

Lev A. (Abramovich) Vulis

Memoir By Ida Vulis, Lev's wife

Lev A. Vulis was born in the small town of Peski, Volkovysk district, Grodno province, which was then Ukraine, now Poland, on the early morning of August 7, 1912. His father, Abram I. Vulis, was a doctor; his mother, Bella Tsibikmakher Vulis, was a dentist. His older brother David (Davi) was born in 1910.

I remember a rhyme by Davi: "Reddish eyebrows, Nose – a potato, Silly you silly, My brother Levoshka!"

When Lev was about a year old, the family moved to Zhitomir, Ukraine. At 2-3 years old, he would enter the room where patients waited to be seen and, feeling pity for them, would kiss their hands. If Davi saw this, he would call their mother: "Mom, come quick! Your favorite is kissing hands again!"

In Zhitomir in 1925, Lev completed seven years of school. As technical schools accepted students from 14, he spent a year at home. He graduated from the industrial technical school in 1929, specializing in heat engineering. He worked for three years as the Chief Heating Engineer at the Baranovich Porcelain Factory, where he was known as the "God of Fire." There, he developed a new porcelain firing technology, applying a transparent paint that turned black after firing. On his first vacation, he brought his mother a set named "Black Rose". I keep the remnants of it.

In 1934, Lev moved to Leningrad. He began working at TEP (ThermoEnergyProject Institute), where I worked then, and that's where we met. In the evenings Lev studied taking undergraduate and graduate courses. A year later, with Academician A.F. Ioffe's help, he was admitted, as a sophomore, to the Polytechnic Institute's Physical Engineering department, specializing in Thermophysics.

On March 7, 1934, I turned 20. A note from Lev: "To little Idochka, entering the third decade, and to her sweet mother on Idochka's birthday, my sincere congratulations, Leva."

We married on October 7, 1934, registering our marriage at the Leningrad Bureau of Civil Status. I wore a black dress - I just liked the black color. When we came home, my father asked me why did I decide to be marrying wearing black... We had our wedding on October 12, 1934.

My father always treated my husband not as a son-in-law but as a beloved and respected son and friend. I marvel at my father's understanding and support, providing a separate room for Lev to study, believing in him, a student just starting his third year. In that room my husband happily studied and completed his undergraduate and graduate programs in 1934-1941. The room had a desk near the window, chair, bookcase, two armchairs, and a phonogram. Yes, there was also a phonogram- a tall mahogany cabinet with a pipe, with a winding capacity of six records. It had an amazing sound, and we had a large collection of rare records. My father bought it especially for me. It is now that I talk a lot, in those years I used to be very shy, and my father intended for music to fill the silence and encourage me to speak. My father loved music and songs, but regretfully, he could not sing. I think that poetry was his substitution for singing, he enjoyed poetry, which he read and knew very well.

Our daughter Inna (Innochka) was born in September 1935. I saved the notes sent to me in the maternity hospital.

On September 12, 1935, Lev wrote: "My little Dusenka, my sun, my dear! Well done! Congratulations, I KISS YOU!! Can't wait to see you. Don't worry now, don't cry, gain strength! Write to us, darling, how you are. I'm so proud of you!! My beloved, I long to see you and the little girl whom I can't imagine but love warmly and tenderly! Sorry for the nonsense I write! Many kisses! Yours, Lev."

On September 13, 1935, my father wrote: "My Dusenok! We will bring everything tomorrow. Take care of yourself and my little blue-eyed baby. I am calm, but will be completely calm when my Dusya and my little white blue-eyed are home. Grandpa A[bram]. (Don't read "Lev" on your husband's note, read "the happy one.")

My brother wrote: "To Idochka and Innochka Vulis. I can't wait to see you and Innusya, Please write how you both feel, and when do you think, you'll be discharged. My classes are fine, I got B in German today. Please write if you are well, and how is Innusya, Many kisses!".

On June 27, 1938, Lev graduated, par excellence, from the Polytechnic Institute and was admitted to postgraduate studies. His diploma thesis was recommended for publication. He combined his postgraduate studies while working at the Central Boiler and Turbine Institute (CBTI) under Professor G.F. Knorre. At the same time, he began teaching at the Leningrad Technological Institute.

On the night of July 13-14, 1938, my father was arrested, "taken away" as they said then. He was a hard worker and patriot, often saying: "You are lucky, you have the

opportunity to study freely"... He himself went through a lot in his youth: "rights for settlement," "percentage norm - quotas" – and all of that while studying. He was sentenced to "ten years without the right of correspondence" – these words were used to hide from us what was eventually done to him – an execution. In 1958 we sent several letters – requests for information and received a "rehabilitation paper" that dashed our faint hopes for seeing my father alive. "For lack of a criminal composition... rehabilitated posthumously." We brought this rehabilitation letter here; it is stored in my archive. It states that if it gets lost, this paper will not be renewed [no copy will be provided].

After my father's arrest, my husband and I began helping my mother, and continued until the end of his life.

In 1941, the war began, and Lev volunteered. He dug trenches near Leningrad, but after a few weeks he was recalled to work at a secret [research] institute. With this institute, we evacuated in the last echelon leaving Leningrad before the blockade started. We could take only the most necessary things and suffered greatly during evacuation (1941-1943). Despite the difficulties, Lev continued scientific research and defended his Ph.D. thesis in 1944. On January 17, 1944, by the decision of the Council of the Leningrad Polytechnic Institute, he was awarded the scientific degree of Candidate of Technical Sciences [PhD]. We returned from evacuation to Moscow, where Lev continued his scientific research (1944-1950).

On January 5, 1946, Levushka was appointed as an associate professor in the department of "Jet Engines." In 1946, he defended his doctoral thesis, and on July 12, 1947, he was awarded the scientific degree of Doctor of Technical Sciences [highest scientific degree in Russia] and was confirmed as a professor in this department. During these years, he also served as a professor at the Moscow Aviation Institute, taught at the Moscow Mechanical Institute, and at the Military Air Academy.

In Moscow, on October 12, 1948, our daughter Irina was born. Our living conditions were [less than] modest - six people in one room of 17 square meters. There were three other families in the apartment, sharing with us a kitchen and bathroom. In this room, we lived for seven long years: Levushka's parents, we, and initially one, then two daughters. Despite these difficulties, we lived in love and harmony.

In 1949-1950, the government-sponsored antisemitism began to develop in the country, and Jews were being dismissed from their jobs under various pretexts. During this time, Grandfather Abram received a letter from his brother in America and, without thinking, replied. This was enough for Levushka to lose his job.

While looking for another job, Levushka continued to work on his book in the evenings. His first book, "Thermodynamics of Gas Flows," was published in 1950. In this book, the theory of gas flow transition through critical speed was developed, detailing the contrast between subsonic and supersonic flows. For the first time, the general conditions for transition through the speed of sound ("the law of [thermodynamic] status reversal") were formulated.

Unable to find scientific work in Moscow, in 1951 Levushka voluntarily relocated to Alma-Ata and began working at the Kazakh State University (KazGU). At that time, construction of an apartment building [scholar's building"] was started for the KazGU employees. Until that building was completed, Levushka lived in a postgraduate dormitory, worked a lot, missed us, and wrote us letters. In 1952, the building was completed, and I moved to Alma-Ata with our daughters, while Levushka's parents stayed in Moscow. In the scholars' building, we got a good apartment - three large rooms with two balconies; the kitchen was shared with one family – Nadezhda Petrova, a professor of physics, and her daughter Lyuda, a few months older than Irina.

At KazGU, Levushka established the Department of General and Molecular Physics and later, a Thermal Physics Laboratory, which he headed for over ten years. Simultaneously, Levushka ran the Laboratory of Physical Foundations of Thermal Processes he had established at the Institute of Power Engineering of the Academy of Sciences of Kazakhstan.

[The Doctor's Plot]

Today (05/16/1990), on the 37th anniversary of the death of my dear husband's father, my father-in-law, Abram Vulis, I received the book by Ya. L. Rappoport "At the Turn of Two Epochs. The Doctors' Plot of 1953..."

*From Wikipedia: "The **Doctors' plot** was an alleged conspiracy to eliminate the leadership of the Soviet Union by means of a number of identified doctors (those selected were mostly Jewish) poisoning them. After the death of Stalin in March 1953, the new Soviet leadership declared that the case was fabricated."*

It was a terrible time; we were already in "voluntary exile" in Alma-Ata. On January 13, 1953, Innusya fell ill and stayed home, unaware of the "plot" that had already been announced. We didn't have a radio then, we had only been living in Alma-Ata for about a year and were afraid of everything. It was Katya, the German housemaid that came to us every other day, who secretly told us about the "plot", sincerely believing in the truth of this matter about Jewish doctors-criminals.

The next day, when Innusya went to school, this "plot" was already being acted-out there. All Jewish girls (it was a girls' school) were being urged to feel ashamed for belonging to these heartless monsters. The most eager were the history teacher and one student, Shura (a baptized Jew). Innusya regretted all her life that she did not dare to speak out in defense of the Jews. No one dared to say anything in our surroundings...

However my father-in law, Abram Vulis, was not afraid; he dared. He openly said that he worked with Dr. Kogan and his wife [who were Jewish] and he did not believe a single word written in the government newspapers about these doctors. He spoke fearlessly, with his characteristic impulsiveness, which was very prominent whenever he encountered lies or anti-Semitism. I remember several such cases when we lived in terrible conditions in Moscow in a single 17-square-meter room, six of us, for long seven years. There were three more families in the apartment, all Russian, all of them believed in the truth in "Pravda. [main government newspaper]"

My deeply respected and dear father-in-law died in Moscow on May 7 of that year 1953. The "doctors' plot" shocked him. It killed him.

Today I received a book about this, and I vividly remembered all the horror of those days, the pogrom atmosphere, and all the hardships that fell to my husband's family, to our daughter, to all of us.

What will happen next, will it be better for Jews? Anti-Semitism is coming back, again...

About Israel.

Israel, its government, its land which the Jews got after 2,000 years of exile.

Why is this that now when Israel is already 52 years old, when its population grew from 500,000 people to 6, 000,000, when the country became much stronger, why do they try to give the land of Israel away? This is the land which G-d gave to Abraham descendants with no restrictions. Why do they try to give this holy land to Arabs? They know very well that there is no hope to achieve any peace, any good relationship with them.

I think that the country of Israel lost an idea of its existence, and a country which has lost its idea will perish. I have an example of Russia.

Russia had an idea for over 300 years - Christianity, monarchy, nation. Russia was a strong, rich country. It fed Europe with its bread. It built the biggest railroad system in a short time. Its industry was developing quickly.

After the revolution Soviet Union had an idea of communism - equal rights for everyone. It was based on dictatorship, fear, and terror against anybody who did not fit into the rigid standards, anybody who did not follow the strict orders exactly, who was slightly different, and who was separate from a gray crowd. An intelligentsia was destroyed, driven away, and even the word "intelligent" was considered a curse.

What's going on in Israel? During the years of exile only faith and books kept people connected, it was a miracle. Now Israel lost this idea. Why are not Arabs embarrassed to wear their traditional head wears, why are they united, and why are the Jews so disconnected and try to get rid of its Jewry, its land? Why does neither Netanyahu nor Barak wear kippa? Why do they protect Arabs from its own people? Is it the psychology of the "galut" that wins in Israel? Then Israel will perish.

But I hope that He, our Lord, He will not let Israel perish, and I am waiting for a miracle, salvation, understanding and respect to come. Meanwhile the anti-Semitism is growing.

Something else about Israel.

Sophia Ron is the best Israeli contemporary journalist in my opinion. She wrote in the article "On ruins of post-Zionism", August 16, 2000:

"A destruction of the old system of values always brings about a growth of crime".

Live and learn! A growth of crime in Israel! It was unimaginable so far, and the same is happening in the United States where President Clinton destroyed the moral values.

From the same article: "A society that rejected an ideology that justified its right on existence makes itself vulnerable not only to external enemies but also to murderers and rapists."

Two short notes.

"A misfortune is a good school. But happiness is the best university. It completes an upbringing of a soul, its capacity for kindness and perfection." - From the letter of Pushkin (*Great Russian poet*) to Natshokin, 1834.

When you reach an old age, don't despair, the old age will pass too...