Ruth Laane

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Estonia
Interviewer: Ella Levitskaya
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I conducted this interview with Ruth Laane at her home. Ruth is a slender lady of medium height. She has nicely cut black curly hair with gray streaks. One can feel her innate intelligence and gentleness. Ruth is quick witted, and I enjoyed talking to her. She lives in a nice three-story house near the Kadriorg town park in a picturesque corner of Tallinn. Ruth works as an editor in a publishing house. She is very busy at work. I appreciate her finding time in her busy schedule to tell me about her family. Ruth knows the history of her family back to her great-grandfathers.

My family history

I know very little about my father's parents, the Mendelevs. They lived in Tartu [about 170 km from Tallinn], Estonia. They came from Riga, Latvia. I don't know how they happened to move to Tartu. All I can say is that my great-grandfather, my grandfather Samuil's father, had five children. Three older children lived in Riga and the younger ones lived in Tartu. My grandfather, Samuil Mendelev, was a dentist, and my grandmother Sara-Haja, nee Iljon, was his wife and a housewife.

My grandmother's father, Itzyk-Ruven Iljon, was a rabbi in Riga, though I don't know, in which synagogue. There were several synagogues in Riga. My great-grandfather's wife's name was Rivka, nee Feldman.

My grandfather and grandmother were born in 1882. They got married in Riga on 10th September 1908. They had five children who were all born in Riga. Their older daughter Sophia was born in 1910. Their second daughter Ella was born in 1911. Their son Alexandr, my father to be, was born in September 1913. Another son, Roman, was born in 1916. Their daughter Pesse, the last child, was born in 1922.

My father's parents spoke German and Estonian in the family. My grandmother was a genteel lady. She spoke fluent German and French. She was raised on French novels. My grandmother and grandfather were very religious. It was natural for my grandmother, who was a rabbi's daughter, but my grandfather was also committed to observing all Jewish traditions. For some time the family

was wealthy. From what I know their material situation got worse at some point of time. I don't know why it happened, but it did. Perhaps, the reason was that their younger son Roman grew ill. There was something wrong with his lungs. He had to stay in hospital for long periods, and it required doctors' advice and medications that all cost money.

My father's older sister Sophia married Yacob Gelbart, a doctor. She and her husband settled down in Piarnu. I don't know for what reason Gelbart changed his surname to Karmi later. Their only son Guidon-Ruben was born in 1939. Sister Ella was married to Shmuel Zlaf, a well-known doctor in Estonia. Zlaf was a neurosurgeon. He was assistant to Pusepp, an outstanding Estonian neurosurgeon. Pusepp was one of the founders of neurosurgery in Estonia. Ella and her husband had two children: daughter Juudit, born in 1937, and son Gill, born in 1939. The Zlaf family lived in Tallinn.

After finishing the gymnasium my father entered the Medical Faculty of Tartu University. During his studies my father joined a rightist Jewish students' organization. I don't remember its name. Mama mentioned it to me, but at that time her stories were no more than the past that was never to come back to me. Therefore, I didn't go into details. All I know is that there was also a leftist Jewish students' organization, and there were frequent fights between them. Mama told me that my father had his nose broken in one of the fights right before his wedding. There were such political storms at Tartu University.

I know much more about my mother's family. I'll start from my mother's father's family. My grandfather's father, that is, my great-grandfather Teviye Korobov, was a soldier in Nikolai's army 1. Recruits served 25 years in Nikolai's army. After their service was over, the tsarist government took care of them. They served in the army while their age mates learned vocations, got married and built their homes. Former soldiers, being about 40, had to start from scratch. Therefore, the government gave them plots of land, money, licenses to start a business to their liking and pensions. There were other benefits and they equally covered Jewish soldiers. For this reason my grandfather was given permission to live in Narva beyond the Pale of Settlement 2.

They say Teviye was handsome, strong and tall. In Narva, Teviye built a house and a forge and became a blacksmith. He got married and had children. I know nothing about my great-grandmother. They had four children. I don't remember the name of the oldest son. My grandfather Iosif Korobov, born in Narva in 1879, was the second child. Then there were two daughters: Jenny and Haja-Dusha. I don't know Jenny's date of birth, but Haja-Dusha was born in 1883. Jenny died young.

My grandfather's older brother emigrated to France probably at the end of the 19th century. He lived in Paris. We tried to find him through the Red Cross after World War II. My grandmother's sister Greta Gringut, who lived in Switzerland, also joined in the search, but we failed to find my grandfather's brother or any of his family. He must have perished during the occupation of France.

My grandfather's sister Haja-Dusha married Leitman, a Jewish man. I don't remember his first name. Estonia belonged to the Russian Empire then. Haja- Dusha and her husband moved to Saint Petersburg, Russia. Haja-Dusha's husband was carried away by revolutionary ideas and was a Bolshevik 3. He took part in the revolution in 1917 4. Later he became a party activist. My grandfather Iosif was trained in the vocation of a hat maker. It was easy to travel abroad at that time, and my grandfather went to his brother in Paris to master his craft. There he met Sara

Brauns, my grandmother to be.

My maternal grandmother's father lived in Vindava, today's Ventspils [about 150 km from Riga] in Latvia. His name was Moshe-Wulf Brauns. My great- grandfather was born in 1846, though his place of birth is unknown. He was married to Haja, born Klein. I don't know where or when my great- grandmother was born. My great-grandfather was a hat maker. He was known for his cheerful character and was everybody's favorite in the family.

There were seven children in the family: daughters Greta, Bertha, my grandmother Sara, Yetta and Hansa. After Hansa the only son, Nathan, was born, and after Nathan the youngest, Amalia, was born. Grandmother Sara was born in 1885. I don't know her sister and her brother's dates of birth. My great-grandparents were very religious, and it could not have been different at the time. They also raised their children in a religious way. They also received secular education, but I don't remember any details. They spoke Yiddish and Russian in the family.

The children grew up and moved to other towns and countries. My grandmother's sisters got married. Greta, the oldest sister, married Gringut, a Jewish man. I don't remember his first name. Their only daughter's name was Juliette. Greta's husband developed tuberculosis and his doctor told him to move to Switzerland for medical treatment. They moved to Davos in Switzerland. At first they thought it wasn't going to be forever, and they would come back after Gringut recovered, but they happened to live in Davos for the rest of their lives. Greta passed away a long time ago. Juliette died in the early 1990s.

Bertha Kazerovich and her husband Yacob lived in Ventspils. Yacob was a tailor and Bertha was a housewife. I know nothing about her. All I remember is that she had a son, whose name was George. He moved somewhere. Nobody knows where, and there is nobody to ask about him.

My grandmother's younger sister Yetta Markovich lived with her family in Paris. Yetta's husband's name was Jacque. Yetta had three children: Susanne, Raymond and Giselle. Yetta and her younger daughter Giselle and her son perished during World War II. Her older daughter Susanne was the only survivor in the family. Susanne's daughter Irena Shpelling lives in the United States.

Hansa married Nathan Kreizburger, a Jewish man from Ventspils. They had two sons: Isaac and Haim. Hansa's family lived in Ventspils. My grandmother's brother Nathan was married twice. His first wife Olga Auguston came from Ventspils. They left Narva for Riga. Nathan had two children, daughter Bertha and son Samuel, from his first marriage. Olga died in Riga in 1928. Nathan then married Yetta Breiz. They had one son in this marriage. They lived in Riga.

My grandmother's youngest sister Amalia Abramovich and her husband Moisey moved to the USA. Amalia had three children: son Jack and daughters Rosa and Norma. Amalia lived a long life. Her daughters and her son and their children live in the USA. Neither my mother nor I knew them, and we did not keep in touch with her.

Sara, my grandmother to be, decided to become a bonnet maker. Bonnets were popular with ladies, and bonnet makers were overloaded with work. Those, who had training in Paris, were particularly popular. Paris has been the cradle of haute couture at all times and a bonnet from Paris was just like a dream. My grandmother's sister Yetta Markovich lived in Paris, and my grandmother decided to go to Paris to have training in the vocation. She met my grandfather to be there and

they fell in love with one another. They got married in Paris. It goes without saying that they had a traditional Jewish wedding, both of them having come from a religious family.

In 1908 their son Philip, and in 1913 their daughter Marcel, my mother to be, were born. After my mama was born, my grandfather started feeling desperately homesick. He insisted on leaving Paris for Narva where his father lived. So my grandmother, grandfather and their two children moved to Narva in 1914 before World War I.

I don't know where my grandmother and grandfather lived after they returned to Narva. They opened a shop in Narva. My grandmother also worked. They worked very hard and finally managed to get better: they bought a house and opened a store. They were quite wealthy. My grandfather was a very kind person and helped people. Some of them took advantage of it. My grandfather's acquaintance asked my grandfather to help him. He had some problems with debts or bills. My grandfather signed a bill at his request, actually acknowledging that he owned a factory that he had nothing to do with. This kindness turned against my grandfather and against the whole family, but I'll talk about it later.

There were three gymnasia in Narva: an Estonian one, a Russian gymnasium for immigrants since there were many Russian immigrants escaping from Bolsheviks, and a public Russian gymnasium. Mama and her brother Philip studied in this gymnasium.

Mama told me there was no anti-Semitism in Estonia. Life was quiet and Jews were well respected. When Estonia gained independence 5, the government allowed Jews a Cultural autonomy 6. Jews were treated justly in the Russian gymnasium where Mama and Philip studied. There were religious classes. Children belonged to different religions, and had individual classes. Religious classes for Jewish children were conducted by a rabbi. Jewish children were released from studies on Jewish holidays. All children got along well and also had friends from the Estonian gymnasium.

Mama told me that those were Russian immigrants that brought anti-Semitism into everyday life. Anti-Semitism has always existed in Russia. Mama told me that her brother Philip was a kind person. One day Philip was walking along the street, when he saw an old Russian immigrant woman feeling ill. She fell, and Philip rushed to help her stand up. The old woman opened her eyes and said, 'If it hadn't been for zhidy, Russia would still stand.' This was how she thanked him. However, only Russians could speak up such things. There was no anti-Semitism on a public level.

Once my mother, her friend and I were talking about this time, and they told me that life was very quiet and hasteless and that each of them knew his or her place in it. For example, Jews could not serve in officers' ranks. There were no Jews among professional officers. Also, Jews could not hold official positions. However, they all knew that Estonia went through a hard time. It was a young country, and it only started rising on its feet: the First World War, and then the war for independence of Estonia 7, the war on two fronts. After Estonia became independent it started supporting the emergence of its own Estonian intelligentsia, and this was well understood.

As for any other ways, they were open for Jews. I only heard warm feedback about life in independent Estonia at that time. I think there was still some anti-Semitism in everyday life in Estonia. I've thought a lot about it. I believe the Cultural Jewish autonomy and the situation when all national communities were rather segregated, had its part in it. Estonians, Russian and Jews lived their own lives. The less you know about the life of others, the more space it leaves for

guesses, and the worse relations are. There must have been some demonstrations of anti-Semitism, but my mother or grandmother never mentioned it.

Mama's brother Philip went to Riga to study to become a dental technician after finishing the gymnasium. After finishing his studies Philip returned to Narva. However, he failed to start his own business and helped Grandfather to work in the store. Philip was not married. He was very much in love with a girl. It never came to the wedding since the Great Patriotic War 8 began. Philip was everybody's favorite. He was a very kind and sympathetic person. He never failed to rush to somebody's aid. It's funny that one can tell that looking at Philip's photos in our family album. Philip was very fond of being photographed on or without any occasion. However, it was not because he was so much enamored with his own image. There was a photographer, a Russian immigrant in Narva, who was not quite popular in the town. Photography was the only craft that man had to earn his living, but he had hardly any clients and life was hard for him. Philip believed it to be his duty to support the man and visited him regularly to have his picture taken.

After finishing the gymnasium Mama was thinking of where she should go to study. She wanted to become a pharmacist and work in a pharmacy. Once she was offered a job in a pharmacy in Pösse, a small Estonian town. Mama accepted the offer. My father was a student of the Medical Faculty of Tartu University. It happened so that my father decided to work during summer vacations and the place was the very pharmacy in Pösse. This was where he met my mother and they fell in love with each other.

I don't remember where they got married, but I know they had a traditional Jewish wedding. My father was to go back to continue his studies, but he did not want to leave his young wife behind. There was no extramural department for medical students at the university, and my father went to the extramural Legal Faculty. After the wedding my parents settled down in Narva. My grandparents owned a house. They leased apartments in the house, but my parents rented an apartment in the house across the street from Mama's parents.

Before I was born my parents also lived in Kemeri for some time. My father worked as an accountant there, but I'm not sure this is correct information. Some time later they returned to Narva. I was born in Narva in 1938. I was the only child in the family. My parents gave me the name of Ruth.

My great-grandfather Moshe-Wulf Brauns, my grandmother's father, died in 1932. He was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Narva. My great-grandmother had died long before. I don't know when. They were buried in accordance with Jewish traditions.

Growing up

We were quite wealthy. My father was the only breadwinner, but this was sufficient. He had rightist attitudes like his parents. Uncle Philip was a leftist, but he did not belong to any parties. He sympathized with the poor and miserable people. I remember my father and Philip arguing till their voices became hoarse. I don't know the subject of their disputes, but I remember them for a different reason. We had a very beautiful dog, the pet of the family. When my father and Philip started shouting, the dog became desperate trying to understand who was hurting whom and kept tossing from one to another barking loudly.

My uncle was a great supporter of the Soviet Union and admired the principles of the Soviet regime: equality, internationalism and fraternity of all people. This was all he heard about from Soviet newspapers and radio programs. He had never been to the USSR and could not have his own opinion. When in 1940 Estonia became Soviet 9, Philip was probably the only one in our family who was happy about it. The rest of the family, my parents and my mother and father's parents believed it to be inevitably evil. There was nothing to be happy about, and it was impossible to help it.

During the War

It goes without saying that Soviet authorities confiscated my grandfather's shop and store. Besides, the bill that my grandfather had signed one day played its role. My grandfather had never seen the factory and was just a stooge, but for Soviet authorities he was a factory and a store owner, a bourgeois and an enemy of the people 10. Mama told me that people had been arrested before overall deportation 11.

My grandfather had no doubts that this was going to happen to them. He had his belongings packed to avoid the hustle when the time of arrest came. They expected arrest each day. Mama told me they had such a vague idea about what was happening in the Soviet Union or where they were to be taken to that my grandmother did not dry any bread or store any food products to take with them for the road. She made a cake every day, and they ate it, and then grandmother made another cake. It never occurred to them to buy any tinned food.

However, for some reason our family was left alone. Deportation took place on 14th June 1941, when about 10,000 people were deported from Estonia. Whole families, including elderly people, children, handicapped and ill people were deported. Men were sent to the Gulag 12, and women and children were exiled to Siberia. A week after the deportation, on 22nd June 1941 the fascist German armies attacked the Soviet Union.

My father and Mama's brother Philip insisted on our evacuation. Despite their continuous arguments, they solidly stood for it this time. They believed it was mandatory to leave and this issue was no subject of discussion. By the way, the reason for the confrontation of my father and my uncle also disappeared shortly afterward. My uncle Philip was mobilized to the army, and after he crossed the Russian border, he wrote us a letter. Fortunately, Philip understood that it was no good to write openly about his impressions, and he diplomatically stated that he would never argue with Alexandr again, which meant that he was disappointed with the Soviet regime.

My grandfather and grandmother Mendelev stayed in Tartu. I heard many versions of the reason for their stay, but there was one common thing about them. Everybody said my grandfather was eager to leave, but not my grandmother. My grandmother did not know Russian; she had been raised on German and French novels and spoke fluent German and French. It probably never occurred to her that the Germans might be worse than the Bolsheviks. The majority believed so, and the deportation in Estonia strengthened their position.

Our family had a note from my grandfather Samuil where he still mentioned that there was a possibility that they might evacuate. My grandfather knew we were up to evacuation and was asking us to find them. Something that convinced them they should stay must have happened at the last moment. They said that his teacher and peer Pusepp promised Doctor Zlaf, Aunt Ella's

husband, that he would manage to protect Zlaf and his family, and they stayed. There was Zlaf, his wife Ella and two children, daughter Juudit, born in 1937, and son Gille, born in 1939, my grandfather and grandmother, their son Roman, their younger daughter Pesse, who was 19 then.

Later we were told that Roman was trying to escape and was seen in the south of Estonia, where the track of him was lost. Roman perished somewhere in the south of Estonia. The rest of the family perished in Tartu. I have no memoriam left of them, not a single photograph. There are a few of Grandmother's letters, and a picture of my father's sister Pesse, just a picture of her. It was the only thing I managed to find. I started looking into the history too late, and I know so very little of them. I don't even know how they looked.

My grandfather, grandmother, mama and I evacuated. Marusia Arefieva, my grandparents' former maid, also joined us. Marusia was nice and tidy, and my grandparents were kind to her. They trained her in the hat making craft, and Marusia was doing well. She learned the trade, got married and followed her husband to Kivioli. However, she remained a devoted friend of our family. When she heard that my grandparents were evacuating, she left Kivioli for Narva and evacuated with us.

I have vague memories of our trip. We settled down in the village of Makhali [about 2000 km from Moscow] in the Ural. My father and Uncle Philip were regimented to the army on the first days of the war. However, they were not sent to the front line forces. Stalin had no trust in nationals of the republics that had recently been annexed to the Soviet Union. They were sent to labor camps 13 in Siberia. It was not far from the place we were at, and my father visited us once on leave. When the Estonian Corps 14 of the Red Army was formed, Estonians from labor camps joined it. In 1942 my uncle Philip and my father joined the front line forces.

We survived thanks to my grandfather. He joined a hat making crew in the neighboring village. My grandfather went to work every day. Marusia gave us a lot of moral support. She always had a smile and a comforting word for each of us. She also worked in the crew and protected Grandfather from whatever harsh words. Fortunately, Mama was good at knitting, and she knitted hats for villagers and they paid her with food products.

We were very lucky with our landlords. The newcomers were accommodated in local houses. We were accommodated with a good steady family. They did not drink vodka or speak curse language. The only person speaking curse language in our household was me. I can't remember the language I started speaking in my childhood, but in evacuation the language I spoke was the obscene Russian language. All members of the family were busy, and I spent a lot of time with neighbors' children in the stable yard. I learned to swear from them, and even adults were confused by the language I spoke. My relatives did their best to make me stop swearing, but that was of no avail.

My grandfather's younger sister Haja-Dusha lived in Leningrad after she got married. The family did not keep in touch with her. She was a Soviet resident, and correspondence with relatives abroad was dangerous for her and her husband 15. The family heard from Haja-Dusha on rare occasions, and only after 1940 the communication was reestablished. Haja-Dusha divorced her husband, a party activist.

In 1937, during the party cleanup [see Great Terror] 16, my aunt's ex- husband was sent to the Gulag on the Kolskiy Peninsula in the far north of the USSR. Though Haja-Dusha had divorced him some time before, she was exiled as a 'member of the family of an enemy of people.' However, she

returned to Leningrad shortly before the war. Haja-Dusha survived the blockade of Leningrad 17, buried her second husband, and joined us in Makhali village in 1943, when she somehow managed to get our address. Since then she lived with us till the end of her life. She had no children and was a lonely person.

Later she lived with her brother until she finally moved in with me. I remember her arrival to the Ural. I remember a woman stepping across the threshold scaring me stiff. My grandfather and his sister were dark-skinned with very beautiful and bright brown eyes. So, I saw a skinny woman with very dark skin that looked almost black. She had absolutely gray hair with the distinguished dark burning eyes. She really looked horrible. I recovered my posture later, but my first impression was horrible.

Haja-Dusha made her appearance at the very height of the fight of all adults with my wordings. Having lived in the USSR for a long time she was not so much disturbed about it. Once in a conversation I told her what in my opinion should be done to her and my aunt commented 'Well, you know, this isn't so bad, actually.' This comment struck me dead, and I gradually quieted down. In due time I forgot the language, but when we returned home from the evacuation I spoke the Ural dialect and obscene language.

I wouldn't say we were starved in evacuation. At least, I don't remember being starved. Of course, it is to my grandmother's credit. She was an excellent housewife, and could make delicious lunch from nothing and was very efficient. She watched it that we managed to make do with what my grandfather, Marusia and Mama were earning. The villagers were kind and nice to us. Our landlady had two sons, a little older than me. Her husband and older sons were at the front. She had a cow. There was hardly any food to feed the cow, and it gave little milk. The landlady was happy, when she managed to get a liter of milk. She gave milk to her sons and me, and I always had more than they did, being younger and a girl.

My father and Uncle Philip wrote us letters from the front. My father spoke poor Russian, but he also wrote letters in Russian. If he had written them in Estonian, the censorship would have kept them longer. His letters would have been kept till there was a free Estonian censor, since only censor stamped letters were allowed for release by mail. Uncle Philip wrote to Grandmother and Grandfather in Yiddish.

My father and Uncle Philip died during the liberation of Estonia before the very end of the war. Philip died a horrible death. He belonged to the marines to be landed on Saaremaa Island to fight the Germans. The boats dropped the marines and left, and all of the marines were actually killed point-blank. There were few survivors. My father exploded on a mine and was buried on Saaremaa Island. We received the notification of my father's death, but Uncle Philip was deemed missing.

After the War

When we heard that Estonia was liberated, our family started preparations for returning home. We still had hopes that Uncle Philip would come back. Our landlords wanted to convince us to stay, but we left.

From evacuation we were taken to Kivioli. There were barracks left from a former camp where all those returning from the evacuation were accommodated. This was a quarantine period. To return

home we needed a letter of invitation, but there was nobody to send it to us. None of our Estonian kin had survived. My father's parents and their younger children, my father's sister Ella Zlaf and her family were dead. My father's older sister Sophia Karmi and her son and husband, who used to live in Piarnu, were dead. We only have confirmation that she was shot, but there is no archive information about her son and husband.

My grandmother's sister Hansa Kreizburger, her husband Nathan and their sons Isaac and Haim stayed in Ventspils. They perished during the German occupation. My grandmother's brother Nathan Brauns, his wife Yetta and their younger son died in the Riga ghetto 19 during the German occupation of Latvia. Their younger daughter Bertha was in the ghetto and in a few German concentration camps, but she managed to survive. After the war Bertha moved to Israel. She lives in Tel Aviv. She has two sons and grandchildren. She is doing all right. Her brother Samuel died during the war.

Narva was nothing but ruins and we could not possibly go there. Our house was ruined. We had no idea how much longer we were to stay in Kivioli. And then Mama ran away to Tallinn. She found a job as a secretary. She had no lodging and slept in her office. Thanks to an acquaintance of hers, mama received a two-room apartment and then we could join her in Tallinn. Then the former owners of this apartment returned. Of course, they could have thrown us out of the apartment, but they were nice people and accommodated us in a little room. There were five of us sharing this room, and I just cannot imagine how we all fit in there.

Later my grandfather found two rooms in a shared apartment 19. Mama stayed in our former room, and my grandmother, grandfather, Haja-Dusha and I moved to the new lodging. It was better for Mama to live apart from us, since she might have been recognized as the daughter of Iosif Korobov, a factory and a store owner, and Mama had to keep it a secret for the fear of losing her job.

My grandfather went to work at a hat making shop. He actually made hats at home and took them to the shop. My grandmother helped him. The output rate was high and he would have hardly managed alone. They had a tough work schedule. They started work very early in the morning. It was hard work. They operated sewing machines making hats and then had to steam out the seams. It was physically hard, and my grandmother and grandfather were no longer young. They worked till lunch, rested for 30 minutes before going back to work.

On Friday, at the start of Sabbath they stopped work. My grandmother lit candles and prayed over them. They didn't work on Saturday either. After the war we no longer had specific dishes for meat and milk products like we used to before. It was impossible; we had no sufficient kitchen utilities to follow this requirement. Before the war my grandparents and parents followed kashrut. They celebrated Jewish holidays. My grandmother made matzah. I remember her making delicious egg matzah. My grandmother was a good cook. She was a very efficient cook, and we always had sufficient food. We managed all right even after the war, when the situation with food was tough. It is all to my grandmother's credit and her efficiency.

On Yom Kippur my grandfather and grandmother fasted. They did their best, considering the situation. The large synagogue in Tallinn burned down in 1944, but there was a prayer house that was called a synagogue. It was near my school. I remember when I was seven or eight years old, my grandmother and grandfather picked me up from school on Jewish holidays, and we went to the

synagogue. Later, when I was a pioneer 20 and then a Komsomol member 21, I stopped going to the synagogue.

When we returned from evacuation, I only spoke Russian and did not know a word in Estonian. Our Estonian neighbors had two children, and gradually, playing with these children, I refreshed my Estonian. My mother and grandparents spoke fluent Estonian. However, my grandparents spoke Yiddish at home, and addressed me in Russian.

In 1946 I went to the first grade of a Russian school. Our classroom was huge. It was a former canteen. There were so many children in my class that they needed a lot of space. Many of them were overage because of the war. On the first day at school our teacher asked the children to tell her their year of birth and nationality. The Russian girl, my desk mate, asked me who I was and I said I was Jewish. Her face gained a scared expression and she whispered, 'Don't tell her!' She must have been in Tallinn during the war, and now she knew such things were to be kept a secret. She didn't mean to hurt me. Vice versa, she wanted to help. There were three Jewish children in my class. I never faced any anti-Semitism at school or observed any demonstrations of it towards other children.

I was a pioneer at school and believed everything we were told. I was a common Soviet child. I argued a lot with my grandfather and he was my opponent. My grandfather was trying to open my eyes, but I didn't let him. I remember always having a trump card. To all his attacks against the Soviet regime I replied that if it hadn't been for the Soviet regime, we would have stayed in Estonia during the war and we would not have survived. My grandfather surrendered under such argument and had nothing to object.

After the war, living in Soviet Estonia, my grandmother corresponded with her sisters living abroad. She corresponded with Bertha, her brother Nathan's daughter, living in Israel. She corresponded mainly with her sister Bertha Gringut living in Switzerland. She would have corresponded with more people, but during the Soviet regime this was dangerous for our family. However, my grandmother had no intention to refuse from this single opportunity to communicate with her sisters. Amalia sent her letters for grandmother to Switzerland, and then Greta resent them here. My grandmother corresponded with Greta in Yiddish. After Greta passed away, her daughter wrote us in German and Russian.

At that fearful Stalin's time Greta wrote such letters that the family was afraid that censors would pay special attention to them. Here is what she could write: 'When I was in elementary school, we had a teacher, who was an immigrant. The Bolsheviks executed him. What brutality!' Greta could also describe the life of one of the tsarist family, or that some noble immigrant opened a store, and she mentioned well-known names that caused anger with Bolsheviks since 1917. Greta described the White Guard immigrants. She probably did not understand that all letters crossing the USSR border were censored. However, we received her letters and nothing bad happened. Probably Greta's letters were so long that they tired censors before they read them to the end. Greta wrote 15-20 page letters on tissue paper. After Greta and Amalia died, this correspondence stopped.

The postwar period was hard and miserable, and we had no parties at home. We did not celebrate any religious holidays or birthdays. We celebrated my birthday at home, when I was in the 5th grade. Haja-Dusha told my granny that it was my birthday and we had to invite guests. This was the first time when two of my classmates came to my birthday. My grandmother made a bagel, but

I saw how much effort it cost her. Now I understand my grandmother who had lost her relatives, her husband's relatives, her husband, her son-in-law, her son, and who lived through whatever hardships. My grandmother loved Philip dearly, so much, that she did not even dare to have his portrait on the wall. I have Philip's portrait now, but then it was kept at the bottom of a box. I noticed how hard these celebrations were for my grandmother.

I remember the Doctors' Plot 22 in January 1953. Now I wonder that this fearful period only lasted for two months. NKVD employees 23 managed a lot through this short period of time.... I was 13. I remember a meeting at school where students of our 7th grade held 'murdering doctors' up to shame. They made speeches saying what rascals those doctors were. I remember that one Jewish girl spoke even having no direction from the teacher. She also said how terrible this was.

My grandfather had many friends and acquaintances, and they often came to see him and discuss political news. My grandfather read newspapers, and could read between lines, which was common in the Soviet Union. He also commented on what he had read saying 'Well, if they write like this, this means...' He also liked listening to 'The Voice of America' 24 and other international radio stations that were forbidden in the USSR, and also discussed what he had heard.

I am grateful to my grandfather that all such discussions took place in my presence. Nobody feared that I could mention something that was not safe for my grandfather or his acquaintances. I think my grandfather did a lot for me. He planted the seeds of doubt in me, and he taught me to think and analyze. These seeds have grown out.

I remember 5th March 1953, when Stalin died. We knew about it from the radio news before it was time for me to leave for school. When my grandfather heard that Stalin had died, his face brightened with happiness. My grandfather did not work on this day as if it was a Jewish holiday. This was so very unusual that my grandfather stayed away from work on a weekday, which had never happened before. On hearing the news my grandfather rushed to see my mother and tell her the news. My grandfather was really happy, but for me Stalin's death was a terrible blow. We had a mourning meeting at school, and all attendants were sobbing.

I came home from school at my usual hour in the afternoon, and there was a strict rule at our home: when I came from school, the family sat down to lunch, and then everybody might take to their usual staff, but at lunch the family was to sit at the table. So, when I came from school after the mourning meeting, Haja-Dusha, who was one from Russia, even though she had been exiled back in 1937, and I mourned after the great chief and teacher. We didn't feel like eating at all, and I still remember how angry my grandfather grew, when he saw us in tears. He even hit his fist on the table, which he had never done before. We pulled ourselves together immediately, and stopped crying.

Gradually, by the end of school, I started seeing things clearly. Khrushchev's 25 speech at the 20th Party Congress 26 added much to my understanding of things. However, my understanding rather referred to the personality of Stalin than the very ideology. I thought that even though Stalin failed to implement the ideas, but the 20th Congress would start a new phase of the development of the Soviet Union, and the others would know how the country should develop and they might do better. I had these illusions for a long time before they faded away.

After Stalin's death those that had been exiled back in 1941 started returning home. My grandfather's acquaintances were among them and they visited us. They told us what they had been through and gave their comments. They had discussions in my presence. They sat at a large round table in the sitting room, and I used to do my homework sitting at this same table. They never told me to go to the kitchen while the adults were talking. Later my grandmother and grandfather discussed what they had heard and I was there, too. My grandfather took more interest in politics, and I had more discussions with him, than with my grandmother.

In 1956 I finished school. I wanted to go to Tartu and study in the famous university, but I didn't. My grandfather, grandmother and Haja-Dusha were old people in poor condition, and I couldn't imagine leaving them on their own. I entered the Faculty of Russian philology at the Tallinn Teacher's Training College.

Anti-Semitism developed in Estonia after the war. This was the policy of the Soviet Union, but one should give credit to Estonian people: they tried to avoid it. Anti-Semitism was mainly demonstrated by newcomers from the Soviet Union.

After the war the Soviet regime took efforts to struggle against religion 27. However, the synagogue was open, and older people remembered traditions and rituals. When my grandfather died in 1957, ten men prayed for him all night through. We buried my grandfather in the Jewish cemetery in Tallinn in accordance with Jewish traditions. My grandfather belonged to that generation that lived according to those rules, and I never doubted that my grandfather, grandmother and mother were to be buried in the Jewish cemetery, not even the Jewish site in the town cemetery 28.

I lived a common student's life with its joys and sorrows. I did not involve myself in any political activities. The time, when I was an active pioneer and Komsomol member, had passed away, but once here is what happened. When I was a last-year student, they decided to elect me the Komsomol leader of the course. I had different, my 'grandfather's' views by then. However, I don't like any demonstrations. I didn't have the courage to put my Komsomol membership card on the table at the Komsomol committee. [Editor's note: Komsomol units existed at all educational and industrial enterprises. They were headed by Komsomol committees involved in organizational activities.]

So, I was an appointee for the position of the Komsomol leader. I spoke out disqualifying myself from this appointment. I can't remember what reason I offered in this regard, but I thought it was rather convincing. However, I noticed that nobody listened to me and they were going to vote for me. I took the floor again, and this time I said that since our Komsomol activities spread as far as collecting monthly fees I believed there were other people that would do a better job. Deathly silence fell on the audience. The students were in silence, and our tutor from the College Party unit also kept silence.

Anyway, I was not elected. Our faculty management took no measures against me, or at least, I did not know if anything unusual was happening. Only when we met 20 years later, my former co-students told me that after I spoke they felt like a bomb had exploded. Any way, I said what I believed was appropriate and I was not elected to this position.

I got a job appointment 29 and went to work as a teacher of Russian literature and language at a general education school in Tallinn. One year later I was offered a position of lecturer in our college and I accepted the offer.

This job was more difficult, but I enjoyed it more than working at school. I would have had no problems working in college if I had joined the Party, since, from our management standpoint, I had two big shortcomings: I wasn't a party member and I was Jewish. Therefore, I was unprotected. In college I was offered to join the Party. The party secretary of our faculty approached me and told me that since I was working with the new generation, I should join the Party. I replied that I couldn't. I could not raise my hand voting 'for' at party meetings, if I disagreed. It is true, I could not do it. And since it was quite frequent that I disagreed, I could not possibly join the Party. This was the last time I had this offer.

However, this refusal had no impact on my work, and I enjoyed working at college. I liked working with students. I also had other responsibilities. I was bound to be involved in scientific research and I didn't have much time for that. Our managers were decent people. Actually, there were disagreements, but they had nothing to do with my national origin or views. Also, I could not speak out what I thought in class, but I didn't mention what I disagreed about either. It was always possible to balance on a safe side.

My only confrontation with the Soviet reality occurred in the early 1960s, when my College offered me a job of a teacher of Russian in Africa for two to three years. At that time the Soviet Union promoted Russian language studies in developing countries. I went through all instances in college well and was recommended as a knowledgeable and skilled teacher, but then I was to be confirmed at the district party committee where I was told that I did not suit the job requirements, and if I wanted to work abroad, my application form was to be ideally clean. What was wrong with my application form? As it happens, I wrote that I had relatives abroad. Well, I might have omitted this item in the form, but we corresponded with them and the KGB 30 would have known about it. Therefore, it was better to be transparent. I did not go to Africa, and my mother was happy about it.

Whatever it was, life in Estonia was not as hard as in other Soviet republics like Russia or Ukraine. There was more freedom. For example, jazz was not directly forbidden in the USSR, but there were hardly any concerts held, while we had jazz festivals. We didn't have samizdat publications, but we received them from Russia. We also had different art exhibitions, when in Russia, for example, pictures were assessed from the standpoint of socialist realism. We had interesting art exhibitions, particularly, in graphics.

By the way, Jews had easier ways here. Estonians value skills, and this was the main criterion for selection, and not the national origin. In the 1950s a number of scientists from Leningrad moved to Estonia for this reason. They could not find jobs in Russia. The Tartu University employed Yuri Lotman 31, a unique expert in Russian philology, the honor of Tartu University, Mikhail Kotik chaired the department of psychology. Kotik failed to learn Estonian, but he lectured in Russian, though the official language was Estonian. They took it easy, considering that Kotik had a name in the world and was the honor of the university.

There were other information channels in Estonia beside Soviet TV and radio programs. We could watch Finnish TV programs. A TV master connected a special add-on device, and we even could

subscribe to a Finnish TV program directory. It wasn't an official channel, but people knew the ways to get subscriptions. We watched three Finnish programs. Finnish is very much like Estonian and people could understand it. We could read the captions, which was easier than listening and understanding. Having coffee at work in the morning we discussed what we had seen and understood.

It's amazing that I had no Jewish acquaintances after finishing school. We didn't have possibilities like the Estonian Jewish community 32 offers nowadays, when Jewish young people have places to get together. Besides, we didn't have any relatives or friends in Tallinn. I had Estonian and Russian co-students. I was raised with the conviction that I would never marry an Estonian or Russian man. I would have been afraid to. Knowing myself, I feared that if my husband said something wrong about Jews, God forbid, this would be the end of our marriage. I would never live on with such person. I was dead sure that I would only marry a Jewish man, but I had no Jewish acquaintances.

My grandmother had no education, but she was a very wise woman. One time I dated a Russian guy. I liked him a lot. I shared my thoughts with my grandmother. She told me that if I decided to marry him, I should marry him even knowing that my grandmother disapproved of it. And if we truly loved each other, my grandmother would ignore the fact that my husband was not a Jewish man. I decided against marrying him for certain reasons, but I remembered my grandmother's advice, all of them. Once my grandmother told me one should marry someone with the same mentality. It didn't matter whether he was wealthy or poor, but mentality should be alike or we would never find a common language. I argued with her giving examples of our acquaintances. I told her that people from different environments could get along, but she insisted that 'no, just take my word, this is not so.' Life has proved that this, and everything else my grandmother told me, was right.

My family life

I got married in 1967. My husband, Valdo Laane, is Estonian. He was born in the town of Viljandi in Estonia in 1934. Valdo's father came from a poor family with many children. He had seven brothers. They lived in a village. Once Valdo's grandfather went to buy a cow or a horse at the market, but somebody stole his money. He returned home and hanged himself. The grandmother had to raise eight children. She happened to be a strong woman. She managed to raise all of them and give education to the older children. The older brothers supported the younger ones. One brother became a teacher and took one of his younger brothers to live with him and teach him. They managed all right in the long run and became wealthy people.

Valdo's father was a merchant. His brothers had families and were doing well. My husband had a brother. When the Soviet regime was established in Estonia, all of them, including Valdo's family, were deported in 1941. The men were taken to the Gulag, and members of their families were exiled. Valdo's brother died in exile. Valdo and his mother returned from exile in 1949, when Estonians returned from the army, and the wives of these ex- military of the Estonian Corps were allowed to pick up their relatives from Siberia. These women helped children of their relatives and even those children that had no relatives left in Estonia.

Valdo' mother stayed in exile, and Valdo arrived at Viljandi where he had no relatives left. Valdo had no place to live or food to eat. He wandered about the town until a passer-by asked him if he was looking for someone. This passer-by took Valdo to his parents' servant, who took Valdo to his

grandparents in the village. Valdo stayed with them.

After finishing school he wanted to enter the Faculty of History at Tartu University. He liked history. He was rejected, and it was all for his honesty. He wrote in his application form that he had started school in exile. History was more like policy at the time, and there was no chance for him. What was he to do? Valdo submitted his documents to the Faculty of Russian Philology at the Tallinn Teachers' Training College. He spoke fluent Russian with no accent. Valdo had learned Russian by rather 'state- of-the-art' method of the language environment in exile in Siberia. It is the best way to learn a language plunging into the environment. There was always a deficit of male teachers at school, and guys were appreciated in our college, despite whatever problems areas, if they could be ignored. Valdo entered it.

During our studies in college we were distantly acquainted, but when I came to work there, Valdo was also working there and we made a closer acquaintance. Our acquaintance developed into love. And it ended with our wedding. My grandmother died in 1965. Mama had no objections to my marrying a non-Jewish man, but I had my doubts. Then I remembered my grandmother's words when she said one should marry someone of the same mentality and I took the risk. So it happened and I never once regretted marrying the man. I would even say that only Valdo might have had his regrets since my husband is much wiser and gentler than me. At hard times, when we had disagreements, particularly when I hear about some wrong developments in the news, I can say uncomplimentary things about Estonians, while Valdo has never said a wrong word about Jews, not because he was afraid of me, but because this is not the way of his thinking.

Our older son Alexandr, named after my father, was born in 1968, and our daughter Eva was born in 1972. After my daughter was born I went to work as an editor in the scientific literature publishing house. This is where I still work. We are a team of associates, and I like it there. We can discuss any subject without having any concerns. I find it very important to trust my peers. I've never faced any anti-Semitism through the years of my work. It is true. It does not exist even now. Recently, the staff was reduced in our publishing house. Three editors have kept their jobs, and I'm one of them. If they wanted they could easily get rid of me, considering that I'm of pensioner's age.

I remembered how my grandmother and grandfather were raising me. They never excluded me from their company or forbade me to do things. I remembered this, but living in the Soviet Union was different, and I raised my children differently. Of course, when we had guests, the children stayed at the table listening to our discussions, but I tried to keep my tongue in their presence. I did not allow them to express their opinion on political subjects: for God's sake, don't speak out before you start understanding things! One can only speak out having knowledge of the subject.

However, my children are very nice children. They've been interested in the past and in the history of our families. They know about my family, and they spent much time with their paternal grandmother, they know everything about Valdo's family, about the life in exile, before and after the exile. They matured very fast. When it was time for them to receive their passports when they turned 16, we left it to their discretion to choose what nationality they wanted to have stated in their passports. And they chose it: my son is formally Estonian and my daughter is a Jew. [Editor's note: In the USSR the ethnic identity was indicated in citizens' passports. The situation in the Soviet Union was such that Jews had problems with entering higher educational institutions, finding jobs, traveling to foreign countries, etc.]

At school Eva got fond of drawing and developed her skills into a serious trade. After finishing school she joined a higher education program in Israel. Eva went to Israel. She failed to enter university the first time. It just was her poor luck that year. She wanted to enter the Art Faculty. Her art works passed the selection commission and then she was to have an interview. The Ivrit interpreter did not show up, and Eva's Ivrit was not quite fluent at the time. She failed at the interview. Eva stayed in Israel to try again in the future. She went to work and she had to work hard to manage without loans. She had to make her own decisions, and I could be of no help to her. I didn't know anything about life in Israel. I was going though hard times. Mama was severely ill for several years. When she fell ill, she moved in with us. My grandmother and grandfather had long passed away and so had Haja-Dusha, who died in 1973.

Eva visited us on her vacations. When she arrived the second time I told her that there was no way for her to study in Israel. She needed money to pay the rent and pay for her food and studies since she might have studied for free if she had managed to enter the first year. Eva knew there was no way for her to earn so much if she had to study full-time. I convinced her to try and take exams to the Art College in Tallinn. If she failed, she could go back to Israel. Eva passed her exams and was admitted to the college though competition was high.

My daughter stayed in Tallinn. I think it might have been for the better that she left Israel. I cannot imagine how we would live in different countries. Eva studied and gave me a hand with taking care of Mama. Eva is doing very well. She graduated and entered the magistracy. Eva is married. Her family name is Laanee-Reintamm. Eva has two children. She named her son, born in 2000, Karl-Philip. Karl is after her husband's father, and Philip after my uncle. We call him Philip at home. Eva named her daughter, born in 2004, she is a year and three months now, Anna-Sophia. Anna is after my son-in-law's relative, and Sophia after my father's sister.

After finishing school my son Alexandr entered the Medical Faculty of Tartu University. After finishing his 2nd year he fell in love and got married and had to support his family. Alexandr gave up his studies and went to work. Later his family fell apart. His son Mark from this marriage was born in 1992. A few years ago he remarried. His first wife and his second wife are Estonian. In his 2nd marriage his daughter Linda was born in 2001. Now Alexandr is an extramural student of the social department of the Faculty of History of Tartu University. I hope he'll finally graduate this year. My son has published the 'Terviste Lehte,' ['Health'] for a few years. He is doing well, and I hope he will.

I've corresponded with Mama's cousin Bertha in Israel through all these years. The Soviet regime established the image of Israel as a fearful, aggressive and fanatical state. We realized this was far from being true, but when they keep telling you one and the same thing for a long time, it leaves its imprint in your mind. However sure you are that things must be different, you still develop some doubts.

We've tracked the events in Israel, sympathized with Israelites during the Six-Day-War 33 and the Yom Kippur War 34, and we were happy about the military and peaceful successes of Israel. I wanted to visit Israel, but this was impossible before perestroika 35. Only diplomats or embassy employees were allowed to travel to capitalist countries. We couldn't even dream of visiting Israel during the Soviet regime. Before perestroika I only traveled to Finland and Czechoslovakia. It was very difficult to have all documents processed and issued. However, we traveled a lot to Russia.

Every year we traveled there with our children. We visited Moscow, Leningrad, have been to the Caucasus and the Crimea.

We finally visited Israel in 1989. Mama was in relatively good condition and we could leave her for a month. This trip was very rewarding. I cannot keep brief my impressions of Israel. I had been told that I could not know how beautiful the desert was. And it is true, I did not understand that it was beautiful in a desert, and I had no idea that a hot country, surrounded by sand and stone could be beautiful at all. Perhaps this was why the beauty of Israel was my discovery: lots of flowers everywhere, mesmerizing landscapes and beautiful towns. The nature is so beautiful!

We always had our camera with us. We have many pictures of this trip. This trip was not only remarkable for the beauty of nature or architecture. We also met with our friends, whom we hadn't seen for a long time. We went from one town to another and there were our acquaintances in all of them. And we were really happy to see them again. We stayed with Mama's cousin sister Bertha. My grandmother and I corresponded with her. This reunion with our dearest people was indescribable.

We learned a lot about the history of Israel, not the history after 1948, but ancient history. We toured the whole country. A month in Israel just flew by for us. My husband loved it in Israel. He found his ways there much better than I did. We stayed in Jerusalem, and this was festive in itself. What a beautiful town! I remember how we went to Ashdod after we arrived in Israel. Ashdod is a nice town, but I would say, it's quite common. We left it late in the evening and took the highway to Jerusalem. The hills around Jerusalem, the night-time lighting, it was something fantastic, so beautiful it was! I feel different about Israel. Jews can feel safe and quiet as long as there is this state.

I wouldn't say my husband and I never considered moving to Israel. My husband told me that if I decided to move he would follow me, but we needed to think what we were to do in Israel. It's a responsible decision to change the life of the family so dramatically. One had to weigh things. And then I thought - right, what were I going to do in Israel? What could I do? I am not even that good at cooking. I cook for my family, but if I were to cook for another family, I would be so nervous that I would fail to do it properly. I know no craft that would be good enough to support me in Israel. If I could make hats like my grandfather, or knit like Mama, I could at least do this, but I was a product of Soviet education. The only time I made something with my hands was when we had vocational classes at college where we made stools and made holes in tin sheets to make sort of vegetable grinders.

I mean, I've never been an idealist, and I knew that a Russian language professional would hardly find a job in Israel. And I didn't want to be burden to the state or my relatives. Their life is no bed of roses, and besides, I am not the one to look for somebody else's support. This is not for me. I've got to manage my own life. Besides, my husband's mother was alive. He was her only son and the only one of her kin, and she was of 100 percent Estonian origin, and she wouldn't have been accepted in Israel. I also knew I would have no courage to tell her this: we're moving to Israel and you're staying here. Basically, there were many problems that were hard to resolve. We stayed for these quite ordinary considerations. I don't think having two older people joining the army of unemployed would have been of much benefit for Israel.

After my grandmother died, we didn't celebrate Jewish holidays in full range, though we did follow some rules. It goes without saying that we always had matzah at Pesach. My close friend always invited me to celebrate Pesach at her home, and we celebrated Rosh-Hashanah at home, and fasted at Yom Kippur.

During perestroika the Jewish life began to revive in Tallinn. A Jewish community was officially registered in Estonia. Now our community is strong and has its part in the life of each Jewish person in Estonia. Believers and non-believers need it equally. It's good to have a community and a synagogue. We can remain Jewish thanks to this, because otherwise we might get lost among other nations. I attend celebrations and events in the community.

I help the community as much as I can. I still work and cannot take an active part in the community activities, but I find it very important to be aware that it is there and I can go there at any time. Children and old people need the community. Everybody finds what one needs in the community, and everybody can contribute to it. My mother was still with us, when the community was established, and she could see changes in our life. Mama died in 1995. She was buried in the Jewish cemetery where her parents and Haja- Dusha had been buried before.

Perestroika brought many good things into our life, but the most important event was the final point of perestroika, the breakup of the Soviet Union and newly gained independence of Estonia 36 . This came as an utter surprise for me. I never imagined that the Soviet Union was so weak, and it would have never occurred to me that things might develop like that. It made the impression of a monolith and one would never believe that the empire might collapse one day, when the monolith happened to be not as tough as we thought it was, and it happened so fast.

I don't think I'm the one to say whether it was good or bad that it happened this way. I think it is for the Estonian people to say. This is the state of Estonia, and if Estonian people think it appropriate to live independently, than be it. And Estonians do feel better that way. I think it is the best that each country can now choose its own ways, and only the nation of this country is entitled to decide the way it should live.

I do not feel nostalgic about the USSR. This used to be an unnatural society that had secluded itself from the rest of the world, with its censorship, unrestricted power of the KGB, weird ways and its own rules of the game that was impossible to play any longer. I'm not saying that I admire everything that is happening nowadays. It's far from it, but it's in human nature that whatever will take place before things come down and take their ordinary ways. I still believe that this is like infantine sickness, and in due time the situation will calm down and people will learn to think about the common wealth besides their own benefits.

Soviet people were silent for too long, or only spoke about what they were allowed to speak. Now finally, everybody is allowed to speak his or her own mind, and they do not always say what one would like to hear. I think it's the task of historians to work on the past history, they have to dot all 'i's and figure out the truth to put an end to it. We have to think about how to make this country a good home for all.

I love the Russian literature and Russian films. I have access to these in independent Estonia, as well as many other literary and cinematographic works and films that were banned in the USSR. I enjoy traveling to Moscow and Petersburg when I can. I felt very sad looking at St. Petersburg a few

years ago. I had a feeling that it would collapse. I had a similar feeling about Tallinn during the Soviet rule. It was like everything was going to collapse and there would be nothing left to restore. However, the city is changing for the better. People develop the sense of ownership: this is my city and I want it to be clean and nice.

Glossary:

1 Nikolai's army
Soldier of the tsarist army during the reign of Nicholas I when the draft lasted for 25 years.

2 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.

3 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.

4 Russian Revolution of 1917
Revolution in which the tsarist regime was overthrown in the Russian Empire and, under Lenin, was replaced by the Bolshevik rule. The two phases of the Revolution were: February Revolution, which came about due to food and fuel shortages during World War I, and during which the tsar abdicated and a provisional government took over. The second phase took place in the form of a coup led by

Lenin in October/November (October Revolution) and saw the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks.

5 First Estonian Republic

Until 1917 Estonia was part of the Russian Empire. Due to the revolutionary events in Russia, the political situation in Estonia was extremely unstable in 1917. Various political parties sprang up; the Bolshevik party was particularly strong. National forces became active, too. In February 1918, they succeeded in forming the provisional government of the First Estonian Republic, proclaiming Estonia an independent state on 24th February 1918.

6 Jewish Cultural Autonomy

Cultural autonomy, which was proclaimed in Estonia in 1926, allowing the Jewish community to promote national values (education, culture, religion).

7 Estonian War of Liberation (1918-1920)

The Estonian Republic fought on its own territory against Soviet Russia whose troops were advancing from the east. On Latvian territory the Estonian People's Army fought against the Baltic Landswer's army formed of German volunteers. The War of Liberation ended by the signing of the Tartu Peace Treaty on 2nd February 1920, when Soviet Russia recognized Estonia as an independent state.

8 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.

9 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.

10 Enemy of the people

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

11 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.

12 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.

13 Labor army

It was made up of men of call-up age not trusted to carry firearms by the Soviet authorities. Such people were those living on the territories annexed by the USSR in 1940 (Eastern Poland, the Baltic States, parts of Karelia, Bessarabia and northern Bukovina) as well as ethnic Germans living in the Soviet Union proper. The labor army was employed for carrying out tough work, in the woods or in mines. During the first winter of the war, 30 percent of those drafted into the labor army died of starvation and hard work. The number of people in the labor army decreased sharply when the larger part of its contingent was transferred to the national Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian Corps, created at the beginning of 1942. The remaining labor detachments were maintained up until the end of the war.

14 Estonian Rifle Corps

Military unit established in late 1941 as a part of the Soviet Army. The Corps was made up of two rifle divisions. Those signed up for the Estonian Corps by military enlistment offices were ethnic Estonians regardless of their residence within the Soviet Union as well as men of call-up age residing in Estonia before the Soviet occupation (1940). The Corps took part in the bloody battle of Velikiye Luki (December 1942 - January 1943), where it suffered great losses and was sent to the back areas for re-formation and training. In the summer of 1944, the Corps took part in the liberation of Estonia and in March 1945 in the actions on Latvian territory. In 1946, the Corps was disbanded.

15 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.

16 Great Terror (1934-1938)

During the Great Terror, or Great Purges, which included the notorious show trials of Stalin's former Bolshevik opponents in 1936-1938 and reached its peak in 1937 and 1938, millions of innocent Soviet citizens were sent off to labor camps or killed in prison. The major targets of the Great Terror were communists. Over half of the people who were arrested were members of the party at the time of their arrest. The armed forces, the Communist Party, and the government in general were purged of all allegedly dissident persons; the victims were generally sentenced to death or to long terms of hard labor. Much of the purge was carried out in secret, and only a few cases were tried in public 'show trials'. By the time the terror subsided in 1939, Stalin had managed to bring both the Party and the public to a state of complete submission to his rule. Soviet society was so atomized and the people so fearful of reprisals that mass arrests were no longer necessary. Stalin ruled as absolute dictator of the Soviet Union until his death in March 1953.

17 Blockade of Leningrad

On September 8, 1941 the Germans fully encircled Leningrad and its siege began. It lasted until January 27, 1944. The blockade meant incredible hardships and privations for the population of the town. Hundreds of thousands died from hunger, cold and diseases during the almost 900 days of the blockade.

18 Riga ghetto

Established on 23rd August 1941, located in the suburb of Riga populated by poor Jews. About 13,000 people resided here before the occupation, and about 30,000 inmates were kept in the ghetto. On 31st November and 8th December 1941 most inmates were killed in the Rumbula forest. On 31st October 15,000 inmates were shot, on 8th December 10 000 inmates were killed. Only younger men were kept alive to do hard work. After the bigger part of the ghetto population was exterminated, a smaller ghetto was established in December 1941. The majority of inmates of this 'smaller ghetto' were Jews, brought from the Reich and Western Europe. On 2nd November 1943 the ghetto was closed. The survivors were taken to nearby concentration camps. In 1944 the remaining Jews were taken to Germany, where few of them survived.

19 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.

20 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.

21 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.

22 Doctors' Plot

The Doctors' Plot was an alleged conspiracy of a group of Moscow doctors to murder leading government and party officials. In January 1953, the Soviet press reported that nine doctors, six of whom were Jewish, had been arrested and confessed their guilt. As Stalin died in March 1953, the trial never took place. The official paper of the Party, the Pravda, later announced that the charges against the doctors were false and their confessions obtained by torture. This case was one of the worst anti-Semitic incidents during Stalin's reign. In his secret speech at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956 Khrushchev stated that Stalin wanted to use the Plot to purge the top Soviet leadership.

23 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.

24 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.

25 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.

26 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.

27 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.

28 Jewish section of cemetery

In the USSR city cemeteries were territorially divided into different sectors. They often included common plots, children's plots, titled militaries' plots, Jewish plots, political leaders' plots, etc. In some Soviet cities the separate Jewish cemeteries continued to be maintained and in others they were closed, usually with the excuse that it was due to some technical reason. The family could decide upon the burial of the deceased; Jewish military could for instance be buried either in the military or the Jewish section. Such a division of cemeteries still continues to exist in many parts of the former Soviet Union.

29 Mandatory job assignment in the USSR

Graduates of higher educational institutions had to complete a mandatory 2-year job assignment issued by the institution from which they graduated. After finishing this assignment young people were allowed to get employment at their discretion in any town or organization.

30 KGB

The KGB or Committee for State Security was the main Soviet external security and intelligence agency, as well as the main secret police agency from 1954 to 1991.

31 Lotman, Yuri (1922-1993)

One of the greatest semioticians and literary scholars. In 1950 he received his degree from the Philology Department of Leningrad University but was unable to continue with his post- graduate studies as a result of the campaign against 'cosmopolitans' and the wave of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union. Lotman managed to find a job in Tartu, Estonia. Starting in 1950, he taught Russian literature at Tartu University, and from 1960-77 he was the head of the Department of Russian Literature. He did active research work and is the author of over 800 books and academic articles on the history of Russian literature and public thought, on literary theory, on the history of Russian culture, and on semiotics. He was an elected member of the British Royal Society, Norwegian Royal Academy, and many other academic societies.

32 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.

33 Six-Day-War

(Hebrew: Milhemet Sheshet Hayamim), also known as the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Six Days War, or June War, was fought between Israel and its Arab neighbors Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. It began when Israel launched a preemptive war on its Arab neighbors; by its end Israel controlled the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights. The results of the war affect the geopolitics of the region to this day.

34 Yom Kippur War (1973 Arab-Israeli War)

(Hebrew: Milchemet Yom HaKipurim), also known as the October War, the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, and the Ramadan War, was fought from 6th October (the day of Yom Kippur) to 24th October 1973, between Israel and a coalition of Egypt and Syria. The war began when Egypt and Syria launched a surprise joint attack in the Sinai and Golan Heights, respectively, both of which had been captured

by Israel during the Six-Day-War six years earlier. The war had far-reaching implications for many nations. The Arab world, which had been humiliated by the lopsided defeat of the Egyptian-Syrian-Jordanian alliance during the Six-Day-War, felt psychologically vindicated by its string of victories early in the conflict. This vindication, in many ways, cleared the way for the peace process which followed the war. The Camp David Accords, which came soon after, led to normalized relations between Egypt and Israel - the first time any Arab country had recognized the Israeli state. Egypt, which had already been drifting away from the Soviet Union, then left the Soviet sphere of influence almost entirely.

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.