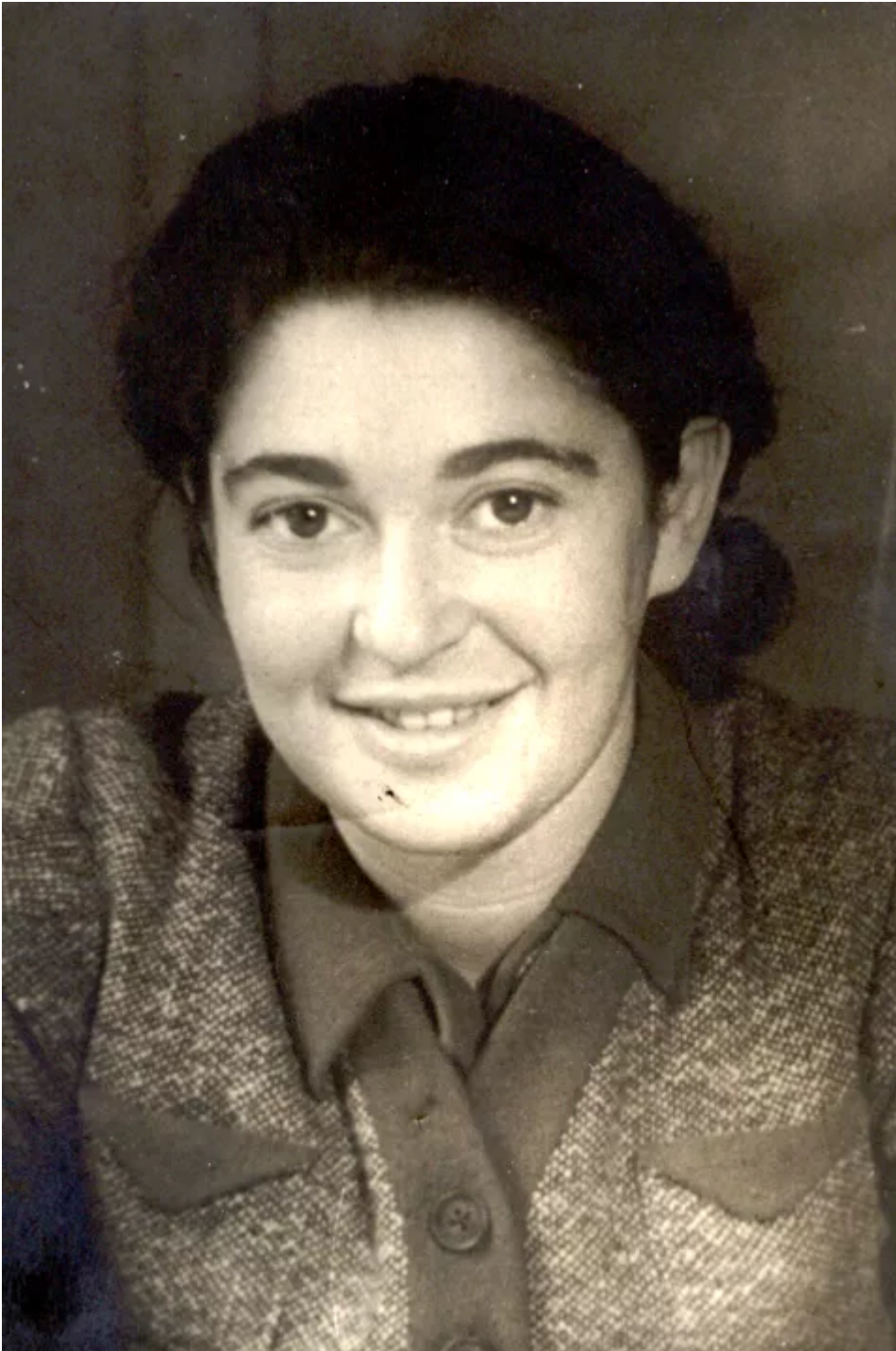


Liya Kaplan



This is me in 1945, upon my return from evacuation. The picture was taken in Tallinn. I met my husband-to-be Marcus Kaplan in the last but one grade at school. Both of my parents liked him and things were evolving, so I was to marry him after leaving school. But the war was unleashed on 22nd June 1941. We left on 9th July 1941. The five of us went: my parents, my brother Rudolf, my sister Vera and I. It was a long and tiring trip and finally we reached Arsk station, in Tatarstan. The evacuees were split up in kolkhozes. We took the cart and went to a kolkhoz in the village of Surda. I was really worried about Marcus and his family. I didn't know if they had managed to leave Tartu. There was no news from them. The only thing I knew was that his siblings lived in Kazan. My father and I decided to go there to find out about Marcus. We took some things with us to sell and get

tickets. We had been looking for Marcus's relatives all day long, but to no avail. We came back to the station, and suddenly a man jumped out of the train, it was Marcus! He had come to Kazan with his sister to look for his relatives. It turned out that they were in evacuation not far from us, in Chuvashiya, but we bumped into each other in Russia. On 27th February 1942 my future husband and his brother Abram were mobilized in the Estonian corps of the Soviet army. Early in the morning Marcus and I walked to the regional center and got our marriage registered at the local regional council at 8am. At 9am my husband was at the collection point and was to join the front line. We didn't see each other for three and a half years. We only started our life together when he came back from the front. I stayed in Kirghizia. My parents came to me in Kyrgyz. I lived with parents, brother and Berta, Marcus's sister, before our return to Estonia. Berta and I worked in the cotton fields. It was a hard work and, being used to the cold Baltic climate, we couldn't stand the heat. It was 40° Celcius all year round. My parents were sick as it was even harder for them to bear the heat. They couldn't work because of it. Every day both of us got one scone made of flour and water, which was to feed my parents and brother as well. The kolkhoz didn't provide anything for them. I sold my watch and bought some flour with that money so that my parents and brother would have some food for a while. In 1944 we found out that Estonia was liberated from the Germans, but we didn't manage to return home until July 1945.