointment with the valuers, and they came round, had a look at the piano, and set about carrying it down to the courtyard where their van was waiting. However, there was a militia-man on point-duty just outside our yard, and he asked them from which flat they'd come. They said that it was from no. 73, and he ordered them to carry the piano back to the flat: "It's forbidden to remove anything from no. 73!" So there we were again, without any money. What were we to do? Now, a search had been conducted in our flat, you see, and they'd sealed up two rooms. The three other rooms, though – the nursery, mine, and the dining-room – had been left open. Well, and I knew that Mama had some money stowed away somewhere – in her bedroom, in the wardrobe – and that we just had to get at this money somehow. However, I couldn't open the sealed door myself… even though it seemed so tantalisingly easy to break open the wax seals… So I decided to send Milia to Pozern's house. He hadn't been arrested yet. Yes, I sent her to Pozern, but I instructed her not to go into the building via the main entrance, since someone might see her, and to use the back door instead. You see, Milia was friends with Pozern's domestic servant, who was also responsible for looking after his little grandson – he was the same age as my youngest brother – and the two maids would often take the children for a walk together. Yes, so I told her to go to Pozern's flat in the morning, when he was having breakfast, and to tell him that I wanted to ask if it was possible to open Mama's room, so that we could take the money that was there, because we didn't have anything to live on. She did as I said and told him: "Marksena wanted to ask…" You see, I knew him simply as Uncle Boria – he was like a member of the family… So she told him this: "Marksena wanted to ask if we're allowed to open the room and obtain the money which is there?" And in the evening, he did indeed send a soldier of some sort to our flat who unsealed the door to the bedroom. He'd apparently been given instructions to… Well, you see, it was like this: he had his back turned towards the bedroom door all the time, whilst Milia carried out shoes, suits and dresses, towels and sheets and other things, and pretended not to notice anything. Then I went in and found the box with money that I knew was kept there somewhere: it had over three thousand roubles inside. The soldier said to me: "Let's have another look here, because there may well be something else." And he opened a small drawer [in the wardrobe] whose contents we then searched through: a pistol with Papa's name engraved on it was lying there, hidden under some things – can you imagine?! – and there was also this envelope. The soldier said: "What's this, I wonder?" So we opened the envelope too and found these gold loan bonds to the value of 42,000 rubles. Just imagine! Well, he said: "Here, take good care of them. I think we ought to look again, just in case anything else turns up." So we looked round the room and all the pieces of furniture one more time, but didn't find anything else that might be suitable. Well, to cut a long story short, I suddenly found myself with all this money on my hands. But I was afraid to leave it all in our flat, because… I was just a child, after all… What I did was to hand most of it over to my aunt for safekeeping. It was because when I got

back to Leningrad after my parents' arrest, my aunt had phoned and warned me about what to do: "Marksena, do you know what? There is a possibility that they may perhaps… what's the word?… that they may distrain all your property, so please try to gather up everything that's valuable and get Milia to bring it to me little by little in the evenings. But as late in the evening as possible, mind you, so that no one sees her." And so Milia went every evening to Auntie Alia with a small suitcase which we had filled with our valuables. I remember how over several days we managed to cram all our crockery into the suitcase, then Mama's fur jacket, and a couple of other bits and bobs, too… I've forgotten what exactly, but I do have somewhere a whole list of the things which I sent to my aunt then. I also handed over the money to her, just setting apart what was enough to cover our daily expenses. As for the bonds… in the end I didn't go to collect them, so they just remained with her. And I was quite right not to have picked them up, because later I had quite a lot of things confiscated from me. Then, after about ten days had passed, an NKVD agent turned up at our door and said: "Tomorrow you're being evicted from the flat. Gather up your belongings and make sure you're ready by then." A car would come to collect us at ten o'clock. So, after having put the children to bed, Milia, Maria Aleksandrovna, and I spent the whole night packing. The following day, at the appointed time, the NKVD agent came in a car, followed by a three-ton lorry. He walked into our flat and, after casting a cursory glance over everything we'd packed, said: "What do you think you're doing? Apart from your personal belongings, you're only allowed to take a wardrobe, a table, four chairs, a saucepan, a kettle, four plates. No more than that, since there are just four of you. So unpack all those other things immediately!" In other words, I was hardly able to take anything with me – only what they allowed me, in effect. So all this was loaded on to the lorry…

- And where did they take you?

- Well, I certainly didn't ask where we were going! But first they drove us to Marat Street and stopped in front of a building where there used to be a pharmacy – I remember that building quite well, but when I passed by Marat Street a few days ago, the pharmacy wasn't there any longer. Anyway, so the NKVD man got out of the car, went into the building, but there was no one in the communal apartment where they'd planned to lodge us. All the residents were away at work, and no one answered the door. He came down again, explained that there was no one at home, and so we set off for another address. We quickly reached Sotsialisticheskaia Street… that's where I was to live for twenty years!… He got out of the car, went up to the flat, and, again, it turned out that no one was at home. But this time he managed to get hold of a key from somewhere, and we were taken into a fifteen square metre room in this communal apartment which was made up of three rooms. The woman who'd lived in that room had been arrested recently, as we later found out. The residents of the other two rooms were away at work. So the NKVD agent left us there, went down to the lorry, unloaded all our things in the courtyard and drove off… Before that, though, he had given the house manager – in those days, you see, each block of flats had its own house manager – our order to move into that flat. He had written this out to confirm that the NKVD were lodging the children of Nizovtsev: Marksena, Aleksei – because he thought Lesha stood for Aleksei, rather than for the less usual name Leonard – and Vladimir at so-and-so an address. The house manager then rubber-stamped our residence permit on the reverse side, and that was the only identity document I had at the time. You see, it hadn't even occurred to me to take all the

documents which Mama had been keeping in that box in her bedroom and which I'd actually seen when I went through its contents. Because of my childish inexperience, I didn't know that it was so important to have a birth certificate and all those other certificates, such as the one I'd been given after completing the sixth form – I had nothing whatsoever! Anyway, the NKVD man gave the house manager that document and left. We set about dragging the lighter things slowly up the backstairs. However, there was one resident of the communal apartment we'd been allocated to, who worked in a factory, in the day shift: well, he turned up at four o'clock and refused to let us into the flat. I went to see the house manager, and he showed that neighbour our order to move in, so in the end the latter had no choice but to let us in. I don't remember who helped us to drag all the heavier things up the stairs, but eventually we found ourselves in our new place with those belongings and pieces of furniture we'd been allowed to take with us. It was a dirty, derelict room which clearly hadn't been tidied for quite some time. As we later found out, the former occupier was a woman who'd been arrested. The whole room, as I said, totalled just fifteen square metres; the floor was made of wooden boards, and the whole place was infested with bugs. When we carried out some refurbishing work later, it even turned out that the wallpaper was from pre-revolutionary times! The first thing we did was to scrub the floor a bit, and then we set up the bed-frames as best as we could. After that, we decided to get some food ready – all we had was this four-litre saucepan and I took it to the kitchen and boiled ourselves some macaroni… That's what we ate. Afterwards, we made our beds: we had two 'one-and-a-half' beds and one iron bed. Milia slept on that, whilst I slept on one of the 'one-and-a-half' beds, and my two brothers on the other one. Yes, we made the beds and tried to get some sleep. I've never forgotten that first night at our new place: it was summer and the window was open, and from outside I could hear singing, laughter, and music being played – some celebration was evidently going on, and I was lying there, crying bitterly into my pillow, so that no one could see me. I just felt so miserable… People outside were enjoying themselves, but I… I'd been taken here and lodged in this dirty hovel… It all felt like some nightmare. Well, some time passed in this way and the 1st of September gradually began drawing closer: that meant Lesha and I had to go back to school, but the trouble was that I didn't have any documents at all. To be admitted into a school, I had to have some proof of residence for myself and Lesha. So he drew up a certificate for Lesha which said that Nizovtsev, Aleksei was living at so-and-so an address; and one for me, too, in which he wrote down my name as Nizovtseva, Marksena. That's why I was called Nizovtseva at school.

- How did you react to that? Did you mind, or were you, on the contrary, pleased about it?

- I didn't… That is, it wasn't so much the fact that I didn't like being called that… No, actually, to be honest, I did mind. But what could I do about it? I just had to put up with it. As a matter of fact, I didn't get too worked up about it – what else could I have done? Yes, I could perhaps have expressed my discontent, but it would have been no use… However, that isn't so important as what I forgot to explain: you see, that school happened to be situated right in front of our block of flats on Sotsialisticheskaia Street – it was school no. three hundred and… oh, I've forgotten what number it was, but everyone knew that it was one of the best schools in the city! So on the 1st of September, I went to the school: all the children had to get into rows in the courtyard, and the headmaster read

out a list with the names of those pupils who were to be transferred to a school on nearby Raz''ezzhaia Street, because the Sotsialisticheskaia one had been over-subscribed for some reason. My name was on the list. Now, this school was in a block of flats on Raz''ezzhaia, just before the crossing with Pravda Street – yes, it was actually a block of flats which hadn't been converted at all and was completely unsuitable for a school. Anyway, next to me in the row was this girl called Iulia, and she said: "I'm also being transferred to the other school. Why don't we go together?" So off we went to that school.

- And your brother stayed in the one on Sotsialisticheskaia Street?

- Yes, that's right, he stayed there. Well, as I was saying, we got to that old building on Raz''ezzhaia, gave our names at the school office and were told where our classroom was – we were both supposed to start the seventh form. However, our classmates didn't receive us in a very friendly way. Then we had our first lesson – it was a subject which we'd hardly ever done in the sixth form at my previous school: botany or natural science, I think it was…And it happened that during this very first natural science lesson, the teacher called me out to answer some question based on the previous year's syllabus. As you can imagine, all the worries of the last few months had completely pushed out what little I remembered from the last school-year, and so I just stood there, snivelling and unable to bring out a single word. I had lost my tongue, as it were. All the other children were laughing their heads off – just imagine! Eventually, the teacher told me to sit down and I did, relieved to be out of my torment. However, during the break, Iulia and I walked out into the courtyard and she said: "Do you know what, Marksena? I don't like it here at all." I told her that I felt much the same, and she suggested that we go to her old school instead. It turned out that she used to live in the Ligovka district and had attended a school in Voronezhskaia Street. When I met her, though, her family had moved to Sotsialisticheskaia Street, and that's why we were both amongst the new pupils at that top school which had turned out to be over-subscribed… So, yes, she suggested to me: "Let's go to my old school, shall we?" Now, Iulia, as she her self told me on the way there, had been one of the best pupils, always obtaining 'excellent' marks! We soon reached Voronezhskaia Street and her school, and knocked on the door of the headmaster's study – his name was Aleksei Vasil'evich Sokolov: he made such an impression on me that to this day I still remember everything about him. Yes, so he called us into his study and said: "Well, Iulia, what's up?" She replied: "I've decided to come back here. But I'm not on my own: there's another girl with me." – "Well, perhaps this girl of yours can explain who she is?" I was standing there, almost snivelling again, and said: "My parents have been arrested." He didn't put a single question to me, but asked his secretary: "Please asks Sof'ia Leont'evna to come here for a minute." – that was one of the seventh-form class teachers. She came and he told her: "Do you know what, Sof'ia Leont'evna? I would be grateful if you could fit these two girls into your class." And that was it: everything had been resolved for us just like that! But it wasn't only that – he soon… You see, in those days, schools had these 'pupils' committees' – *uchkomy* [*uchenicheskie komitety* – committees in which the older pupils shared authority with the teachers and could decide on some administrative matters. They were set up in the early years of the Soviet Union, but by the 1930s the pupils' role in decision-making (including the awarding of marks) had been drastically cut back], and the headmaster fixed it up so that I was elected chairman of our school's *uhckom*.

- Why did he do that?
- So that I didn't feel an outcast. I must say that I was very lucky indeed – especially taking into account that I didn't have my parents to protect me and that my aunt was afraid of even so much as admitting that we were relatives… Didn't I tell you how, in the first days after we'd got back to Leningrad, Milia would go to her place only in the evenings, when no one could see her. And she would also look back every now and then, to make sure that she wasn't being shadowed. My aunt had even forbidden me to visit her. It's true that later I did go round to her place on rest-days, but, still, she would always tell me: "Don't forget to check that no one is shadowing you!"… She was afraid even of just admitting that we were kin.
- Why did your aunt behave like that?
- Because then they were arresting anyone who dared to stand up in some way for someone who'd been arrested… and they also picked up many relatives, too… especially the close relatives of someone who'd just been arrested.
- But what about the headmaster of your new school, then?..
- Well, you see, I've always been lucky to come across good people who've given me a helping hand. Take Pozern, for example, who helped me so much during the first weeks after my parents' arrest. And then there was the headmaster of that school… Thanks to him I wasn't just the chairman of the *uchkom* in the seventh, eighth, and ninth forms… for four years, in fact, but I was also… This was in the eighth form, when all of us were already fourteen and could apply for admission to the Komsomol. Everyone in my year was running around, writing application statements – it was one of these mass recruitments, and our Komsomol secretary was even exempted from his teaching work, so that he could concentrate on assessing all the applications… Now, I had this girl friend called Tosia Bragina, from whom I was inseparable… we were hand and glove together! And she went to the secretary and gave him her application – he then asked her: "What about Marksena? Why hasn't she come yet?". As Tosia later told me, she had explained what the matter was: "Well, you know, her parents were arrested, so…"…. You see, I was just sitting quietly in the classroom when all this happened! What was the point of my applying? – I knew that they wouldn't admit me into the Komsomol.
- Did you want to be admitted, though?
- Yes, I did. I did want to…. All the young people wanted to join the Komsomol. Why not me, too?! Of course I wanted to join. But I knew that they wouldn't take me, so that's why I didn't write an application… I just sat there in the classroom, saying nothing. However, the Komsomol secretary had asked Tosia to fetch me, as she told me, and so I followed her to his office. I've forgotten what his name and patronymic were. Anyway, we walked into his office, and he said: "What's the matter? Why didn't you come yourself?" I said that I wouldn't be admitted anyway, even if I applied, because my parents had been arrested. But he told me to sit down and write an application. I obeyed, though I couldn't help thinking that it was just a waste of time. Now, I don't know what they do nowadays [The Komsomol was re-established in Russia in 1994], but in those days the Komsomol admission ceremonies were held in the organisation's local district committee. A special commission would be set up to interview each of the applicants in turn. Our whole form was invited to the Komsomol district committee for this final stage of the admission process, and I too went along, of course. Now, when it was my turn to step forward and face the questions of the commission, our secretary – who'd also come

with us – didn't let me get a single word in! He stood up, too, and said that I was a girl who had proved herself to be very energetic and who was the chairman of our school's *uchkom*; and that he fully endorsed my application. They didn't put a single question to me, and I was admitted into the Komsomol! [*laughs*]

- Tell me, is it true that apart from you there weren't any other children in your school whose parents had been arrested?

- That's right – there weren't any others in that situation.

- That seems unusual… Was there any special reason for that?

- Well, you see, the Ligovka is a workers' district, after all. On the whole, it was just workers' families who lived there, and there weren't any workers amongst those who were arrested. As a matter of fact, the children there weren't particularly in the know about all this. Yes, these workers' families, since they weren't affected personally, actually didn't know what was going on in our country.

- But, still, the other pupils knew that your parents had been arrested, didn't they?

- Yes, they knew.

- And what was their attitude to this?

- No one asked me any questions. For example, when there was a parents' meeting at the school and I obviously had to turn up with no one accompanying me, I didn't have to say anything – Sof'ia Leont'evna would say nothing either… in fact, everyone would keep quiet about it, as if there was nothing unusual about the whole thing.

- Didn't the other parents ask you anything?

- No, as I simply didn't have anything to do with the other parents. No, there weren't any conversations on the subject at all. Take Tosia, for example – the girl with whom I was such good friends – well, her parents… her mother and her grandmother were very friendly and kind to me… I often visited their place, you see…

- And they knew that your parents had been arrested…

- Yes, they knew that and felt very sorry for me. They tried to help me with everything they could and would also give me advice. As a matter of fact, everyone tried to help me with whatever they were able to. I lived in house no. 6 on Sotsialisticheskaia Street and whenever I met any of our neighbours in the courtyard, I would always be asked: "Marksenochka, how are things going? Are you sure there's nothing you need?" Can you imagine?! It's true, though, that there were some neighbours who would just walk past me as if they hadn't noticed me at all – yes, there were some like that. For example, one of our neighbours in the communal apartment was precisely of this sort. His mother-in-law and wife started pinching things that belonged to us, but when I complained to him about this, he said: "You don't want to end up *there*, do you?" And that was it – there was nothing I could do… Yes, that's how my relations with our neighbours in the flat were.

- What about the second family? Didn't you say that there were two other rooms in the flat apart from yours?

- The thing is that one room was occupied by that neighbour, together with his wife and their child, whilst his wife's elderly parents lived in the other room. The latter also had their nephew registered there: he'd moved to Leningrad from the countryside and become a foreman at the "Skorokhod" [Shoe] factory. So the two other rooms were occupied by this joint family, so to speak. Now, it was their granny who was chiefly responsible for stealing my things. For example, if I left some linen to soak in a wash-tub and put it

under the [kitchen] table, she would invariably steal even these soiled garments… It was a real nightmare – I'd really rather not talk about it…

- But did she actually want these things for herself, or was it just a mean trick to rile you?

- No, no, she definitely wanted them – because they were, as a matter of fact, a poor, working-class family, with nothing of their own, whereas, when we moved into the flat, I did have quite a few things with me. You see, Milia had carried away a lot of our belongings to my aunt, and, a few weeks later, after Mama was executed – although I didn't find out about that until much later – an NKVD agent came to our communal apartment and told me that the investigation had been completed and that I could now go and collect any belongings that were left in our flat. However, I didn't realise that I was also allowed to unseal the doors to my parents' rooms and that I could take all of our possessions with me. So in the end I just took what there was in the three other rooms, and didn't touch the seals on the doors to Papa's study and the bedroom. Someone later… probably the commandant [the warden of a block of flats]… made use of this opportunity, of course. But I was simply too scared, good Lord!, to even so much as breathe a word about the seals and to ask whether they could be broken. I was just delighted that I'd been allowed to take something at least. And I then sold those things that were appropriate for selling… That is, with Milia's help, I managed to get some money for them in a second-hand shop… All those things that I didn't really need.

- So Milia stayed on living with you?

- Yes, that's right, she didn't leave me… Later, she actually married our neighbour – that nephew I told you about, who worked in the "Skorokhod" factory. Now, when they married… But hang on, that was after the… Well, to cut a long story short, this is what happened. Together with that Iulia, I'd started attending her old school, and one day I was walking home from school – some two weeks had passed since I was admitted into the school, so it was some day in mid-September – when suddenly I saw Leonid, our neighbour in the communal apartment, coming towards me. He said: "Marksena, you know…Your two boys have been taken to a children's home." When I got home, I asked Milia what had happened, and she explained that an NKVD agent had come and taken the boys to a children's detention centre.

- Weren't they going to school, though, by this time?

- Yes… that is, my youngest brother hadn't started school yet, since he was just six… but Lesha was going to school, and that's where the NKVD agent had picked him up. Volodia, though, had been taken away straight from our room. Now, the NKVD man didn't know where I was, because I actually hadn't told anyone which school I was attending. Apparently, he had said that he would be coming back in the evening to take me away, too. And I, silly fool that I was… you see, our flat had these wide window-sills, and I, just like the fool that I was, thought that the best thing I could do was to sit on the window-sill in the entrance hall of our flat and wait till they came to get me. But it seems that this… yes, I've just remembered his name: Sudiatov… that was the NKVD agent's name… Well, it seems that he either forgot about me or decided to spare me. At any rate, he didn't come back in the evening. Handing over two of the Nizovtsev children to a detention centre was probably sufficient for him to report that he'd carried out his orders… There was no point in busying oneself with a silly wench, he must have thought – let her try to fend for herself… So no one came to get me. I was living there without

any identity documents, without a passport, without any sort of guardian over me! Just imagine?!… I was left… All right, I did have money, that's true… And I went to the mother of that friend of mine and asked her for advice on how I should spend it to make it last as long as possible, because I had no idea of such things, you see. Well, she gave me quite a few useful tips. I tried to save as much as possible. So that's how things were: I continued to go to school and lived on my own. Now, that nephew of the old woman started courting Milia, and…

- Was Milia still living in the same room as you?

- Yes, in the same room… And one day he suddenly told me that he would like to assume legal guardianship over me – that is, that he and Milia were going to get married and that he would become my guardian. In other words, what he was after was my room! I went to my aunt, told her this, and asked what I should do. She said that on no account must I consent to this. Then, a bit later, my uncle came round… you see, my room couldn't even be locked… Yes, my uncle came round and fitted a lock on my door – he wasn't the sort to let himself be daunted by anything!

- Your uncle – do you mean the husband of your aunt Alia?

- Yes, exactly. So he fitted this lock, and I shut the door, after turning Milia out: Go and get married if you want! That is, it was actually my uncle who gave her this brush-off: "Go ahead and get married, as you please!" At least, from that day on, they weren't able to get into my room any more. Because, you see, they'd already carried away from there everything they could lay their hands on. Yes, Milia managed to pocket a great deal at my expense – I'm sure she furnished herself with enough to last her for half her life. But what's interesting is this… Milia married and had two children, and during the war she was able to leave Leningrad and get to her native village. Her in-laws – that is, her husband's cousin – continued to live in the flat, but she later managed to change the room she and her husband had been sharing with his aunt for something else – she and the old woman had ceased living together by then… So for a while we had some other tenants in the apartment, but they too were eventually evacuated from Leningrad… One day, though… this was in 1944… someone suddenly knocked at my door, and I said: "Come in," and it turned out to be Milia! She walked in and threw herself at my feet: "Marksena, dear Marksena, you know… I've just arrived from my village… Forgive me, I've done you such wrong!… Please forgive me! I'll never be happy again for as long as I live, if you don't forgive me." And there she was weeping bitter tears. Well, and seeing that, oh Lord!, I mean… I was still almost a girl then… and, besides, we hadn't… we hadn't set that much store on all those things anyway… If they'd been stolen, well there wasn't really anything one could to do about that now. And, besides, I'd lost what meant so much more to me than those possessions. So, to be honest, I'd actually already forgotten about all that, and I said to her: "Milia, you know that I'm not a resentful sort of person and that I've always thought it's better to let bygones be bygones. So let's forget about all this, as if it had never happened." She was so grateful to me that she kissed my hands over and over again. Yes, she had said that: "I'll never be happy again, knowing that I've caused you so much suffering."… And, as it turned out, I had done the right thing, because later, when my parents were rehabilitated, I decided to apply for compensation for the property that we'd lost. I couldn't, of course, remember every single thing that had gone missing – I just tried to write down what I did remember, but for the application to be valid, I had to produce three witnesses… Now, my witnesses were my uncle, Milia,

and Auntie Masha – I managed to find her in the end… Yes, but when I went to Milia's place to ask her to sign the list, she said: "Is that all you've written? But you've missed out at least half of the things!" So, at her prompting, I wrote out a list which was twice as long. But that alone wasn't sufficient, of course – she also had to go to the office in that large house [probably the Supreme Court building] and confirm her signature… So if I hadn't forgiven Milia back then, where would I've been able to dig up a third witness?! But that wasn't the main thing I wanted to tell you, though. In 1948, Smorodin's daughter was arrested and I received a summons to the NKVD headquarters – you know, that 'big house' [the name by which the residents of Leningrad used to refer to the NKVD central headquarters in house no. 4, Liteinyi Prospekt]. This happened when I was staying at our dacha with our two boys – the dacha was in Raivola [Roshchino], on the Karelian Isthmus [The popular summer resort of Roshchino is situated 60 km north-west of St Petersburg]… One day, my aunt came over and brought me this summons notification… Now, I'd already had my first two children, you see… Well, the reason she'd come herself was because… her husband had sent her to stay with my children, so that I could catch a train back to Leningrad and present myself at the 'big house'… Yes, and when I arrived there, I signed this permit which they gave me, and was told that the entrance was from Voinov [now Shpalernaia] Street. So I went in via that entrance… Have you never been there, in the 'big house'?

- No, I have been there, in fact.

- Right, so first there's one sentry you've got to show your permit to, and then there's another one a bit further in… It was by the second sentry post that this investigator was waiting for me. He took me along this long corridor which leaves such a terrible impression on one – all the more so in my situation… It had these high ceilings, I think, and was so narrow… And then there were those oak doors… I was following the investigator, and he turned round towards me once and said: "Terrified, eh?" See what a repulsive blood-sucker he was?… I didn't say anything, but I really did feel terrified. Then, suddenly, I saw two men coming down the corridor towards me, and one of them I recognised to be the former secretary of our school's Komsomol office. He immediately greeted me: "Marksena, hello! What are you doing here?" I replied that I'd received a summons to appear there but didn't know why. Then he asked: "Well, how are things going with you?"… And he started chatting to me in this leisurely manner, as if he were at home, whilst the investigator stood at attention all the time – I realised that he must have an inferior rank because his shoulder-straps were smaller than those of my former Komsomol secretary. Yes, he was just standing there, all quiet and waiting for his superior to finish [*laughs*]… Well, so he asked me how things were going, and I said that they were so-and-so. He then told me that during the war he had fought together with the partisans in the Ukraine; after that, he had stayed on there to work in the [secret police] organs, but had recently been transferred to Leningrad. He asked me again how I was getting on, and I confessed that I didn't know why I'd been summoned there… "Well, if there's anything you need, please let me know" he said at the end of our conversation. And, of course, after that, when we finally reached the investigator's office, he immediately started treating me differently. Even though at the time I could very easily have been run in together with Maika and wound up in prison, he nevertheless… can you imagine?!… he nevertheless adopted a different tone of voice when questioning me. Now, that Maika was, of course, a rat, but… oh, never mind…

- Maika – who's that?

- Maiia Smorodina – the daughter of Smorodin. He showed me her dossier, and it turned out that in the… You know these account books there used to be, with these pale or dark blue pages? Yes? Well, it was precisely on a page of this type that the statements she'd made had been written down – she'd said that I had an anti-Soviet cast of mind… that I… oh, she'd listed various facts, conversations, and anecdotes, all to this effect… See what I mean?… it was a downright accusation… and, of course, given such a denunciation, I might very well have found myself in real trouble… Yes, he showed me the file. Can you imagine?! And do you know what the reason for all this was? Well, the thing is that Maika had been living with me… Her grandmother died shortly after the war, and I put her up at my place for a few months. As a matter of fact, in the war years there was always one or other of my girl friends staying at my place. Who did *not* live in my little fifteen-square-metre room, I wonder?! Yes, and one of them was this Maika – she came to me, all sorrowful because her grandmother had just died of hunger, and said that her room was freezing and that she had nothing at all. So I decided to put her up at my place. She lived with me for several months, but during that time she secretly stole a good deal of my things. You see, she was then working as a courier in one of the depots of Apraksin Dvor [a famous department store on Sadovaia Street], so she had enough spare time to take the things she would steal from me to the market, sell them there and buy herself food which she would gobble up on the spot. That is, on a few occasions she did bring me something, too, saying that she'd received a parcel from some relative. Now, when I noticed that I was missing this and that, and realised what had happened, I turned her out from my room. So that's why she had decided to take revenge on me. I explained all this to the investigator, told him that she'd lived at my place for several months, that she'd robbed me, that I had then turned her out, and that she must have simply decided to get her own back on me in this way. He asked: "Are you prepared to repeat this in writing?" I said that I was, took the piece of paper he gave me, and wrote down everything that I'd said… However, all that's not so important. You see, many years later, when Maika's son came here to talk to me… She had a son with someone in the camps, you see, and the child was put in an orphanage. That's where he had grown up. Later, though, he was reunited with his mother, but that's another story… Anyway, when Smorodin, her son, came to see me after her death, he asked me to write down all that I could remember about his mother, and I did – I wrote down everything as it had been. He also went to the 'big house' and asked to be shown his mother's dossier – later, he told me: "You and this other fellow are the only ones who… You know, they interrogated quite a lot of people in connection with my mother's arrest… well, you're the only ones who didn't write anything negative about her." He also confirmed that in his mother's declarations there was a denunciation against me. So there you are, it's a small world, isn't it?

- When your brothers were taken away, did you know in which children's home they were put? Were you able to write to them?

- Yes, I knew that they'd been taken to this children's detention centre on the Petrograd Side. This was in autumn, and Milia and I knew that they were going to be sent to some orphanage, so we went to the detention centre with all their things and clothes – their winter clothes, felt boots, coats, fur caps, warm underclothes, and so on… [When I was applying for compensation, after my parents' rehabilitation,] I had two quite long lists of things… Of course, they didn't hand over a single thing to the boys – nothing

whatsoever. Lesha later told me, you see, that they hadn't received anything. And then they were sent to…

- They didn't allow you to see them?

- No, we weren't allowed to… Lesha was sent to Kirov [now Viatka] Oblast, Volodia to Udmurtia, to the Udmurt ASSR.

- So you were told where they were being sent to?

- Yes, they told us where and even gave us the exact addresses. And I wrote to them… I wrote to Lesha – he was already going to school [there, in Kirov Oblast], and we wrote to each other all the time. His letters, however, were quite sad to read. For example, he wrote once: "I'm sitting here and writing you a letter, 'cos today I've got free time. I didn't go to school today, we've just got one pair of boots to go round three of us. So we take turns to go to school. Thank God, it'll soon be summer and we'll be able to go to the river and catch some…" You see, they would go fishing and try to catch some ruffs which they would then roast in a camp fire… They would also eat some plants… He knew all the edible plants. Yes, they would gather these and try to catch a few ruffs, because they were always hungry there. As for Volodia, well, he hadn't learnt to write yet… He hadn't started going to school yet. So I wrote to his orphanage, asking for some information… I wrote that I was the sister of Nizovtsev, Vladimir, and that I kindly requested them to let me know how my brother was, what he needed, so that I could send it to him – all in this proper and polite manner, you know. The reply I got was as follows: "Your brother – Nizovtsev, Vladimir – has been in our children's home since so-and-so a date." I wrote to them again, asking them to please pass on my letter to the member of staff responsible for my brother's group at their nursery school, so that she could write back to me and tell me if there was anything I could send. Again, the reply was: "Your brother – Nizovtsev, Vladimir – has been in our children's home since so-and-so a date." Nothing else. Can you imagine what kind of… And, I mean, I received a couple more replies like that one. Some years later, just before the war began, my latest request got the following reply: "Your brother – Nizovtsev, Vladimir – has been transferred from our children's home to so-and-so an educational children's home." I wrote to this home too, but received no different a reply: "Your brother – Nizovtsev, Vladimir – has been in our children's home since so-and-so a date."…

- But why couldn't you write to him straight off? Surely he had learnt to write by then, hadn't he?

- Ah, but he hadn't, you see – he still didn't know how to read or write.

- How old was he when they transferred him to the educational home?

- Well, obviously when he was about to start in the first form! So I couldn't expect him to have learnt to write yet, could I? And then the war started and postal communications were interrupted. When I was finally able to write to that orphanage-school again – that was in the final stages of the Siege [of Leningrad] – I received a reply saying that the children's home had been disbanded and that they didn't know what had become of the wards and pupils. But before the war, I regularly kept in touch with Lesha: he even sent me a photograph once… A photograph of himself, with this written on the back: "To my beloved sister." He completed the seven years of schooling provided at the orphanage. His teacher was very good, she was always very nice to him and gave him suitable references so that he could enrol at a forestry *tekhnikum* [a technical college which provided secondary specialised education] there, in Kirov [Viatka] Oblast. It was a school

where they taught woodwork and cabinet-making, amongst other things. Yes, so he was admitted to that school and studied there for a while, but then the war started and he was conscripted into the army… You see, they tacked on an extra year to him…

Cassette nr. 2, side B

- What do you mean they tacked on an extra year?
- Well, Lesha was born in 1927, but they tacked on an extra year to him by putting down 1926 as his year of birth. That is, a doctor was asked to determine his age [because they didn't have any birth certificate to go by] and he decided that he was born in 1926. So just imagine – after all those years of hunger he'd suffered in the orphanage, he was now suddenly being called up for service… And he said [to the medical board]: "I can't hold a rifle properly." He was a year younger than the age of conscription, which was 17 then… Yes, he was called up far too early for his age, and he tried to explain to them: "But I can't hold a rifle – it's too heavy for me." I mean, just imagine: a poor, hungry child… So during the war, he was sent to serve in the armed forces in the Far East. Later, after the war, he came to Leningrad on leave – no, sorry, after his demobilisation – and… Well, I didn't have any money either, but I sold a couple of things – including a watch, I think – and managed to scrape up enough money so that he could go to Udmurtia and try to find our brother Volodia. However, he wrote me a letter from there, saying that he hadn't had any success, he hadn't been able to find any trace of him. All he did manage to find was Volodia's former teacher who told him something about Volodia's years in the orphanage but who didn't know where he'd ended up either. In other words, he had disappeared, God knows where… We were never able to find him. What chances of success did we have, anyway, given that his patronymic and date of birth hadn't been recorded when he was put in that orphanage, and that he was too little then to know about all that?… Later, we did apply for an All-Union search to be arranged [i.e. a search across the whole Soviet Union – something that would normally have been carried out upon instructions of the MVD] but it didn't result in anything. Because we didn't know what patronymic, what year of birth they registered him under at the children's home. So I just don't know what became of him. We did everything we could, but our Volodia went missing just like that… I don't know what became of him.
- Surely he could have tried to write to you?
- But he wouldn't have remembered anything, you see… Why, even Lesha, who was older than him, didn't remember anything! Yes, it's true! When Lesha arrived from the Far East, he remembered neither Papa nor Mama, nor Milia, nor where we had all lived in Leningrad. He didn't remember a single thing – even though he was, after all, ten years old when they took him to the orphanage. I still don't understand what they did to the poor child.
- But you had written to each other regularly, hadn't you?
- Yes, that's right, we had, but I didn't write any details in my letters…
- But he did know that he had a sister?
- Oh yes, he knew that he had a sister and brother, but apart from that… You see, I didn't write anything about the past, about our parents – I assumed that all that is something one can't forget just like that, but when he arrived back in Leningrad, it turned out that he didn't remember anything at all. Can you imagine?! Right to the end of his life – he died

last year, God rest his soul – he wasn't able to recall anything from those years before he was taken away. Yes, right to the very end he couldn't recall a single thing. He didn't even remember Milia [who'd been his nurse and looked after him all the time] – it sounds incredible, doesn't it?! It was only thanks to my photograph – I sent him my photograph once – and the fact that I kept writing to him all the time, that he recognised me as his sister, his own sister. Now, when he was demobilised from the army, the first thing he did was to come to me in Leningrad – but they wouldn't give him a residence permit here… Fortunately, though, my aunt was well situated to… You see, she was a very good stomatologist and had a great deal of acquaintances of all kinds amongst her patients. And fortunately, one patient of hers, with whom she got on well, was the head of the passport office in our district – the Frunze district – so she asked her to help us out, and Lesha was duly registered. However, we couldn't give my address as his place of residence, since I just had a fifteen-square-metre room, I had three children, and, in all, there were five people registered at my address! So I managed to have him registered as a resident of my aunt's apartment. But he also needed to get a birth certificate and a passport, and in order to be issued with a passport you had to have a birth certificate first. Fortunately, my aunt remembered in which district he'd been born, and he was able to go to the ZAGS [registry office] there and have a birth certificate issued to him. That, of course, meant that I couldn't hide any longer the fact that he wasn't my own brother… But he didn't take it ill or anything that I had… He still continued calling me his sister. For example, whenever he brought some present, he would always say that it was "for my sister, for my dear own sister"… Before that, though, on the day that he arrived in Leningrad from the Far East, I had actually removed from the family album all the photos of my own father – I removed everything that might make him suspicious, as I still didn't want him to know about that… But in the end, of course, I was forced to tell him everything. As I said, though, he didn't get worked up about it because, you know, after so many years, he had got used to the thought that I was his own sister, so that wasn't something he could change so easily. But, of course, it was a rather complicated matter. He had completed seven years of schooling [at the orphanage] and when he came to Leningrad, he wanted to sign up an evening course at some *tekhnikum* [a specialised secondary education college which trained students for low-level management positions in industry – its graduates could in theory also apply for higher education]. But no one wanted to take him on and he was without a job until my husband, who had some personal connections in the telephone network, managed to fix him up with a job there: just as an ordinary worker. Yes, and he started his job, which involved driving round and checking these junction boxes but he was still keen on enrolling at a *tekhnikum*. However, we decided – that is, I insisted that he didn't go for a *tekhnikum* but, rather, that he should try to get into a Workers' Youth school [which provided general secondary education in evening classes] and from there apply to a higher educational institution. And that's what he eventually did: he completed his secondary education at a Workers' Youth school and then became a student at an electrotechnical institute. After graduating, he worked in the same scientific research institute right up to his retirement! Of course, throughout these years I tried to help him as much as I could… It's interesting that when we received compensation for the property [we'd lost as a consequence of our parents' arrest] – later, they also regularly paid a bonus of two months' wages [on top of my normal salary], as a kind of compensation… But before that, when we were actually notified that our

application for compensation had been validated, the clerk at the municipal financial department refused to pay out the full sum to me: “There are two of you” she said, “You’ve got to tell me what share each of you has agreed on.” When I protested, she said that I would have to take legal action. And I did, I lodged a complaint with a court.

[…]

- How did you manage to stay on at your school? I mean, you didn’t have any identity documents at all… And when the war started… which form were you in then?
- Yes, in 1941, I actually finished my ten years of schooling – just before the war started.
- And you were given a school-leaving certificate – without any snags?
- Well, after completing the first seven years, the name they put on my certificate [of ‘incomplete secondary education’] was Nizovtseva. But in the case of my school-leaving certificate… It was like this… At school and elsewhere my name had always been put down as Nizovtseva, but when I was due to receive my passport… To get this I needed a copy of my birth certificate, but that was precisely what I didn’t have. So my aunt went on my behalf to the appropriate ZAGS [registry office] and obtained a new copy of my birth certificate for me: on this document, however, my name was recorded not as Nizovtseva, but as Sizova-Karpitskaia – that’s how I’d been registered at birth!… After Mama’s divorce, and when I first started going to school, my name had been entered as Karpitskaia in the records – and so it stayed until Papa and Mama were arrested – but now, on seeing a copy of my original birth certificate, it turned out that I was a Sizova-Karpitskaia! So there I was with a double-barrelled surname... I obviously had to change the name I was registered under at my school, but since Sizova-Karpitskaia was too long, they just entered me as Sizova – there wasn’t enough room for Karpitskaia! All the same, my school-leaving certificate for ten years of completed secondary education had Sizova-Karpitskaia written on it, and it was the same with the passport I was issued with shortly before finishing school. A few years later, when I married, I changed my surname to my husband’s and became Nikiforova. But in reality I was a Sizova-Karpitskaia! Now, when the war started I was living at my aunt’s place… You see, by then she had already stopped being so afraid of having anything to do with me – in fact, her attitude had changed some two years before the start of the war, and I had effectively been living at her place since then: I’d left my room locked and had gone to live with her. Yes, and when the war started and the first bombs were dropped on our city… Actually, before this, there was an interesting episode which I should tell you about: as I said, I wasn’t living in that flat [on Sotsialisticheskaia Street] any more, but one day someone came there, as I later found out, asking for me – a man wearing a hat and carrying a brief-case. He had knocked at the door of the apartment and told my neighbours, who happened to be there, that he needed to speak to Marksena Karpitskaia. They explained that I was now living with my aunt, and he asked where. They had also told him that, and so that’s why he turned up at my aunt’s place – when I happened to be out of the house – and explained to her too that he needed to speak to a young girl called Sizova-Karpitskaia. My aunt had asked him who he was, and he’d replied: “Oh, I’m a professor at so-and-so an institute, I’m a friend of the girl’s mother and I just wanted to drop in to find out how she’s doing.”

Soon afterwards, though… afterwards, he confessed that he was an NKVD official and that he had indeed come to find out what had become of me. Moreover,…

- Why was he interested in that?

- I don't know why. But he himself confessed to my aunt who he was… Because, you see, he advised her to assume legal guardianship over me and said that he could help her to do so, since certain documents were necessary for this. In short, it was clear that no beating about the bush was called for here… Many years later, in 1957, after my parents' rehabilitation, the press started talking a great deal about… Quite a lot appeared about the repressions… Especially in the periodicals…. And in one newspaper I read an article which went like this: the author was an elderly woman, and she wrote about how both her daughter and son-in-law had been arrested, which had meant that their infant child was left to her care. One day, a stranger had called at her door and explained that he was a former colleague of her daughter's and wanted to ask how things were going… Shortly afterwards, however, he had confessed that he was from the NKVD and that he wanted to help in some way. And he actually helped her to procure a special pension for the child. At the end of her article she said that she never found out the surname or the patronymic of that man, but that she was very grateful to him. Can you imagine?! I mean, he was going round these addresses as an NKVD agent, having been instructed, of course, to check up on [the relatives of arrested persons] – but instead of that, he was trying to help wherever he could. It's perhaps hard to imagine, but there were such people, too! Anyway, I was living at my aunt's place when the war started. Leningrad was being bombed from the air, and one day a bomb landed right next to our block of flats: the explosion was so strong that it knocked out all the window frames and panes in the building, as well as shattering all these partition walls in the rooms. I was at home at the time of the explosion and happened to be sitting in front of the window – I instantly covered my face with my hands, but… Can you see it? I've still got this scar on my nose… Some splinters and pieces of broken glass hit me in the face… they sprayed through the gaps in between my fingers and… my whole face was covered in blood. I had this large scar on my face for quite a while… You see, my uncle and I hadn't gone down to the air-raid shelter, because we were fed up of having to rush there each time the bombers flew over – so we'd stayed at home. After that bomb exploded, though, we went down to the shelter as best as we could – everything around us had been destroyed… as we were walking down the stairs to the shelter, these air-raid wardens were rushing up, and when they saw me, my face all covered in blood, they lifted me up and placed me on a stretcher… I couldn't see myself, of course, and didn't know that I was covered in blood…. I heard them mutter something like: "What are we going to do with you now? Oh, why didn't you go down to the shelter when the alarm sounded?.." I immediately said: "But look, I'm all right, it's nothing…" They proceeded to wipe the blood off my face – the effusion of blood had stopped by then – and, yes, they painted some iodine or whatever on my face, pasted some of the cuts up, and in the end, well, everything turned out all right. The block of flats, however, had been destroyed, and so my aunt and uncle moved to my place. They brought some boards of plywood and we used them to close up the windows. So they moved into my fifteen-square-metre room, and we all lived there together.

- Were you working during the Siege?

- No, you see, the thing is that not long after the war started, I enrolled at the University. Under normal circumstances, I wouldn't have been admitted, but during the war no one paid any attention to such things as who or what each applicant was.

- Why do you think that they wouldn't have admitted you otherwise?

- Because I knew that they were turning down applicants who were in much the same situation as me. For example, a friend of mine applied to the University, but she wasn't admitted – for being the daughter of 'enemies of the people'. When I applied, however, it was all very straightforward – the entrance exams weren't given any real importance, and the overwhelming majority of us were admitted. They posted up these lists with the names of all the successful applicants. Well, and then, the following day, they sent us to help build fortifications – somewhere in the outskirts of Novgorod. There, we helped to dig these anti-tank ditches. After this fortification work, when we returned to Leningrad during the first days of September, our lectures and classes officially started. But these classes, you see, only took place in snatches: for example, at one point I was sent to work as a warden in a hospital… And later… a field hospital had been set up in the Otto Institute [for Obstetrics and Gynaecology], which is right next to the University, of course, and I was sent to work there and had to be on duty for whole days and nights. So you can imagine how much time there was left for studies… And when the situation got worse in November and I was too weak to walk, I stopped going to the University. I would just about manage to crawl [to the University Embankment], [which is quite a long way from Sotsialisticheskaia Street, especially given that no trams were running in this first winter of the Siege] in order to pick up my ration cards at the end of each month. They were these manual worker's [class one] ration cards, you see… no, actually, hang on, no… not worker's, but employee [class two] ration cards… yes, I think it was employee ration cards which they handed out to us…

- But why weren't you evacuated together with the University?

- I didn't want to leave Leningrad. You see, my uncle – my second uncle, that is, who was a rather famous cartographer, in fact…

- This second uncle – whose brother was he?

- Oh, no, he wasn't the brother of either of my parents, if that's what you mean. He was actually my great-uncle – my aunt's uncle, that is, the younger brother of my grandmother. It's just that everyone in the family called him Uncle Stevasia. He also lived in that same flat [as my aunt?]… He worked in a cartographic factory and was quite a well-known cartographer. When he was offered the opportunity of being evacuated – all the specialists were being evacuated then, you see – he went to see me and said: "Look, Marksena, this is what I've been offered, and if you come along, I'll go with you." But I said no – and that I had no intention of leaving Leningrad. Then he admitted that he too didn't want to leave the city… But I survived and he didn't: he died of hunger. And it was my fault – I have this on my conscience, that he died… Yes, I didn't want to leave the city. You know, I simply didn't believe that they would be able to capture Leningrad. Such a thought simply couldn't cross my mind – not for a single second! Moreover… here's an interesting anecdote!… my aunt was working in a polyclinic and she had this friend there who was also a doctor. Well, that friend… she gave my aunt the following piece of advice: "Listen, you'd better have Marksena's name changed, because when the Germans get here, they'll execute her immediately!" [*laughs*] When my aunt came home, she told me this and I said: "Not if I know it! I won't let anyone change my name! I'll

stand by the name my parents gave me, whatever happens. Let the Germans shoot me if they want to, but they won't be able to take my name from me!" I didn't believe that they could capture Leningrad, I simply didn't believe that… Besides, where would I have gone? I mean, just think about it… True, my father was in Novosibirsk, but that wasn't a very attractive prospect, as you can imagine. It was only here in Leningrad that I had a warm place of my own – that very same fifteen-square-metre room – was I going to leave that to end up God knows where?! So you see, it just never occurred to me to leave Leningrad. It never even crossed my mind! I didn't believe that the city could ever fall into German hands – that was something utterly inconceivable for me.

- Tell me, didn't they actually try to evict you from Leningrad at some point?

- Ha! You bet they did! I'll tell you how it was: I was working in a library… You see, when the University was evacuated, my aunt and uncle moved out of my room and went to live in the flat of her aunt – that is, her first cousin once removed – whose husband had just died and who'd therefore invited them to live with her. She had a small three-room flat. So they moved out of my place and I was left on my own. Now, in order that I had something to live on, my uncle had fixed me up with a job in a library. It was a district library for children, on Pravda Street, right next to a school. Well, and the director of this library – her name was Liubov Zakharovna Rubina – was a very nice person. I later understood why she treated me in particular so kindly – I found out that her brother and sister had suffered state repression. But I'm still amazed that she was able to conceal that – because she was, after all, a Party member, a member of the *raikom* bureau, and, last but not least, the director of this library – just imagine! And she took me under her wing: what she did to help me was incredible. Yes, she was an excellent person… Now, during the war, at the start of the Siege, the authorities tried to evacuate all the children from Leningrad – so we didn't have any children coming to use our library. It so happened that the Pushkin District Library in the Ligovka district, not far from Raz''ezzhaia Street, had been destroyed and burnt down during an air-raid. So the *raikom* – this was still during the war – decided to open up a new district library [affiliated to the main Public Library in Leningrad] for adults and transfer us, the staff of the children's library, to work there. They earmarked a building for us – house no. 8 on Sotsialisticheskaia Street – which was very close to our previous place of work. It was a one-storeyed building, situated in the centre of the courtyard, and had once housed a design office, before its staff were evacuated. So those were the premises we were allocated – and we set about building up the stock of books for the new public library, but all that's another story…

- When did you set up this new library?

- This was in 1943 – that is, we began in 1942 and carried on with this work in the following year. Now, amongst our library's staff there was this bookkeeper called Vasil'eva, who lived on Sotsialisticheskaia Street, also in house no. 8/2 – almost next door to the library. In fact, all of us lived more or less next door to it. Her husband had once been a tsarist officer but had gone over to the Reds. Subsequently, he had been able to study at an institute and was appointed head of the planning department in the Stalin [Metal] Factory. During the war, however, he fell ill with scurvy as a result of malnourishment: his legs became all swollen and he wasn't able to go to work any more. He just sat at home to start with, but, of course, sitting at home, in the cold, wasn't the best way to survive, and so he decided to go along with his wife to her place of work, instead [much nearer to where they lived than the Stalin Factory, which was on the

Vyborg Side of Leningrad]. That's why he started coming to our library, where he would light the stove, stick little coloured flags onto the library's wall map which showed our armies' positions in the counteroffensive, file the newspapers, and so on – in other words, he was always making himself useful in some way. And it went on like this for quite a long time – for a couple of months, in fact – until he was suddenly arrested. Then they started dragging off all the library's members of staff for questioning. But none of them said or testified anything! Just like the partisans caught by the Germans. One evening, however, Liubov Zakharovna invited me to her place and said: "Do you know what, Marksena? They're summoning all of us to be interrogated. That means it will be your turn soon. Just bear that in mind and be prepared." I said that I would, and, in effect, a few days later I received a summons to the NKVD district department on Sadovaia Street for some reason – that's in the Oktiabr'skii district… I don't know why they didn't summon me to the department in our district, but perhaps it had to with the fact that Vasil'ev had lived there before moving to Sotsialisticheskaia Street… Yes, so I had to go to the Oktiabr'skii district, to the same red building where the Party *raikom* used to be. Before that, though, I told Liubov Zakharovna about the summons I'd received, and she said that she would go there with me. She accompanied me to the red building, but stayed outside, of course, when I walked in, because you needed to have a pass to be allowed into the building. Anyway, I showed the sentries my letter of summons, was issued with a special pass and directed to a small study where this Derzhimorda was sitting behind his desk… [Derzhimorda (*lit.* 'Keep your mug shut') is one of the policemen in Gogol's *The Inspector-General* – he appears on scene only once, but what is said about his brutality on duty and about his drunkenness was sufficiently expressive to make his name a byword for a certain type of oppressive petty official in the Russian (and Soviet!) bureaucracy.] Well, he started jumping from one subject to another… discussing the weather… no, seriously!… and a couple of other things in this vein, too… Then he started asking me about my family circumstances… and, suddenly, he sprung this question on me: "If I'm not mistaken, there's someone who's been working illegally in your library called Vasil'ev – I'm afraid his name and patronymic escape me – What can you tell us about him?" I replied: "What more can I say than that he's a decent, good person?" But he started plying me with various leading questions. I insisted that nothing of what he was suggesting had actually happened and that I didn't understand what he was trying to get at. He then retorted: "Yes, you would say that, wouldn't you! You're the daughter of an enemy of the people, and therefore you protect such enemies.' At that point I exploded with rage. I said that nobody had yet proved that my parents were enemies of the people, and that what he was saying was itself a crime. For me that was suddenly clear. But imagine my saying it! Only the foolishness of youth could have possessed me to be so brave! He jumped up and came towards me, as if to hit me. No doubt he was used to beating people. I stood up and grabbed my stool, as if to protect myself. He would have hit me had it not been for the stool. He came to his senses, sat down at his desk, and asked for my papers. I put the chair down, gave him my papers, and he signed them… Then he said I could go. I turned round, and as I was walking towards the door, I couldn't help thinking that he was going to catch me up and bash me from behind. But I was determined not to show that blood-sucker that I was afraid of him in any way, so I walked slowly to the door, opened and shut it behind me carefully, and walked out on to the street – all the while, though, I had this lump in my throat and felt

that I couldn't bring out a single word. Liubov Zakharovna, as soon as she saw me step out of the building, rushed towards me and asked me what had happened. I was unable to give any sort of answer, so she took my arm and we walked along Sadovaia Street till we reached Sennaia [Hay Market] Square [it would have been known as Peace Square in those times] – on the way there I gradually came to myself again. Now, from Sennaia Square, to get home, she had to cross to the other side of Griboedov Canal, whereas I had to make my way to Sotsialisticheskaia Street, in the Frunze district. She offered to accompany me there, and it was then that I told her all that had happened. She was quite alarmed: "How could you do that? What came over you to make you say all that?" But what could we do about it – what was said couldn't be unsaid! So I slowly made my way home – by the time I got there, I had calmed down, more or less. Now, this was when my school friend Rufinka was living at my place.

- In which year was this?

- It was 1942, or, rather, the beginning of 1943… A couple of days had passed [since the interrogation], when I suddenly heard the doorbell ring – at eleven o'clock in the evening, which made me wonder who it could be, since the authorities had imposed a curfew of ten o'clock. Anyway, I opened the door and saw this lad standing there with a summons he'd been instructed to present to me – on the piece of paper it said that I had to appear at the NKVD district department by midnight! This department was then situated near the landing-pier on the Fontanka embankment – the one you get to if you come in from Zagorodnyi Prospekt. The summons I'd received was also supposed to serve as a pass, so I didn't have to worry about leaving our block of flats during the curfew hours – I just crossed the road and soon reached the NKVD building… What struck me most when I got there, was that, despite it being close to midnight, work was going on in full swing: in every room typing machines seemed to be rattling away, and people carrying stacks of papers were coming and going along the corridors. Poor them, they had to labour night and day during the Siege! I found the member of staff whom I was supposed to report to, and he asked me to follow him – he opened one door in the corridor, but the room was already occupied, and the same happened with another office he took me to. Eventually, he found a small room which wasn't already occupied and shoved me into it. Inside it was a writing-table piled with books and papers, and there was also one of these large square safes in the middle of the room. He put the folder he was carrying on the top of the safe, took something out of it… and gave me a document, which he asked me to sign. I read what it said: "You are to leave Leningrad within 24 hours." … I signed my name, took the order of expulsion which he'd detached from it, and walked back home. As I said, all this happened when my school friend Rufinka was living with me… There was always someone or other living at my place… So I showed her the order, and she said: "Oh, Marksena, you'll have to pack everything ready… I'll give you a hand." But I just slumped down on the bed like this, having lost heart completely, as I remember very well… I simply couldn't move. Rufinka was bustling to and fro, trying to get me to pack my things and not lose time… After a few minutes of her pleading and not getting any response from me, I raised my head again and said: "Do you know what, Rufina? I'm not going anywhere. Why should I go? The only thing I have is this little corner [in the communal apartment]. Let them arrest me, I will not leave of my own accord. Yes, I've made my mind up!" So we went to sleep, and in the morning I went… to work, found Liubov Zakharovna and showed the order to her: "Look, Liubov Zakharovna…" I said,

but she didn't let me finish. She immediately cried out: "What?! They're chucking you out of Leningrad?! We'll see about that!" – she had a rather bluff way of expressing herself, "Here, take the keys to the library – you can stay and live here until things have calmed down a bit." Those NKVD men, they were so sure that anyone receiving one of their orders of expulsion would get scared and leave the city immediately that they didn't even bother checking whether I had actually left or not! Moreover, in our local ZAGS [registry office] there was this elderly woman who worked as a passport officer, and she was very well disposed towards me – so I went to her… Elizaveta Nikolaevna was her name, I've just remembered… and said: "Do you know what? I've just been given an order of expulsion. If they start asking you anything, please tell them either that you don't know or that I've left." It sounds difficult to believe, but there really were people like her to whom I could say such things! And when I actually asked her, some time afterwards, she said that no one at all had come to her office and made inquiries about me. They hadn't even bothered to check! The library was, of course, right next to the block of flats where my room was, so every so often, late in the evening, I would run across the road, dash up the stairs and pick up from my room whatever I happened to need… The windows were curtained off, so I wasn't afraid to turn on the light briefly whilst I looked for what I needed… But I would always go back to the library to pass the night there, in Liubov Zakharovna's office, because I didn't want to be caught napping in the place where they would be most likely to look for me. I lived in this way for several months, and, as it turned out, it didn't occur to anyone to check whether I'd actually complied with the order of expulsion. Several years later, I met two families who had been expelled from Leningrad in the same way as the NKVD had wanted to do to me, but who hadn't been able to get certificates testifying to their having been deported [and entitling them to compensation] – because they had packed their things up and left almost as soon as they received their order… and none of this ever went on record, of course… At the places where they settled after leaving Leningrad they registered with the police but it was never recorded officially that they'd been expelled from Leningrad… so that's why they weren't been able to get any certificate afterwards… As a matter of fact, neither in my mother's file, nor in my stepfather's – I've read through both of them, you see – is there any mention of my having received an order of expulsion. So if I too had left Leningrad, I would never have been able to prove that I too had been personally repressed.

- You've mentioned various persons who helped you… But were there any occasions on which people, after finding out that your parents had been arrested, behaved to you in some nasty way?

- Well, the only such incident was when that neighbour I told you about… when I complained to him about his wife and mother-in-law stealing my things, he made this sign to me with his fingers [*crosses the fingers of her two hands in the form of prison bars*]… But apart from that there wasn't anyone else.

- Never?

- That's right, there wasn't. And, besides, in our block of flats, we all knew each other… After all, it was a rather small house… Yes, and what is more, in those times people actually talked to one another – not at all like nowadays… For example, I don't even know who my neighbours on this floor are!… So, generally speaking, I got a lot of help from people.

- Did you always have this sensation, though, that you were the daughter of an 'enemy of the people'?
- Yes, I did feel that…
- Well, for a start I always felt this… It was just something that I could never get away from. I never forgot about it. I never knew what was lying in store for me. And, moreover, I started feeling this a lot when I finished school. When I started getting my application ready for university, I realised that they might well… But it so happened that I was also lucky at university: you see, we had this… now what was his name?… Men'shikov… no, not Men'shikov… No, I've forgotten, but, anyway, at the Philological Faculty [of Leningrad State University] we had this Party [bureau] secretary who was always very helpful and friendly towards me. Our faculty's Komsomol secretary – Nina Volk was her name – she also showed a lot of goodwill towards me. Well, and they would both give me all kinds of assignments: for example, I was put in charge of designing the *agitkollektiv* board [The *agitkollektiv* was a group formed in each Soviet institution soon after an election was announced and whose purpose was to carry out propaganda encouraging all the members of staff to vote. It would also put up boards with various electoral slogans and statements], and a couple of other things, too… So, as you can see, they were very well disposed towards me… And, moreover, when the University returned from evacuation…
- But, still, these people knew that…
- Yes, that's right.
- And you actually wrote that in the *anketa*? [a questionnaire which had to be filled in before enrolling at a higher educational institution or when taking up employment, which included questions on one's parents]
- Yes, and not just in that case – I wrote it everywhere, on all such *ankety* and forms. I never tried to conceal it. I've even got one of these *ankety* lying there on the table now. The head of the cadres department actually… you see, the libraries then were subordinated to the district department of education… Yes, and when I left my job at the library, the head of the cadres department let me have my whole personnel file, together with my *anketa*, as a kind of memento, as it were… Just imagine: even someone in his position treated me kindly!... Now, this was before I'd been rehabilitated, but he still gave me my whole personnel file. I've got it here somewhere – on the table you can see an *anketa* I filled in once and which was also included in my file.
- Why did he give you those papers?
- Oh, I don't know why he did that. He just gave them to me. Perhaps because he thought they could interest me from a historical perspective.
- After the war, did you ever discuss with the people around you the repressions your family had suffered?
- That was something I only discussed with those who were nearest and dearest to me – with my friends, with those whose parents had been repressed or who'd suffered repression themselves. But never with those who didn't really know what that all meant. No one ever asked me anything – you see, it was a completely different world back then… People then had a completely different upbringing... Despite everything [i.e. all the propaganda], they obviously realised that the repressions were wrong, and they never asked me about these things. Everyone in my block of flats knew [about my parents' arrest], but they would never refer to it in any way. All they would do was to sometimes

ask me: “Marksenochka, do you need a hand with anything? How are you doing? How are things going?” – it was just questions of this sort that I would hear. And at school no one ever reproached me with anything… no one ever said a nasty word to me.

- Did you ever come across any informers?

- No, I didn’t. Oh, actually, no, that’s not true – I did! We were working in a district library, you know, and in those days there were these so-called district library inspectors, and when we were setting up that new adult library in our district, we had this inspector called… If I remember his name later, I’ll tell you. Anyway, he was the district library inspector and he would call on us every now and then, to check how things were going, as he put it. Sometimes he would steal in upon us just like that… and, for example, I once happened to be in the general reading room doing something, when suddenly Liubov Zakharovna ran up to me and took me into this small room in the back of the library, telling me to sit there for a while. Well, I was used to following her advice always, and I knew that she would never want to do me any harm, so I understood that this was necessary. It all happened so quickly that I wasn’t able to ask her why she was hiding me, so I just sat there, waiting. Eventually, she came back and said: “It’s all right now, you can come out. You know, it was that NKVD agent, and I didn’t want him to see you.”

- In which year was this?

- … oh, this was 1943… yes, and she also said: “If he starts coming here regularly, make sure that he doesn’t catch sight of you.” Well, afterwards he did, in fact, call at our library a number of times, but as soon as I saw him walking in, I would sneak out of the room as unobtrusively as I could. We’d actually arranged that back room as a kind of reading room, too, with the only difference that we stored there all the rare books that we couldn’t hand out to readers but which had to be consulted in the presence of a librarian. And my official post in the library was as superintendent of this reading room, although in reality, as you can understand, I had to do all kinds of odd job – both things that I was up to and various things that I wasn’t…

- In what sense weren’t you up to them?

- Well, I mean things that I wasn’t supposed to do [because of my heart condition]: I would do everything, you see – even sawing firewood and going to the right bank of the Neva River to fetch it! But what choice did I have? I had to do everything… Yes, I also helped to fetch our fuel supplies: the district department of education put a car at our disposal, and we would drive to the right bank of the Neva to pick the firewood up. After getting back, we would stack the wood in this shed we had next door to the library, and then we would take turns to go to the shed and cut the firewood into smaller pieces. Then Vasil’ev would come to stoke our stove… yes, and sometimes that ‘library inspector’ would drop by… I would immediately sneak away… And whilst Vasil’ev was sitting by the stove and stoking the fire, that fellow would start up a conversation with him… This happened on a number of occasions… and one day, that Konstantin – yes, I’ve just remembered Vasil’ev’s name and patronymic – Konstantin Nikolaevich came into the library in the afternoon and said to me: “Marksenochka, do you know where I was yesterday? I went round to…” and he said the name of that ‘inspector’, which I’ve forgotten, “… ‘s place, and he offered me a pack of these ‘Kazbek’ cigarettes and treated me to some chocolates…” Now, it’s well known that NKVD staff could get hold of ‘Kazbek’ cigarettes and chocolates in a special closed distributor… So that ‘inspector’ had invited Konstantin Nikolaevich to his place! It wasn’t long after this visit that he was

arrested… I later found out a bit more about that ‘inspector’: by profession he was actually a maths teacher… It really is a small world, you see: Valentina, a friend of mine, whom I got to know after the war, had as a girl been taught by him, so she was familiar with his story. She told me how in the same class as her there had been a girl, the daughter of some professor, whom that maths teacher managed to get thrown into prison thanks to his reports to the NKVD. He had then lived with that professor’s daughter for a while before getting her to marry someone else, so that he could take over the spacious flat which had once belonged [or been allocated] to her father. Just imagine – what ruthlessness! Yes, Valentina told me all about it later – how he had taken over that flat, and how his wife, who’d been in evacuation during the Siege, was thus able to move into such magnificent housing. Can you imagine?!… Valentina’s mother, you see, was friends with that informer’s wife, so that’s how she was able to pass on all these details to me. Yes, and he would regularly make the rounds of our district – he had this unmistakable black eye-patch, and always carried a briefcase as he walked round… talking to everyone he met.

- What about after the war? – did you ever come across any such denunciations or informers at the places you worked?

- No, I didn’t. Perhaps there were cases of that, but I wasn’t affected by it personally – never, and I think that there wasn’t any, in fact.

- May I ask – did you ever join the Party?

- No, I didn’t.

- As a matter of principle?

- It didn’t even occur to me to go for such a thing. It just wasn’t for me.

- Could you tell me what you saw happening around you when Stalin died?

- Well, to be honest, when Stalin died, I too was scared and went through quite a lot. For a start, there was this announcement about Stalin’s death which left a strong impression… then there were all those days of mourning on the radio – there wasn’t any television yet, of course – and the radio was broadcasting all the time this splendid funerary music. I was actually surprised at how many of our composers wrote all kinds of funeral melodies for this occasion. I’ve never heard any of them again since then, but in those days of mourning, one melody would be played after the other successively. They were wonderful melodies – I wish I knew where they got them from. But, anyway, I did, of course, go through a lot at the time.

- How do you mean that?

- Oh, in the sense of something which seemed to have become permanent suddenly collapsing. Yes, it collapsed… and we didn’t know what was going to happen next. There was a certain fear about what was coming. But, of course, I didn’t go anywhere, so I didn’t see any of those… In Moscow, so it is said, terrible things happened, didn’t they? [The crowds at Stalin’s funeral in Moscow were so large that many people were crushed to death.] But, believe me, I was definitely worried, because this really did mean that something which had become permanent, to which we were accustomed to, had now fallen apart. And none of us could tell what was coming next.

- But tell me – after the war was over, when you had grown up and were a young woman, how did you try to come to terms with what had happened to your parents?

- I just did, I suppose.

Cassette nr. 3, side A

- So how did you explain to yourself back then why that had happened?
- Well, anything can happen in politics.
- But you already knew then that your parents weren't the only ones to have been affected, didn't you? Weren't you aware of the scale of the repressions?
- Yes, I knew that these were mass repressions. As a matter of fact, I was in a better position than many to judge about the scale of the repressions.
- Why was that?
- Because I had once moved in that circle of people, you see – I knew how many of our Party workers were arrested in Leningrad: that is, practically all of Leningrad's Party cadres were annihilated. Not a single one was left in the end.
- But surely you couldn't just think that it was mere chance, or perhaps you did after all think it was that?
- No, not at all. I knew that Stalin on the whole had always hated the Leningrad Party organisation – I didn't know how it was with other cities, but I had no doubts that Stalin loathed the Leningrad Party organisation, that they had galled him in some way – that is, well, to put it this way, he had had all those rows with Kirov, whom he actually feared very much, and so [after Kirov's death] he made all the other Leningraders the target for his resentment…
- And when the 'Leningrad Affair' started, did you know about it?
-Yes, I did – I had a close friend who was arrested and perished [in this purge]… I must say I was lucky again… You see, my aunt was very good friends with this Chistiakov, Mikhail Ivanovich, and his wife Valia – they had both lived in the flat of a relative of my aunt for some years. Yes, they were still students when they married, and they had rented a room in the flat of my aunt's own aunt. They would also come to my aunt's place unofficially to be treated for any dental problems: if I'm not mistaken, she didn't charge them anything for this. And later he worked as… he was a graduate of the Railway Institute [the Leningrad Institute of Railway Transport Engineering], whereas his wife had studied at the Paper Industry Institute [the Leningrad Technological Institute of the Pulp and Paper Industry]: when I got to know them, she had already obtained her Candidate of Sciences degree and was director of a laboratory… He, on the other hand, was no less than the Head of the Political Department of the Oktiabr'skaia Railway – just imagine! But, even so, they both still carried on visiting my aunt for dental treatment. I would meet them sometimes, since I was living at my aunt's place, and they always showed great sympathy for me. Not only that – when by chance they found out my birthday, the 12th of October, from my aunt, they visited us on that day, she with a box of sweets, he with a bottle of perfume: they had decided to congratulate me! Yes, and they were always so kind to me – and they also helped my aunt a lot thanks to their position. After the war, he actually became Secretary of the Smol'nyi *raikom* – actually, not the Smol'nyi, but the Lenin district – just imagine that! Yes, in his time he helped my aunt a great deal: she was ill, you see, with cancer, and her length of service wasn't sufficient to qualify her for a pension. So he managed to fix her up unofficially with a post in some medical institution, where she was nominally on the staff list, and that's how a few more months were tacked on to her length of service, entitling her to a pension. He also helped me out during the Siege by bringing me a sack of potatoes once. At the beginning of the

war, he was in the Ukraine, organising the evacuation of rolling stock away from the advancing Germans. He then worked in Moscow for a while before being transferred here again, when the Oktiabr'skaia Railway was opened here [i.e. after the German blockade was broken through in early 1943 and the section of the railway between Leningrad and Novgorod, known as the Road of Victory, could return to operation] – now when was this?… I think in 1944, that's when he came back here.

- But did he know about your parents?

- Yes, he did. You see, when he found out about them, given that he was occupying such a high position, he wasn't at all afraid to drop by at my aunt's place and to talk to me. Would you imagine! Yes, that's how it was. Well, and in 1948, when he was Secretary of the Lenin district Party committee, he was arrested and imprisoned, but, fortunately, the investigator in charge of his case turned out to be a decent person and contrived to find some hitch in the evidence presented against him, which called for further inquiry: thanks to that, he escaped the general execution [of most of the Leningrad city and oblast Party officials arrested in 1948-50]. But although he was eventually struck off the list of suspects, he'd suffered a heart attack whilst in prison and died a few months after his release. They really gave him the works there, you see, and left him in a terrible state. [Severe torture was used on those arrested during the 'Leningrad Case']

- So that actually means you knew about the 'Leningrad Affair' – was it through his wife that you found out about it?

- No, not through her. I just knew about it generally. You see, my husband did, after all, have quite a lot of contacts and acquaintances – and he would let me in on who'd been arrested here, who there, and so on. For example, Popkov, who was a well-known figure, was arrested, as was Kuznetsov and various others. [A. A. Kuznetsov was First Secretary of the Leningrad *obkom* and *gorkom* from 1945 to 1946. P. S. Popkov succeeded him in both these posts from 1946 to 1949. They were leading associates of Zhdanov.] So I knew about that. And then there was… now what was his name?… the one who restored our city's Moscow Triumphal Gate [This classic triumphal arch was erected in 1834-38 to commemorate the recent Russian victory over the Turks. In 1936, the arch was dismantled at Stalin's orders and was not restored until 1958-60]… Oh, you don't know this story? Right, well, he was appointed Secretary of the *raikom*… no, sorry, the *obkom* after Popkov's arrest… yes, and he decided to restore the Moscow Triumphal Gate: he got hold of the necessary money from somewhere and organised its restoration… And for that he was actually tried – on charges of having embezzled or squandered some large sum on this project… Now, his name began with S… it wasn't Sokolov, nor Serov… but I just can't remember now. [Popkov's successor as First Secretary of the Leningrad *obkom* from 1949 to 1953 was, in fact, a certain V. M. Andrianov.] So, yes, he was subsequently put on trial and almost executed – you see, they'd slipped some wads of money into his safe, as well as some other 'incriminating' documents… In short, they managed to pin quite a meaty criminal case on him.

- Do you remember the campaign against 'cosmopolitanism'?

- Yes, I read about it, of course.

- You read about it… So you didn't have any direct experience of it?

- No, I didn't, as a matter of fact – I just read about it… and, of course, I didn't approve of it. Liubov Zakharovna and I didn't approve of it at all. You see, Liubov Zakharovna wasn't afraid of me: she could always speak her mind in front of me. The two of us

would talk about everything openly… Yes, and she understood full well what all this [campaign] smacked of [i.e. anti-Semitism]… The thing is that it wasn't just that her brother and sister had suffered repression, but that at the time it happened she was the director of a district library in the Central district and, moreover, a member of the *raikom* bureau. Now, my stepfather was then First Secretary of the Central district *raikom*, so she had actually been his colleague for a while and got to know him very well. You know, it was also on account of that that she had this affection for me. Because, you see, she had a very high opinion of him and she would always recall him with great regret… Yes, we would always talk frankly to each other… and she said once: "It's impossible that Petr Leont'evich could have been an 'enemy of the people'. It's just out of the question that someone like him could… What complete and utter nonsense!"

- What did she say about what was happening in our country? What views did she have on these events?

- She accused Stalin of all sorts of things.

- Could I ask: how did you react to the Twentieth Party Congress?

- The Twentieth Congress… Well, I generally…

- How did you find out about Khrushchev's speech?

- I found out… I don't actually remember how I came to know about it…

- It was, after all, delivered to a special closed session.

- I just don't remember how I found out, but what I do remember is how… Oh, what was her name – you know, the one who proposed at the [Twenty-second] Congress that Stalin's body should be removed from the Mausoleum? What was her name? I knew her well…[Stalin's embalmed body wasn't removed from the Lenin Mausoleum until 1961]

- You knew her?

- Yes, I did. She had suffered repression and was later rehabilitated… But what was her name?…

- Dora Lazurkina – she had a dream that… [During her speech at the Twenty-second Party Congress in October 1961, D. A. Lazurkina, an Old Bolshevik, said that Lenin often appeared to her in dreams and that he had told her how unpleasant it was to lie next to Stalin in the Mausoleum because of all the evil he had done. According to the report published in the newspaper *Pravda*, the delegates at the Congress had greeted her speech with tumultuous applause.]

- I suppose I managed to link up various fragments that came to my notice here and there – either on television or… I don't know… Later I read the… Yes, that's what it was! The closed letter… [After Khrushchev's famous 'Secret Speech' during the Twentieth Party Congress in February 1956, the Central Committee circulated a closed letter amongst Party cells which also criticised the 'cult of personality'.]

- But how did you get hold of the closed letter?

- Oh, that's an interesting question. You see, relations between that neighbour I told you about and me were very strained. All we would say to each other was simply: "Hello and goodbye", because he was a repulsive, horrible person… I was cooking some *kisel* [a kind of blancmange] once, and when I left the saucepan on a slow fire and returned to my room for a while, he took the opportunity to pour some salt into it! That's the kind of character he was. Well, and one evening, when I was… My husband was a Party member, you see… One evening, at ten or eleven o'clock, my husband hadn't come home yet, and I went out to the kitchen to prepare his supper. My neighbour Leonid then

turned up at the kitchen and said: “Hello, Marksenochka!” I couldn’t help wondering why he was suddenly in such a friendly mood, but, still, I returned his greeting. A bit later, my husband arrived and told me about that closed letter – it was instantly clear to me why Leonid had all of a sudden turned so friendly…

- Was this Leonid also a Party member?

- Yes, he was… As it turned out, my husband and his colleagues had read the closed letter together after work – when he came back home, he told me about it… My husband would always tell me about everything, you see – even about the… I forgot to say that he was working in… that he had to work in an area which fell under classified material… on radiation protection.

- He was a physicist, right?

- No, a chemist. You see, there was this Academician Petrianov in Moscow who was doing research on this, and my husband had worked with him for a while: he had been his assistant, and they’d done all the hard work in this field. [Academician Igor Petrianov-Sokolov (1907-1996), a physical chemist known for his work on aerosols and for being the author of a number of popular science books.] My husband then became the director of a laboratory here in Leningrad, and he would sometimes tell me what he himself had heard from Petrianov… about the experiments which had been carried out on sheep… You know, for some experiments they even used people… and Petrianov would tell him about all this… They had to develop means of protection against radiation…What I must tell you about, though, is how my husband suffered because of… You see, I first met him in 1942 – we started living together, and I gave birth to a son in 1944, but I didn’t want to have our marriage registered.

- Why not?

- Because I thought that… I understood that in the long run he would get fed up – that his career might not advance because of me, and that he would eventually tire of me, so I didn’t want his hands to be tied: I wanted him to be free to leave me whenever he should choose to. So that’s why I refused to have our marriage registered… But all the same, from the very first day, he persistently wrote in all the *ankety* [questionnaires] he had to fill in – even whilst still being in the army – that I was his wife and that my parents had been arrested. Because we didn’t know yet that they’d been executed… So yes, he would always write in these forms that my parents had been arrested. Now, he’d only been able to complete one year of his degree at the Technological Institute when the war started… He was studying in the Department of Ammunition – that is, if I remember correctly, in the Department of Powder Technology… Anyway, he specialised in the field of equipment and ammunition. And after the war, when he was demobilised, he immediately went to his institute and was again taken on as a student in that department – [even though] after the war, they checked the information given by applicants on their *ankety* quite carefully. Well, and he graduated from that department, having written his degree thesis on something to do with equipment and ammunition, and after that, he tried to find work… but no one would have him. He applied here and there… but as soon as they saw the *anketa* he’d sent in, they would turn him down… And this was despite the fact that he had graduated with a ‘free diploma’ [Often awarded to those students who obtained excellent marks in their examinations, such a diploma exempted them from planned job allocations (*raspredeleniia*), which required Soviet graduates to work for three years at a job allocated by the Soviet authorities] – despite his having obtained a

distinction in his finals! Can you imagine! However, here in Leningrad this new scientific research institute was being set up – I've forgotten what it was called – as a branch of one in Moscow, and the director of the latter suggested to the director of the branch institute that he should take on Nikiforov. And he did!… Actually, no, I'm getting things mixed up – that was later… First, as I told you, he'd been going round all these industrial works, but no one wanted to employ him… After all these rejections, though, he went to Factory No. 77 – this was a factory which during the war had been reconverted to turn out shells but was originally an agricultural machinery construction plant. After the war, it started producing agricultural equipment again, and they also set up one of these… how do you call them?… these… hmm… design offices, where a certain chief engineer called Dobrin was working – in fact, he was responsible for the whole factory. Well, and he had a look at my husband's diploma and offered him a job in the department in charge of designing these… agricultural machines. But first he sent him to Moscow for a three-month refresher course. When he got back, though, he didn't work in that design department for very long, because he also started a course at the factory's department for training new scientific cadres, as it was called then. Yes, so at the same time that my husband was working in that factory, he was also studying at home in the evenings – in my fifteen-square-metre room, with three little children around him all the time… just imagine! – and hoping to be admitted for postgraduate work… And eventually he took his qualifying exam at the Institute of Technology…

- In which year was this?

- This was in… Oh, when was it?… I don't want to say something off the top of my head, you see… Yes, it must have been in 1951… Yes, and he was actually admitted! He was taken on as a postgraduate student in the Department of Ammunition. The only trouble was that they wouldn't give him a research topic, because the research carried out by that department was all secret… classified material, you know! They did pay him a grant, though – in those days, postgraduate students got 700 rubles a month – and he was also able to earn some extra cash with odd jobs here and there. So it went on like this for a few months: they just wouldn't give him a research topic to work on… But, fortunately, the institute's 'first department' [An office set up at every workplace in the USSR that dealt with technical, scientific, economic, and statistical data, and which was directly answerable to the NKVD/ MVD] was headed by a very nice person: this Aleksandr… I'm afraid I don't remember his surname… And he was very favourably disposed towards my husband, you see, so when he started despairing of ever getting to do any proper research work and was considering dropping out, that Aleksandr would always try to encourage him: "Wait a bit, don't leave us just yet. I'm sure we'll come up with something." The head of the 'first department' – sounds incredible, doesn't it?! Well, and one day he summoned my husband to his office and said this: "Do you know what? The Department of Paint and Varnish Coatings has just received a project assignment from the NKVD…" – you see, in those times the fire-brigade was subordinated to the NKVD, "… It has to do with the spontaneous combustion of vegetable oils. Look, you can bet no one's going to take this topic on, because it's half chemistry and half physics, if you see what I mean. So if you undertake this assignment, I'll get you transferred to the Department of Paints and Varnishes. What do you say to that?" My husband had no choice but to agree, and eventually he completed his dissertation [for the title of Candidate of Sciences] and defended it brilliantly. But, all the same, despite having

obtained his higher degree, he was still left without a job for a while, because no one would have him… And it was then that the director of that Moscow institute recommended him for a post in the one that was being set up in Leningrad, and he was taken on there, though only as a junior research fellow. In practice, he performed all the duties of a laboratory director, but on paper he was just a junior research fellow. It stayed that way until my parents had been rehabilitated – when that happened, the director immediately appointed him head of his laboratory.

- Could we go back to the Twentieth Congress… Was everything that you heard about then new to you?

- No.

- So there was nothing at all you weren't aware of already?

- That's right – I didn't find out anything that was new to me.

- But did you notice anything changing radically after the Twentieth Congress?

- Well, the circumstances changed… and my own attitude to everything also changed: on the whole, I began feeling more confident. You know, I was… I just couldn't get a job anywhere… Let's see, when was this?… Again, I don't want to get the dates mixed up… Yes, in short, it was after I'd given birth to my last son, in 1954: I didn't work for a while, but then I saw that I had to find myself a job somehow. I spent six months looking for work… I would go first to one office and fill in an *anketa*, then to another, a few days later, in order to find out the outcome of my application – I kept being rejected all the time. As soon as they saw from my *anketa* that my parents had been arrested, they automatically turned my application down. So I would just have to try again somewhere else… and this went on and on for a good six months, with me leaving the house every morning, as if I actually had a job. Where did I *not* go? You just wouldn't be able to imagine it!… But one day I bumped into Liubov Zakharovna on the street – by then they'd already re-opened that children's library, and she had again been appointed its director. Yes, and she asked me: "Marksena, how are you?" I replied: "Oh, I'm on my feet all the time… I just can't seem to land myself a job." – "Would you be willing to work in a district library… a school library, that is?" – "I'm ready to work anywhere – even as a cleaner…" Yes, as a matter of fact, in one of these moments of despair at getting all these rejections, I'd gone to work as a grinder in a factory for a while – I was issued a work record card as a category 3 grinder… Because I just had no choice: I had three children to think of and had to provide for them somehow. My husband hadn't finished his postgraduate studies yet, so he couldn't bring home much… Anyway, she said to me: "Do you know what? One of our librarians is retiring on account of ill health, so if you want, I can fix you up with a job in a school library…" And she was true to her word: she got me this job in the library of a school which was right next to the Technological Institute on Moscow Prospekt – it was a general ten-year secondary school, but there was also this auxiliary school for mentally handicapped children affiliated to it. Thanks to Liubov Zakharovna's efforts on my behalf, I also got a half-rate bonus to my basic salary from this auxiliary school. So, in all, I was receiving a one-and-a-half salary. There you are: that's another example of how she helped me out again.

- When did you find out that your parents had been shot?

- When I received their certificates of rehabilitation.

- And when was that?

- In 1957.

- But before you found out, didn't you try to look for them somehow?
- If it were just a question of… You see, I regularly applied to the NKVD – or the KGB, or the NKVD when that was still around – [The NKVD was renamed the MVD in 1946, and the Soviet security police was designated as the KGB from 1954 onwards] for information on my parents… The entrance to their headquarters was from Liteinyi Prospekt – you know, where the entrance lobby is now – I'd been there a couple of times before… Yes, and every year I would write to the Main Camp Administration with the same inquiry: "Please inform me of my parents' fate." Every year. I wasn't afraid… And the NKVD would send me a summons… When you go into the lobby from Liteinyi Prospekt now and go up the stairs, there's this landing and then another entrance which opens into a large reception room. Well, back then that reception room wasn't there. After getting up the stairs, you would see this wooden bench on the landing – like the ones you find in trains – and there was a small door, behind which was this narrow office… Well, it was there that I had to report with my summons, and an NKVD agent would ask me: "You wrote to us, didn't you?" – "Yes, I did." – "Your parents are in a concentration camp – [they've been sentenced to] ten years without right of correspondence. That's all I can tell you." And that was the reply I got each time I asked in the course of ten years. [The (fictional) sentence of 'ten years without right of correspondence' was a bureaucratic euphemism for execution.]
- Did you write to them again in 1957?
- Yes, that year I also sent an inquiry and was again summoned to their building: I walked into the lobby, then up the stairs, and I found myself in that office again: there someone handed me those rehabilitation certificates. And when I read them… I mean, right up to the last moment I had hoped that perhaps one of them at least would be alive and… you see, that's the feeling I'd always had… right till the last… When I read through their indictments, I was left speechless. Imagine what it felt to read that… Both of them had been shot. For me this was a terrible shock, of course. True, I got over this, like any person would have to; I didn't die with grief, but it still was a terrible shock for me. Because it was only then that I understood for the first time that there was no hope left. I remember that until then – for example, when we were evicted from the flat, or when my brothers were put into children's homes and I was left on my own – until then I always had such moments when I would be sitting like this, facing the door, and thinking that it would open any second now and Mama would walk in. I mean, I was just thirteen years old when that happened… Every single minute I waited for her to come back, because it was all a misunderstanding, it just couldn't be true that Mama had been guilty of anything. I was sure she would come back, if you see what I mean… I had nourished a certain hope all along. And it wasn't just that – when my parents were arrested, you see, we were allowed to hand over a package to them, or a remittance up to a limit of 30 or 50 rubles… I don't remember exactly. Yes, and these packages and remittances had to be handed over in an office on Voinov [now Shpalernaia] Street. The queue almost literally stretched to the end of the street, because people would start queuing up from the night before. So Milia and I… Milia went there in the evening and took her place in the queue that was already forming, and the following morning I rushed over to relieve her, and it was I who actually handed over the remittance we'd put together. All this was done in a smallish room with this flat, sliding window – just like a counter, really – which you would go up to and give your surname. The man there would flick through a book, take

receipt of the money, and give you an acknowledgement slip. So I managed to hand in our first remittance, but the second time I went there, the man behind the window turned to the relevant pages in his book and said: "I'm not taking any money in receipt from you today." I asked why, and he explained that the investigation had been completed and that my parents had been transported to a camp where they had no right of correspondence. That was the only information about them I got: I wasn't given any documents, nor was I told anything more than that. And subsequently I would write every year to inquire about my parents… I know there were people who – I've met some myself – who were afraid and even destroyed the photographs of their arrested relatives, but not me: I wasn't afraid and I wrote every year to the Camp Administration, requesting them to please inform me of my parents' fate, after explaining who they were and when their arrests had taken place. And I would always receive a summons to the NKVD building – they never replied to my inquiry in writing – where they'd inform me by word of mouth – again, without giving me any documents – that my parents had been taken to a camp without right of correspondence.

- But tell me – in 1957, when you received the rehabilitation certificate, surely it didn't state that your parents had been shot, did it?

- No, what it said was that they'd been posthumously rehabilitated. The certificate I was given in 1957 ran as follows – for example: Karpitskaia, Anna Iakovlevna… arrested on so-and-so a date, sentenced on… posthumously rehabilitated. Yes, and in 1989 I was issued with death certificates like this: the one for Mama said that the cause of her death was myocardial infarction [i.e. a heart attack], whereas, in fact, she'd been shot in 1937. But that's the document I received. And the one for Papa was similarly worded: "Nizovtsev, Petr Leont'evich – 23 January 1942. Myocardial infarction."

- So when did you find out about their execution?

- That was again in 1989. I made an inquiry then, and that was the answer I got.

- Was your own father arrested, too?

- Yes, they also arrested him. He was First Secretary of the Party *raikom* in Novosibirsk, but his second wife worked here in Leningrad, in the GIBKh [a research institute of biology and chemistry]: she was a chemist, you see. And she didn't want to move to Novosibirsk with him, so they would only meet now and then, when he came here on leave, or when she went there herself, also on leave. It was a strange ménage they lived in. Well, and she was arrested here in 1937. They'd had a daughter called Lena, and after her mother's arrest, she was taken in by Grandmother, who was then living in the Caucasus. As for my father, he was always very sociable – he'd been like that ever since childhood, and he had friends everywhere, which is not surprising given that he always liked to do things in a big way. Now, one of his acquaintances tipped him off that Eikhe – who was then the NKVD chief [Robert Eikhe (1890-1940) was First Secretary of the Western Siberian *kraikom*. From 1937 to 1938, he briefly served as People's Commissar of Agriculture and became a candidate member of the Politburo. Subsequently, however, he was arrested, put on a show trial, and viciously tortured before his execution] – that Eikhe had signed his arrest warrant. So father asked this forester whom he knew and who was devoted to him, to harness a horse to a cart and take him to Novosibirsk – he hadn't taken his car to Siberia, you see. Yes, and when he arrived in Novosibirsk, he got some friends to hide him for a while. Eventually, Eikhe was himself arrested, and father lost no

time to write a petition, indicating that his arrest warrant had been signed by the 'enemy of the people' Eikhe. However, this didn't lead to him being reinstated in the Party…

- He'd been expelled from the Party?

- Yes, that's right – as soon as the arrest warrant was signed, he was immediately expelled. Now, he was a graduate from the Faculty of History at Leningrad University, but they wouldn't allow him to teach history and they also imposed various other restrictions on him. However, intelligent and resourceful that he was, he soon managed to get himself appointed as a maths teacher in a school. Well, and there he made up to the school's headmistress… His second wife had perished very quickly in the camps – she had some sort of illness which just got worse there… And his little daughter was in Kislovodsk, with Grandmother… So the school's headmistress became another of his conquests, and they married and continued to live in Novosibirsk. He carried on teaching for a while, but also completed a postgraduate degree, which qualified him to become the rector of some institute in Novosibirsk. In 1948, however, he was arrested and taken to Moscow, where he was imprisoned for many years – he wasn't released until 1953. Moreover, he was confined in a two-prison cell, interrogated regularly, and sometimes put in a punishment cell… The conditions in this prison were such that he left it a dangerously ill man: he had a painful hernia and his legs were also in a bad way. That was because in the punishment cell they'd kept him the floor was covered in cold water… he told me about that… it was terrible. But as a rule, they would always place another inmate in the same cell as him, so he was always in the company of someone or other… He had this cellmate once who recalled how during one of his interrogations the investigator had unfolded the floor plan of some government institution in front of him, pointed to a section of it, and told him bluntly that he had to say that he had gone up those stairs with a gun hidden in… yes, the investigator was instructing him as to what kind of confession they expected from him… Later, they put one of our former intelligence officers in his cell. He'd worked in Bucharest, as a sort of attaché to King Michael. [For his part in overthrowing the pro-German dictator Antonescu in August 1944 and declaring war on Germany, King Michael I (b.1921) was tolerated by Stalin as the nominal sovereign of Romania for a few years, although all political power was vested in the new Communist government installed in Bucharest which, ever obedient to Moscow, eventually forced him to abdicate and leave the country in 1948] But then he'd been recalled to Moscow and arrested there. He was a very talented person, father said, and after his rehabilitation he was appointed *raikom* Secretary somewhere in the south… Ah, but the most interesting thing he told me is that in 1953 they put this person in his cell who kept walking up and down, muttering: "Iosif's going to die, Iosif's going to die… How could they do this? Iosif's going to die…" Father couldn't make any sense of this at first or understand what had happened, but then he found out that his new cellmate was none other than Professor Vinogradov! [Prof. V. N. Vinogradov (1882-1964) was Stalin's personal physician. After being arrested in November 1952, he was to have been the principal culprit in the Doctors' Plot, accused of being in the pay of British intelligence since 1936, but was saved by Stalin's death.] Yes, my father was in the same cell as Professor Vinogradov, and a bit later, Professor Abrikosov also ended up in his cell for a while. [This is almost certainly Afanasii K. Abrikosov, a specialist in heart disease who also treated Stalin and diagnosed him with angina pectoris in 1946] And when Professor Abrikosov was rehabilitated, he wrote some declarations about how he

had been interrogated… According to my father, Professor Vinogradov had told him how all the doctors had been arrested; and that he, Vinogradov, had developed this treatment method for Stalin, of which it was essential not to miss a single session or whatever. Otherwise Stalin would die. Well, that's precisely what happened in the end.

- So did you stay in touch with your father all along?

- No, I only really saw him in 1939… That was when my aunt decided to take me to the Caucasus for a few weeks. There I got to know Vera, the woman for whom my father had left Mama – and whom he would later abandon, too – as well as her family who were very nice. There was her mother… and they were three sisters in all: Vera, Niusia, and the third one… now what was her name?… Oh, it doesn't matter. But what is interesting is that Niusia had been a fellow student of Mama's at university. And these three sisters… Niusia studied at the Faculty of History, Vera in the Technological Institute, and Nina was also in the Technological… And all three of them lived in a student hostel. We, on the other hand, had a flat of our own – that was when we lived near the Smol'nyi… Mama was still living with my father then, you see… And these sisters would always come round to our place and spend their days of rest with us… They also suggested to my parents once that in the summer they should all go to the Caucasus together. In those days, it was very straightforward and inexpensive, so these poor students set off for the Caucasus just like that. They took no more than a few small suitcases, a change of linen, and off they went to explore the region. Vera's parents lived in Novorossiisk, so that was their first stop before travelling on the Caucasus – oh, but they also went to Crimea, as well as staying for a while in Diurso [a small settlement on the Black Sea coast, between Anapa and Novorossiisk, it is at the mouth of a valley with many vineyards from whose grapes the famous Abrau-Diurso champagne is produced]. I later heard a lot about their travels there. Well, and it was during this vacation that father struck up with that Vera. Now, Niusia and Vera's mother, on the other hand – oh, her mother, she was a wonderful person, a true Russian woman… she was very much against my father leaving us for Vera. And, moreover, after my parents [i.e. Marksena Mikhailovna's mother and stepfather] were arrested, she sent me a parcel with fruits for my birthday each year right up to the war. She felt very sorry for me…

- How did she know that your parents had been arrested?

- She found out… Because they were always in touch, you see. I expect it was my aunt who wrote to them about it, but I'm not quite sure… Anyway, they always kept in touch with each other – I mean, after all, they were in-laws, since father had married their Vera… Yes, I think it must have been my aunt who wrote and told them what had happened to my parents… Before that, though, I should say that both my aunt and that Niusia had been very supportive of Mama; they had helped her a lot and were very angry with my father for having abandoned Mama for Vera – I think that Vera's sisters and mother even broke off relations with her to a certain extent. Now, by the time that Vera herself was arrested, Grandmother [i.e. Marksena Mikhailovna's paternal grandmother] had already moved to Kislovodsk, so she took in her granddaughter Lena, who'd just completed her ten years of secondary school. So, as I was saying, in 1939 Niusia wrote to my aunt and invited her to take me along to spend a few weeks with them in the south. Because, she explained, some warm weather would do me good and there was plenty of that down there. So the three of us – that is, my aunt and uncle, and myself – decided to go on holiday to the south. Now, Niusia had written that she knew this wonderful place

which was ideal for holiday-making… And so when we arrived in Novorossiisk, Niusia was there waiting for us and she convinced us to go with her to Dzhubga. You don't know where that is? Oh, it's this resort settlement somewhere in between Novorossiisk and Sochi. It's marvellous there: the whole shore is full of rocks, and it's the only part of the coast where the bay is sheltered, and the sand is so crystal-clear… When the sea was choppy, we would dive under the waves… So that's where we stayed, in Dzhubga – we rented a room for ourselves, and one day father turned up… Someone had obviously written to him – Niusia perhaps, though I can't say for sure… He had taken a holiday and made his way down to us in Dzhubga. Now, when my aunt and uncle's holiday was coming to a close and they had to return home, he asked them to let me stay on with him for a bit. They agreed, and he took me along with him to see the Caucasus. Then, we both returned to Leningrad together, and he tried to persuade me to go to live with him in Novosibirsk, but I refused, promising, though, that I would visit him during the vacation. This was in 1939, when I turned sixteen and received my passport – so that meant I was able to keep my promise and visit him, but I didn't like it there at all: the whole atmosphere, you know, and his wife, and so on… I just felt so out of place there – what business had I poking my nose into a family to which I didn't belong? That's why I refused to stay there with him – he even took offence at my adamant refusal, but I made it clear to him that in Leningrad I had a place of my own, an aunt whom I knew well, whereas there everything was alien to me, so I would never agree to move there.

- But you knew that he had been expelled from the Party in 1937, didn't you?

- Oh, that he told me about when I went to visit him during the school vacation. As for his arrest in 1948, it was Niusia who told me about that… Niusia, his wife's sister… Now, Niusia was a graduate from the Faculty of History here, and she had gone to work in the Caucasus. In 1939, when I got to know her, she was Head of the History Department in that Chechen… oh, what's it called?… in Groznyi University. Would you imagine?! And when my father was arrested, Lena, his daughter from his second marriage, had just completed the tenth form at her school… Grandmother went to fetch her and brought her to Groznyi, where Niusia took her in. She studied maths at Groznyi University and, after graduating, was sent to work as a teacher in some mountain village. The trouble was that Lena didn't know how to behave properly: she was capable of going to lectures and classes in tracksuit bottoms and she never combed her hair as one should. You know, she was… As a student she'd still been able to pull herself together, but when she was sent to work in the mountains, she started showing real signs of mental derangement. So Grandmother had her come to live with her in Kislovodsk, but, even so, there she would sometimes disappear from the house for whole days and nights, and it proved impossible to find her any work. Moreover, in Kislovodsk there weren't any good psychiatrists, so her condition went untreated until… well, until her father's rehabilitation. Now, when Stalin died in 1953, father was swiftly dragged out of prison and put on a transport to Ukhta [a city in the Komi Republic].

- Why to Ukhta?

- Oh, I don't know why they sent him to Ukhta… He was just exiled there because it was 1953, after Stalin's death, so they didn't sentence him to a labour camp… Now, when they took him out of the prison in Moscow and boarded him on a train, he was put in one compartment together with a criminal prisoner, as well as another political. And this criminal started threatening the latter to hand over his clothes, but he refused to, so in the

end the criminal killed him. Then he demanded the same from father, who took off everything he was wearing and handed it over to him: his quilted trousers and greatcoat… the criminal took everything, even his cap and scarf… So when the train arrived in Ukhta, he had to make his way through the biting frost, with almost nothing to protect him from the cold, and find the militia office where he'd been told to get himself registered. When he got there, the policemen told him that in Ukhta there were a lot of these exiles and that they would help him out with some spare winter clothes… And they did, these exiles, they found him a fur cap and a scarf… Well, and at first he worked in some enterprise of sorts until he was finally allowed, after all, to teach maths in a school. He was one of two teachers at the school who'd suffered repression but eventually been allowed to teach. One evening, apparently, the headmaster of the school asked the teaching staff to stay on after the lessons had finished for some meeting – he asked all the members of staff, with the exception of father and that other teacher who was also an exile: they were told that they could just go home. So they walked out of the school premises together, reassuring each other that there was nothing to feel offended by, that these meetings were perfectly normal and none of their business… However, when they hadn't got that far from the school, they saw someone running after them and shouting for them to come back, because the headmaster wanted them to be present at the meeting. They didn't know what to make of it all but rushed back anyway. They walked into the assembly hall, and suddenly all the teachers got up from their chairs: the headmaster was inviting them to follow him to the Presidium [of the City Soviet], where a 'closed letter' was going to be read out… [This probably refers to the 'closed letter' that was circulated to Party cells after the plenary session of the Central Committee in September 1953, at which Khrushchev was elected First Secretary and the question of Stalin's 'personality cult' and the abuses it had led to was first raised. Although the letter was supposed to be read only at closed Party meetings, its contents soon became widely known.] Father stayed in Ukhta for a couple more years, but then he lost his sight and, after his condition was attested by a doctor, was allowed to leave his place of exile. So he went to Leningrad and lived at my aunt's place for a while until he received his rehabilitation.

- But did you write to him regularly when he was in Ukhta?

- No, not when he was in Ukhta. I didn't write to him because I didn't have his exact address. Nina had told us that he'd been exiled to Ukhta, you see, but we thought they meant the place called Ukhta which isn't so far from Leningrad, [The village of Kalevala in the north of the Republic of Karelia was known as Ukhta until 1963.] whereas in reality it was Ukhta in the Komi ASSR! My aunt tried in vain to locate him in that village, unaware that there was an Ukhta further east. [The city of Ukhta had started off as a small settlement, founded in 1929, and did not undergo major expansion until the 1940s and 50s, all achieved through forced labour. It is therefore understandable why Marksena Mikhailovna's aunt wasn't aware of its existence.] If I remember correctly, it was he himself who somehow got in touch with my aunt before coming to Leningrad.

- But you did know all along that he was being investigated, that he was in prison, isn't that so?

- Yes, that's right. And when he finally turned up in Leningrad, he told us everything that had happened: how he'd been treated, who his cellmates were, and so on… Not so long after coming here, he married again – a woman who'd been his colleague several years back. Yes, they married and he was awarded a two-room flat… She soon died of cancer,

though, and he eventually married yet again – only this time it was his maid, because he needed someone to look after him. In all, he was married five times… He lived to the age of eighty. Our relations were never particularly cordial: we would just meet now and then to have a chat.

From Interview 2

Nikiforova, Marksena Mikhailovna
Interviewer: Flige, Irina Anatol'evna
11 January 2005

- You told me once that from the very first day you started attending school, you would walk there and back on your own – Why didn't your nurse accompany you? Why did you have to go by yourself?
- Oh, because Mama wanted to accustom me to doing things independently. She was of the view that I had to get used to doing everything on my own.
- And why was that? Why do you think she wanted that?
- I think it's just that Mama wanted me to stand on my own legs as early as possible. This helped me an awful lot later, because I was left all on my own when I was thirteen, you see, and I was effectively my own man, so to speak, by then. I could dispose of our property as I saw fit; it was up to me to get everything ready when we were supposed to leave our flat. I was the oldest in the family. Even though I was just a girl of thirteen, everyone would listen to me, and I was in charge of everything, of deciding how our money should be spent, and so on. Already then, I was a completely independent person. And there's nothing strange about that – I just couldn't stand toadyism. You see, being the daughter of leading Party officials, I often had occasion to witness the toadyism of domestics and other subordinate staff. In this respect, there's one incident I ought to tell you about: my father was in charge of this house… Oh, what was it called?… Not the Party activists' house, no, it wasn't that… the house… for the instruction of Party workers (bear with me, I've got sclerosis)… Well, anyway, I suppose it was the Party activists' house, after all, and it was situated in… The Higher Party School, that's it! Yes, it was the Higher Party School in Pushkin [Tsarskoe Selo], which was housed in the palace of Countess [actually Princess] Palei. And Papa often had to go there, to carry out all kinds of inspections, and he would frequently take me along, too. This was after all Pushkin [Tsarskoe Selo], almost in the countryside, you might say! When we were there, I really loved to… You see, the School was right opposite the Catherine Park, and I would run around the gardens while Papa was carrying out his assignments. Now, at the School there was this janitress – a not so young woman… And I remember how we arrived there one day, and she rushed out of her room to greet me: "Why, it's my beautiful little darling! Here, let me help you take your galoshes off…" She took me in her arms and put me down on some kerbstone, as I remember so vividly. Now, in those days, we had these high overshoes made of cloth to protect one's everyday shoes from the mud and snow… and she started pulling off my overshoes. I was so angry!… It just goes to show what a silly little girl I was… I was so angry that I suddenly kicked her in the face with one foot! That's something which I've never been able to forget. And the

thing is that no one actually told me off or anything… That is, no one dared to scold me… But it's just that I couldn't stand all this toadying, I was so disgusted with it!

- Didn't your father tell you off, though?

- No. He even pretended not to have noticed. In general, I would definitely say that they wanted to bring me up to be as independent as possible. At home I was… You see, Mama and Papa were away at work all day long: they would leave early in the morning and come home very late. So I was effectively left in charge of the house. We had two servants, you see. Our cook, for example, would ask me – just imagine! she'd ask me! – what we'd like to have for dinner. Yes, and I remember what happened once… We'd taken on a nursemaid, and our cook sent her to the shop, to that… There was this special closed distributor or shop for senior Party officials. It was located, by the way, in this building to the right of Kazan Cathedral if you're standing facing the colonnade… My mother took me there once: they had this large grocer's shop inside. It's possible that they also sold some other things, too, but I'm not sure. This was a closed distributor, and you were only allowed to go in if you had a pass. They did, however, serve some rationed goods, too – that is, ones for which you had to present a ration card. There were these special coupons, you see… Well, as I was saying, we had this maid, and I couldn't bring myself to like her – it was something intuitive, I suppose. Anyway, she was the one our cook would send to that shop to buy groceries, and one day Mama got wind of how this maid was short-changing us – that is, she wouldn't bring home all the goods she bought there, but would go out and hawk some of them on the street. She was sacked. So, as you can see, Mama did pay heed to what I said: if there was something at home which I wasn't happy with, I would report it to Mama, telling her that this and that was going on, or that so-and-so wasn't being done properly. And all the time I felt myself to be the person in charge at home. Oh yes, and not just that, but also responsible for… That was just how things were: my parents must, after all, have instilled this sense of responsibility into me… Yes, because for some reason I always felt responsible for everything that was going on at home… Because my parents were away at work, and I'd been left in charge, so to speak. Now, these domestic servants of ours, they were, of course, a very mixed bag… We only really had this one servant [Auntie Masha] who was with us for a long time – but we had to sack her by order [of the NKVD, in 1935]… She was very, very conscientious and honest… a wonderful person, in short. Then, after her came… Yes, if there was something I didn't like, I would let Mama know and she would then go and tell the servant off who was to blame. Mama even… Something else which has always stuck in my mind is when Mama took me to school for the first time. She said to me: "I hope you can remember the way because you'll have to get back on your own this afternoon. There's no one who can go with you. You'll have to walk to school by yourself." And it was quite a long walk, you know. I think I told you, didn't I?, about how I had to walk from Labour Square to the Mariinskii Theatre [which was known as the State Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet in that period], and then a few blocks further on to get to my first school.

- Couldn't your mother have asked your domestic servant to take you to school?

- No. She didn't do that. As a matter of fact, it would never have occurred to her to ask such a thing. And for me too it was unconceivable that someone would have to go along with me in the mornings and wait for me outside the school building in the afternoons. No, I always went on my own.

- Was it the same with other senior Party officials' families?
- No. It was different in each case. Some parents did drive their children to school. Because there were many… Oh, I was very unhappy that… You see, the wives of many of these senior officials didn't work, and they had so much time to coddle and fuss over their children, driving them to school and picking them up in the afternoon, and so on. My mother, on the other hand, was working, so I almost never got to see her and I was very unhappy that she devoted so little time to me… But in our block of flats there was one family – the Tokarevs – where the father was a senior Party official, too. I was friends with his twin daughters, Musia and Pusia. A Jewish family, they were. Yes, and the mother of these two girls didn't work: she had a maid who would take them to school and fetch them home in the afternoon. And, although I always walked to school alone in the mornings, on the way back I did often join them and their maid. Their mother really did pamper them a lot: she even hired this German nursery-governess to teach them German. That governess also organised a group of six or so children – in which I regularly participated – for practising German, although it was more for fun, really. We would put on performances, learn poems by heart and recite them… It was thanks to this that I could speak German almost fluently then. I've still got a decent range of vocabulary, but as for speaking the language… I've forgotten the grammar completely, of course, so I can't speak German any longer, but at secondary school these extra 'lessons' did pay off and I always got good marks. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to keep it up… So, yes, I saw a lot of this family, but not for long, though. Because two or three years later, their father, Tokarev, was transferred to Moscow, so they had to move. I did, however, exchange letters with her for a while, and I remember her boasting once about how they were now living in the First House of Soviets. But I don't know what became of them afterwards… we stopped writing to each other.
- What about other families?
- In other families, as a rule, it was like this… Well, for example, all the girls I was friends with: their mothers would take them to school.
- They weren't so independent-minded as you?
- That's right, they weren't. They didn't have that quality. Kim, for example… my girl friend Kim Alekseeva: her father, Petr Alekseev, was the Chairman of the Trade Union Committee for Leningrad Oblast. His wife, Auntie Sonia, didn't work, so she was able to look after their children a lot: she would take them to school, fetch them in the afternoon, help them with their homework, read them stories, and so on. I remember that one year they decided to spend the winter vacation in Siverskii [a small urban-type settlement some 60 km to the south-west of St Petersburg], where the Trade Union *obkom* had some sort of vacation resort, and Mama asked them if they could take me along, too. Auntie Sonia agreed, and I was able to see at first hand how much she devoted herself to her children. She would read us books – for example, I remember how she read us *The Three Fat Men* once. [This first 'socialist fairy tale' by Iurii Olesha was published in 1924] I've never forgotten that! Yes, she would read books aloud to us, go walking with us: in short, it was clear that she wanted to spend as much time as possible with her children. That was something which I didn't see in my family: no one there ever looked after me particularly.
- Would you say that your parents were strict with you?
- Yes, on the whole, they were strict.

- In what ways did it show? Would they punish you, for example?
- That was Mama who would punish me – sometimes she would even smack me if I did something that was wrong. But I don't blame her, since I was quite a naughty child… I started reading very early… I hope I'm not mixing things up, but if I remember correctly, I read all of Pushkin's *Tales of Belkin* when I was in the third form. Moreover, I remember we had this one-volume paperback anthology of his works… We had book cases, without any glass doors, covering all the walls of our living room – in fact, they were simply shelves attached to the walls, and on the lower ones there were all kinds of periodicals, as well as some books without bindings… And it was from there that I fished out my volume of Pushkin. The moment I sat down on the floor to read, nothing could get me up again: I would sit there for an eternity, reading. Yes, I would just sit down below the shelf from which I'd taken my latest book… On one occasion I got myself into a real scrape because of this: I'd pulled out *The Thousand and One Nights* from a shelf – we had this good-quality Academy edition – and when Mama saw me reading these tales, she confiscated the book from me and scolded me: she said it was too early for me to read such things. I must have been nine or ten years old at the time. Yes, and then she hid the book somewhere, but I managed to find it and started reading it again. She soon caught me, however, and I really got it in the neck that time: I think Mama even spanked me for having disobeyed her… But that didn't stop me from reading. For example, when I was eleven, I read almost all of Maupassant. So for me that bookcase… You see, in the new flat we moved to, we had this large bookcase made of red wood, and I would sit there… That was my favourite occupation: sometimes I would even fail to do my homework because of it… I would sit down next to the bookcase and start skimming through the first few pages of this or that book: if I liked something, if it promised to be interesting, I would read it from cover to cover, but what I didn't like, I would simply put aside. It was in this way that I read Tolstoi's *War and Peace*, *Anna Karenina*… I read all this when I was between ten and eleven…
- So what did your mother punish you for then?
- For reading books that I wasn't supposed to. That's why she bought me so many children's books. She would often come home with some new book for me: she bought me everything that came out in those years… For example, *The Republic of Shkid* [Published in 1927, the two young authors of this book, G. Belykh and L. Panteleev, 20 and 17 years old respectively when they wrote it, had been orphaned during the Civil War and became street children (*besprizornye*) until they were put in the Dostoevskii orphanage-school on Petergofskii Prospekt in Leningrad. The title of their book refers to the acronym which the orphanage's children devised from its full name: '**Shk**ola sotsial'no-individual'nogo vospitaniia **i**meni **D**ostoevskogo' (Dostoevskii School of Social and Individual Upbringing). It shows the struggle of the school's teachers to win the trust of their pupils and instil better values into them than those they had picked up on the street, but is said to be far less 'didactic' than other Soviet works which deal with this subject, and, accordingly, much more popular.] or *Sannikov's Land* by Obruchev [see note above], which she gave me when… And Jules Verne, too - in fact almost all the approved books that were on sale for children then… Oh, I had loads of these children's books. But they weren't very interesting for me! As soon as I'd finished with the latest one, I would rush to our bookcase [for another classic book].
- Was there anything else she punished you for?

- No, not really… no, there wasn't anything else I had to be punished for.
- What about your father?
- Well, my stepfather was always so good to me. He never told me off, not a single time. He treated me very kindly. Well, and I suppose it was also because I was a child who… That is, I never got up to anything that could give cause for… I didn't skive my lessons, and I got decent marks at school: not brilliant, of course, but at least I was a solid *troechnitsa* [a pupil obtaining the mark *troika* - three (out of five) – 'satisfactory']. So there wasn't any particular reason why I had to be scolded… At home I was always tidy and orderly: I would go to bed on time… After all, a child never has any trouble getting to sleep. That's why I would almost always be in bed by the time my parents came home from work. Only very rarely did I stay up for them…
- So why did you say that they gave you a strict upbringing? In what sense were they strict?
- Well, what I mean is that the whole atmosphere I grew up in was rather strict: I wasn't spoilt or anything by my parents. Perhaps 'strict' isn't the most adequate word, but, at any rate, they didn't spoil me; they didn't pamper me at all, in contrast to some other children I knew. 'Reasonable' – I suppose that's the best word to describe the way I was brought up… I never asked for anything. The clothes I was given were plain and simple. I was completely unpretentious in that respect. There's even a photograph lying around somewhere which shows me – that was when I'd already started going to school – wearing this flannel dress. Nobody made a fuss over me. If I didn't want to eat, I didn't. If I felt like eating, I would. No one ever tried to cram food into my mouth or force me to do anything – quite the opposite of what happened with other children of my age, who were still almost being spoon-fed! I, on the other hand, never had breakfast in the mornings, and no one ever forced me to… well, I suppose, because there wasn't anyone around to see that I did have my breakfast. Our domestic servant, you know, couldn't care less if I did or didn't. So during all those years that I attended school, I would set off in the morning without having breakfasted. It was the same after my parents' arrest: I still wouldn't have anything to eat in the mornings. My body had simply grown used to it. But I was a bit jealous of those girl friends of mine whose mothers did fuss over them, that's true… However, I do remember when we went to the theatre once, and met the wives of Kadanskii and Alekseev, who'd had some smart dresses made to measure for themselves and their daughters. Yes, and they'd come to the theatre, all splendidly attired, and were showing off about the evening dresses their daughters were wearing. But, would you imagine, I didn't feel a single whit of jealousy! I remember that I thought something along the lines of: "Yes, very pretty, but so what? Fine feathers make fine birds. What's there to be so proud of?!" I just didn't envy them, you see. Oh yes, and Nadia Kadanskaia also had these patent-leather shoes, whereas the leather on my pair was plain and dull, but I didn't care. I was brought up in a very unassuming sort of way…
- But is it just this you meant when you said that your upbringing was strict?
- Well, I suppose there wasn't any particular strictness as such. It's just that no one really paid much attention to me. I was simply left to my own devices.
- What was your parents' work like? That is, what do you know about their working scheme, for example?
- Oh, the working hours for senior Party officials in those days were like this: they would leave the house somewhere in the region of ten o'clock in the morning – that is, a car

would come to fetch them at around nine o'clock and wait outside a bit – and they invariably worked very late hours… That's how busy they were… For example, I remember the following episode: I wanted to go to the theatre once… There was a special box to the front of the stage for senior officials… Yes, I remember it was the Mikhailovskii Theatre. What do they call it now? – oh yes, the Malyi Opera Theatre [its full name has been the M. Musorgskii Academic Malyi Opera and Ballet Theatre since 1989]… And Papa said: "All right, wait for me at home. I'll come to fetch you with the car." And that's what he did: not long before the start of the performance, he picked me up in his [government] car. There was a colleague of his in the front seat. So we drove to the theatre, and I was able to see the performance, whereas Papa and his colleague stayed outside in the back foyer and went through some work matters – even though it was so late in the evening! But it's just that he couldn't put it off for another time. There were all these meetings to attend, and all kinds of other things… I don't know… I mean, they had to work long hours, there's no question about that. They really did have to work hard.

- Was it the same for your mother?

- Exactly the same. She too had to work late into the evening.

- But they did have days off, didn't they?

- Oh yes, they had holidays, of course. And holidays too. On holidays, we would usually go out of town, but, again, we children would be left to play and run around, and so on, by ourselves, whilst the grown-ups attended to various things of their own. We never asked… Yes, so on rest-days we would go on these excursions – and on holidays, my parents would always go to the south. Now, the thing is that most parents took their children along with them whenever they went on holiday, but not mine! Not once did they take me to the south.

- And why do you think that was so?

- Oh, I don't know. We children would stay here… Besides, there were three of us in the family, after all. It wouldn't have been right to just take me along, and I understand very well that it would have been awfully complicated to take all three of us there. So we would stay up here, that is, at our dacha… on the former estate of Count L'vov , near Luga. We and our domestic servant would always spend the summer months there. Of course, I did want to… This thought would sometimes flash upon me: if only I too could go to the south! I remember how once… when Maika Smorodina's parents decided to take her along on one of their annual holidays to the south… I remember that I couldn't help feeling jealous. I kept thinking about how lucky she was to be able to go there. You see, they were staying in Khosta [a small village to the south-east of Sochi], where the Central Committee had a dacha: that's where the Smorodins always stayed.

- Didn't you ever ask your parents to take you with them?

- No, I didn't ask them.

- You just said something about that evening when you wanted to go to the theatre. Was it the case that whenever you felt like seeing a performance, you could get a seat in that special box?

- Yes, I could go to the theatre whenever I wanted to. Moreover, on a number of occasions I actually went there on my own. I would let my parents know beforehand that I was going to the theatre, and usually it was so that neither of them had the time to drive me there or pick me up after the performance… So there were two or three occasions when I had to get back home on the tram, all on my own… late in the evening! And I

actually had an unpleasant experience once. It was when I was on my way to the theatre. You see, I had this handbag for the theatre which Mama had bought me, and in this handbag I was carrying… First of all, though, I should explain that we had these special passes which were valid in all our theatres here. Even in the cinemas which showed the latest films. We also had separate passes for the TIuZ. ['Teatr Iunogo Zritelia im. A. A. Briantseva' – the A. Briantsev Young Spectator's Theatre, founded in 1922, was one of the first repertory theatres for children in the world.]… Yes, and as I said, I could go to see the premières of films. I would go to the theatre manager's office – not the general box-office – give him the pass and he would issue me with a ticket… Now, when that nasty incident took place, I happened to be going to the Kirov Theatre… The entrance we would use there wasn't the general one, but this front door on the left wing of the theatre. If you went in through that door, you would come to this passageway which led you straight to the two boxes: they were very near the stage… say you're standing facing the stage – in that case the upper and lower boxes to your left, those were the special boxes for the *obkom*… So, as I was saying, that door was on the left side of the theatre. Now, I was carrying my special pass in that handbag I told you about… Even though the door-keeper in charge of that entrance knew us all by sight – there weren't that many of us, after all – even so, I always took my special pass with me just in case… Yes, and that evening I was standing in the tram-car, on the rear platform – that's where you were supposed to get on in those days – and holding my handbag like this. Suddenly, some hooligan leapt into the car, snatched that handbag from me, and jumped off again!! Now, there wasn't anything else in the handbag apart from my special pass, but, still, I realised that I would be in trouble if I didn't do something about it. So I went back home and phoned Papa at work, and there they took measures to… Oh, I can just imagine what must have gone through their heads when they found out: some unidentified person had stolen a special pass for the *obkom* boxes at the Kirov, and who could tell what he was going to use it for?… So what they did was to arrange for some plain-clothes guards to stand at the various entrances… And that's how they caught that lad… You see, he went to the Kirov Theatre all right the following evening, but, silly fool that he was, he went into the foyer where the public box-office is, and showed the usherettes that pass… Well, as you can imagine, the guards arrested him on the spot. And literally within a few days I got my special pass back! Yes, that's one incident I remember vividly… As I was saying, I could go to any theatre whenever I wanted to… The staff there already knew who I was and would let me in to the special box. In the Malyi Opera Theatre, for example, these boxes were also on the left side… Or, rather, the lower one was the director's box, whilst the upper box was the one reserved for the *obkom*. In the Aleksandrinskii Theatre, on the other hand, the boxes were on the right side… Anyway, the boxes which were closest to the stage, those were the government ones. And whenever I wanted to, I could… Although, as a matter of fact, I would always phone Mama or Papa beforehand and tell them that I was planning to go to the theatre. However, we often went to the theatre in a group – that is, my girl friends and me, since almost all of us were at the same school – Model School No. 1, on the Petrograd Side – and if we knew there was some interesting performance or première in the evening, we would arrange to meet outside the special box just before the start of the performance. Afterwards, one of our parents would always be waiting outside in a car and would drop us off at our various houses. So each one of us would make her own way to the theatre, but after the performance there would always be

someone to drive us home… I was such a fan of the theatre! I got to see all these interesting performances… For example, I remember when the famous bass Pirogov came over to us, to give a gala performance – we all got together and decided to go to the theatre that evening, at all costs, just to have a chance to hear him. [Aleksandr Pirogov (1899-1964), one of the great soloists of the Bolshoi Theatre's opera company] I also had this girl friend, a certain Maia… Ivanova, that was her name… Well, she wasn't really a friend, but we saw each other now and then. She was a student at the Vaganova Ballet Academy, so she knew everything about ballet, and when we were sitting next to each other at some performance, she would always whisper to me what was particularly worth applauding and what wasn't.

- Could I ask about that pass of yours – had it been made out for you personally or was it your father's or your mother's?

- It was… I don't remember… I suppose it must have been Papa's or Mama's… That seems most likely…

- So when you went to the theatre, you would take your mother's pass?

- Yes.

- Or were there special passes for the children of senior officials?

- No, I don't think there were… I don't think each of us children would have had a pass with his or her respective surname on it [Marksena Mikhailovna's half-brother and step-brother had different surnames to hers]… But I just don't remember… If I'm not mistaken, I don't have that pass any more; I lost it at some point. But I'll go and have a look now…

[…]

- Did you also go to that special closed shop by yourself?

- No, the only time I ever set foot in it was when I was with Mama. It was just that she needed to get some groceries and I happened to be with her, so that's why she took me inside. Otherwise, I just had no business there.

- You weren't curious to see what was inside, or was it simply because no one would take you there?

- I had no business there, that's all there was to it… I mean, what was I supposed to do inside… look at the goods on sale?…

- Weren't you a bit curious, though?

- There was nothing interesting for me to see.

- All right, but who knows, perhaps you could buy yourself something nice to eat?

- Ah, but all that kind of stuff would be brought home by our servant. So we always had some sweets on the sideboard in the dining room. There was always jam, too. That is,… Yes, we also had caviar, which we would buy in tins. Now, there weren't any fridges in those times, so instead, what we had in the kitchen was this corner cupboard with a ventilation hatch on the back that drew in fresh air from outside. We would store all our groceries there: cheese, ham, and so on… But I wasn't a particularly big eater myself. In short, I wasn't interested in food as such. Whatever was served on my plate I would eat without any fuss. Say, for dinner: the starters and the main course… For the afternoon snack our cook would always prepare some Russian salad – with not too many ingredients. And for supper we would have tea. If I felt like drinking it, I would; if not, I

didn't. I was never particularly interested in food and meals. What did get me going, though, were spice cakes! [*laughs*]

- Spice cakes?

- Yes, when I was at that school on Theatre Square, on my way there I'd always pass this stall on the corner of [Glinka Street] and Theatre Square: it was a stall which sold sweets and spice cakes by the piece. And I really loved spice cakes, you see. I remember this funny thing that happened once… It was on some public holiday and all these dishes were served up on our table – my parents were sitting there, as well as a couple of our acquaintances, and, yes, there was a jellied suckling-pig, too, and various other treats… But I was getting ready to go out and I asked Mama for some money. She asked: "What do you need the money for?", and I said: "I want to buy spice cakes," and at that everyone burst into laughter: what with all these dainties on the table, I was asking for spice cakes! Yes, I've never forgotten that. She did, though, give me the money to buy myself some spice cakes… As for all these stationery items, for example – you know, exercise books, crayons, and so on – I would buy those myself. No one bought them for me. So right from the first form… That is, when I first started out at school, Mama bought me all the text-books, including those for the higher forms, but as for exercise books, pencils, paints, and various other things, I would go and buy them myself… I went to this… Well, when we were living on Labour Square, I would go to Nevskii Prospekt on my own. Near the wing of the General Staff building which faces Nevskii there was this stationery shop, and I would go there to buy what I needed… I would ask Mama for money for these things… That is, first I'd just drop in to the shop to have a look at what they had and find out what these various things cost; then I would wait till Mama came home and ask her for some money… The following day, I'd visit the shop after school and buy myself the crayons I needed, or whatever. I bought everything myself: pens, fountain-pens, pencils, you name it… No one ever bought these things for me, I'd do it all on my own.

- So you'd say how much they cost, and your mother would give you the money?

- That's right, Mama would give me the money and I'd spend it on what I needed at the shop.

- Did you also get pocket-money every day?

- No, no, not every day. There wasn't any need for that. At school, you see, we would be given a free lunch meal, although it's true that at the buffet you could also buy yourself something extra if you wanted to… Yes, compote, for example. I've just remembered: during the lunch break, I would go to the buffet and get myself some fruit compote – it came served on a plate. I just loved that fruit compote! [*laughs*] And, yes, I suppose I did have to pay the dinner lady… Because it wasn't free. But what I do remember is how wonderful the compote tasted – especially the one made with dried fruits.

- And who would buy the exercise books for your younger brother? Was it your mother who took care of that?

- Yes, I suppose it must have been Mama…

- But not you?

- No, not me. It was Mama who did that.

- Did you like being able to buy things by yourself?

- Well… it wasn't a question of whether I liked it or not. I just assumed that that was how it should be. No, I didn't stop to think whether I liked it or not… Although, to be honest,

I suppose I did like it, because I could buy myself what I needed. If there was something I liked, I could go and buy it. I didn't have to wait for the grown-ups to bring it to me. I would just go out myself and fetch whatever I needed.

- When you were at home, did you always eat at the family table?

- Yes, that's right – at the family table.

- That is, your parents, yourself, and your brothers?

- Well, only when we were all at home, of course. In that case, yes, we'd all sit at the same table together. But otherwise, when I came home from school, I would have dinner on my own. Because, you see, my youngest brother didn't go to school yet, so he would get his dinner earlier. As for Lesha, my middle brother, he didn't always come home at the same time as me: sometimes his school-day finished earlier, and by the time I got home he'd already have been given his dinner… Anyway, I would sit down… We had this large table, with a fixed place for each one of us: I'd sit here, Papa there, Mama over there, and my brothers on this side of the table… Then our maid would bring me the starters and the main course… Yes, I'd sit down, have my dinner served to me, and after I'd finished, our maid would clear the table. That was something I didn't do myself! [*laughs*]

- Would your family's servants sit down at the same table as you to have their meals?

- No.

- And when your parents were at home?

- No, our maid didn't have her meals together with us…

- So you kept a certain 'distance', as far as your nurses and domestic servants were concerned, is that right?

- Yes, yes.

- So where did they eat, then? In the kitchen?

- In the kitchen, yes.

- And you didn't consider them to be members of the family?

- No, we simply regarded them as servants. Well, for example, I've got this photograph of my little brother, from the time when he still wasn't able to eat by himself, and it shows him being fed by our maid who's standing next to his chair, by the table. And it also shows Mama standing to one side and looking at the whole scene… It must have been on one of those occasions when she was able to come home briefly in the middle of the afternoon. Yes, the photograph shows how we were all sitting around the table and having our dinner: Lesha and I eating by ourselves, and Volodia being spoon-fed by our maid who's standing next to the table. Mama's standing aside – she'd evidently just come home for half an hour or so – and quietly watching us have our dinner…

- Your parents started treating you as an adult quite early, didn't they? On an equal footing with themselves, isn't that so?

- No, not on an equal footing…

- But did they let you take part in general conversations, for example?

- Oh, we didn't have any general conversations as such. There just wasn't time to talk. Although sometimes… for example, when Mama and I were walking together, she might sometimes start telling me a bit about her childhood… Papa, too, when he had time off work, would sometimes… but this was only when we went walking somewhere. I remember how Papa once started recalling his childhood… He was born in the provinces,

you see, and his parents sent him to Moscow when he was still almost a boy… to a factory whose name he told me but which I've since forgotten. This was so that he could study at the PTU affiliated to it. [PTU stands for *professional'noe tekhnicheskoe uchilishche* (vocational technical college). These colleges admitted students who had completed eight years of secondary education in a general school and provided them with both vocational training and further academic education, giving them the opportunity to qualify for admission to university in some cases. Most graduates of the PTU's, however, would stick to the trade they had learnt on their course (which might last from 1 to 4 years) and go on to work in industry.]… Because each factory, you see, had its own PTU to train its workforce properly… That's something we don't have now, which is a scandal, in my view. Because the upshot is that we don't have any skilled workers, any specialists, in our factories. Because… Whereas in those days, yes, in Soviet times, each factory had a PTU affiliated to it which would train the specialists it needed… So Papa was sent to Moscow to one of these PTU's, and he lived in a hostel which, apparently, wasn't that bad. Yes, and he also told me that a couple of years later, when he was due to be called up soon for military service, he was sent to some naval academy in Kronshtadt. And that's where he was when the Revolution broke out. So that's what he told me about himself… As for Mama, she also told me some things, but… Well, for example, she once brought me some new school-books and said: "Just imagine, you're getting all these brand-new school-books every year, whereas I went to a gymnasium where I didn't set eyes on a single new text-book! At the end of each year, I would go to the market, sell my old books, and buy myself second-hand ones for the following year. Now, look at you, though, getting new ones every year!…"… There was, of course, a certain barb in these words, directed at me and supposed to get me thinking: here was I getting new school-books every year… I understood that it was something that I had to appreciate.

- Tell me, were you ever inclined to feel proud of who your parents were… for example, when you arrived at the theatre and you had your own special pass?

- No, that wasn't something that I let go to my head.

- But did you have this sensation of belonging to an élite? I mean, having a separate box at the theatre, a closed distributor… Didn't you feel like that at all?

- No. As I said, I didn't get particularly excited about it – in fact, it left me rather cold. I just didn't have this notion of… Well, for example, here's an episode I remember: I had this… You see, we didn't have a nurse yet, and Mama had hired this woman to help me with my homework and to read things to me… I was still a little girl then… Yes, and I told her once that I'd been to the theatre the other day. She asked me which one… you know how curious people generally are… And the next time she came to our place, she said that her… her daughter or some other relative of hers had also gone to the theatre on that evening and thought they'd seen me in one of the boxes. She explained which box it was, and I said: "Yes, that's right, that's the box where I was sitting." No sooner had I admitted that than she gave me this look of… I just couldn't understand why she was so astonished. It seemed so strange to me – yes, I remember exactly how I felt when I saw her gaping at me as if… I mean, what was there to be so surprised about?

- Didn't this make you feel… well, sort of awkward that…

- No, no.

- Like the way you said you felt when that janitress wanted to take your galoshes off for you?

- No… There wasn't anything like that when I went to the theatre… Apart from that door-keeper, I didn't come in contact with any of the other service staff there. We were simply left to ourselves. The only thing is that the door-keeper would tell me if any of the senior officials had come for the performance or were expected… They would usually gather in the upper box and occupy the seats there… So he would ask me to sit in the lower box. That's all there was to it. I just didn't make a fuss over these things, you see… They never went to my head, or anything.

- But perhaps there were other episodes like the one you described in Pushkin with the janitress?

- Well, yes, there was one incident… Once when we… You see, there was this woman who would stay at our dacha to look after us when Mama gave our cook and maid their summer leave – they would both go back to their native villages for a few weeks. So we had this woman staying with us who was the mother of a colleague of Mama's… Oh, she was a frightful lickspittle, she was! I mean Mama's colleague… because the mother was all right; there was nothing wrong with her… But her daughter was a real rotter! She wrote some denunciations against Mama… and, on the whole, she… This was when Mama was arrested… Anyway, I remember how on one public holiday that woman – the mother of Mama's colleague, that is – how she took us on an excursion to Petergof… There was this holiday resort there, you see, which belonged to the *obkom*, and that's where she took us. Everything there was free: you could get sweets, apples, anything you wanted… And she had this little suitcase with her, and do you know what – little by little, she filled it with these sweets and apples… she would take, say, an apple from one of the tables and pretend to be munching it, but I saw how she'd slip it into her suitcase when she thought no one was watching… Now, later that day, in the evening, Mama came to fetch us in a car. As soon as I saw her come into the lobby where we were waiting, I went up to her and told her what our minder had been doing… I said that I didn't like it that she was stashing away so many of these… Besides, it wasn't the first time that I'd seen her do that. The first time, you see, I had pretended not to have noticed anything; then I'd sort of kept quiet about it; but now it was just too much: I felt I had to say something… But Mama actually did as if she hadn't heard what I'd said… So what I did then was to rush back to where my two brothers and our minder were standing – I grabbed hold of the suitcase, rushed back to Mama with it, opened it, and tipped all the apples and sweets out onto the floor. Mama… she didn't tell me off or anything, but I ran out of the lobby and I don't know what happened in the end. At any rate, that woman stopped coming to our dacha to look after us.

- You said that if the servants did something that you didn't like the look of, you would tell your mother – but couldn't you also reprimand them yourself?

- Oh, I did… I did make comments to them.

- Regarding what things, for example?

- Well, I can't remember now… Trifles of some sort, I suppose… But I don't remember, so I couldn't tell you what exactly. It's just that sometimes various small things cropped up which I didn't like.

- So you didn't always turn to your mother?

- No, not always. As a matter of fact, more often than not I would try to sort out the matter myself. I rarely troubled Mama with these things: if something wasn't quite right, I would try to deal with it myself.

- And altogether you felt yourself to be the mistress of the house. That is, since your mother wasn't at home, that role fell to you, isn't that so?
- Yes, that's right. I was the housekeeper, so to speak.
- Could you also give the servants orders as to what they should do and what they shouldn't?
- Yes, yes.
- And your mother was agreeable to that?
- Yes, I suppose she must have been, because no one ever told me off for anything in this regard.
- So your mother never told you to mind your own business?
- No, not at all. You see, Mama, I think… She did as if it was no concern of hers what happened at home… In our family, these housework matters never gave rise to any… quarrels or what have you.

[…]

- You also mentioned earlier how that Grusha came into your household…
- Yes.
- And you said that she had been deliberately selected? [by the NKVD]
- Yes, that's right.
- Were there any signs which gave her away? How could you tell?
- No, you see, I didn't know about it then – I didn't realise the implications at the time. It's just that she always behaved so…
[*interruption in the recording*]
- So in front of her no one… none of you would discuss anything?
- That's right: we didn't discuss anything in her presence.
- Was it just with her you were like that, or did you as a rule not talk with the servants anyway?
- Well, I suppose we were like that with all the servants. It's just that Milia – who was our nurse for some time – she was around more often, because she was looking after the children, and she'd often be in the same room as us. Whereas Grusha, on the other hand – she would just stay in the kitchen. She'd never come into the other rooms and was generally just in the kitchen – there was a room attached to the kitchen, you see, and that's where her bed was, that's where she would sleep. So she never really left the kitchen.
- And you didn't talk about anything in front of her?
- No, never.
- What about Milia – did you ever discuss with her the fact that Grusha didn't quite seem to fit in?
- No, no: we didn't know that then, we didn't even suspect anything. The only thing is that when we returned from our dacha once, I asked Mama where Auntie Masha was, because she seemed to have disappeared, and she said: "Petr Leont'evich isn't too happy with her. That's why we've sacked her." I never actually found out what the reason for his discontent was. However, I didn't try to inquire further.
- And how do you see it now: why was your father dissatisfied with her?

- Well, the way I see it now is… To be honest, I only really understood why after reading Allilueva's memoirs – you know, when she describes how they ordered her nanny to be sacked. As a matter of fact, the events she describes happened at around the same time as Auntie Masha was sacked. [In letter no. 12 of her autobiographical *Twenty Letters To A Friend* (published in the West in 1967), Stalin's daughter Svetlana Allilueva (b. 1926) describes how after returning to Moscow from the country in September 1937, she found that the family cook and housekeeper had both been sacked. She also describes how the secret police agents who took charge of Stalin's household after her mother's suicide also wanted to have her beloved nanny, Aleksandra Bychkova, arrested and managed to dig up some evidence proving that Bychkova's first husband had been a clerk in the Tsarist *okhrana*. However, Svetlana was able to intercede for her nanny and save her from the purges.] Moreover, I also know for sure that many families had their servants replaced at the time.

- This nanny of yours, Auntie Masha – was she like a member of your family? Were your relations with her different?

- Yes, they were more cordial… Well, for example, I would go to her in the kitchen, sit down with her and have a chat. Yes, with Auntie Masha it was more straightforward. If I wanted something, I could just go and ask her. We got along all right…

- Yet, all the same, she didn't eat at the same table as you?

- No, you're quite right, she didn't. She didn't have her meals with us. But there's nothing strange about that if you take into account the fact that my brother and I would almost always come home from school at different times. So the maid had to serve us our dinners separately, anyway. And as for my parents, they would come home at around eleven o'clock and have their supper… You couldn't expect anyone to join them at the table at such a late hour, could you? As for red-letter days… well, no, none of the servants would ever sit at our table. They would just attend to their duties in the dining-room… and certainly didn't sit down with us.

- Could you tell me a bit more about your granny – that is, your own father's mother?

- Oh, well, her name was Elizaveta Filippovna Krylova. She came from a family of merchants, and when she married, her younger brother, Sebast'ian, was still under age, so she took him into her new family… My grandfather worked as a… notary. He was on the staff of some bank, too, as a clerk, but his main occupation was that of a private notary. In those days, you see, there were all kinds of formalities that had to be set down in writing… And, apart from that, he also advised a certain wealthy landlady on legal matters and executed various commissions for her. That lady owned a number of houses and she wasn't married, so he conducted all these financial matters on her behalf… It's something that just doesn't seem possible nowadays… Anyway, he made use of every opportunity to earn some extra money, and I think he drew quite a decent income. So that's how they lived until the Revolution. Now, after the Revolution… they don't say in vain that there's no fool like an old fool, because, you see, my grandfather suddenly took it into his head to leave Grandmother for another woman. I've even got the divorce certificate: Grandmother divorced him in court, you see. As a result, she was left on her own… Oh, I forgot to say that when she was still living with my grandfather, they had this five-room flat on Bronnitskaia Street. And when the housing authorities started this policy of consolidation [*uplotnenie* – i.e. increasing the number of occupants per flat by

moving new residents into already occupied flats, most of which became municipal property as a result of the 1918 decree 'On the abolition of ownership in real estate in towns.']… this was, of course, after the Soviets had come to power… my aunt… You see, Grandmother was living together with… By that time my father had gone away from home, his elder brother Shura had married and had also set up for himself, so the only ones who were left were Grandmother and my aunt – her daughter. Aunt Alia married this gymnasium teacher in the first years of the Revolution, and her husband also came to live with them. Oh yes, and Uncle Stevasia – that's how we called Grandmother's younger brother – also had his own room in that flat. Now, as I said, when this policy of consolidation started, my uncle – that is, Aunt Alia's husband – who was so terribly clever, saw that it was useless to sit tight, as the authorities would eventually target their flat too, so he decided to take the initiative himself… You see, he was teaching in a factory workshop-school and he managed to find these two Czech sisters who were living in a hostel and working in the factory. He offered them to move into the large room of the flat on Bronnitskaia, and they readily agreed. So Uncle Stevasia still had his room, the two Czech girls had the large room to themselves, and then there were three other rooms. After Grandmother's death, he also lodged this married couple he knew in her small room. So, in other words, he was able to find precisely those residents he wanted to have: they were all good, decent folk… It was at any rate much better than waiting for the authorities to force complete strangers on you… Besides, the flat was… It had this spacious entrance hall with a large chest of drawers and wardrobe… Then, in the kitchen there was a proper sideboard, as well as a cupboard and a trunk, on which the domestic servant would sleep – in the morning, she would stow away her mattress and blankets into that cupboard… So the kitchen was also taken up to a certain extent, but these new residents my uncle had found didn't mind. However, if the authorities had moved complete strangers into these rooms, they would almost certainly have kicked up a fuss about it… That way, then, they were all on friendly terms with each other… My uncle and aunt were thus able to keep two adjoining rooms for themselves: a large room of 25 square metres, and a smaller one of 12 square metres where they had their bedroom. They stayed in those two room ever since… Now, when Grandmother was still alive, she had this small room in the flat which I mentioned earlier. She was a very calm, quiet, and friendly person, and she had lots of friends. There wasn't any central heating yet in those days, so in winter the whole flat would be warmed by leaving one of the hobs on the kitchen stove burning almost all day long. And Grandmother would also leave her coffee-pot on top of the cooker all the time: she had this copper coffee-pot and a gauze bag which she'd sewn herself, and that's where she would brew her coffee. You could always get hot coffee from her! I remember how she always had these friends and relatives of hers coming round, and she wouldn't let any of them leave without having had at least one cup of coffee. She would lead them to the dining-room; there, they would lay the table, pour themselves some coffee, and chat a few hours… She was a very kind and gentle person, you know, and everyone thought the world of her. Her maid, too, was terribly fond of her… You see, there was something wrong with her legs – I don't know what it was, but she tried to avoid walking as much as possible… So she would sit in the kitchen and teach Milia, her maid, how to cook all kinds of dishes… Milia, you see, was a country lass and had moved to Leningrad in search of work… And Grandmother taught

her how to cook: she would sit in the kitchen and show Milia everything she had to do… So it was Grandmother who was effectively in charge of the household.

- Could I ask – how did she treat Milia?

-Very well, in fact. Because Milia was, after all, almost a family relation. She was Grandmother's godchild.

- So that's why she was like a member of the family, right?

- Yes.

- She was part of the family…

- Well, no… not quite. It was still as a servant that she'd come to live with Grandmother. She would sleep in the kitchen and have her meals separately. I suppose that was just the way it was… in that respect…

- So she was treated the same in your family as by your grandmother?

- Yes, exactly the same.

- Did your mother always allow you to visit your granny?

- Yes, she did. Because… at home, you see… this was before I started going to school… there wasn't anyone who could look after me properly, and since I was ill so often… That is, I did go to a kindergarten for a while, but I think they stopped taking me there pretty soon. I don't really remember much from that period, but I've got this photograph somewhere, in which I'm standing in the courtyard of that kindergarten, together with some other children… But, as I was saying, I caught colds very often and was ill many times as a child. And as soon as I fell ill, since there was no one at home who could take care of me – Mama was at work, and our cook was hardly in a position to attend to me properly – I would be sent to Aunt Alia's place. Because Aunt Alia, after all, was a qualified doctor, and then there was Grandmother, too: they would both nurse me back to health. Aunt Alia would also take me to be examined by other doctors – she was always very concerned about my health, she didn't have any children of her own, you see. And both she and my uncle loved me very much… So I would always be taken to Grandmother.

- But how did your mother feel about that?

- Why, she was glad, of course, that I could go to Grandmother's place!

- I mean, she didn't have any… grudges, did she?

- Grudges? No, absolutely not! Yes, she did divorce my father – that's true – but she got along very well with Grandmother. Because Grandmother really was a very decent person. And my aunt, too… They were good, decent people, they were! And, indeed, it wasn't at all their fault that my father had left us for someone else. So as far as Mama was concerned, her mother-in-law was still a member of the family. That's why she would always visit her on Easter Day and take me along, too. I was very little, but I still remember how I always clapped my hands in delight when Mama said that we were going over to Grandmother's place to eat some of her *paskha* – because Grandmother would boil this wonderful *pashka* herself, and she always invited us round on Easter Day.

- Wasn't your mother afraid, though, that someone might find out?

- No, she wasn't afraid.

- Perhaps she would warn you beforehand not to tell anyone about it?

- No, not at all.

- When you were with your granny, did you notice any difference in her views on how to bring up children? Was she strict, for example?

- You see, the thing is that at home no one really paid any attention to me. I don't mean that they were strict or anything – it's just that they didn't show much interest for what I was getting up to. Whereas at Grandmother's, I could always count on proper attention. It was Grandmother who taught me to sew, to do beadwork, and she'd also buy me toys. That is, Aunt Alia would buy them for me on her behalf. At home, in contrast, I didn't have any toys almost, if I remember correctly.

- Why was that?

- Oh, I don't know. That's something I've never really thought about. But Aunt Alia, for example – she would buy me dolls, and Grandmother and I would sew dresses for them. I also remember how Aunt Alia once bought me this little iron stove – we cleared some space for it in a corner of the room, and then she also bought me some toy saucepans, crockery, even this little teapot… And then my uncle made me these small wooden shelves, and someone – I've forgotten who it was – also sewed these little pouches for me which I would fill up with groats of various sorts and tie up. Yes, I had this nifty little kitchen, and I would play at cooking dinner…

- But did you play with these toys only when you were at your grandmother's place? Didn't you take them home with you?

- No, I didn't take them home at all. In fact, it would never have occurred to me to do that. I'd come over to Grandmother's and play there. That's where I could be a child! Whereas at home no one paid much attention to me.

- So your grandmother didn't try to inculcate a sense of independence in you?

- No, I suppose not.

- Was she affectionate with you?

- Grandmother? Yes, very much so… Yes… There's one episode that I still remember: they had this tom-cat called Krotik who had this dapper white chest. And in the block of flats where they lived, like most houses then, it was literally teeming with mice. It's only now that we don't have mice any more, but in those days they were all over the place… And that cat would catch them. Whenever he got one, though, he'd just crush it between his paws and leave it lying there. Yes, and one day, when I was at Grandmother's, he'd evidently been at work because there was this poor mouse lying dead on the floor. I remember how I started crying over the mouse which that revolting Krotik had squashed. But Aunt Alia said: "Don't cry, the little creature will soon get better, you'll see." She picked up the mouse in her hand – as I've just remembered, all this happened in the evening – then she took a small box, lined it with some cotton wool, put the mouse inside it, and sent me to bed: "You go to bed now and don't worry: this mouse will make it through, you'll see." And she placed the box next to my bed. When I woke up the following morning and looked at the box, it was empty – the mouse had run away, of course, it was all right! [*laughs*] But do you know what I'm so grateful to my aunt for? She gradually taught me not to be afraid of anything.

- What do you mean by that?

- Well, for example, with animals… When I was still quite little, I saw this toad once and started screaming: "Argh! A toad! Yuk!" But my aunt wouldn't have anything of that; she said: "Now, come on, what do you think a toad is? You just have a good look and see how fabulous it is. It's not doing you any harm, is it?… it doesn't even bite!"… And I remember how she took the toad by one of its paws and tied it to my bed with some string. So all day long I had this toad hopping up and down in my room… and I

eventually did reach the conclusion that it was silly of me to be so afraid of it! I began to stroke the poor toad and even took it in my hands. And, indeed… She used all kinds of tricks to train me not to be afraid of anything. She taught me to be brave, no matter what… I can still hear her saying: "What are you afraid of? You just have a good look, Marksena – there's absolutely nothing to be afraid of here!"… For example, I was afraid of the dark. So she came up with this special method to get me used to it. Yes, I remember how in the evenings she would say: "Now then! Go and creep under the table, if you're still so scared, and I'll turn off the light!" So I'd get under the table in the dining-room, whilst she left the room, switching off the lights and closing the door behind her. Then from behind the door she would ask: "Well? Is it so scary? Well, what are you afraid of? That something's going to get you..? Nothing's going to happen to you, silly girl! There's no need to be afraid of the dark! Crawl out from under that table, will you, and you'll see for yourself!" I would do as she said – and she was right: there really was nothing to be afraid of.

- So you had told your aunt that you were afraid of the dark?

- Yes, yes, that's why she knew about it.

- Did you also tell your parents if there was something you were afraid of?

- No, for some reason I never talked to them about those things.

- Would you say your grandmother and aunt were more affectionate towards you than your parents?

- Oh yes.

- And you could tell them everything?

- No, not everything – because… I mean…

- What things couldn't you tell them?

- Oh, I don't know… I just can't think of any occasion on which I really let myself go and spoke out everything that was on my mind… No, somehow that never happened. I was, after all, a rather reserved person. That is, I would answer what I was asked, but I didn't come out with things spontaneously… My aunt often used to remind me of a scene that had occurred when I was about three and still couldn't speak properly. We were all at her place, seated at the table and having dinner, and I did something which… well, what can you expect from a child! I mean, I was sitting properly and eating by myself, but I still managed to do something wrong: perhaps I spilt some soup or I wasn't holding the spoon properly… And my aunt scolded me a bit. I then apparently took the spoon and – I don't remember it myself, but my aunt often recalled what happened – and, brandishing that table-spoon, I said: "Don't ever dare tell me!" You see, my grip on the language wasn't that firm yet, and that's why I missed out the "off" at the end – what I wanted to say was: "… tell me off"… Well, anyway, after that scene no one ever scolded me again during meals. [*laughs*] "Don't dare tell me!" Oh, my aunt remembered that all her life! She would often recall this episode, laughing.

- Did you have any portraits hanging in your flat? A portrait of Lenin, say?

- Well, Papa did have this portrait of Lenin, cast in metal, on his writing-table.

- What about a portrait of Kirov?

- No, we didn't have one of Kirov… Actually, except for that portrait of Lenin in cast metal which Papa had in his study – in those days, you could get these types of portraits with small stands on the back – we didn't have any portraits whatsoever. In fact, we didn't have anything at all hanging on our walls.

- In that case, you wouldn't have had a portrait of Stalin either, would you?
- That's right, we didn't… But now that you've mentioned Stalin, I do remember something interesting… You see, Mama was Chairman of the Cotton Workers' Trade Union *obkom*, and on her birthday she was once given this portrait of Lenin woven in silk, which I've still got somewhere around the house. And another present she got was this portrait of Stalin printed on cotton cloth, with these strong red and brown colours. Now, during the war, when my son was born and it was very difficult to get hold of any fabrics as such, I remembered that we had this rag stowed away somewhere and said to myself that it wasn't doing much good just lying there. So I took it, washed the portrait off, and swaddled my baby son in this rag. The following day, of course, I had to wash it again and hang it to dry… Our kitchen had a window, you see, with some ropes stretched across its frame, so I scrubbed this nappy of sorts clean and hung it to dry by the window. What I hadn't realised was that the portrait would still show through in the light. It wasn't visible otherwise, but if you held the cotton up against the light, the contours of the face clearly showed through! Now, my neighbour was… he was a rather mean fellow, to put it mildly, and when he walked into the kitchen and saw that, he shouted: "What's this? Using Stalin's portrait as a nappy?! I'm going straight to the NKVD to report this!" [*laughs*] Well, I took the 'portrait' down immediately and I didn't hang it there ever again. That is, I did carry on using it as a nappy for my son, but I didn't dry it in the kitchen any more. [*laughs*]
- What did your grandmother and aunt think about politics? Did they ever talk to you about politics?
- No, they didn't do that. The only thing is that both Grandmother and my aunt would sometimes talk about how good life was before the Revolution. My aunt especially: she would say how before the Revolution life had been so much better. She was firmly convinced of that. It was a real bee in her bonnet with her, and when I was there, she would recall various episodes… showing that life was much simpler and easier before the Revolution.
- And how did you react to that?
- I just listened and said nothing. Why should I have…
- But what did you think inwardly?
- Me? I didn't think anything… That is, properly speaking, I thought that my parents were right. I mean, back then, I would sing the *Internationale* with heart and soul! [It was the Soviet national anthem until 1944] It's only now that I… "We shall raze the world of coercion / to the ground, and then / we shall [build] our own, our new…" Yes, it's only now that I've come to realise how stupid these words were. But when I was a girl, I would sing the *Internationale* with such enthusiasm. I believed every word of it. It's only now that, looking back, I can understand what… It's almost unbelievable that they could come up with such nonsense…! What a nightmare! "We shall build our own new world…" Yes, it's very easy to raze things to the ground, but as for building a new world… How does one go about that? That isn't so easy, after all… But I didn't understand that then. I thought that my parents were doubtlessly right…
- In that case, your aunt's reflections must have jarred upon you?
- Oh, I just took good note of what she said, and didn't say anything for my part. You see, on the whole, I believe that… I could appreciate that it was better then. But better in what respect? Perhaps it was better for some, but for others it may well have been worse. I

wasn't around then… So I can't really tell how it was in those days… Perhaps it had been better for my aunt and her family back then, but for others it may well have been worse. I just don't know.

- Although you were brought up to be so independent from an early age, it is true, isn't it, that your childhood as such ended with your parents' arrest?

- Yes, after my parents' arrest.

- That was the end of your childhood and full stop, wasn't it?

- After my parents' arrest… That really was it. After that, I had to take care of everything myself. That is, Milia was still with me… but I saw in her no more than a grown-up with a passport, which in certain situations was essential, if you see what I mean. Because I was the one who was in charge of everything – including the money. I would decide for what purpose and how much of it was to be spent. I think I told you, didn't I?, that I had this girl friend from school whose mother I'd ask for advice on how to spend one's money judiciously.

- But couldn't you also ask Milia? Or perhaps you didn't confide in her advice?

- That's right – she wasn't the right person to turn to.

- And why was that?

- Well, I mean, she was a simple, rustic woman. She couldn't give advice.

- So even if she had said something, it wouldn't have carried any weight with you?

- Yes, that's how it was: I never turned to her for any advice. And besides, if you take into account the fact that she started stealing things for me – after my brothers had been arrested [*sic*] – then it's pretty clear that…

- And did you actually sense beforehand that it would come to this?

- Yes, I did, as a matter of fact. At first, though, I didn't notice that much, but then it became more and more obvious…

- And yet Milia did help you, didn't she?..

- Yes, Milia did help me – until the boys were arrested… That is, when they were taken away and put in a children's home, I asked Milia: "How much did Mama pay you by way of salary?" and I paid her off for all those months that she'd stayed with us after my parents' arrest – I paid her off. She got the full salary for all those months. Then I told her: "I won't be needing your services any more." And that was it. But my room was open, you see, so she continued sleeping in it – because she had nowhere to go to otherwise.

- Could you describe in more detail how Pozner helped you? First of all, why did he do that?

- No, not Pozner, oh what was his name?…You know, the first time I met him… the first time I met Uncle Boria was when we were staying at the dacha in L'vovo. One day, this man arrived in a car, and all the boys rushed to him, hollering: "Uncle Boria! Uncle Boria! Uncle Boria!" and started prancing around him… Then they all went down to the lake, and he rowed them to the other shore. Yes, he had a way with children. I remember how I asked myself: who is this Uncle Boria? But I didn't rack my brains for long to try to make out who he might be: if he was so popular with the children, he couldn't be a bad person. And then…

- But who was he then?

- Oh, he was the [Leningrad] Oblast Prosecutor. Not Pozner, what was his name…? I'll tell you when I remember… Anyway, he had this son who was married to a very stylish

woman, who also gave herself such airs for being the daughter-in-law of so important a person. On the whole, she behaved so… She was quite an unpleasant piece of goods. And they had this little boy who was called Volodia, like my youngest brother: the two were in fact of the same age. Moreover, their nanny, who spoilt that Volodia so much, happened to be friends with my nanny, who was living with us. And the two Volodias soon became hand and glove – that is, their nannies got on very well, you see, so they would take their charges to the same playgrounds and the two boys quickly became friends. But they were still very little. When our parents were arrested, Volodia was just six – he hadn't himself been arrested [*sic*] yet. And, isn't it funny, he just knew me by the name Marksena… Oh yes, what I wanted to say is that when our parents were arrested, we were staying at a dacha in Sestroretsk, where the *obkom* had a dacha settlement. And our parents would come over to spend every rest-day with us – that is, they would set out from Leningrad in the evening of the previous day. They'd park the car by the gates to the grounds of the dacha colony, and I would always be standing there, waiting for them. But one evening, when I was expecting my parents and was walking down to the gates, I saw Uncle Boria and the editor-in-chief of "Leningradskaia Pravda" coming towards me. They took me by the shoulders and walked me back to the colony: it was then that I understood that my parents had been arrested. It was obvious, I mean… Two grown-ups… Treating a child with such consideration… They took me to the dining-hall, and then I made my way to our dacha.

- Why did he help you, do you think?

- Why? I don't know why. It was simply…

- Did he help everyone?

- I don't know. Perhaps, he did help everyone. I just don't know. At any rate, when I ran out of money… I told you, didn't I?, how I sent Milia over to his place, to ask him for help… And how he sent this friendly soldier to break open the seals in our rooms so that I could take our money out…

- And you didn't see him again after that?

- No. I didn't turn to him for help again. Besides, soon afterwards, he too was arrested.

- Was he also shot?

- Yes, he was executed too.

- You told me last time that no sooner did you find out about your parents' arrest than you understood that they weren't 'enemies of the people'…

- Yes.

- And that it was a crime of Stalin. Did you really know that already in 1937?

- Yes, I knew it then already. Oh yes, I did. By the way, it's interesting that the director of the library where I worked [L. Z. Rubina], whom I actually helped to set up our library and who treated me so… She was the director of a children's district library, and in 1942 my uncle managed to fix me up with a job in her library. Soon afterwards, though, as all the children had been evacuated from the city, the decision was taken to close down this library temporarily, and all my colleagues and I were set the task of organising a new adult library in our district… And that director, she treated me like a mother. She was always thinking about the future and coached me in librarianship whenever she could, hoping that I would be able to make my way in this career. That's why she took me along everywhere – for example, to acquire books for our new library, and in all kinds of other matters. There was an interesting episode once… I don't know if I've told you about it

already, but what happened was that I had to take some document to our district's financial department. She had sent me on this errand, you see, and told me which inspector I was supposed to ask for. So I managed to find that woman, gave her the document, but she said: "Oh! That's something I can't decide… I think we'd better go to the Head of the department with this." We went upstairs to the Head of the department's office and that inspector showed her the document: as it turned out, Rubina, my director, was asking for some funding from the district department. Well, the Head of the department skimmed through the letter quite quickly, saying her thoughts aloud at the same time: "Now, let's see who's asking this – I see, it's Rubina. Well, I don't see why we shouldn't give her what she's asking for. She's worth every kopeck." Yes, there you can see how highly she was regarded in our district… She was very fond of me, and we were always quite frank with each other. She told me a great deal of things which I wasn't aware of before. For example, whenever she referred to Stalin, she would invariably tag an insult of some sort to his name: "That parasite! That parasite! How many people he's done to death! That scum! He's the first one who ought to be shot!" Those were the kinds of expressions she'd use to refer to him.

- But surely they didn't come as a surprise to you, since even before meeting Rubina, you thought that…you considered it to be a crime of Stalin's, isn't that so?

- Yes. Because it was precisely against Stalin that I had a prejudice, to put it mildly.

- Could you explain why?

- Well, it was because my parents didn't approve much of Stalin's conduct. And it showed in conversations. For example, I told you how, when Kirov was assassinated, Mama was sitting at home, preparing a report she had to give, whilst I was in the dining-room. My parents' study was adjacent to the dining-room, and I heard her talking with someone on the phone. A bit later, she came out of the study with a distraught look on her face: "He's killed him. He killed him after all!" I was never in any doubt as to whom Mama was accusing.

- Why were you so sure?

- Because in a general sort of way I knew that… You see, before *that* happened, people had been talking about how Stalin, on the whole, was ill-disposed towards the Leningrad Party organisation. It was something that was talked about, and it trickled down to me, too… Because someone actually told me… Yes, Maika Smorodina, in fact – she was such a sly-boots, you know, and was always eavesdropping on the grown-ups' conversations. And she told me how in Moscow, at a plenary session [of the Central Committee], Stalin had… You see, in Leningrad we had this senior officiall called Struppe… I don't remember what post he occupied, but… [P. I. Struppe (1889-1937), a Latvian by birth, was Chairman of the Leningrad Oblast *ispolkom* and one of Kirov's closest collaborators]

- Struppe?

- Yes, Struppe… And Stalin had attacked [the Committee members from Leningrad] for tolerating such a drunkard in their organisation… It was common knowledge, you see, that he liked a glass or two every now and then… But Kirov had apparently come forward and told Stalin that it was obvious he wanted to eliminate Struppe, but that they, the Leningraders, wouldn't allow it. This was at a plenary session, long before the arrest [*sic* – Marksena Mikhailovna probably means long before the murder of Kirov] – yes, that was something that got talked about, and there were various other conversations like

that… all pointing to the fact that Stalin, when Kirov was still alive… Yes, just imagine what a long way back these grievances went … So, as I said, there were these various conversations about Stalin. And it was because of all this that, when Mama said: "He's killed him after all", I was in no doubt about whom she meant. I understood that Stalin had killed him. But I didn't ask any questions. And later, when… Kirov was lying in state in the Tauride Palace… And when his coffin was put on the train to Moscow, Papa had been in the guard of honour at the coffin. But before that, when my parents had been getting ready to go to the Tauride Palace, I overheard them talking in our entrance hall, because I was standing somewhere in the doorway. Yes, and Mama had said: "What a nerve he's got to even turn up in Leningrad and bury him." For me it was obvious whom they were talking about – which just goes to show what opinion I had of Stalin already then.

- You said that you had this girl friend Maia who was so quick-witted – did you discuss these things amongst yourselves?

- Yes, we did sometimes. But it wasn't just that: Maika and a few others – a couple of the senior officials' children – actually wrote a letter to Stalin. It was to do with this: one leading Party figure… I don't remember who… had been amongst the 26 Baku Commissars. He was the only one who'd survived, and it was rumoured – the grown-ups would talk about it, too – that he'd betrayed all his comrades and thus escaped the firing squad. [The 26 Baku Commissars were Bolshevik (and SR) members of the Council of People's Commissars which controlled the short-lived Baku Commune – the Soviet government established in Baku and a number of districts of Azerbaidjan in 1918. After they were driven from power in July 1918 by anti-Bolshevik forces within Baku, the Commissars ended up in prison, managed to escape in September, but were captured in Turkmenistan by the local SR authorities and executed. They came to be hailed as heroes in the Soviet Union] So Maika and her friends suddenly decided to write this letter… to Mikoian [A. I. Mikoian (1895-1978) was at that time People's Commissar for Trade and a member of the Politburo] or Stalin, asking him whether this rumour was true or not. They didn't receive any reply, of course, but this matter was talked about quite widely – that that high-ranking official had betrayed the Baku Commissars all those years ago… I don't remember who it was they said these things about… whether it was Mikoian or someone else… I'm afraid I just don't remember.

- And what else did you discuss with your young friends? Did you talk about Kirov's assassination?

- No, we didn't discuss that. We didn't generally discuss anything – that is, the grown-ups wouldn't talk about these matters with us children. And although, properly speaking, I was a child then, I did understand that it wasn't possible to talk about everything, that things weren't that straightforward.

- Could you say a bit more about Liubov Zakharovna?

- I first met Liubov Zakharovna when I started to work in that library. Now, I hadn't been in my new job that long when this slovenly dressed, short man came into our library. He said that he wanted to speak to Rubina, so I went to her study and told her: "Liubov Zakharovna, there's a man outside who would like to speak to you." – "Ask him to come in, then", she said. So I showed him in to her study and he was there quite a long time. I don't know what they were talking about, but when he left the study, she saw him out to the library exit and said after he'd gone: "What a lousy Yid!" I gaped at her in such

bewilderment… I mean, she was Jewish herself, and now… And that man was also a Jew… She snapped at me: "What are you gawking at me for?" – she was often a bit coarse in the way she expressed herself – "What are you gawping at, eh?! You just remember: there are Jews, and then there are Yids!" [*laughs*] Generally speaking, she really was quite a character – a very interesting person. And she was very fond of me – I didn't really know why, but then I found out that her sister and brother had suffered repression.

- What was her brother's name?

- Rubin. Also Rubin – I don't remember his first name or patronymic. He's been dead for quite a long time, of course. As for his children, I don't know what… His son was an artist, but I've forgotten what his daughter did for a living.

- Was he Liubov Zakharovna's younger brother?

- I don't even know that, I'm afraid. It's quite possible, though, that he was a bit younger. Her sister, on the other hand, was definitely younger. After she was released from her prison camp, she was in exile for a while, but then, after her husband died, she was able to return here – this was after the war and after she'd been rehabilitated. Yes, she came to Leningrad and went to live with her sister. Now, Liubov Zakharovna – she was a real live wire, and so clever, too. She succeeded in… I mean, she really was an extraordinary person, brave and strong, a Communist idealist, with a deep commitment to justice for everyone. As I said, she tended not to mince her words: yes, she could swear and dress you down, but everybody still loved her very much. There was no one in her staff who would have wanted to leave her of their own accord, and she did not sack anyone from the library. Just imagine! And she so succeeded in welding together the work-team – it was just amazing! Moreover, she achieved this without losing her calm. If, say, she had to give someone a piece of her mind, she would do so, but at the same time she would give praise where praise was due. She was simply a very fair-minded person. Even though she was, admittedly, a Party member, a member of the *raikom* bureau, and the director of a district children's library! But, all the same, she always treated me like a mother. Not to mention the fact that, as I told you before, she saved me from…

[…]

- She was a member of the *raikom*, yes? She was, of course, a Party member too, wasn't she?

- Yes.

- And even so, she would only ever refer to Stalin as a 'rotter'…

- Yes, yes.

- What else did she say about her views?

- Oh, it was only with me that she was like this, of course. She allowed herself to speak openly to me. She explained many things that I had not understood. She talked all night. She knew that I wouldn't betray her, that I wouldn't say a word to anyone, and when she talked to me she opened up her heart. She would talk all night long. She was a committed Communist – that's how everyone rightly saw her. But with me she could allow herself to let off steam in this way.

- Only with regard to Stalin, or did she criticise other things, too?

- We talked about everything – not just about Stalin. There was one conversation in which she told me that collectivization had been a terrible mistake that had ruined the country; and others where she said that the White Sea Canal and other building projects had all been built by prisoners…These were things that I hadn't been aware of before. We'd speak quite frankly, you know… On all kinds of matters… Whenever some question arose, we would discuss it. And yes, she might sometimes come out with such phrases as: "Oh, that parasite – the very mention of his name makes me sick…" But this was only in front of me and no one else. Otherwise, she generally… She was a very sociable person, you see, and had many friends in the district: when we were working in the library, many people would drop in to see her. I didn't even know most of them. They'd come in and head straight for her office: "Liuba! Liuba, do you know what, I really need this book… I say, Liuba… How come you can never find what you're looking for in this wretched library?!" And she would frequently direct them to me: "Go to Marksena, she'll sort it out for you."… Because I was responsible for this room of some 18 square metres, where all the books from the district were taken and stored temporarily until we decided what to do with them: they included rare books and also those which needed to be bound. I had this special cupboard where I would stack all valuable books, and also had a card-index to record their details… And I'd often have people coming in and saying: "Do you know what, Liuba sent me here – give me something to read, please." So I would issue these books to them, asking them at the same time: "Please remember, though, to be careful – the pages can fall out very easily, as they still have to be bound…"

- I see – so she had lots of friends, but was she as plain-spoken with them as she was with you?

- No, I don't think she was, but I'm not sure. I can't really judge. But it's true that she did have very many friends.

- Did you ever talk with her about the arrests of 1937?

- Yes, we did. She talked about them [the arrests] and said that my parents had been innocent. She had a very high opinion of my stepfather. She actually knew him from work, you see. In those days there was one single Central District – just like there is now, when they've merged those other districts again [The Central District of Petrograd, including the most famous areas of the city (the Imperial Forum, the Field of Mars, Nevskii Prospekt etc.) was set up in 1922 and renamed the Oktiabr'skii District in 1930. It was later sub-divided into three other districts, until, in 1994, the Central District was again re-established.] – and the Party *raikom* was based in the Belosel'skii-Belozerskii Palace, on Nevskii Prospekt. Mama took me there a couple of times to see Papa, who was the First Secretary of the *raikom*. Now, as I said, Liubov Zakharovna was Director of the Central Children's Library of the Central District, but she was also a member of the *raikom* bureau, and in this capacity she frequently came into contact with Petr Leont'evich. And she held him in great esteem: she'd refer to him as a very decent and good person, and she told me that my parents weren't guilty of anything… By the way, my uncle was once walking with my eldest son, when he was little, and he met an old acquaintance of his… He later told me how they'd started talking and how he, my uncle, had said: "Yes, the mother and stepfather of my niece were arrested…" – "Who was her stepfather?" asked my uncle's friend. And when my uncle told him, he was rather

surprised: “Nizovtsev, you said? Why he was such a fine person! How could they arrest him?!” Yes, that’s how highly regarded he was, my stepfather…
- Tell me, when Liubov Zakharovna talked with you about the arrests, was she of the view that all those who’d been arrested weren’t ‘enemies’ at all… that there weren’t any ‘enemies of the people’ as such? Or did she think that these ‘enemies’ did exist?
- No, no. She believed that there weren’t any ‘enemies’ as such….
- And that…?
- And that all this was just a way of eliminating the Party cadres – that is, those who weren’t to Stalin’s liking.

[…]

- Did Liubov Zakharovna teach you how to conduct yourself in later situations – for example, when you were applying to university or, say, for a new job..?
- No, she didn’t teach me that…
- But perhaps she advised you to conceal the fact that your parents had been arrested, or didn’t she?
- No, she didn’t do that either. As a matter of fact, we never talked about it. The only thing is that, when one of our library’s staff was arrested and all of us, one by one, were summoned for questioning, she warned me that it could well be my turn soon – that is, that I had to reckon with being summoned for interrogation and that I should therefore be prepared for that and not say too much about that Konstantin. Yes, in that case she did instruct me specifically.
- I remember how you described that interrogation – but tell me, how ever did you manage to muster up so much courage?
- Oh, I don’t know! I suppose it was because of my being so green and stupid… [*laughs*]
- No… please try to explain a bit more…
- Well, you know, it was probably just that I lost my temper. Because, you see, it really infuriated me that this person, who knew perfectly well whom he had summoned for interrogation, had started off by talking about… about the weather, almost!… and asking me these harmless questions about how I was getting on… if everything was all right at home… in other words, as if he actually cared about me… but then it suddenly became clear that… Then suddenly he threw this in my face: “You’re the daughter of enemies of the people! That’s why you’re sticking up for him!” And that just sent me into a rage!
- What was it that so enraged you? The humiliation? Or the way he’d called your parents ‘enemies’?
- I’m not sure that I can answer that. …No, it wasn’t the humiliation – I didn’t feel humiliated as such… It’s just that I… Well, I suppose it was a question of self-respect… I don’t know what… I suppose what angered me most was his vileness! His vileness… Because I understood that the case he was supposedly investigating was a cock-and-bull story, and that that Konstantin was completely innocent! I saw that they were out to condemn him no matter what, and that, not being content with that, they were summoning all our library’s staff for interrogation...! All this made me so angry, you see! That is, it had all been simmering in me before I arrived for the interrogation… But I had in fact come there… intending to say nothing. However, when he threw that taunt in my

face, I just snapped. Besides, it was his whole boorish demeanour, his vileness – that got me terribly mad! [*laughs*]

- Is it really true that you never concealed that your parents…

- I never concealed it.

- But after the war, too?

- Yes, I never concealed it after the war either. That was the reason, in fact, why I wasn't able to go to university… You see, in 1948 I applied to the [N. K. Krupskaia] Institute of Librarianship, [now the St Petersburg State University of Culture and Arts] but I was rejected… Even though I had passed the entrance exams… By the way, I actually left my certificate [of secondary education] behind at the Institute: I was so upset, and shocked even, at having been turned down that I didn't even bother to pick up the documents I'd sent in with my application. God knows what the Institute's selection board decided to do with my certificate in the end!

- You told me last time that you felt guilty about your youngest brother – In what sense do you feel guilty?

- Well, the fact that I wasn't able to find him… that I wasn't able to help him in any way. Of course… Although, to be honest, I wasn't really in a position to do that… But the fact that I didn't try to do it all the same – that is, of course… that's something I can't help feeling bad about… But I wasn't in a position to do that: for a start, from purely practical considerations. I mean, to go and look for him would have meant abandoning my family – and I already had children then… I had two children to think of… So I really was in a difficult situation. I wrote to all the relevant authorities, I even applied for an All-Union search to be carried out, and did everything I could… All that could be done from here I did do. Moreover, I sold a watch to scrape together enough money so that my brother Lesha could go there [to Udmurtia] and look for him on the spot. But he didn't find anything either. So who knows where Volodia disappeared to in the end?… One does often hear that many children put in these orphanages would try to run away… and then ended up in the criminal underworld… So perhaps… he went into hiding somewhere… either with the surname they gave him in the orphanage… or one he'd assumed himself.

- When you wrote to that children's home, did you have any faith in these institutions? Or..?

- At first, I did have faith in them, but I lost that eventually. In the end, I was just writing from force of habit… I mean, I was amazed all the time that people could be so brazen… But I still kept on writing to them… What else could I do? I would write and…

- Why did you lose the faith you'd had in that children's home?

- Well, because they didn't answer my questions. You see, I'd write a letter, kindly requesting them to let me know what state of health my brother was in… What I wanted to know, of course, was whether he was still alive at all… But their replies were invariably of this format: "Your brother – Nizovtsev, Vladimir – has been in our children's home since so-and-so a date." That's all I would get.

- Were these replies forms printed off on a typewriter, or were they written by hand?

- By hand. I can't show you, though, because I don't think I've got any of these replies left… I suppose I was a bit too careless, you know… And, besides, I was simply afraid… I was afraid of having many of these documents with me… For example, I now regret very much that I destroyed that order of expulsion from Leningrad. But, you see, I was

afraid of hanging on to it… So I simply destroyed many documents which I thought might harm me in case my room were to be searched.

- But how could your correspondence with the children's home regarding your brother possibly harm you?

- Well, you know… I suppose it was just carelessness on my part.

- Nothing deliberate?

- No, I didn't get rid of these replies deliberately. They were lying around somewhere in my room, and then, evidently… I put them in different places… Later, though, I did get myself a folder where I kept everything. But, as I said, at first I just had all these things lying around… And, besides… how do people generally treat letters, anyway? I mean, when you get a letter, you don't normally think you're going to need it again at some point in the future, do you? So I must admit that I was a bit careless… with these letters.

- Could you say something about your husband?

- About my husband? [*smiles*] About my husband… When I first met him, it's interesting that… When we met… We didn't become intimate until after quite a long time… You see, for some reason he awakened my trust from the very beginning. It's a long story, but it's worth telling. I was introduced to him by Vasia Ivanov, my cousin's husband… or, rather, not husband, because at that point he was also just living with her… So this is what happened. In the summer of 1942, my future husband was serving as a regimental commander for armaments, and Vasia Ivanov was an armourer [i.e. a small arms technician]. They both became good friends and remained so for the rest of their lives. Now, Vasia, when he met me, through my cousin Lidia – this was, again, in the summer of 1942 – he decided to introduce me to his friend, Nikiforov… Because, although Nikiforov was married, he didn't have any children – that is, his wife couldn't have children… And, besides, it was a rather strange marriage… In short… He hadn't actually wanted to marry her as such, but… it turned out that way in the end. When he was still very young, he went to work in Central Asia. Now, there was this scientist called Uspenskii, who was carrying out research there – a remarkable man, he was… He later successfully defended his doctoral dissertation and would visit us whenever he came over to Leningrad. Yes, and he was doing research on combating locust plagues – his team had been sent to Central Asia because there were swathes of land which hadn't been invaded by locusts yet, but everyone was reckoning with future migrations of locust swarms. And Uspenskii set up these monitoring stations on the [cotton?] fields in order to collect data on the movements of all these insects. It was at one of these stations that my future husband worked after having come to Central Asia when he was still almost a boy… Let's see, how old was he then? Yes, he must have been barely twenty. And there was this other lad working with him – their monitoring station was located near Urgench [a city in western Uzbekistan]. Now, on weekends this lad would travel into Urgench, where he had a girlfriend. When he got back to the field station once, after one of his weekend trips, he said to Nikiforov: "Why are you sitting here, all cooped up? You ought to come along next time. My girlfriend knows this very nice girl… We can all go out on the town together!" So he did go along on the next weekend, and that's how he met his future wife. Zina wasn't particularly attractive, but she loved him very much. And when he left for Tashkent, to enrol at a *tekhnikum*, [a technical college providing specialised secondary education] she actually followed him there and turned up on his doorstep with a suitcase in which she'd packed all that she had. A few years later, in 1937, when his brother

invited him to come to Leningrad… you see, his brother had some connections in the Agricultural Institute, and he wrote to him: "Do come! I'll fix you up with a study place in a *rabfak*." [The *rabfaki* (workers' faculties) were established in 1919 for the purpose of providing prospective working-class or peasant students who lacked a formal secondary education with a sufficient grounding to enable them to subsequently take a special or higher education course. They were closed down in 1938] My husband, you see, had completed only five years of secondary school. His brother did manage to set him up in a *rabfak*, from which he actually graduated with distinction! After that, however, he didn't enrol in the Agricultural Institute, as his brother had urged him to do, but in the Lensovet Institute of Technology. His wife had also moved to Leningrad with him, but for as long as he was studying at the *rabfak*, they didn't have a place of their own, so they had to live at his cousin's: she had a room of 12 square metres, and they'd sleep on the floor… Now, Zina couldn't find work because she didn't have a *propiska* [residence permit] for Leningrad, so they decided to register their marriage. Thanks to that, she was finally able to get a job. However, she couldn't have children. It was the result of some other affair she'd once had… But she loved my husband very much… that is, her husband… During the war, though, she was evacuated, whilst he stayed on in Leningrad. Now, he wanted very much to have children… He was obsessed with the thought that he would be killed in the war and that he wouldn't leave any descendants… You know how these things are… He really was very fond of children, and he wanted to have his own… Well, and he took up with a number of women, but none of them… None of them was willing to bear him a child. One of these women even resorted to an illegal abortion and ended up in a hospital… [Abortion had been prohibited by a law passed in 1936.] So then he met me and we saw each other for a few months – he later explained to me that what he'd wanted most of all was for me to believe him. And, you know, I did come to believe him, like… like a brother… I told him everything that I had on my mind… I told him about everything that I'd gone through in life… There's one scene from these first months which I've just remembered: we went to the cinema once… You see, he and Vasia had come into the city for the evening [presumably on leave from the Leningrad front]: after work, they invited me to come along to the cinema and then they dragged me to their place, to have supper – that is, to Lidia's place (Lidia is my cousin). But when we finished our supper, it was too late to walk home, so Lidia, who had two rooms in her communal apartment, left the two of us in this room. She had a stove which heated both rooms, and, as it was rather cold in the room she'd left us, we sat down next to the wall of the stove and talked for half the night almost. Then we noticed how late it was, and he said: "Just lie down. Don't be afraid – I won't touch you." He lay down on his side of the bed, turned his back to me, and fell asleep. That's all. And we carried on seeing each other in this way for quite a while, even sharing the same room like that night, but we… didn't live together. He later explained to me that back then he'd so wanted me to believe him and trust him completely… And when we did start living together, he'd write on his *ankety* [personal questionnaires, required when applying for work] – actually, he'd also do this before we moved in together – he'd write that it wasn't Zina who was his wife but me, and that my parents had been arrested. Can you imagine?!

- So you actually told him about your parents?

- I told him everything. Yes. I mean, he was a wonderful person, no doubt about that… But he wasn't able to get a divorce from Zina for a long time… Because she was living in

another city and hadn't sent word of where she was… So he couldn't find her… But after he eventually did manage to divorce her, we carried on living for quite a while still without… You see, I was still playing up then, I didn't want us to register our marriage yet. We argued all the time about which surname… I wanted to keep my surname, but he insisted on my adopting his – Nikiforov. And even though I refused to do so at first, he would still write everywhere that… Well, for example, when he was taken on by the Institute [of Technology], he wrote on all the *ankety* which he had to fill in that I was his wife and that my parents had suffered repression… that is, arrested… the word 'repressed' wasn't being used yet… yes, so he wrote that my parents had been 'arrested' in 1937… And later, when we were… He didn't have an easy time of it, I can assure you. At the Institute of Technology he'd been studying in the Department of Powder Technology – and when he returned there after the war… You see, after the war, they didn't trouble themselves to look through the information given on these *ankety* that carefully, and so he was able to complete his studies there. He wrote his degree thesis on "Equipment and Ammunition". Just imagine! Now, he graduated with a 'free diploma' [see note above] but wasn't able to find work anywhere. We hadn't registered our marriage yet… and as soon as the employers he'd applied to for work looked through his *anketa*, they would reject his application on the spot. Eventually, though, he managed to… Someone advised him to go to Factory No. 77, which is on the Vyborg Side – it's the Karl Liebknecht Factory… There was this chief engineer there called Dobriakov [*sic* – his name is given as Dobrin in the first interview], and my husband went to see him… As I said, before that he'd been going round to all these institutions, but no one wanted to take him on. Now, this Factory No. 77 was actually an agricultural machinery construction plant, but during the war it had been used to manufacture mortar shells: subsequently, the factory returned to its original production line, turning out agricultural equipment, but it kept one workshop – workshop No. 5, it was – which carried on assembling mortars. Anyway, so this chief engineer had a look at my husband's diploma – my husband had told him beforehand in all sincerity that wherever he'd applied so far, they had rejected him each time because of the information on his *anketa*. Dobriakov, [*sic*] however, said: "That's absurd – not to take on someone with such a diploma! Listen, do you know what? I'll give you a job." And he took him on the staff of his design office for agricultural machinery, but first sent him to Moscow, to undertake one of these three-month refresher courses. However, after completing that course, he didn't work in that design office very long: he moved to another department in the factory, to take up the post of Chief Engineer for Personnel Training. Soon, though, he left his job at that factory to undertake postgraduate study. Now, this was in… 1952… and, again, he almost came unstuck because of the information he wrote on his *anketa*! That is, he was admitted for postgraduate study, after having passed the exams, but the trouble was that at the department he'd chosen they wouldn't give him a research topic to work on… It was the Department of Ammunition!… However, the Head of the Institute's 'first department' – a certain Andrei… oh, I don't remember his surname – was a very decent fellow. Yes, even in the [secret police] organs there were good people… Now, my husband had been on the point of tendering his resignation, but that Andrei said to him: "Wait a bit, we'll find you something." He really was concerned to keep him on at the Institute, and he made him this suggestion… One day, he summoned him to his office and… You see, my husband was registered as a postgraduate student and was even receiving a grant, but all

this without actually having a research topic to work on! It had gone on like this for several months… for half a year, in fact… Just imagine how he must have felt!… But fortunately, this Andrei asked him to call at his office and made him this suggestion: "You know, the Department of Paint and Varnish Coatings has just received a research assignment entitled 'The Spontaneous Combustion of Vegetable Oils'. The trouble is that since it's got both chemistry and physics thrown in, everyone is afraid to take it on. So if you want to try your hand at it, it's all yours." My husband agreed: he was transferred to the Department of Paint and Varnish Coatings and set to work on this topic. After a few years, he was able to give a brilliant defence of his dissertation… So in spite of all these obstacles, that's how he managed to complete his higher education and not only that… Unfortunately, though, after obtaining his postgraduate degree, it was the same old story again: no one wanted to offer him employment. However, he found out that the State Research and Planning Institute [for the Paint and Varnish Industry] was setting up a branch institute here in Leningrad… and someone advised him to go to Moscow and speak with the director of the central institute. So that's what my husband did, and at the interview in Moscow the director saw clearly that he was an intelligent chap and said to him: "Look, I can't give you a senior post… but I'd be delighted to take you on as a junior research fellow." My husband said yes, and so it was that right until my parents' rehabilitation, he was officially just a junior research fellow at that branch institute here, but in reality was performing the duties of a laboratory director! [*laughs*]

- Marksena Mikhailovna, why were you so stubborn back then? – why did you refuse to have your marriage registered?

- Oh, I don't know why. I didn't want him to… No, it wasn't really that I was afraid of putting him on the spot… It's just that I had this feeling that sooner or later anyone's patience can run dry, and that he might well eventually… You see, I couldn't foresee that my parents would be rehabilitated… And I thought that he would eventually get fed up with all this, so I wanted him to be free to leave me whenever he might want to. That is, I left the door open for him, so to speak. And, moreover, I actually told him about this. I said to him: "At any time, if it gets too hard for you, I won't complain… Because I understand that it's of course impossible to live like this forever."

- And what did he say?

- He just laughed… and treated it as a joke – that's all.

- You said that he was a true Communist, didn't you?

- Yes.

- What do you actually mean by that?

- Well… that, after all, he was a member of the Party… To be honest, I don't know how much of a Communist he was, but at any rate he scrupulously discharged all the obligations that were entailed on him by his Party membership. By the way, I forgot to mention that he was admitted into the Party during the war, when he was serving in the army. Before the war, his application had been turned down – because of a conflict he had with the secretary of the Party bureau [at the Institute of Technology].

- What was the cause of this conflict?

- I don't remember what it was exactly… but this secretary taught political economy at their institute – she was a terribly nasty woman! And for some reason she… she took a dislike to him. But it wasn't only that – during the winter exam period… in 1940 or 41, I'm not quite sure which year it was… she gave him a *troika* in the exam she'd set… And

students who got *troiki*… You see, they'd introduced study fees, and those students who received *troiki* didn't qualify for grants. So he was forced to take academic leave and decided to move to Vyborg, where Zina was: there, he managed to get himself a job in a gas processing factory, as a shift engineer. Well, and that's where he was when the war started. So that's why he hadn't been able to complete his degree – all because of that rotter of a woman! But during the war, he was eventually admitted into the Party.

- When you told him about your parents, did he understand that they weren't 'enemies'?

- Yes, he did.

- So what did he make of their arrests?

- You know… That's rather difficult to explain. I mean, he understood that they weren't 'enemies' – he was aware of the whole situation, but… I don't know… It's something that you can't explain just like that. He was definitely conscious of this situation – he knew what hand Stalin had in this whole affair.

- He actually talked about that, did he?

- Well, there was *that* on the one hand… But as for the Party… that was quite another matter…

- Did he openly talk to you about Stalin?

- No… That is,… We were both of the same opinion, more or less, but we didn't have any conversations on the subject.

- So with your husband you didn't have any conversations like those you had with Rubina?

- That's right, I didn't.

- Why are you so sure then that you both felt the same about...

- Well,… It's something I was able to tell from various moments when… From various things he'd say now and then… In short, from the way he behaved, if you see what I mean.

- And he understood that there weren't any 'enemies' as such, right? That it was Stalin all along?

- Yes, yes.

- So that was the same for both of you?

- Yes, that's right, we both thought alike in this matter.

From Interview 3

Nikiforova, Marksena Mikhailovna
Interviewer: Flige, Irina Anatol'evna
29 April 2005

Cassette nr. 1, side A

[…]

- You say that your attitude didn't change in the course of the war…

- That's right. It didn't change.

- Now, this sceptical attitude towards the authorities, when did it first arise?
- Sorry, my what?
- Your sceptical attitude towards the authorities.
- Do you know what, it's actually quite recently that I've started feeling like that. Before, it was more of… That is, I did have a clear-cut opinion of the authorities, but it wasn't so much sceptical as critical. Now, as far as this scepticism is concerned… to be honest, it's only just now that it's come over me. I can't… I'm so disgusted by it all! You can't imagine how I feel! Take those 1000 rubles of Putin, say… for the war veterans – that really sickened me, you know; all I can see in it is an insult, a way of buying off people, if you see what I mean. [On 29 March 2005, during a meeting held in Orel, at which a number of ministers presented details on how the government was intending to commemorate the imminent 60th anniversary of Victory Day, President Putin promised veterans of the Great Patriotic War, who made up the greater part of the audience, that from 1 May, they (as well as former child prisoners of the Gulag and survivors of the Siege of Leningrad) would all receive 1000 rubles per month on top of their pensions] I don't know what to say! That makes me so indignant! I find it so terribly sickening! I mean… not so long ago, I was myself 'fighting'… You just can't imagine what efforts I made! To whom did I *not* write, whom did I *not* try to phone up – all whilst sitting here, at home. Yes, because of the way they're demolishing all these market stalls in our area… When, in fact, they weren't disturbing anyone at all!… They're not even stalls, they're just pavilions. And, besides, they're all private property. I found out for myself how this woman had built these stalls with her own money, and she had every right to exploit them. But now they're tearing them down! They even wanted to demolish our polyclinic and hospital…
- Yes, I know about that.
- Oh, you've heard about it? So there again… I even wrote to the public prosecutor. That was already the second time they'd floated the idea of demolishing our hospital. And I'm not too sure that there won't be a third attempt sometime in the future. Someone obviously wants to use this plot of land, and they aren't going to let a hospital get in their way… Even though there's a memorial cemetery there. Yes, there's one on that territory, too. But no! Someone had to take over that land… It's a terrible disgrace! What a frightful nightmare! This all makes me so sick! Oh, I'm as mad at them as a dog! [*laughs*]
- But what about your *critical* attitude towards the authorities then? When did that first arise?
- My critical attitude? Well, just now, more or less… Perhaps a year ago… or thereabouts.
- Yes, but I mean earlier – was it when Kirov was murdered, or when your stepfather… when your parents were arrested, or during the war?
- Oh you mean that – well, I knew the cause of that. I knew the cause, and that it was of course impossible to do anything about it. If my parents hadn't been able to do anything, what could I have done?… And, besides, Stalin, after all, did… Of course, one can judge him however one wants to, but it can't be denied that he did play his part in the war. One has to admit that, after all. Yes, thanks to his authority, his power, he definitely achieved… I mean, I know that the military blame him for a lot of things… and they also blamed him back then, too – I know that… Because of the way some operations were delayed, since they had to be submitted for the Supreme Commander's approval first.

Yes, and timing was essential then… Of course, many disgraceful things happened at the time… And, besides, I was aware of them already then. I knew how these staffs [*sic*] and battalions were being sent into battle without sufficient weapons… I mean, this was a constant problem for our whole army… I knew how these penal battalions were being sent into battle without enough weapons to go round all the men, and how almost all of them perished… [Penal battalions consisted of soldiers and officers who were suspected of cowardice, as well as those who had committed various crimes and offences. A proportion of those Gulag prisoners who were released during the war for induction into the army were also sent to these penal battalions. They were used in the most dangerous offensives.] It's just horrible to think about it! I actually knew someone who was sent to a penal battalion and served just two or three months before he too was killed.

- Tell me, you said that you generally avoided talking about what had happened to your parents – why was that? Were you afraid or did you feel embarrassed?

- I was afraid. No, it wasn't a question of embarrassment – I was simply afraid. No, not embarrassment… because all my acquaintances, relatives, my schoolfellows – they all knew about it. I didn't try to conceal it, I told people if… But, of course, I was generally afraid that… Well, for example, I've just started trying to draw up all these various documents in some kind of order, and there are many I can't find. I'm especially sorry about that order of expulsion from Leningrad… I destroyed it, you see – I was afraid. I thought that if my place was searched, they might find it and… I actually destroyed quite a few documents at the time: for example, my brother's [Lesha's] letters and those I received from the orphanage. Then there were these horrible letters… I destroyed them, too.

- But this fear of yours… what exactly were you afraid of?

- I was just afraid…

- Afraid of being arrested?

- Yes, that's right.

- So you had specific reasons to fear that they might arrest you?

- Yes, very much so. As a matter of fact, it was something I was reckoning with every day. Because I knew that, for example, the children of this acquaintance of mine… Well, take the son of Ugarov, say – they arrested him too when he turned 16. [A. I. Ugarov (1900-1939), Secretary of the Leningrad *gorkom* under Kirov] Or, say, Iura Kadarskii – he was arrested when he turned 18. So I knew about all these cases when the children [of imprisoned or executed senior Party officials] were also arrested. That is, as long as I was under age, I might be safe, but after that I was expecting to be arrested any minute. I was prepared for that. And there was nothing I could do. There was no way I could have offered any resistance.

- So when did you stop being afraid that they might come and arrest you? After the war?

- No, it must have been later… Later… In all likelihood, after Stalin's death. Because before that I had this secret fear all the time that perhaps I would… I can't tell you exactly, but it was more or less after that point. You see, this fear followed me all the time… This [possibility of being arrested] really did exist, so that's why I couldn't help being afraid of it.