

Interview with Lydia Kamendrovsky, 1982 (comments watching photos)

With my [Masha Alexandra van der Heyde] comments as [MvdH]

Russia

- This was our estate, Virga. In those days, it took three days to go by horse and carriage from our city Nizhny Lomov, to Moscow.
- This is a matchbox from our factory. They were made by hand and put into the boxes, each box containing the same amount. My father was very proud. He made it possible for women to work at home, so they could have their own income.
- The Communists then took over our factories and called them Hercules. It became owned by the state. But that was after we left.

Escape

- This is a picture of Kislovodsk. See, when we left in 1917, we thought it would only be for a little time. We only had our summer clothes with us. We went to the Caucasus, to Kislovodsk. We stayed here for five years, and I had typhoid. Then we escaped with five families behind each other with horses and carriages through the snow. It was very hard and dangerous. We had to walk for a while as well. General Shatiloff was there. In Sochi, he danced the polka with his mother. My mother and Shura [Alexandra MvdH] were not with us. Mother couldn't leave; she was sick with typhoid. They stayed in the Caucasus. Eventually, they went to Moscow. [How Alexandra and Mother escaped, I learned through Marina Chatsky MvdH]

- This is a picture from Georgia. We lived there after Kislovodsk. [Where they lived and whose house it was, I learned through the passport which they used during their escape MvdH] From Batumi, Georgia, we took the last French boat. It was not for passengers, but for coal. We slept in hammocks above the coals and stopped everywhere to load. I was only with my father and brothers. Our boat was very full. We went to Constantinople, stayed there for three days, then to Marseille and Paris. We stayed for a little while in Auteuil. Father still had money in Japan. He had sold matches to Japan and went to pick up that money.

Berlin

- This is a picture of Berlin, where we went next and where my family started an import-export business. When Mother finally escaped, she decided to stay in France. But we lived in Berlin. I went to a high school here. I already spoke German, we had a German governess called Frieda.

- This is a picture of my brother Volodja [Vladimir MvdH]. See, the import-export business also did business in Morocco. Volodja went to Casablanca as a representative. My other brother, Mitja [Dmitry MvdH], went to study engineering in Belgium, Liege, thanks to our Wrangel. As a child, he already played with Meccano. Paris

- This is Djiguite. The restaurant we opened in Paris. I was a mannequin in Paris. The fashion was very thin at the time, and I had size 36. But the French were not allowed to give jobs to many foreigners, so it was very hard to find something. I made hats, I braided shoes. When someone was sick, I also helped out in Djiguite, and after that, I often helped at the restaurant. The restaurant was very popular. Many Russians came, but also many artists and many foreigners.

- One day, a Dutchman came. When we went to the lavatories to wash his hands, he talked to me. He told me he came from the Dutch Indies, and I told him that must be a very interesting country. The

following day, I wasn't feeling well, so I didn't work. When I came the day after, the Dutchman had left me Lilies of the Valley. On my birthday [14-03-1930 MvdH], he had followed me to the Russian Orthodox Church at Rue Daru and asked me to marry him. [But was on leave, he had to go back to the Dutch Indies. They married in 1935.]

Holland

- We were supposed to go to Indonesia after the War, so when my brother wanted to give me a fur coat for my birthday, I told him that I wouldn't need one. How could I know! My husband's company went bankrupt. So we stayed in Holland. And for seven years, every day, I thought, 'I want to leave here.' [Her son Nikolai – my father – remembered how every day after his father left for work, she would lock herself in her room and cry. Nikolai: It was a little hard in Friesland, the north of Holland, where we lived. When my mother had just arrived, someone threw a snowball with a rock at her, because she was a foreigner. Her French clothes were considered too fashionable. They made fun of her red nail polish, saying she had dipped her nails in the jelly and walking in her husband's arm on the streets – as they had done in Paris – was considered scandalous.]

- This is my little Kolya [Nikolai MvdH] as a baby. He and his little twin brother Feodor were born on January 23rd 1936. Little Feodor died two days later.

- This is my Lyena [Elena MvdH]. She was born on April 22nd 1941. See, we still thought after the war that we would go to the Dutch Indies. Kolya and Lyena were promised a little monkey.

- These are Kolya and Lyena in Paris. They spent a lot of time in France, with their Russian family and at Russian summer camps.