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I remember Olga Alexandrovna Ladyzhenskaya starting from my childhood. She was a friend of my parents and a close friend of my father, Mark Vishik. They wrote a joint paper together in the 1950s.

On many occasions in the 1960s and 1970s she traveled to Moscow or through Moscow from Leningrad. Sometimes she stayed in our apartment in Moscow (in Lefortovo district opposite to the infamous prison, later near Leninsky Prospect). My task was sometimes to meet her at the railway station and bring her home and on other occasions to see her off when she was traveling elsewhere from Moscow. The one time I vividly remember now, I took her to Belorussky railway station in Moscow for her travel to Prague to see J. Nečas. She was one of the most interesting guests, warmhearted and interested in subjects far outside mathematics. She talked long hours to my father in his study, then we all had dinner together in the kitchen.

I asked her during her last visit to our apartment in Moscow, why it is so difficult to prove uniqueness in the context of the 3D Cauchy problem for a 3D viscous incompressible fluid. Olga Aleksandrovna said simply: “There is no apriori estimate, Misha.”

I could have hardly imagined at that distant time that much later I would be telling students in my graduate classes in Texas about Olga Alexandrovna Ladyzhenskaya's multiplicative inequality and her uniqueness theorem for the 2D Navier–Stokes equations of a viscous incompressible fluid. Arguably, one of the two greatest results in mathematical fluid mechanics in the XX century. The other one being the existence theorem of Jean Leray in the 1930s.

I knew that her father, a teacher of mathematics, had been arrested and executed by the Soviet secret police (NKVD, a predecessor of KGB) in the 1930s. This tragedy also made it difficult for her to get mathematical education and she suffered in her early mathematical career. She was the daughter of the “enemy of the people” using the official Soviet terminology. When I read Solzhenitsyn's “The Gulag Archipelago” I found the story of Ladyzhenskaya's father there. Olga Alexandrovna was one of the 227 witnesses (sources) for A.I Solzhenitsyn's book. I asked her about this. I remember she laughed with her beautiful laugh and responded: “Why are you reading bad books, Misha?” “Archipelago” was not published in the USSR until much later.

Having suffered terribly because of the communist terror in the 1930s, Olga Alexandrovna made a special effort to help others during the comparatively less brutal but still difficult times of the Brezhnev era. She helped many people whom I knew personally to defend their dissertations in Leningrad where she had a considerable influence, as opposed to Moscow where they were denied this opportunity.

When my wife and I got married, Olga Alexandrovna sent us a beautiful present, a reproduction of Leonardo's painting "The Madonna and Child" (The Litta Madonna) from the Hermitage collection in Leningrad. A truly beautiful thought. It was kept in my parents' apartment, however unfortunately it disappeared after my father's death in 2012.