

LINE FIVE: THE INTERNAL PASSPORT
The Soviet Jewish Oral History Project of the Women's Auxiliary
of the Jewish Community Centers of Chicago

JULIA ZISSMAN UMANTSEV

Pediatrician
Medical Institute #1 of Moscow, 1948-54

BIRTH: January 27, 1929, Moscow

SPOUSE: Rudolf Umantsev, February 5, 1924, Irkutsk

Married July 10, 1949

CHILDREN: Alex, 1952, Moscow

PARENTS: Israel (Eugene) Zissman, 1898-1982, Gomel

Maria Samarovitska Zissman, 1905-1958, Poland

SIBLINGS: none

MATERNAL GRANDPARENTS:

PATERNAL GRANDPARENTS:

JEWISH ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATIONS (IF GIVEN):

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Women's Auxiliary of the Jewish Community Centers of
Chicago

NAME: **DR. JULIA ZISSMAN UMANTSEV**

DATE: June 15, 1991

INTERVIEWER: Elaine Snyderman

INTERPRETER: son, Alex Umantsev

(Julia, you were born in 1929 in Moscow. Can you tell me what you remember of your early life: what your home was like, what your parents did for a living; who lived in the home with you...) I was born in Moscow. My bother was a bookkeeper in a big factory, and my father worked as accountant at a big firm. Before the revolution he worked at a bank. But by 1929 he didn't anymore.

(At your birth he would have been thirty-one years old. What kind of house did you have, and who lived there?) We lived in a three room apartment that my mother received from

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work. Two rooms were occupied by one family, the Strausov family, very interesting people, and the third room was occupied by my family. There weren't separate bedrooms, a dining room and living room. Just three rooms, a kitchen, a bathroom, a corridor. (Was it a typical situation or better than the usual?) Just typical.

(Who took care of you when you were growing up?) At that time it was the custom to take care of all of the children in the apartment. The Strausov family took care of me. They had three kids who were older than me. It was a very interesting family because they were close relatives of the most important religious person from the Russian Orthodox Church, Archbishop of Russia. Strausov was his secretary. (So the secretary and the family would also have been Russian Orthodox, too?) Yes.

(So here you are a Jewish family and this Russian Orthodox family together. How were you treated as a child by these people?) This archbishop whose name is Alexei, who was a very well-known person because at that time he was persecuted. All types of religion were suppressed in Russia. The man was a friend of my grandfather, and was a very religious person. He liked to come to the apartment to talk to Alexei about history,

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about Torah, about Hebrew, about ancient Hebrew. Alexei knew ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, French.

(So your grandfather lived with you also in this place?) No. (But they lived nearby, and grandfather would come to visit this secretary?) No, the archbishop himself, who used to come to this apartment too. Before the war, all types of religion were suppressed, not only Jewish religion, but Russian Orthodox religion too. It was difficult. Many Russian churches were closed. Alexei, the archbishop, used to celebrate Russian religious holidays at this apartment. We would leave and go to my grandparents, and they would hold services in our rooms. And on Easter, my mother would help prepare the foods.

(I know the seder of Pesach is also the Last Supper that in the Christian religion that Jesus had before the crucifixion. So do you think that they wanted to celebrate the seder as the Last Supper prior to Easter Sunday?) No, you don't quite understand. We strictly observed all Jewish holidays at my grandparents' home. There we had all the dishes, etc. We didn't keep kosher, but everything there was kosher, so that's where we celebrated. So we never observed holidays at home, always at my grandparents. (Was there matzos then?) We always

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had matzos because my grandfather was connected with the synagogue. Some Jews didn't know what it was, but we knew.

(So as a child you knew about the Jewish traditions, and you observed them. Not that you were necessarily religious, but you had an understanding?) In general we knew. But my grandfather didn't speak Russian very much at all, and he didn't tell us much about Jewish holidays. I used to pray, and everything was done during the holiday that was supposed to be done. But somehow I picked up much more information from Aunt Strausov about Jewish traditions. She knew a lot, and used to tell me a lot about it. And because they were Russian, I knew a lot about Russian religious holidays, too.

(Was there a point in your childhood when you started to think that being Jewish in Russia was not a good thing?) Yes. That was right after the war. Sharply.

(This is a family picture that shows you as maybe two years old being held by your mother. And here is your grandfather and grandmother and father and then these are other family members, aunts and uncles of yours, and these are cousins. Now, this would be about 1931. And then you said to

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me that one of these uncles was sent to prison and another one died. Can you tell me what happened to these family members and why they died early the way they did?)

One, Moses Levitan, was a merchant who was repressed right after NEP - the New Economic Policy started by Lenin, who wanted to bring a fresh stream into the Russian economy. It was a kind of capitalism, free enterprise. Now Gorbachev would like to use some ideas of Lenin of that period, like cooperatives. It's a small private enterprise. It actually comes from that period. Moses was the owner of a big factory. He had two stores. Some kind of manufacturing.

(What happened to him?) He was arrested right after this picture was taken, 1931. And he was sent into exile in Siberia and lived in a prison camp there. He died before the war. (No one was told why he was arrested?) He lived with his parents, my grandparents. Some details were known. The government wanted to appropriate his property - his factory, stores - and of course they didn't have a legal right to do that. Their only "legal right" was to arrest him. (He was married to your mother's sister?) Right. (So the couple lived with your grandparents. Did they have children?) Yes. This boy. And

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this young man. (How did your aunt and this son of their's survive? Did your grandparents take care of them after this?) They were kicked out onto the street. Overnight. They went to the basement of the same building we lived in. The basement was often flooded. They lived in that place for many years.

[Alex: I used to know that place because my mom's aunt, my great aunt, I remember her. This is his wife, and her sister, and they lived in that apartment. I used to visit them. I remember her famous lemon cake, and tea in a very clean, bright glass. I know that for many years they lived together in this basement.]

(Two sisters and who?) Grandparents, and I lived in that apartment for a short time too. During the war we were evacuated to south Russia, and our room was occupied by a different family. Later, Alexei helped our family to get the room back. But for awhile we all lived in this basement.

(How old were you when you started to understand what the family's worries were?) Only after the war. Before the war I was so young that I didn't understand anything.

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(The war breaks out in 1941, and you are twelve years old. What happened when the war broke out in Moscow?) It was horrible, because from the very first day there were horrible bombing raids. We used to find shelter in the Moscow metro. (This is actually the metro that Stalin built, with the beautiful light fixtures and art work?) Yes, exactly. Everybody would go there with pillows, mattresses, with blankets, everything, just to spend the night and maybe a couple of days.

(Did you feel calm with your family, or was there a lot of hysteria?) Immediately when the war broke out, I was sent to the hospital to work as a nurse's aid. But at that time people started to evacuate, to leave Moscow, but my family couldn't leave because my mother at that time was chief bookkeeper of a very big electrical plant, and she had a lot of responsibilities, and a large sum of money at home, workers' salary for maybe a month, and somehow she couldn't bring this money to the bank because banks had canceled all operations. She kept this money at home and couldn't leave Moscow.

At that time it became known in Moscow that the Nazis had a strong anti-semitic policy, and that they exterminated Jews

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in the occupied territories, even in the Ukraine. Our neighbors, the Strausovs, said that they would survive, that presumably they would be able to survive the occupation if the Nazis came to Moscow, "but you Jews, you won't. We know what's going on, what the Nazis are doing with Jews, and you won't survive. You have to go, you have to leave." They helped our family to leave Moscow. It's difficult even to get a place in a train that was going south from Moscow. But we left Moscow in October 1941. It was a very dangerous time in Moscow, when the Nazis were almost in the Moscow suburbs, and cannons could even be heard in Moscow. The front was very close.

(What were your parents saying to you at this time?) It was a time for speeches, not for talking. I worked at the hospital from morning til night, and mama was at work. We just didn't see each other. When we got our chance to leave Moscow, my father took me immediately when I came back from work, and we left the house as we were.

(You seem to still feel what you felt at that moment.) It was a horrible period of time. (Where did you go and how long did it take?) We didn't know where we were going because they just pushed us into the wagon and that was it. We were

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supposed to get to Tashkent because that's where mother's factory had been evacuated to. We travelled for four months. (Staying on the train?) Not because of a slow train, but because we didn't have legal documents, or tickets, and the people who helped us to travel tried to do the best they could. They were friends of Alexei. We stopped at a station and had to spend some time there to live in the country. We lived in a church. Winter came and we had to spend some time there. My mother had all papers and documents of this factory, and she wanted to reach the place where the rest of the factory workers were so she could hand over all the documents to the head of the factory. It could be considered a crime to lose all those documents. It could cost you your life.

When we got to Tashkent, mother handed over the documents. She worked full-time at the factory and after that job she would go work at a meat processing plant, a slaughterhouse, and there she did the laundry for the workers. She washed their clothes by hand. She did that from seven at night until seven in the morning. This was how we lived.

(Was this typical? Was this expected of workers there?)
We didn't have enough money to live on. Food was distributed

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by ration cards at work. So she had to work another shift in order to get more ration cards. If you were a blue-collar worker at the same plant, you would have different benefits, bigger portions, more ration cards. But my mother was a white-collar worker. She worked as a bookkeeper, so she had a different packet of benefits, much smaller, and it wasn't enough to feed the family. We worked at this place and at that place we could get bones. Meat was used for different places. (They were probably sending meat to the military.) To the front maybe. But so sometimes we could get bones, which was important to the family.

(So your mother got very little sleep, and you were up all night. Were you able to go to school during this period?) Yes. We lived in a very intellectual Uzbek family, very rich. The man had four wives. (Was the man Islamic?) Yes. We lived in Tashkent with his main, first wife.

At the same time he had a big estate, with gardens, where the three other wives lived with their younger children. The main wife lived in Tashkent with teenagers who went to school. The children went to Russian schools, learned Russian, French, English. They taught music too. I lived with them. I

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attended the same grade as one of the man's oldest daughters. She was my friend. In the summer, all members of the family would leave Tashkent and go to the estate. To live there was something very special, except for working in the garden. But I had to wear a *chadra*, the traditional Islamic dress for women. A Jewish girl who had to wear this outfit! I had forty-two braids, the whole thing. You had to look like one of them or you could be killed!

(Why did these people take you in?) They loved my family. (But how did you get connected?) They spoke very good Russian. When we got to Tashkent there was something like a law in effect. People in these regions had to take in evacuees. My mother helped this man with his bookkeeping, and I worked in their garden. Because of that, he gave some rice and other food to our family for the whole winter.

(Father wasn't there?) He came at the very end of the war. (What was he doing during most of the war?) In general, we don't know. He didn't leave with the family. He doesn't know what he was doing either. He came back only at the end of the war. (Do you think what he was doing was secret?) No. Maybe he wanted to spend his time on his own. In 1942, we wanted to go back to Moscow, but we couldn't get permission

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because the factory was still in Uzbekistan, in Tashkent, but still we wanted to get back. And the Strausov family helped get us the permission to get back to Moscow. We lived for a time in the basement we talked about earlier, and then we got our apartment back.

(I have one point of confusion. I have that the grandmother died in 1936, but I hear you mention that grandmother was with you?) [Alex: No, I mean my grandmother, Julia's mother.] (So it's really just the two of you.) Right. (So the Strausov family helped you again. Thanks to them you do get back to your apartment. Your father has joined you in Tashkent toward the end of the war. How long does it take you to get back to Moscow from Tashkent?) Two days. We had fruit, clothing, pillows.

(You said to me that it was only after the war that you began to feel anti-semitism. So you're now fifteen years old.) Yes. (Can you tell me what happened after the war? You go back to school, back to a "normal" life. How did you first become aware of this anti-semitism?) I was already in the tenth grade, and I had to get into the medical college. Then it became clear that this type of education was prohibited for

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Jews. Those colleges were closed for Jews. (This is the first time this starts to happen in Communist Russia.) Right. (After 1920 or so. But you did get into the medical institute. How did this happen?) [laughing] By virtue of my husband. (When did you enter the medical institute?) I entered in 1948, and finished in 1954.

(When did you meet Rudolf?) In 1947. I got married in 1949. (you met at some sort of party? He saw you?) I was in love with a Russian boy who was in the tenth grade with me. It was mutual. My mother was working all day long and didn't want to leave me home alone, so she sent me to the suburbs, to her cousin's family, Jacob. He was maybe a second cousin. His last name was Rothstein. I lived there for a certain period, and met Rudolf there. We are distant relatives. Now very many relatives from different sides of the family are here in Chicago. We're not blood relatives, we're related by marriage.

(Rudolf said that you were worried about your mathematics and they he was good in math. Was he a good tutor?) Oh yes! (He said that you really did have trouble.) [she laughs] (But nevertheless you were good enough to get into the medical institute. How did he help you do that?) In addition to my

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[future] husband, I had other tutors in biology, in physics, and chemistry. Those people worked for the institute I wanted to get into, and they knew what was necessary to pass the exams. [Alex: This was a typical thing, especially for Jews, to find tutors. It was always necessary to be two levels higher than average. That's why it was necessary to study with a tutor.]

(He helped you to get in. Were you being funny or being serious?) By tutoring. (The young man you wanted to marry was not Jewish?) Not Jewish. (And your mother didn't want you to marry a Russian?) Right. (How did know him?) From school. We were friends for a long time. (For him it wasn't important that you were Jewish?) No. Who knows? Because later he started to work for nuclear industry. And for that it would be important not to have Jewish relatives in the house.

(Did you experience any discrimination now after the war, in school until the institute?) Of course. The entrance examinations for the institute - I worked hard and passed them all very well, and in the application I wrote that I would like to be a gynecologist. But in spite of my will and good test results, they pushed me into a different department - the

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pediatric department, which I didn't want to enter. At that moment everybody wanted to become gynecologists, so you had to be very good to do this. But even though I passed the tests well, they wouldn't let me do what I wanted to do. They didn't have enough students for the department of pediatrics. That's why I became a pediatrician.

(Once you went into that, were you still unhappy or did you find some satisfaction in that work?) I did find some satisfaction. (While you were a student, and when you finished, were you treated like the other students?) Inside our student community and among our teachers, I didn't feel outright anti-semitism or any kind of different treatment. They didn't show anything. But all the Jewish students, five or so among two hundred students in our department - we knew our place exactly. Because we were Jews, we knew that not everything was allowed. We couldn't go outside certain borders.

(How did you find this out? How did you know?) I tried to take a specific class. I wrote an application, but was refused, and I was put in a completely different one. It happened with almost all of us Jewish students. (You mean if Russian students applied for the class, they got in? They gave

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the places to the Russians first, is that it?) Yes, of course. Russians didn't have any problems.

This is something very sensitive. You prefer not to be refused. It's frustrating. That's why before applying for these sorts of things, we would try to investigate if it was even possible for a Jew to get into this class. We tried to talk to assistants, to people who worked in that laboratory, asking, "Is it possible for Jews? What's the policy?" It usually depended on the professor. If we found out a certain professor accepted Jews, then we would write applications and try to get into this course. If somehow we found out that this professor doesn't accept Jews, we would just give up.

(1954 is when you finished. 1947 you met Rudolf. And you were married in 1949. So you were married while you were a student?) Yes. (Alex was born in 1952, so you were still in school?) Yes! (How did you manage to take care of him?) Mostly my husband. At that time he was writing his dissertation, so he could spend time at home studying and taking care of Alex. My mother helped too on the weekends. We lived with my in-laws, but my mother worked all day long as the head of a gynecology department. She thought that work was the most

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important thing in the world, and it's necessary to work until you die. She paid less attention to Alex.

(We're going to go back to the family photograph. The first man we talked about was standing up in the back row. He was the second man from the right. And the other person we're talking about is first to the left. What was his name?) Pavel Somorovitsky. (What happened to him?) He was a great Communist. He was shot. (In what year?) In 1937. They came during the night, rung the bell, picked him up. (Who is this?) KGB. But at that time the militia and KGB were mixed in together. In two days we stopped receiving letters and his packages weren't picked up. Nobody knew why, what the reason was.

(What was his occupation?) He worked in Moscow in a big Party committee, maybe the Moscow or the Central Party Committee. (So this was at the top of the hierarchy?) Right. (The apparatus?) Right, the apparatus. The Moscow and Central Apparatus would be close. Everything was a secret. No one knew exactly what his responsibilities were. (How old was he?) He was young, maybe twenty-seven. The son was born after he was shot. The boy never knew his father. (What happened to

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them - the wife and child?) She was exiled to Karaganda, in the Eastern Soviet Union for several years. Later my mother helped them to come back. Again, the archbishop Alexei helped to bring the family back.

[Alex: We'd been talking about Moses Levitov. His wife was Liza.] (And Pavel's wife's name?) Sonya. (Who are these people?) This is me with my nanny's mother.

[Alex: Just a small thing about the Levitov family. The son Izrail, his daughter is now in Israel. She emigrated to Israel twenty years ago. Her husband was a dissident in Russia. Somehow he was connected with Sakharov and when they were leaving Russia Sakharov, maybe, helped them. I remember their marriage. (How old were you?) I was maybe five or six years old. (Was it a Jewish wedding at all?) No. They lived close to our apartment. (So her name was Natasha Levitan.) And she married Ilya Rubin. But he passed away in five years after they left Russia. (Around 1981 or so.) Maybe earlier.]

(Did you have any trouble getting an assignment that you wanted when you finished the medical institute?) [laughs] Oh yes! They sent me to the worst, most difficult region in

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Moscow with prostitutes and criminals all over the place. Theft, corruption. (Was this the highest crime rate?) Yes. (What is this place called?) "Marina Roshcha." Marina is a name, and *roshcha* is a grove. It is a very well-known region.

There were different kinds of prostitutes - those who worked at the railway station, at the markets or shops, and those who worked around the churches. They were excellent mothers. They liked me as a doctor. The streets were completely dirty, with no lights at all. It was slippery with ice. I would go there at night, but wasn't afraid. When they knew that the doctor was coming, they asked the people in the region who were criminals and so on, that they had to come to bring the doctor to them and see that the doctor was protected, not only against other people, but also because it was slippery and dangerous. Stairs were bad. They would carry my bag full of instruments. I came in and saw a bandit gang busy dividing their spoils. I said, "Go away, I have to look at the child." And they picked up their things and quietly left. I knew almost everybody from that society. They were good to their kids.

[Alex: I remember an episode that mom told me about the institute.] It was 1952. Doctor Spock's article comes out in

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the newspaper. Everything came through the paper. Two days later I had to pass a test. It was a test on criminal medicine. But not medicine, another word. (Investigative medicine? We call that forensic. When you investigate from the medical information criminal matters. That's forensic medicine.) I was taking this exam. The teacher looked in my documents and said, "Oh, Umantseva, is that your pseudonym?" with this special Jewish accent. My maiden name is specifically Jewish, but my husband's name isn't specifically Jewish. That's why he asked me this. His idea was that she was trying to hide her Jewish origin. He was a real anti-semite.

I finished medical college with good grades. I should have been able to get an assignment at that college, in the same department for research. Instead of that, I was sent to Marina Roshcha. (So they took away your choice?) I started to work at that department doing research for two years. But later when I graduated and it was a question of documents and formal application procedure and so on, of course my nationality was the most important thing, and they just took away my choice and gave me this other assignment. I didn't want to accept it but I didn't have any other choice.

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(What about membership in the Communist party? Would you have been allowed to join if you had wanted to?) No. For Jews it wasn't allowed. My husband became a Communist in 1942 when the situation was absolutely different. Now being a party member was considered a privilege, and Jews weren't allowed. There was a moment when I wanted to join the Communist party. With this membership, I could get a better position. At that time I worked for a clinic. I could be the head of a pediatric department. I was young and full of energy. I had a lot of experience. I studied for two years at a clinic after the institute, and got a higher degree. I wanted to be a head of a department. But they didn't take the application. At that moment, no.

I wanted to increase my level of knowledge of my field. I wanted to study more, to reach another educational level. But they didn't accept my application for many years, until a special law was issued. The law said that a doctor cannot work as a physician if he doesn't increase his level. It is necessary to update your knowledge. It was many years before I could do this.

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(How long did you work in the Marina Roshcha area?) Five years! (From 1954 to 1959.) Yes.

(In 1958 your mother died?) Yes. (Had she been ill?) She had very high blood pressure and died of a stroke. (But she was only fifty-three years old.) Yes.

(What were your living conditions at this time? Who lived in the apartment?) Alex can tell this. [Alex: It was a big four room apartment, close to the Jewish theater on the same street. Two rooms were occupied by one family, and two rooms by our family. Our family was my parents, me, and my grandma.] It was more or less satisfactory because the family had their own room.

(At this time in your life, after those five years, where did you go?) My mother-in-law was the head of the Department of Gynecology of a very prestigious place. She worked for the clinic of the Department of Railroad Transportation in the USSR, where everything depends on the departmental structure. My mother-in-law had some possibilities. She could get a position for me at the same place. (So there was an opening

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and you filled it?) It's not quite like that. Not a competition. If there is a position there she let me know. It is a question of two people, the head of one department and the director of the whole organization who says he can accept her daughter-in-law or whatever. I then worked for this clinic for thirty-five years.

(Were you happy in that place?) Yes. (What was a typical work day for you?) I got up at six in the morning. My husband left for work at seven o'clock. I left for work at eight. For three hours I would have office hours. In the afternoons I did rounds of house calls. (Did these patients pay the clinic or you, or was this something the State gives the patient?) I never saw money. (What about medicine, a prescription?) I wrote prescriptions, and the patient has to pay for it. (What time would you finish your rounds?) The working day is six-and-a-half hours. In case of an emergency, of course we had to work long hours either at the hospital or at people's homes. Then nurses would come out to help us.

Sometimes among my patients were kids of high-ranked parents who worked for the department of Railroad Transportation. Kids of the Minister, Vice-Minister. Sometimes it was necessary to go there because they lived in dachas outside of Moscow.

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Sometimes I would stay there overnight with the children. If the child had to go to the hospital, then doctors from our clinic had to go there and stay with the child in the hospital, in spite of the fact that the hospital has its own physicians and pediatricians. (So would you actually stay overnight at a hospital?) It wasn't necessary to stay overnight, but just to visit. (But sometimes you were away overnight outside of Moscow, but typically, what time did you get home at night?) If it was a morning shift, then I got off at four. I'd get home at five or six because I had to do the shopping. If it was an evening shift, I left at one in the afternoon and got home at eight-thirty. (How long did it take you to shop? How many days a week did you go shopping?) Every day. (How many days a week did you work?) Five days a week plus two Saturdays a month.

(Who cooked?) I did. And the cleaning and the laundry. (How did you do your laundry?) What period of time is this? (Say, the Fifties.) In 1962 we got a different apartment. We got one of our own, although we still lived with my father. But it was a relief because it was one for our whole family. At that point living conditions changed a little bit. In the late 1950's and 1960's, at that time I had to do everything by

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hand. We didn't know about washing machines and dryers. Refrigerators, yes. When we got a new apartment, soon we bought a washing machine.

(So it was physically very hard on you for those years? How much sleep did you get a night?) I went to bed at eleven or eleven-thirty and had to get up at six. (You never stopped moving while you were awake?) [laughs] Yes.

(In the 1960's, did you have any sense of anti-semitism around you or were you reading any books in *samizdat*? What was going on with your intellectual and political life?) First of all, anti-semitism was overwhelming [literally terry cloth, dyed-in-the-wool. -sk]. (Were you worried about the history of *pogroms* and things like that?) Yes.

A Jewish cemetery close to the place where I met my husband - it was a Jewish community. (What was it called?) Malakhavka. There is a song about this place, that lots of Jews live there and build houses.

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I got a very good, high-level education. I wanted to become head of a department and maybe change my place of work. But I couldn't.

(A cemetery?) Lots of books from *samizdat* were circulating in our family. At that moment some of our relatives started to emigrate from Russia to Israel and one of my relatives who was a physician going to Israel invited her. He said that he would try to prepare a position for her. At that time it wasn't very difficult, but we didn't do it. (Why not? What year was this?) This was early 1970's. I really wanted to! My husband didn't want to.

[Alex: I wanted to go too, but I was a young person, not one with a voice in the family. I had graduated from school in 1969. In the early 1970's I was just a first-year student. But still I was a young guy. This question arose in the family from time to time, but not strongly, because we all knew that dad wouldn't go. Maybe he was tied to the country. Of course his mother was there, his roots. If there was an origin that won the game, it was my mom's side that decided to emigrate. I think there are two sides inside each person.]

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(The 1970's and 1980's - are there any moments that stand out in your mind politically or in the family history that you would like to include in this history? Any events that remain in your mind as very important? The Yom Kippur war in 1973 elicited hostility from Russians. The Soviets supported the Arab states.) [Alex: But it was much stronger during the Six-days war in 1967. It was a much more difficult situation.]

Maybe not directly, but we were interested in everything. We knew things, listened to Voice of America and Voice of Israel.

(When Sakharov was arrested and banished to Gorky, since you had family that knew him, how did you feel about that? Were you upset by that?) Of course we were on Sakharov's side. We were very upset. Of course almost everybody in our family understood how bad it was, how unjust.

(He's released in 1986. He's "rehabilitated." By this time you're very serious about leaving the country. Alex and Lilia are thinking of leaving by 1986. Did you know that you'd convince your husband to leave when they left?) It wasn't necessary to try to convince him to leave because I was sure that when my son left the country the question would be solved for me and for my husband automatically. The place doesn't

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matter, America, Israel or the moon. We would leave the country with our children.

(1986. A number of things happened. There was the Chernobyl disaster. It was around that time that *glasnost* started. Which came first or were they connected in some way?)
[Alex: They were not connected directly, but some kind of events like Party Congress was prior to the disaster and *glasnost* had been announced before the accident. But even if it was announced, not so many things had happened. And the Chernobyl was like an explosion for *glasnost* because it was like a test.]

(As a doctor, when you heard the news about Chernobyl, what was your reaction about the way the government handled the problem, and about how they continue to handle the problem?)
As a doctor I was familiar with nuclear medicine, with treatment after radiation exposure. We treated children who were affected by exposure to radiation. (So they sent the children to Moscow?) Yes. (How soon were you seeing the casualties from Chernobyl?) In five days.

Julia Umantsev

(What did they look like?) They had various problems. They didn't send the worst to us. This wasn't chemotherapy; that was done in other places with the equipment. We had to test children with a small degree of infection, the children who weren't affected strongly. (What were their symptoms?) Mostly blood was affected. Changes in the blood. Their skin had not been affected yet, five days after. Just minor problems with the blood. This is the kind of disease that evolves gradually. Now those children are in the most serious of situations. (Did you continue to see these children until you left?) All the time. (What developed from these changes in the blood?) Leukemia in varying degrees. (You weren't worried about Moscow children, just children from the region around Chernobyl?) Not Muscovites.

(What is your personal philosophy of life? You're well-educated, you've lived through a lot, you've had an opportunity to reflect from a distance now on your life in the Soviet Union. So we want to know what your personal philosophy?) It was all very, very difficult and complicated. I can't formulate my personal philosophy because it's hard to go through all that and describe how complicated it was.

Julia Umantsev

(What kept your family strong and together?) A great love among us.

(What do you hope for the future here?) That all my family and relatives will be healthy and happy. I don't see anything interesting ahead for me. I think I've passed through everything. Just for us to be together. (What do you hope for Boris?) Hopefully he'll have an absolutely different life. I'm glad he won't have the same difficulties that Alex had. [Alex: But all my difficulties cannot be compared with the life of my parents. They are on a different level.]

I hope Boris will have a different sort of life.

(What do you miss of Russia?) Nothing.

(Here, do you think it's important for the family to be part of a Jewish community, or doesn't it matter to you?) Unfortunately, I'm interested mostly in my family, in everything inside the family, and this is just the close circle of my interests. I understand that I don't think much about life outside the family. That makes the question hard to answer,

Julia Umantsev

because it's a question outside the family. I'm different from the person that was in Russia.

(Is there something that I didn't ask you that I should have asked, something you would like to raise now before we close the interview?) No. (Thank you very much....)