

Irene Shein And Her Father Naftole-Hertz Shein



This is a picture of me and my father, Naftole-Hertz Shein. It was taken when he came back home from exile. We sent that picture to Mother, who was still in exile in the settlement Vavilovka. The photograph was taken in Johvi in 1948.

During the war, we were in exile. Nothing changed for us when the victory came on the 9th of May 1945. Men were sentenced for a certain term. Father was sentenced to six years of Gulag, without trial, and in 1947 his term was over. He was released from the Gulag camp and went to Estonia. In 1948 there was a decree of the Soviet government to exempt from exile those who were exiled being minors. I was also given an exemption. Only mother stayed in Siberia. She was on permanent exile and could only hope for a miracle.

I and another Estonian girl, Leya, who was six years older than I, went to Tomsk. We walked to Tomsk in deep snow, covering a distance of 250 kilometers. There was Taiga along the way. There was an old man with a sleigh in front of us. A wooden case with our clothes was on that sleigh. We couldn't go on the sleigh all the time, as the horse was lean and it wouldn't have been able to bear the extra load. From time to time, when we were too weary, he let us go on the sleigh.

Liya is still alive. We keep in touch via the phone. Her acquaintances lived in Tomsk. We stayed at their place for a couple of days and then went to Novosibirsk. It was easier to get home from there. When we were leaving, we left some money on the table for accommodation. But they found us at the train station and returned the money. So we reached Novosibirsk. The train station was huge, but there were throngs of people, and there was no space. Many people were coming back from evacuation. There were no tickets, but my fellow traveler managed to get some for us somehow. We reached Moscow by train and from there we went to Tallinn. This happened on 4th February 1948.

Father wasn't allowed to live in Valga. He settled in the small town of Johvi. I knew the address and found him. He worked as a procurer of agricultural products. Estonians received him very well and helped him a lot. Estonian neighbors from Valga gave Father a lot of family pictures. When we were

liberated, the new hosts of our apartment threw our pictures on the garbage heap in the yard. Neighbors collected them and gave them to Father when he came back home.