Mariasha Vasserman

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Tallinn
Estonia
Interviewer: Ella Levitskaya
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I met Mariasha Vasserman in the Estonian Jewish Community 1. Mariasha was going to take a tour in Spain with her friend the day after, so she had a lot to do before her departure. Nevertheless, Mariasha agreed to an interview. For me not to spend too much time to get to Mariana's house, we had a talk in the hotel, where I was staying and which is very close to the community. Mariasha is a slender petite woman. She has an elegant hair cut. She is wearing a close-fit suit, which looks good on her. Mariasha was a little bit worried before the interview and said that her education and cast of mind was mathematical, thinking that she was not a good story-teller. It seems to me that the interview with her turned out to be engaging. Her carefree childhood was over when she turned 12, with coming dreadful circumstances: her father's death, and the deportation 2 of her entire family to Siberia. But even speaking of all that - her life in exile, the daily fight for survival, she had to go through - Mariasha kept her sense of humor seeing the humorous even in horrible things.

My father's family lived in Latvia. There was a small town named Friedelstadt not far from Riga. Now it is a part of Riga, which grew rapidly after war. In tsarist times Jews were not permitted to live in cities, but Friedelstadt was in the Pale of Settlement 3. It was a Jewish town. If Jews came to Riga on business, they had to be through with their matters by midnight, as they weren't allowed to stay in Riga overnight. Friedelstadt was at such a distance from Riga that it was possible to take care of all things there during the day and come back by night. That is why Jews preferred to settle in that town, and made up most of its population.

I never met my paternal grandfather. He died such a long time ago that even my father couldn't remember his name or the way he looked. I asked him, but he couldn't tell me anything about his father. Grandfather died, when Father was a baby. Grandfather's last name was Vasserman. This is all I know about him. My paternal grandmother's name was Libe-Leya. She had seven children, and my father was the youngest. He was born in 1884. Father was called Nafral-Hertz. Father explained to me that the first name was biblical to be mentioned in the synagogue, and the second name was secular.

I met only one of Father's brothers. It was way back in my early childhood. I remember that my uncle lived in Riga. Once, the whole family went to see him for a couple of days. I don't even remember his name. He died a long time ago, in the 1930s. As far as I remember, he had three daughters, and all of them immigrated to Palestine, when Uncle was still alive. One of them died shortly after arrival. I don't know anything what happened to the other cousins.

The rest of my father's siblings left for different countries. I don't have information about them. I don't know anything about Father's childhood and adolescence either. Of course, he got religious education. It could not have been otherwise in such a town as Friedelstadt. He also got some

secular education. At any rate, Father knew how to read and write in Russian, Lettish, German, knew mathematics and accounting.

Mother's family also lived in Friedelstadt. I don't know where her parents came from, but both their daughters were born in Friedelstadt. Grandfather Perets Gordon owned a hat shop. He worked as a hatter and took some apprentices, who worked for him for some time after their apprenticeship was over. Grandmother Yoche-Hinde was a housewife. My mother Dayle was born in 1887. Her sister Breine was ten years younger than Mother. She was born in 1897. I know that my mother and her sister had a middle brother, but he died in childhood.

Mother's family was an ordinary Jewish family, like most families in Friedelstadt. Neither Grandfather nor Grandmother were pious, but they respected and observed Jewish traditions. There was a synagogue and several prayer houses in town. On Sabbath and Jewish holidays the entire Jewish population of Friedelstadt went to the synagogue. They prayed at home on working days. Grandmother strictly observed the kashrut. There were separate dishes and tableware for meat and dairy dishes. Grandmother was a unique cook. She had a true culinary talent.

They had a small one-story house. Grandfather's shop was next to it. There was a small plot of land by the house, where grandmother made a garden. She planted greenery there. Grandmother kept poultry in the coop- chicken and geese. The husbandry was not big, but still it was helpful.

My parents got married in 1914. They had a traditional Jewish wedding, there was no other way. Father was a tradesman and mother was a housewife. Father went to Riga to take goods for his store, and in the evening he came back home. Father was deeply respected in town. He was considered to be an intelligent and decent man. Father was one of the few dwellers of Friedelstadt, who got the Jewish newspaper. It was issued in Yiddish. Father was subscribed to that paper, and when the new issue came out, the town dwellers came to my parents to discuss the news. After the wedding, my father bought a small house, the same size as that of my grandparents' and of other residents of Friedelstadt. Following Grandmother, my mother took care of the garden and bred poultry. They had a regular calm life.

In 1914 World War I was unleashed. When the Germans entered the territory of the Baltic countries, as per order of the Tsar in 1915 all Jews were to be exiled from here to the remote areas of Russia within 24 hours. My parents and Mother's family were not willing to go to the unfamiliar region. Nobody knew how long they would have to live far away from the vernacular place. Some distant relatives lived in Minsk and they decided to go to them. Military actions were being held in that direction and they couldn't cross the front line. Then they remembered that some of their relatives, the Goldbergs, were living in Tallinn, so they went there as they had no choice. Thus, our family turned out to be in Tallinn.

Grandfather Perets Gordon died in Tallinn in 1915. He was buried according to the Jewish rite in Jewish cemetery of Tallinn. Shortly after Grandfather's death in 1915 my parents had their first-born. My brother was named Perets after Grandfather. My sister was born in 1919. She was called Sore-Reyze. I was born in 1928, and I was named Mariasha.

My parents rented an apartment in the house of a rich Tallinn Jew named Berkovich. My paternal grandmother Libe-Leya, my maternal grandmother Yoche-Hinde and Mother's younger sister Breine lived in our apartment. Breine remained single and lived in our family all the time. Grandmother

Libe-Leya died in 1930. I was only two years old then. I don't remember her at all. Grandmother was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Tallinn in accordance with the Jewish rite.

I don't what Father did for a living when our family had just arrived in Tallinn. I know that he had to start from scratch. Maybe he managed to take some money and precious things from Friedelstadt and it helped for a while. At any rate, when my sister was born, Father had a store called 'Gold, Clocks, Crystal.' The building of that store is still there. The store was in downtown Tallinn, on Viru Street. It was a busy street, so there were a lot of customers at the store. Nowadays there is a book-store in its place. There were two stores in one building before. The largest area was taken by a drapery store, owned by Berkovich. The second part of the store was occupied by my father.

Father was respected in town; he was thought to be an honest tradesman. Of course it attracted the customers, as they knew they wouldn't be swindled in Father's store. Mother was always being constantly busy. She helped Father in the store. A governess was hired for the children. She took care of my sister, who was a baby, and my brother. She was a very nice woman. When my brother and sister grew up, the governess stopped working for us and she resumed her work when I was born. She raised me since I was a baby. My governess was Estonian. She was a very educated woman, fluent in German and French. She was single and she was affectionate to me and our entire family.

My parents were very busy at the store, and couldn't pay me a lot of attention, so my governess taught me everything. Owing to her I learnt German and French. She tried to teach me Russian, but for some reason Russian was too complicated for me. My parents spoke Yiddish with each other and German with the children. German was my native language. My first words were spoken in German. I learnt Estonian by natural method, communicating with children in the yard. Our family knew Estonian. It went without saying for us: since we were living in Estonia, we were supposed to know the language of the country.

Jewish traditions were strictly observed at home. We always marked Sabbath. Grandmother Yoche-Hinde cooked for the whole family. She didn't trust the maids in that. Grandmother was a wonderful cook and she enjoyed cooking. She was definitely the master in the kitchen. On Friday morning Grandmother cooked food for two days. She even baked Sabbath challah herself, in spite of the fact that there was a Jewish bakery in Tallinn, where challah was sold. In the evening the whole family got together. Grandmother lit the candles and prayed. Then all of us sat down at the table. During my childhood I was a bad trencherman, but Grandmother knew how to cook and serve the dishes so that even I didn't have to be talked into eating. On Saturdays no work was done about the house.

All Jewish holidays were marked at home. The whole family went to the synagogue on holidays. I remember there was a synagogue on Makri Street, not far from our house. The synagogue was destroyed after the war. It was a choral, two-story synagogue. My mother, sister, grandmother and Aunt Breine were in the top gallery with other women. I was a baby, so I always sat with my father and brother in the lower gallery.

Pesach was my favorite holiday. People started getting ready for the holiday beforehand. There was something interesting every day. I liked that preparation for the holiday. Every year it was an event for me. Grandmother made wine for Pesach herself. Our apartment was heated by stove. When the apartment was not heated in the warm season, Grandmother kept the bottles of wine in

the stove. The wine was made from raisins. It was sweet and very scrumptious. Matzah for Pesach was bought from Genovker. There was a confectionary, owned by a Jew called Genovker. My aunt Breine worked at Genovker's confectionary factory. Tasty sweets and cakes were produced there. On the eve of Pesach the Genovker bakery switched for baking matzah. There was the ordinary matzah, from flour and water, and egg matzah. The latter was delicious, very crispy and tender. Of course, we had only kosher food.

When the thorough cleaning was over, Father walked into every room and the kitchen. Pieces of bread were put in certain places. Father swept them onto a wooden spoon with a goose feather. Then that spoon was wrapped in a rag and burnt in the stove. It was a Paschal ritual. Once the chametz was banished from the house, Paschal dishes were taken out. Of course, on ordinary days only kosher dishes were used and Grandmother looked into that. Paschal dishes were not ordinary, they were beautiful. When they were taken out from the package, I started feeling the holiday.

Grandmother always cooked delicious Jewish dishes. Unfortunately, I don't know the recipe and cannot cook them myself. Grandmother made 'Eingemachtes' – radish was cut and soaked in honey, then boiled. It was really tasty. Grandmother took the pits from prunes and put almonds in the prunes. Then those prunes were to be boiled in honey. Of course, there was gefilte fish, chicken broth and all traditional dishes of the Jewish cuisine. I remembered the desserts most vividly.

In the evening father carried out the first Pascal seder. There was a large goblet with wine in the center. It was meant for Prophet Eliagu. All of us were supposed to drink four glasses of wine during seder. I was also given wine, though I drank it from a tot. There was another seder the next day, but it was not obligatory to have it at home. Sometimes on the second seder we went to our relatives, the Goldberg family. My parents chose Tallinn owing to that kin, and our families were very friendly. Sometimes, the Goldbergs came to us on the second seder. It was mandatory to have the first seder only at home, with your family.

On Rosh Hashanah the whole family went to the synagogue. Then Yom Kippur came. All adults fasted for 24 hours on Yom Kippur, the way they were supposed to. I was a child, and I didn't have to fast. On this holiday people went to the synagogue for the whole day. The prayer lasted until the first evening star appeared. Father's store was closed on holidays. I also remember the holiday of Simchat Torah. It was a very joyful holiday. Children hold apples in their hands. Small flags were stuck in those apples. Children were given desserts in the synagogue and I remember it. I remember that holiday for the reason that it was my mother's birthday. Guests came to our place and we had fun. All my parents' friends were Jews. They tried to get together. Apart from Goldberg family, my parents kept in touch with the Genovker family, the owners of the confectionary factory, the Berkovich family. There were some more Jewish families, but I don't remember their surnames. In general, only Jews came to us.

We did not mark Estonian state holidays in our family. Of course, we did what we were supposed to: hang the state flag of Estonia on the balcony, but we didn't have celebrations like we had on Jewish holidays.

All of us went to the Jewish lyceum 4 on Karu Street. At present that building belongs to the Estonian Jewish community. At that time there were two private Jewish lyceums. One of them, where we went to, had the teaching in Ivrit, the other one in Yiddish. When Perets was in the junior grades of that lyceum, some subjects there were taught in Russian; when my sister went there, all

subjects were taught only in Ivrit. Ivrit wasn't spoken at home.

One year before lyceum, I went to the kindergarten, where children were taught Ivrit. We had a wonderful teacher called Anna Klas, the daughter of the chazzan of the largest Tallinn synagogue 5 , Gourevich. Then she became a pianist. Her son Erie Klas is the conductor of the Tallinn symphonic orchestra. Anna didn't only teach us music; she also taught us the rudiments of Ivrit. Children perceive things quickly and after kindergarten we were ready to study all lyceum subjects in Ivrit. We stayed in the kindergarten from morning until noon. Probably it was not very different from modern kindergartens. We played different games, learned how to sing, draw, went for strolls. Many children, with whom I made friends in the kindergarten, were enrolled in the same grade in lyceum. All my friends from childhood were Jews. Most of them were my school friends. Some of them were children of my parents' friends.

All of us were enrolled in Zionist organizations by school. There were Maccabi 6, Hashomer Hatzair 7, Betar 8. My elder sister and I joined Maccabi. We were focused on physical training. We had good gymnasiums and different circles. There were several groups in every circle for children of different ages. I remember when I was attended training classes in Maccabi, there was another group with adult, very beautiful girls. Isaac Goldman, my sister's future husband was also in Maccabi. He was a great sportsman, a member of the Maccabi team.

All Jewish holidays were always celebrated in the lyceum in a very interesting way. We didn't have classes on holidays, but all students and their parents got together on holidays. We organized a concert program and our parents were our audience. We sang, danced, gave performances. Our mothers baked desserts for our school holidays. The children got food from the school canteen. Charity raffles, auctions were arranged on such occasions. There was tuition for lyceum, but children from poor families, who couldn't afford to pay the tuition, were also admitted. Their tuition was paid by the Jewish community, and some amounts of money were collected at charity events.

We always celebrated the birthdays of all our family members. All my friends were invited for my birthday. My sister, who was nine years older than me, always arranged very enjoyable holidays for us. It was engaging all the time. She organized games, performances and we all had fun.

We always spent summer in the picturesque Tallinn suburb Pirita. There was a wonderful coast with clean white sand. There was a thick pine forest along the coast line. We rented a dacha 9 and lived there all summer long. My parents couldn't leave the store, so they stayed in Tallinn and came to see us on weekend. My sister, grandmother, Aunt Breine and I stayed there all the time. Pirita was an amazing place for me, an urban child. I could see a cow, while walking in the forest or feed chicken in the house. We spent time on the beach and in the forest. Even now when I come to Pirita, I am overwhelmed with joy recollecting my childhood.

Upon graduation from the lyceum my elder brother entered Tartu University, the Economics Department. Having finished her studies, my sister entered the Tallinn Arts Institute. My sister's new friends, whom she met in the institute, often came to us. At that time her friends were not only Jews, but also Estonians.

In 1938 Fathers' cherished dream came true - to have his own place to live. He bought half of a two-story house. There was a five-room apartment on each floor. The first floor was occupied by a Jewish family, and our apartment was on the second floor.

All of us knew that in 1933 the Fascists came to power in Germany 10. Probably, my parents discussed that. I don't think any Estonian Jews were troubled by that event. Many of those who were deported by the Soviet regime in 1941 and sent into exile said that if they had not been deported, they would have definitely stayed in Estonia during the war. It was true, as many Jews were no willing to get evacuated and perished in Fascist concentration camps and during mass executions of the civilian population.

When in 1939 Soviet military bases were established in Estonia, it went by me. My parents must have been indifferent to that; otherwise I would have felt their anxiety, even if they hadn't spoken about it. There was a normal course of life and military bases were beyond us. In 1940 we felt it, when Estonia became Soviet 11. Our Jewish lyceum was closed down, or to put it more precisely, it was made into an ordinary school. The last school year was in Yiddish, Ivrit was banned. I went to the 6th grade. All my classmates became pioneers 12. It was interesting for us, like a new game. We saw no politics in that, just took it as a new club, a new organization for children like Betar or Hashomer. There were some events for pioneers. We went on excursions. In general, we had fun and didn't think that there was a change in our life.

My brother, who was studying at Tartu University, had to come back home. He quit his studies to help Father with the store. He worked as an accountant. Though, it didn't last long. The Soviet regime commenced nationalization of the private enterprises. Father's store was also nationalized. The process of nationalization was as follows: first the Soviet commissar 13 was assigned, who came to the store, reviewed business processes. Then there was the day, when that commissar should be given the keys to the store, safe and all documents, and that was it. The owner was turned out. Of course, there was no monetary compensation. My father had to go through that. On that day I saw my father crying for the first time, and I was worried. I remember, I climbed on his lap and tried to comfort him. Soon, I saw Father's tears for the second time. Though his store was requisitioned, Father had to pay a large amount of money. He didn't have enough to pay the debt.

First, some people came and made the inventory of our property, then they started taking all things from our house. And again I had to see my father cry. Father loved curio things, silver utensils and jewelry. He had collected them all his life and he used to say that those things would later remind his children of him. All those precious things were taken, as well as good pieces of furniture. Only the most necessary things were left: table, chairs and a bed. At that time I expressly understood that our calm and prosperous life was over and we didn't know what was in store for us.

In November 1940 my elder sister got married. She met her future husband, Isaac Goldman, in the lyceum. They were classmates and had been in love for a long time. My sister was married in a chuppah in the Tallinn synagogue. Rabbi Aba Gomer 14 led the wedding ceremony and gave them the ketubbah. Then their marriage was registered in the city hall. It was a mere stationary procedure. We had a wedding party at home. There were not a lot of guests, just close friends and relatives. It was in the Soviet time, so there was no way the newly-weds could have rented a separate apartment. My sister and her husband lived with us. Isaac was a good expert. He worked with jewelry, silver in particular. My sister kept on studying at the Arts Institute.

When the store was nationalized, my brother was hired there as an accountant. It was harder for my father to find a job. Finally he went to work in the clock repair shop, which was providing

services for the Baltic fleet. Father was a very good clock mender and an honest man. Some of the people who knew Father recommended him for that work. Mother went to work as a cashier in a dish store, and Aunt Breine kept on working in the confectionary, which was also nationalized and taken from the Genovker family.

In January 1941 my brother got married. He was 13 years older than me, and he always treated me like a child. He loved and pampered me. When he studied in Tartu, he always brought me toys and presents. I got used to the idea that brother loved me best of all. I felt insulted and offended, when he brought a wife, or more precisely, a fiancée from Tartu. I was shifted to the second place. Perets's wife was called Sima, nee Zak, and her Jewish name was Simcho-Dvoira. She explained that the name Simcho was a blend name as in Jewish families children were named after deceased relatives and at that time, in that period of time two of her relatives died. One of them was Simon, and I don't remember the name of the second one, it began on 'Cho.' Sima was younger than my brother. She is still alive. They were wed at home under a chuppah. They also lived in our apartment.

Newcomers were housed in the apartments of the local dwellers. There were times, when the hosts were evicted from their houses. It happened to the Berkovich family, who leased us the apartment. They were told to leave the place within 24 hours and they had to do it and rent a small old house in the Tallinn suburb Nõmme. Fortunately, our family was not touched. We had five rooms, but there were a lot of us: my father, my mother, my sister and her husband, my brother and his wife, my aunt, my grandmother and I. Probably, the newcomers didn't want to live with such a large family, and looked for a quieter place.

Father was getting unwell. He most likely couldn't get over his anxieties. He died in April 1941. I didn't see my dead father. I was 12 and I wasn't allowed to say goodbye to him. I wasn't taken to Father's funeral. I caught a cold and under that pretext I was told to stay at home. I only know that my father was buried according to the Jewish rite: without a coffin, in a shroud. It was still possible at that time. After the war it wasn't allowed to bury people without a coffin even in the Jewish cemetery.

Mother took Father's death very hard. All of us were overwhelmed with grief. We lived as if in a haze. The most terrible day in the history of Estonia came: the deportation starting on 14th June 1941. It changed the life of our family completely. It was not during the day, but on the night of 13th June. Somebody rang at the door, when everybody was asleep. A couple of men came in. I don't remember if they were wearing NKVD 15 uniforms or not. We were apprised that our family would be deported. We were given two hours to pack our things. Those people had the lists. They found our family name on the list and started demanding that we should wake up our Father. Those lists must have been compiled in advance. At any rate, Father was included in the list. Father had died two months earlier, and those people came to our apartment, looked for him and didn't want to believe that he had died. How come, he was in the list!

Three families – my mother and I, my sister and her husband and my brother and his wife – were exiled. If Father had been alive, he would have been sent to the Gulag 16 as exploiter and 'enemy of the people' 17, and we, the members of the family of an 'enemy of the people,' were not sent to the Gulag, but into exile. Then I understood how lucky Father was to have died before that day. He had heart trouble and most likely he would have died in the train. If he was to survive the trip, it

would be hard to imagine what a tormenting solitary death was awaiting him in Gulag, and we would never have known where his grave was. Only grandmother and Aunt Breine stayed in Tallinn as they formally were not considered as members of our family, and remained untouched.

Of course, for the time given, we were not able to pack all necessary things. We were panic-stricken. It was like a bolt from the blue. We were lucky that Aunt Breine came to a station, where our train stopped, and brought us many things, which were really helpful later on. We received no money in exile. The only way to survive was to sell the things or exchange them for products.

We were brought to the train station in a saloon car. The trains were ready for departure. These were trains for transportation of cattle. There were tiny windows in the cars almost under the ceiling. Of course adults were worried and despondent. Strange as it may sound, but it was very interesting for me. I took it as an adventure. I met a girl of my age in the car, and we made friends at once. We had fun. I don’t remember if we were fed on our way or whether there was an opportunity to buy food. At any rate, we were not starving.

We were taken to the town of Kotel'nich, Kirov oblast [about 800 km from Moscow]. It was a deportation depot, wherefrom people were allotted to the destination of exile. Our family was to go to the town of Sovetsk in Kirov oblast, about 100 km from Kotel'nich. We were not to live in the town itself, but we were to go to the place of the quarry, located about 10 kilometers from the town. There were only barracks for the exiled and quarry workers.

There were terrible conditions in the barracks: 14 people were housed in one room. Of course, adults dreaded that, but I found it adventurous. We were lucky that my brother, and Isaac, my sister’s husband, stayed with us. They were not enemies of the peoples, just members of a family of an enemy of the people. Who knows what might have happened to Perets and Isaac, if they hadn’t been in exile. They might have been sent to the front and perished there. Apart from us there were was a man with a son of my age, a woman with a son, older than me, and another woman with a daughter. Two people shared one bed. I shared a bed with my mother. There was another room in the barrack, also meant for 14 people, and a smaller room.

On the first day all adults were sent to the quarry. Men blasted stone, fragmented it with picks. Women were to load the stones in the trolleys and took them to the embankments. After a couple of months, women over 50 were exempt from work. They were supposed to stay in the village. My sister and Sima kept on working in the quarry. Then people from the quarry were gradually moving to town, to Sovetsk. Very few were allowed to go – several people every month. Sovetsk was also in the area of exile and local authorities didn’t mind our moving there. My sister and her husband were the first to move to Sovetsk. They settled somehow, rented a room and invited Mother and me to go to Sovetsk. My brother was a very bona-fide and responsible man. He stayed in the quarry the longest and left the last. He said if he was assigned to that work, than it was needed. I think he stayed in the quarry for over a year, and then came to Sovetsk.

I had to go to school. It was complicated as I didn’t know the Russian language. Besides, the curricula of Estonian and Soviet schools didn’t coincide. We studied for 12 years, while in the USSR school lasted for ten years. Though I had finished the 6th grade in Estonia, I was admitted to the 6th, not the 7th grade of the Russian school in Sovetsk. I went to school in the second term, after the winter holidays. My sister, who knew Russian, spent a lot of time teaching me. We spoke Russian, and I wrote dictations. In general, when I went to school, the only problem I had was

Russian. I got good and excellent marks in mathematics. I could learn the poems by heart and recite them. I got poor and very poor marks for writing. I couldn't remember spelling and wrote the way I heard things. There was an enormous amount of mistakes. In summer I was transferred to the 7th grade with the reexamination in Russian language, which I had to pass in fall. It took me a year for my writing to be literate and my speech fluent.

I felt no anti-Semitism at school. Of course, I stood out among other children, at least with regards to my accent. But I was lucky, I was teased 'Estonian.' I would have probably been hurt if they had called me 'kike.' I did not care, when they cried 'Estonian, Estonian!' I was dressed like other children. It was very cold in Kirov oblast, so all of us wore 'valenki' [warm Russian felt boots], sheepskin and hats covering almost all of our face and ears. There was no other way.

Besides the exiled, there were a lot of evacuated wives of Soviet officers in Sovetsk. They received monetary certificates from their husbands, who were in the lines. So, they lived pretty comfortably. We got food cards 18. We could receive only bread on that card. That bread was very heavy and sticky. Sometimes, we were given salt. Once we even got a card for sugar. It was a real fete. We scraped through for the sake of exchanging things we had taken into exile with us for products. When Mother was alive, while she was still able to move, she went to rich villages and exchanged things. They willingly took our things, as they were rare for them. Then we started knitting jackets for the wives of the officers. All women knew how to knit in Estonia, so we also could knit. The customers brought us wool or old woolen things, which we remade. We had a fixed price. One piece from wool cost a pood [16 kg] of potatoes. We somehow managed to make a living.

There was no security. We were not entitled to leave the bounds of the city. Those who had passports were supposed to check in at the NKVD department once every ten days. In the USSR a passport was issued when people reached the age of 16, so I didn't have to check like the other members of our family. My brother worked as an accountant in a local enterprise. He had to take financial statements to Kirov. He was supposed to get a permit from the NKVD for every trip. He would have been arrested right on the train, if he hadn't had that permit with him. Passengers were constantly being checked.

Grandmother and Aunt Breine found us. They went into evacuation at the beginning of the Great Patriotic War 19, and lived in some kolkhoz 20 in Tatarstan, not far from Kazan'. My aunt worked in the kolkhoz. She and Grandmother got food cards. They were not exiled, but evacuated. Aunt Breine was very frugal and kept things very thriftily. She even managed to preserve some things that they took into evacuation. We kept no things, as we spent on food everything we could. Aunt told us later on, that they were not willing to get evacuated, but since we had been exiled, they decided to go. Our exile had not only saved our lives, but also theirs. If we had not been exiled, Mother would not have agreed to be far away from Father's grave. He had died only two months earlier. Most Estonian Jews were not appalled by the Germans, they were more daunted by the Bolsheviks 21. We had a radio. It looked like a big black round wall plate. We listened to the news from the front. At that time we didn't know that practically all Jews, who stayed in Estonia, were executed. Grandmother died in evacuation in 1943, and in 1944 Aunt Breine moved from Arsk to Kazan'.

I was afflicted with typhus fever when I finished the 7th grade. I most likely had enteric fever, and I was hospitalized in the typhus department, so I think I caught typhus fever. Nobody believed that I

would survive, but I did thanks to my mother. She started getting sick. She had heart trouble. I was discharged from the hospital, but I was very feeble and had a fever. My sister took me to the doctor and it turned out that I had problems with my lungs. Fortunately, the Leningrad tuberculosis sanatorium had been evacuated to Sovetsk, both doctors and the patients. Somehow my sister made arrangements for me to stay there. The doctors had no hopes that I would get better as my case had been so neglected. Of course, I stayed in the sanatorium and went through the treatment. In spite of war times, I was fed very well there, because when having tuberculosis, nutrition is one of the most important factors.

My sister knitted for the doctors of the sanatorium and I was helping her. Again a miracle happened. I was convalescing. When I was in exile for the second time, I will talk about that later, I saw those doctors again. They took me from one office to another for all the doctors to see the miracle. The doctor, who treated me, reiterated that I would get better soon, and we would go dancing. She confessed to me later that she didn't even believe that I would survive, nothing to say of recuperation. Everybody saw that I wouldn't make it, and they were rejoicing when they saw me alive and healthy. Fate was on my side.

When I was discharged from the hospital, I was supposed to be operated on the lungs. I went through pneumothorax – air was blown in my thorax. There were adhesions, inhibiting air to go through. I was supposed to undergo operation for those adhesions to be removed. I was sent to Kirov. There was the necessary equipment for the operation, but there was no surgeon. So we came back. Shortly after my return in June 1944, my mother died. Of course, there was no Jewish cemetery in Sovetsk. All exiled from Estonia were buried in one sector of the town cemetery no matter what nationality they were. [Editor's note: In the USSR city cemeteries were territorially divided into sectors. Usually all city cemeteries have common plots of land, plots for burial of children, sectors for burial of the titled militaries, a Jewish sector, plots for the political leaders etc. People were usually buried in accordance with the will of the relatives of the deceased or the testament.] Mother was buried there. When I lived in Tallinn, I went to Sovetsk to visit Mother's grave. I wanted to bring it in order and set up a monument, but I couldn't find her grave. There were no Estonian graves at all. Even in the undertaking bureau no record on the burial of the exiled was maintained.

After Mother's funeral, my sister took me to my aunt in Kazan'. There was a surgeon in Kazan' hospital but there was no equipment for the operation, therefore I was not operated on, but it was for the better, as I could do without it. I stayed with my aunt. I didn't go to school in Kazan', I decided to work. My aunt found me a job as an accountant's assistant at a motor-transport depot.

In late 1944 Tallinn was liberated from the Germans, and evacuees started coming back home. I turned 16, but I didn't want to receive a passport in exile. I procrastinated with that in order to come back home and get a passport as a citizen of the Soviet Estonian Republic. I was small and lean, so I looked much younger than my age. Thus, my aunt took me to Estonia without passport. My sister and brother stayed in Sovetsk. After some time, my sister and her husband managed to get the permit to move to Kirov. My brother was not willing to go to Kirov, as he dreaded the idea to address the NKVD to get the permit. He lived with Sima in Sovetsk until 1956. Their three sons were born in Sovetsk. The elder, born in 1947 was named Naftole after our father. The second son, Benjamin, was born in 1949, and the third, Avigdor – in 1954. My sister didn't have children. After working in the quarry very many women became barren.

My aunt and I returned to Tallinn. Other people occupied the apartment we used to live in before our exile. My aunt got our apartment back by a ruling of the court. I lived with her. Now we also lived in the communal apartment 22. I wasn't entitled to live in Tallinn : there was a law at that time: people were not permitted to settle in the place, wherefrom they were exiled. I couldn't get a passport in Tallinn either. In general, there was no way the passport could be issued without a residence permit 23.

I went to school, submitting my birthday certificate. I finished the 8th grade there. It was dangerous to live without a passport and I had to find a way out. A motor-transport depot was established in a small settlement called Mardu in the vicinity of Tallinn. They needed an accountant, who was familiar with the automobile business. Since I had worked in the motor-transport depot in Kazan', I was offered a job in Mardu and given the residence permit registered in the hostel of the motor-transport depot. Finally, I was able to receive a passport.

I lived with my aunt in Tallinn. When I was held up at work, I stayed in the hostel. In 1948 my aunt retired. She managed to get a permit for me on the grounds that I had to look after an elderly relative. Thus, I was able to live in Tallinn officially without being worried to be checked by the militia. Having got a residence permit, I left my job in Mardu and went to work for the Tallinn motor-transport depot. It seemed to me that everybody forgot that I had been exiled, the daughter of an enemy of the people, who illegally returned to her native town.

There were a lot of people in Tallinn, who came back from the exile, especially people of my age and a little bit older than me. In 1949 arrests recurred. It was not connected with the campaigns against 'cosmopolitans' 24, ongoing in the USSR since 1948. Only Jews were arrested, being charged with cosmopolitism, former exiled were detained in spite of their nationality. They were re-exiled. They must have decided that there were too many of those like I. The year of 1949 was auspicious for me, and I thought that there was nothing to fear, but I was mistaken.

I was arrested in 1950. Late at night in March 1950 the doorbell rang and there was continuous knocking. I opened the door and saw a militiaman. He told me I should come with him. I was 22 and had an adventurous feeling again. I was amused and scared at the same time. The militiaman took me to the NKVD. A military officer read me the order saying that being the daughter of a large tradesman and socially dangerous person I was to be exiled in the previous area.

After that I was sent to the transit prison. The cell was huge. When I entered it, I heard different people calling my name. When I looked around, I found a lot of people I knew: from the lyceum, and those who had been in exile with me. Some of the arrested had been exiled already. They sent away people in small groups and brought new ones into the cell. As soon as the door of the cell was opened and a newcomer was brought in, he was joyfully welcomed by others. Again some familiar persons came in.

All of us were young and optimistic. We took our incarceration in transit prison as a picnic: no living conditions, bad food and a vague future, but still we had fun. We sang songs, recited poems, chatted, laughed. I made friends with a girl, whom I knew from my childhood. We shared one barrack room in the quarry near Sovetsk. Both of us were sent to transit prison in Leningrad. It is the most horrifying recollection. The exiled were aligned and taken to the train, being convoyed by gunned soldiers on both sides. Some of them held the sheepdogs by the lead, and those dogs were barking and fidgeting. It was a scary scene. There were no things like that in other transit prisons.

The cars of the train were one and the same: with bars on the windows, like for prisoners. We were fed with some insipid food on our way, but we were not starving. We still were optimistic, which was inherent in young people.

There was a huge transit prison in Leningrad. The cell where I was placed was also large. It was probably meant for about 100 people. Again, I had a kindled interest: new impressions, new acquaintances. Every morning the guards made a roll-call in the cell. They called a number and an inmate was supposed to say its first name, last name and the article of conviction. We proudly cried out ‘no article.’ I remember Lithuanian schoolchildren, who were in the cell with me. There was the whole class with the teacher. They were condemned for listening to either some German radio station or Voice of America 25, which were both banned in the USSR and listening to them was considered to be a crime against the Soviet regime. Each of those teenagers and their teacher were sentenced to 25 years in strict-security camps. They were waiting for their turn to go the camp. They were quiet. They sang songs in sotto voce.

We were not interrogated in prison. Everyone got his ‘tag’ and we were supposed to calmly wait for our turn. Sometimes the guards suggested a deal: we were to wash the floors in the hallway and then we would get a change to watch the concerts of the amateur groups. We willingly washed the floors, but we never attended the promised concerts. We were even scolded for washing the floors improperly. I don’t remember how long I stayed in that prison; from there I was transferred to the transit prison in Kirov. There I met my former classmate from the lyceum, whom I had seen in the transit prison in Tallinn before. She was sent to Kirov earlier.

We were supposed to get to Sovetsk. Now there is a connection with that region, but at that time we could get there by plane only. In spring and fall there was a mess on the roads, they were dirty, and the planes didn’t fly as the landing-strip was turned into the marsh. There was no navigation. We were to take a train to Kotel’nichi, which was half way to Sovetsk. And then it was up to us what to do. We decided to go there on foot and thumb a lift.

I had stayed in prison for a long time, and had collected quite a lot of things. My aunt was constantly bringing me clothes, footwear, books. I took all that and put it in my suitcase and backpack. When we got off the train and started walking, I momentously understood that I wouldn’t be able to carry that heavy load on me. We met two passers-by on our way, who were going to some village. One of them took my suitcase, and the other one took my backpack. When we decided to stay in their village overnight, I understood that I wouldn’t be able to make another step. There was a telephone in the rural authorities, wherefrom I called my brother in Sovetsk. He addressed the Sovetsk department of the NKVD with the request for me to stay in that village and wait for the steamboat.

Finally, I arrived in Sovetsk. My brother and his family were still staying there. My brother worked as an accountant at a glove-making factory, which had been evacuated to Sovetsk from Leningrad before the war and remained there. I couldn’t find a job. I was looking for a job opening and found some options. When I came to the HR department, it turned out that the vacancy was closed, they just hadn’t managed to close the announcement. In reality, they were afraid to hire a socially dangerous individual; they didn’t know what that individual had in mind.

In the end, my brother, with the help of his pals, found a job for me at the motor-transport depot, where they had an urgent opening for an accountant. They were in the nonplus and had to offer

me a job. I thought that I would be working and attending evening school as I had finished only 8 grades. I had to work a lot in the first years, the job was new for me and I had to learn a lot. Work was much more important for me than school. Two years had passed, before I entered the 9th grade of the evening school.

Having finished school, I decided to continue my education. I went to the Teachers' Training Institute in Kirov to submit the documents. I didn't have a passport. Upon my arrival the NKVD had taken my passport and given me a temporary identification card instead. The entrance examination board of the institute didn't accept that document saying that it was not a passport. I went to the NKVD, which called the examination board of the institute and told them to accept my documents. My name was included in the list of entrants, but I decided not to take the exams. I understood that they would be biased against me and no matter how good I was, I would be given a poor mark on the first exam.

I returned to Sovetsk. My friend, who went to the evening school with me, also was not admitted to the institute. She tried to enter the medical institute in Perm'. We decided to enter the next year. We chose Voronezh University. I wanted to enter the Mathematics Department, and she chose biology. We started getting ready for the exams. We wrote a letter to Voronezh University, and they sent us the forms and the invitation letters to take the exam. I was supposed to get the permit from the NKVD to go to Voronezh to take exams. It didn't take my friend long to get such a permit. It took longer for me to get mine. I was to leave, but I still had no permit. So, we decided that I wasn't predestined to enter that year. My friend decided to take a vacation. On the day of her departure I received my long-awaited permit. I dashed to her, but she said that she was tuned for vacation and didn't want to change her plans. It was the second failure.

The next year, in 1953, I decided to enter the institute again. It was after Stalin's death and the exiled were given passports 26. All of us were restricted in the residence area. I got a real passport, and it was very amusing: The page where the residence permit was to be filled in contained an entry saying 'permitted to reside in Kirov oblast.' Of course, the entry was made as a result of the illiteracy of the passport officer. It would have been clear if it had said 'permitted to reside only in Kirov oblast.' But in my case the entry implied that I was entitled to reside everywhere, including Kirov oblast. Owing to that entry I had no residence restrictions. I could go anywhere, not only in Kirov oblast!

Thus, I decided to go to Leningrad and enter the Mathematics Department of Leningrad University. My friend's term of exile was over, so we decided to go to Leningrad together. She successfully passed the exams and was admitted to the Biology Department, but I flunked the exam in mathematics. I ploughed the exam; my knowledge was not underestimated. I had finished only evening school in the district center, in the small town of Sovetsk. I even prompted my mathematics teacher during the lessons. I couldn't solve the tasks on the entrance exam. I didn't even know the approaches. So I went back Sovetsk, got textbooks and took to studying. The next year I passed the exams and I was enrolled for the extramural Mathematics Department of Leningrad University. I moved to my sister, who was living in Kirov.

When I left for Estonia with my aunt, my sister and her husband were still staying in Kirov. They decided to take a risk. They were young, energetic and entrepreneurial. They left the place of exile without permit. They wanted to get to Estonia, but they were nabbed on their way and sent to

prison, and later on to the camp. Thanks to Stalin's death they were exempt from the camp pre-term. They came back to Kirov in late 1953.

I hoped that Stalin's death in March 1953 would exempt us from exile. Right after Stalin's death, Beriya 27 granted amnesty, but it referred only to political convicts, not the exiled. Only criminals were pardoned. I was writing a lot to the general prosecutor, the NKVD, to the revision commissions and other authorities! It was futile. I wrote that I was exiled when I was a child and I was not guilty of anything. I got the typical response: 'you were exiled in 1941.' And that was that.

The change in our life was brought by the Twentieth Party Congress 28, where Khrushchev 29 divulged Stalin's cult of personality and exposed his crimes. The wife of my brother Sima and my sister's husband Isaac were rehabilitated 30, as persons who innocently suffered from our family. They could go, but they stayed as my brother and sister were still in exile.

I worked and studied at the institute extramurally. Twice a year I was given academic leave to go to Leningrad to take exams. In Soviet times academic leaves were paid by the enterprise, and it was good. It was the only time, when I was able to communicate with my group mates. All of them were much younger than me. They entered the institute right upon finishing school, but I had to miss many years. They treated me very well. We were friendly and amiable. The first years of my studies I had to rent a room, later on I was given a room in the hostel. I was neither a Komsomol 31 nor party member. Once I was talked into entering the Komsomol at work. I was not willing to. No way. Why would an exiled want to enter the Komsomol? It was impossible and unacceptable for me.

Aunt Breine had lived in our family all the time, with the exception of our exile. She was a very kind person. She was single. We were her family, her children, and she loved us selflessly. When we were in exile, she visited us twice. My aunt's trips to Sovetsk were funny. Small open aircrafts flew from Kirov to Sovetsk – one pilot and one passenger. The cockpit was open and the passenger was to wear a helmet. When my aunt took that helmet in her hands, it was teeming with lice. You can only imagine how shocked my aunt was! However, it didn't scare her off, and she came to us for a second time.

In 1958 my sister, brother and I were informed that we were permitted to leave the area of exile. It was not rehabilitation. The latter happened much later, in the 1960s. At least, we were entitled to leave. Of course, everybody decided to come back to Estonia. My sister and brother knew that they were not permitted to reside in Tallinn, but they hoped that everything would be OK with time. I was not going with them. Nobody was waiting for me in Estonia. I had a job and a place to live in Kirov, I studied at university. I told my sister to go without me. I remember her and I having tea and crying. My sister said that she couldn't leave me here by myself, and she would have to part with her husband. I understood her situation and agreed to go with them. I went to take the term exams in Leningrad, my sister and her husband went to Estonia, taking my things along with them.

I came to Estonia from Leningrad. We still were not permitted to live in Tallinn. My sister and brother with their families went to Tooste, not far from Piarnu. Sima's distant relatives were living there and they helped everybody with work. I went to Mardu and was hired by the motor-transport depot I used to work for before my exile. I was an accountant. The chief accountant of the motor-transport depot was not qualified, so from the first days at work I did everything for him. Then there was a downsizing of the staff at the base, and one of the economists was removed from his

position. I was to take his job as well. Then the base was liquidated.

By that time I had been officially rehabilitated and was entitled to live in Tallinn. Before that I lived in Tallinn at my aunt's place, but it was fraught with danger. In that period of time my siblings and their families also moved to Tallinn. I went to work at the motor-transport depot in Tallinn. Soon I was put in charge of the planning department. I kept on studying at university. I lost a year of studies due to my departure from Kirov – I had to get settled in a new place, which was a hassle. I had to study for seven years instead of six. I was so sick and tired of everything that I even wanted to give up my studies. Then I thought that I had spent so many years on my studies, that there was no use in dropping everything at the very finish line. So I simply had to graduate from university. My personal life wasn't happy, so I thought I should at least succeed in education.

When I obtained a diploma from the university, my relatives started convincing me to look for another job, connected with my profession. They thought I should quit work at the motor-transport depot. I started looking for a job. There was the Mathematics Institute in Tallinn, under the auspice of the Estonian Academy of Science. I was offered a job there. First, my salary was much less here, and secondly I was told to go on with my education and enter the post-graduate department. I was so fed up with my studies that I decided to turn down that offer. I suited them very well as I was a mathematician and had experience in working as an economist. They called me, invited me, but still I refused. When a computer center was established by the motor-transport depot, I gladly transferred there. I worked there until my retirement. I retired in 1987. I was 59 years old. I could probably continue working. Every employee of the computer center had his own theme to work on. When I was through with my topic, I didn't find any new one to take an interest in. There was no need for me to work for the sake of earning my bread and butter. I was not willing to perform tedious work.

I had stayed with my aunt for the first years since my return. Then I got an apartment from the motor-transport depot and started living separately. My aunt kept on observing Jewish traditions, though the Soviet regime was strongly struggling against it [32]. Of course, we didn't observe the kashrut; it was next to impossible, as it was hard even to get common products. We would gladly have eaten kosher food, but we could not. We obligatorily marked all Jewish holidays. At first, there was no place to buy even matzah in Tallinn before Pesach. We baked it ourselves in strict compliance with the rules. Then matzah was brought from Riga and Vilnius, so we could buy it.

My aunt cooked Jewish dishes. She didn't quite know how to cook them, as when grandmother was alive, she didn't trust anyone to cook and cooked everything herself. Thus, my aunt only partially remembered how grandmother cooked, and cooked offhand in a way. In the end, the food tasted good.

The Tallinn choral synagogue was no longer there. It burned down in 1944. There was a small prayer house my aunt went to on holidays. We also marked the holiday of the foundation of Israel. It meant much for us to have our own Jewish state, recognized globally. We didn't mark Soviet holidays at home. We took them as common days off. Though, it was mandatory for all working people to attend demonstrations on the days of revolutionary holidays – 1st May, 7th November [33]. Directors were responsible for the presence of their employees, so I had to go there in order to not let my people down. It wasn't hard for me to come over, meet people I knew, take a walk in the fresh air. It was fun. We even enjoyed those demonstrations.

My brother had worked as an accountant all life long. He worked for different enterprises, but only as an accountant. His wife Sima worked in the kindergarten in Tooste and after moving to Tallinn he worked as a secretary at the plant. Their sons live in Estonia. All of them are married to Estonians. They don't identify themselves as Jews. My brother died in 1992. He was buried in Jewish cemetery in Tallinn. The Jewish community of Estonia had already been founded and so my brother's funeral was Jewish. Perets's wife Sima is still alive. We keep in touch.

Upon her return to Tallinn my sister couldn't resume her studies in the Arts Institute as it was too late. She finished seamstress courses and taught at a vocational school. She didn't have a higher education and it was reflected on her salary. My sister tried to choose between the philology and mathematics department. She chose mathematics and finished Tallinn Teachers' Training Institute extramurally. She taught mathematics at the vocational school until her retirement. Her husband Isaac was a wonderful sportsman. He took an active part in coaching children. He worked in school as a physical training teacher and a coach.

Anti-Semitism appeared in Estonia in the postwar years. I didn't come across it in everyday life. Maybe I could escape it as I had a very neutral appearance. I didn't look like a typical Jew. Anti-Semitism was definitely displayed on the state level. I felt it in Soviet times. I loved traveling. At that time it was possible to buy a trip voucher only to socialistic countries. Besides that, the candidate to take a trip was supposed to be approved by the district committee of the Party, even if the candidate was not a member of the Party. I bought a trip to Bulgaria, but I wasn't permitted to go. When I came there to find out the reason for refusal, I was told to try visiting Bulgaria next year. Of course, I made no attempts. Then I found out, that under the Soviet regime there was an admission quota for Jews in the institutions of higher education as well as for the trips abroad, purchased by Jews with their own money.

The second time I came across that was when our director decided to award a couple of our employees for their performance with a trip to Finland. There were three-day trips. All candidates were approved, but me. Our chief was a very good man. He was persistent. He took efforts and addressed all authorities to make it possible for me to fly to Finland. I went there but only owing to my chief, his persistence and the sense of justice. It wasn't connected with my exile, but only with nationality. It was the politics of the Soviet Union.

In the 1970s Jews were permitted to go to Israel for permanent abode. At that time none of my relatives could leave for different reasons. I didn't even consider such an opportunity for myself. I was not willing to go alone. My kin, the closest people to me, were staying in Tallinn. It was the period of time when we couldn't think of going somewhere on the invitation of somebody or invite somebody over. Even ordinary correspondence might have been dangerous for those who stayed in the USSR [34]. I understood if I was to leave, I would never be able to see my loved ones. It was a very dear price for welfare. When perestroika [35] started, we had the opportunity to travel, visit any country, but it was impossible for me for another reason: I couldn't afford it.

I went to Israel for the first time in the 1990s. I went to see my sister and her husband. They left for Israel in 1990, before Estonia gained independence [36]. My sister was scared that they wouldn't be permitted to immigrate because of their exile. At that time it was still hard to leave the USSR. It was easier only after breakup of the Soviet Union. In the end, they got the permit to leave. They settled in Ashdod. Unfortunately, my sister's husband Isaac couldn't get acclimatized for some

reason. The reason was the heat. He was a healthy man, a sportsman. There he started having problems with his health. They hoped that he would get adjusted to the climate with time, but he was getting worse. They had to come back to Tallinn after five years. Even now, many of Isaac's ailments are connected with his stay in Israel.

I went to Israel only thanks to visiting them. My impressions of the country were probably spoiled by the fact that I lacked money and couldn't visit all places I would have liked. Of course, I saw a lot in Ashdod, admired that town. Then I found a travel agency offering cheap excursions. I took a tour to the northern part of the country. I went to Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Haifa and Galilee. I didn't have enough money to go to the South of Israel. Of course, I had an indelible impression from that trip. The country is wonderful, the people are amazing. It took me long to get used to walking in the street among Jews only. Then I finally became aware that it was our country, and all Jews were at home there.

I saw my aunt very often, though we lived separately. I asked her to move in with me, but she refused, saying that she wasn't willing to be a burden. Then it was hard for her to be on her own. When I retired, we finally started living together. My aunt was a wonderful person. She treated me like her own child and she was like a second mother to me. I looked after her the way I would look after my mother. When Mother was sick, there was nothing I could do for her, as I was in one hospital after another. I was trying to give my aunt things I could not give my mother. My aunt wasn't picky. She never complained. Sometimes, I wanted to pamper her with something tasty and said that we didn't have anything and she replied, 'Is there bread?' 'There is.' 'Is there butter?' 'There is.' 'What else do we need?!'

Aunt Breine died the same year as my brother. She was almost 95. Perets died a couple of months earlier, but I didn't tell my aunt about that. When she asked how he was doing, I just made up impromptu stories. Thus, she didn't find out that he had died. My aunt was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Tallinn. Her funeral was in accordance with the Jewish rite. My aunt never talked to me about her funeral, and I didn't know what she really wanted. She lived like a Jew, and was buried like a Jew.

When the putsch commenced in Russia 37, I was horrified. I dreaded to imagine that previous times may recur. Thank God, it didn't happen. The Soviet Union broke up and I think it was the right and proper thing to happen. Estonia regained independence. I don't mean this from a personal view. I don't think about what it meant to me. I simply think it was needed for the entire Estonian people, and for me as well. Liberty is the most important thing for every individual and for the country as a whole. Only the country, its peoples are entitled to decide what to do, how to live, but not to fulfill somebody's orders. Of course, sometimes things don't happen to be the way one expects. At times, when I watch on TV the representatives of different parties in the parliament being at loggerheads, I loathe that and don't even want to hear it. What are we to do? There should be time for learning something, including learning how to hear somebody else's opinion.

When the Jewish community of Estonia was established I was happy about that. At that time I couldn't take part in its foundation, in its work. I had to take care of my sick aunt, who needed me. When she died, I came to the community and asked for a task. At that time they started making the lists of the lonely and needy. I was also taking part in that job. I made friends with Eugenia Gourina, the daughter of the former director of our Jewish lyceum, Samuel Gourin. She was a very

smart woman, knowing what she wanted and how to get it. It was a pleasure to work with her. Eugenia gave me some work to do and I willingly performed it.

Eugenia also talked me into joining the revived WIZO 38. Once, she took me there. I wasn't impressed as there was more talking than doing. I wanted to have a concrete work. When Rita Blumberg came to WIZO, she invited me once again. I said if she found some work for me, I would gladly go there. I didn't want to be a mere member of WIZO without doing anything. She promised to find something for me.

Once a month alumni of the Jewish lyceum get together in our former lyceum, now the Jewish community of Estonia. There are not very many of us. Every year we are getting less and less. Many of those who are still alive cannot come over, as they are sick and cannot leave the house. There were 24 people in our class, and only four are left. Those, who were younger than us, come over rarely either for the reason of not having studied together for a long time or because they were not as friendly as our class. I come to the community on Jewish holidays as well. I always go to the synagogue on commemoration day. I read the newspaper published by our community.

Lately I go to visit some country every year. I've visited many European countries. Our government raised the pensions for those who were either repressed or deported from Estonia during Stalin's reign. I put away that money for my trips. It is very interesting. It is a pity that I got such an opportunity so late. I am not complaining about my life. I am repining that life is fleeting, and I won't be able to travel as much as I'd like to. I am trying to see as much as possible while I can.

Glossary:

1 Jewish community of Estonia
On 30th March 1988 in a meeting of Jews of Estonia, consisting of 100 people, convened by David Slomka, a resolution was made to establish the Community of Jewish Culture of Estonia (KJCE) and in May 1988 the community was registered in the Tallinn municipal Ispolkom. KJCE was the first independent Jewish cultural organization in the USSR to be officially registered by the Soviet authorities. In 1989 the first Ivrit courses started, although the study of Ivrit was equal to Zionist propaganda and considered to be anti-Soviet activity. Contacts with Jewish organizations of other countries were established. KJCE was part of the Peoples' Front of Estonia, struggling for an independent state. In December 1989 the first issue of the KJCE paper Kashachar (Dawn) was published in Estonian and Russian language. In 1991 the first radio program about Jewish culture and activities of KJCE, 'Sholem Aleichem,' was broadcast in Estonia. In 1991 the Jewish religious community and KJCE had a joined meeting, where it was decided to found the Jewish Community of Estonia.

2 Deportations from the Baltics (1940-1953)
After the Soviet Union occupied the three Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) in June 1940 as a part of establishing the Soviet system, mass deportation of the local population began. The victims of these were mainly but not exclusively those unwanted by the regime: the local bourgeoisie and the previously politically active strata. Deportations to remote parts of the Soviet Union continued up until the death of Stalin. The first major wave of deportation took place

between 11th and 14th June 1941, when 36,000, mostly politically active people were deported. Deportations were reintroduced after the Soviet Army recaptured the three countries from Nazi Germany in 1944. Partisan fights against the Soviet occupiers were going on all up to 1956, when the last squad was eliminated. Between June 1948 and January 1950, in accordance with a Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR under the pretext of 'grossly dodged from labor activity in the agricultural field and led anti-social and parasitic mode of life' from Latvia 52,541, from Lithuania 118,599 and from Estonai 32,450 people were deported. The total number of deportees from the three republics amounted to 203,590. Among them were entire Lithuanian families of different social strata (peasants, workers, intelligentsia), everybody who was able to reject or deemed capable to reject the regime. Most of the exiled died in the foreign land. Besides, about 100,000 people were killed in action and in fusillade for being members of partisan squads and some other 100,000 were sentenced to 25 years in camps.

3 Jewish Pale of Settlement

Certain provinces in the Russian Empire were designated for permanent Jewish residence and the Jewish population was only allowed to live in these areas. The Pale was first established by a decree by Catherine II in 1791. The regulation was in force until the Russian Revolution of 1917, although the limits of the Pale were modified several times. The Pale stretched from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, and 94% of the total Jewish population of Russia, almost 5 million people, lived there. The overwhelming majority of the Jews lived in the towns and shtetls of the Pale. Certain privileged groups of Jews, such as certain merchants, university graduates and craftsmen working in certain branches, were granted to live outside the borders of the Pale of Settlement permanently.

4 Tallinn Jewish Gymnasium

During the Soviet period, the building hosted Vocational School #1. In 1990, the school building was restored to the Jewish community of Estonia; it is now home to the Tallinn Jewish School.

5 Tallinn Synagogue

Built in 1883 and designed by architect Nikolai Tamm; burnt down completely in 1944.

6 Maccabi World Union

International Jewish sports organization whose origins go back to the end of the 19th century. A growing number of young Eastern European Jews involved in Zionism felt that one essential prerequisite of the establishment of a national home in Palestine was the improvement of the physical condition and training of ghetto youth. In order to achieve this, gymnastics clubs were founded in many Eastern and Central European countries, which later came to be called Maccabi. The movement soon spread to more countries in Europe and to Palestine. The World Maccabi Union was formed in 1921. In less than two decades its membership was estimated at 200,000 with branches located in most countries of Europe and in Palestine, Australia, South America, South Africa, etc.

7 Hashomer Hatzair ('The Young Watchman')
Left-wing Zionist youth organization, which started in Poland in 1912 and managed to gather supporters from all over Europe. Their goal was to educate the youth in the Zionist mentality and to prepare them to immigrate to Palestine. To achieve this goal they paid special attention to the so-called shomer-movement (boy scout education) and supported the re-stratification of the Jewish society. They operated several agricultural and industrial training grounds (the so-called chalutz grounds) to train those who wanted to immigrate. In Transylvania the first Hashomer Hatzair groups were established in the 1920s. During World War II, members of the Hashomer Hatzair were leading active resistance against German forces, in ghettoes and concentration camps. After the war, Hashomer Hatzair was active in 'illegal' immigration to Palestine.

8 Betar
Brith Trumpledor (Hebrew) meaning Trumpledor Society; right-wing Revisionist Jewish youth movement. It was founded in 1923 in Riga by Vladimir Jabotinsky, in memory of J. Trumpledor, one of the first fighters to be killed in Palestine, and the fortress Betar, which was heroically defended for many months during the Bar Kohba uprising. Its aim was to propagate the program of the revisionists and prepare young people to fight and live in Palestine. It organized emigration through both legal and illegal channels. It was a paramilitary organization; its members wore uniforms. They supported the idea to create a Jewish legion in order to liberate Palestine. From 1936-39 the popularity of Betar diminished. During WWII many of its members formed guerrilla groups.

9 Dacha
Country house, consisting of small huts and little plots of lands. The Soviet authorities came to the decision to allow this activity to the Soviet people to support themselves. The majority of urban citizens grow vegetables and fruit in their small gardens to make preserves for winter.

10 Hitler's rise to power
In the German parliamentary elections in January 1933, the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) won one-third of the votes. On 30th January 1933 the German president swore in Adolf Hitler, the party's leader, as chancellor. On 27th February 1933 the building of the Reichstag (the parliament) in Berlin was burned down. The government laid the blame with the Bulgarian communists, and a show trial was staged. This served as the pretext for ushering in a state of emergency and holding a re-election. It was won by the NSDAP, which gained 44% of the votes, and following the cancellation of the communists' votes it commanded over half of the mandates. The new Reichstag passed an extraordinary resolution granting the government special legislative powers and waiving the constitution for 4 years. This enabled the implementation of a series of moves that laid the foundations of the totalitarian state: all parties other than the NSDAP were dissolved, key state offices were filled by party luminaries, and the political police and the apparatus of terror swiftly developed.

11 Occupation of the Baltic Republics (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania)

Although the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact regarded only Latvia and Estonia as parts of the Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe, according to a supplementary protocol (signed in 28th September 1939) most of Lithuania was also transferred under the Soviets. The three states were forced to sign the 'Pact of Defense and Mutual Assistance' with the USSR allowing it to station troops in their territories. In June 1940 Moscow issued an ultimatum demanding the change of governments and the occupation of the Baltic Republics. The three states were incorporated into the Soviet Union as the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republics.

12 All-Union pioneer organization

A communist organization for teenagers between 10 and 15 years old (cf: boy-/ girlscouts in the US). The organization aimed at educating the young generation in accordance with the communist ideals, preparing pioneers to become members of the Komsomol and later the Communist Party. In the Soviet Union, all teenagers were pioneers.

13 Political officer

These "commissars," as they were first called, exercised specific official and unofficial control functions over their military command counterparts. The political officers also served to further Party interests with the masses of drafted soldiery of the USSR by indoctrination in Marxist-Leninism. The 'zampolit', or political officers, appeared at the regimental level in the army, as well as in the navy and air force, and at higher and lower levels, they had similar duties and functions. The chast (regiment) of the Soviet Army numbered 2000-3000 personnel, and was the lowest level of military command that doctrinally combined all arms (infantry, armor, artillery, and supporting services) and was capable of independent military missions. The regiment was commanded by a colonel, or lieutenant colonel, with a lieutenant or major as his zampolit, officially titled "deputy commander for political affairs."

14 Aba Gomer (?-1941)

born in Belostok, Poland, and graduated from the Department of Philosophy of Bonn University. He lived in Tallinn from 1927 and was the chief rabbi of Estonia. In 1941, he was determined not to go into Soviet back areas and remained on the German-occupied territory. He was killed by Nazis in the fall of 1941.

15 NKVD

(Russ.: Narodnyi Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del), People's Committee of Internal Affairs, the supreme security authority in the USSR - the secret police. Founded by Lenin in 1917, it nevertheless played an insignificant role until 1934, when it took over the GPU (the State Political Administration), the political police. The NKVD had its own police and military formations, and also possessed the powers to pass sentence on political matters, and as such in practice had total control over society. Under Stalin's rule the NKVD was the key instrument used to terrorize the civilian population. The NKVD ran a network of labor camps for millions of prisoners, the Gulag. The heads of the NKVD were as follows: Genrikh Yagoda (to 1936), Nikolai Yezhov (to 1938) and Lavrenti Beria. During the war against Germany the political police, the KGB, was spun off from the NKVD. After the war it also operated on USSR-occupied territories, including in Poland, where it assisted the nascent

communist authorities in suppressing opposition. In 1946 the NKVD was renamed the Ministry of the Interior.

16 Gulag

The Soviet system of forced labor camps in the remote regions of Siberia and the Far North, which was first established in 1919. However, it was not until the early 1930s that there was a significant number of inmates in the camps. By 1934 the Gulag, or the Main Directorate for Corrective Labor Camps, then under the Cheka's successor organization the NKVD, had several million inmates. The prisoners included murderers, thieves, and other common criminals, along with political and religious dissenters. The Gulag camps made significant contributions to the Soviet economy during the rule of Stalin. Conditions in the camps were extremely harsh. After Stalin died in 1953, the population of the camps was reduced significantly, and conditions for the inmates improved somewhat.

17 Enemy of the people

Soviet official term; euphemism used for real or assumed political opposition.

18 Card system

The food card system regulating the distribution of food and industrial products was introduced in the USSR in 1929 due to extreme deficit of consumer goods and food. The system was cancelled in 1931. In 1941, food cards were reintroduced to keep records, distribute and regulate food supplies to the population. The card system covered main food products such as bread, meat, oil, sugar, salt, cereals, etc. The rations varied depending on which social group one belonged to, and what kind of work one did. Workers in the heavy industry and defense enterprises received a daily ration of 800 g (miners - 1 kg) of bread per person; workers in other industries 600 g. Non-manual workers received 400 or 500 g based on the significance of their enterprise, and children 400 g. However, the card system only covered industrial workers and residents of towns while villagers never had any provisions of this kind. The card system was cancelled in 1947.

19 Great Patriotic War

On 22nd June 1941 at 5 o'clock in the morning Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union without declaring war. This was the beginning of the so-called Great Patriotic War. The German blitzkrieg, known as Operation Barbarossa, nearly succeeded in breaking the Soviet Union in the months that followed. Caught unprepared, the Soviet forces lost whole armies and vast quantities of equipment to the German onslaught in the first weeks of the war. By November 1941 the German army had seized the Ukrainian Republic, besieged Leningrad, the Soviet Union's second largest city, and threatened Moscow itself. The war ended for the Soviet Union on 9th May 1945.

20 Kolkhoz

In the Soviet Union the policy of gradual and voluntary collectivization of agriculture was adopted in 1927 to encourage food production while freeing labor and capital for industrial development. In 1929, with only 4% of farms in kolkhozes, Stalin ordered the confiscation of peasants' land, tools,

and animals; the kolkhoz replaced the family farm.

21 Bolsheviks

Members of the movement led by Lenin. The name 'Bolshevik' was coined in 1903 and denoted the group that emerged in elections to the key bodies in the Social Democratic Party (SDPRR) considering itself in the majority (Rus. bolshynstvo) within the party. It dubbed its opponents the minority (Rus. menshynstvo, the Mensheviks). Until 1906 the two groups formed one party. The Bolsheviks first gained popularity and support in society during the 1905-07 Revolution. During the February Revolution in 1917 the Bolsheviks were initially in the opposition to the Menshevik and SR ('Sotsialrevolyutsionyery', Socialist Revolutionaries) delegates who controlled the Soviets (councils). When Lenin returned from emigration (16th April) they proclaimed his program of action (the April theses) and under the slogan 'All power to the Soviets' began to Bolshevize the Soviets and prepare for a proletariat revolution. Agitation proceeded on a vast scale, especially in the army. The Bolsheviks set about creating their own armed forces, the Red Guard. Having overthrown the Provisional Government, they created a government with the support of the II Congress of Soviets (the October Revolution), to which they admitted some left-wing SRs in order to gain the support of the peasantry. In 1952 the Bolshevik party was renamed the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

22 Communal apartment

The Soviet power wanted to improve housing conditions by requisitioning 'excess' living space of wealthy families after the Revolution of 1917. Apartments were shared by several families with each family occupying one room and sharing the kitchen, toilet and bathroom with other tenants. Because of the chronic shortage of dwelling space in towns communal or shared apartments continued to exist for decades. Despite state programs for the construction of more houses and the liquidation of communal apartments, which began in the 1960s, shared apartments still exist today.

23 Residence permit

The Soviet authorities restricted freedom of travel within the USSR through the residence permit and kept everybody's whereabouts under control. Every individual in the USSR needed residential registration; this was a stamp in the passport giving the permanent address of the individual. It was impossible to find a job, or even to travel within the country, without such a stamp. In order to register at somebody else's apartment one had to be a close relative and if each resident of the apartment had at least 8 square meters to themselves.

24 Campaign against ‘cosmopolitans’

The campaign against 'cosmopolitans', i.e. Jews, was initiated in articles in the central organs of the Communist Party in 1949. The campaign was directed primarily at the Jewish intelligentsia and it was the first public attack on Soviet Jews as Jews. 'Cosmopolitans' writers were accused of hating the Russian people, of supporting Zionism, etc. Many Yiddish writers as well as the leaders of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee were arrested in November 1948 on charges that they maintained ties with Zionism and with American 'imperialism'. They were executed secretly in 1952. The anti-

Semitic Doctors' Plot was launched in January 1953. A wave of anti-Semitism spread through the USSR. Jews were removed from their positions, and rumors of an imminent mass deportation of Jews to the eastern part of the USSR began to spread. Stalin's death in March 1953 put an end to the campaign against 'cosmopolitans.'

25 Voice of America

International broadcasting service funded by the U.S. government through the Broadcasting Board of Governors. Voice of America has been broadcasting since 1942, initially to Europe in various European languages from the US on short wave. During the cold war it grew increasingly popular in Soviet-controlled Eastern Europe as an information source.

26 Passport 24

Such passports were issued to people that authorities didn't put full trust into: they were former political prisoners or those that had recently arrived in the USSR, etc. There was a note in such passports stating that the owner of that passport was not allowed to reside in the 24 biggest towns of the USSR.

27 Beriya, Lavrentiy Pavlovich (1899-1953)

Communist politician, one of the main organizers of the mass arrests and political persecution between the 1930s and the early 1950s. Minister of Internal Affairs, 1938-1953. In 1953 he was expelled from the Communist Party and sentenced to death by the Supreme Court of the USSR.

28 Twentieth Party Congress

At the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956 Khrushchev publicly debunked the cult of Stalin and lifted the veil of secrecy from what had happened in the USSR during Stalin's leadership.

29 Khrushchev, Nikita (1894-1971)

Soviet communist leader. After Stalin's death in 1953, he became first secretary of the Central Committee, in effect the head of the Communist Party of the USSR. In 1956, during the 20th Party Congress, Khrushchev took an unprecedented step and denounced Stalin and his methods. He was deposed as premier and party head in October 1964. In 1966 he was dropped from the Party's Central Committee.

30 Rehabilitation in the Soviet Union

Many people who had been arrested, disappeared or killed during the Stalinist era were rehabilitated after the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956, where Khrushchev publicly debunked the cult of Stalin and lifted the veil of secrecy from what had happened in the USSR during Stalin's leadership. It was only after the official rehabilitation that people learnt for the first time what had happened to their relatives as information on arrested people had not been disclosed before.

31 Komsomol

Communist youth political organization created in 1918. The task of the Komsomol was to spread of the ideas of communism and involve the worker and peasant youth in building the Soviet Union. The Komsomol also aimed at giving a communist upbringing by involving the worker youth in the political struggle, supplemented by theoretical education. The Komsomol was more popular than the Communist Party because with its aim of education people could accept uninitiated young proletarians, whereas party members had to have at least a minimal political qualification.

32 Struggle against religion

The 1930s was a time of anti-religion struggle in the USSR. In those years it was not safe to go to synagogue or to church. Places of worship, statues of saints, etc. were removed; rabbis, Orthodox and Roman Catholic priests disappeared behind KGB walls.

33 October Revolution Day

October 25 (according to the old calendar), 1917 went down in history as victory day for the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia. This is the most significant date in the history of the USSR. Today the anniversary is celebrated as 'Day of Accord and Reconciliation' on November 7.

34 Keep in touch with relatives abroad

The authorities could arrest an individual corresponding with his/her relatives abroad and charge him/her with espionage, send them to concentration camp or even sentence them to death.

35 Perestroika (Russian for restructuring)

Soviet economic and social policy of the late 1980s, associated with the name of Soviet politician Mikhail Gorbachev. The term designated the attempts to transform the stagnant, inefficient command economy of the Soviet Union into a decentralized, market-oriented economy. Industrial managers and local government and party officials were granted greater autonomy, and open elections were introduced in an attempt to democratize the Communist Party organization. By 1991, perestroika was declining and was soon eclipsed by the dissolution of the USSR.

36 Reestablishment of the Estonian Republic

According to the referendum conducted in the Baltic Republics in March 1991, 77.8 percent of participating Estonian residents supported the restoration of Estonian state independence. On 20th August 1991, at the time of the coup attempt in Moscow, the Estonian Republic's Supreme Council issued the Decree of Estonian Independence. On 6th September 1991, the USSR's State Council recognized full independence of Estonia, and the country was accepted into the UN on 17th September 1991.

37 1991 Moscow coup d‘etat

Starting spontaniously on the streets of Moscow, its leaders went public on 19th August. TASS

(Soviet Telegraphical Agency) made an announcement that Gorbachev had been relieved of his duties for health reasons. His powers were assumed by Vice President Gennady Yanayev. A State Committee on the State of Emergency (GKChP) was established, led by eight officials, including KGB head Vladimir Kryuchkov, Soviet Prime Minister Valentin Pavlov, and Defense Minister Dmitry Yazov. Seizing on President Mikhail Gorbachev's summer absence from the capital, eight of the Soviet leader's most trusted ministers attempted to take control of the government. Within three days, the poorly planned coup collapsed and Gorbachev returned to the Kremlin. But an era had abruptly ended. The Soviet Union, which the coup plotters had desperately tried to save, was dead.

38 WIZO

Women's International Zionist Organization, founded in London in 1920 with humanitarian purposes aiming at supporting Jewish women all over the world in the field of education, economics, science and culture. A network of health, social and educational institutions was created in Palestine between 1921 and 1933, along with numerous local groups worldwide. After WWII its office was moved to Tel Aviv. WIZO became an advisory organ to the UN after WWII (similar to UNICEF or ECOSOC). Today it operates on a voluntary basis, as a party-neutral, non-profit organization, with about 250,000 members in 50 countries (2003).