

# Rachel Randvee

Rachel Randvee

Tallinn

Estonia

Interviewer: Emma Gofman

Date of interview: March 2003

Rachel Randvee is not tall; she is an elegantly dressed lady with a lovely, open face. She is very friendly and hospitable and likes talking to people. She lives in a big apartment with her son's family and her daughter. Although she is not in perfect health, Rachel assumes all the domestic responsibilities - she goes grocery shopping, cooks for the entire family, and cleans the apartment. She is ever so optimistic and that makes it very pleasant to talk to her.

My father, Hirsh-Leib Tsivian, was born in the town of Kreizburg in Latvia. It was a small town on the bank of Daugava River; many Jews lived there at that time. My father's father, Yakov Tsivian, went around Latvian villages purchasing cattle and selling it to butchers. He died early so neither my elder sister, Riva, nor I ever met him. My father's mother, Grandma Haya-Sore, was left alone with a whole flock of children after her husband died. In order to maintain her family she started baking. She baked and sold challah for Sabbath, strudel and other delicious pies for Jewish holidays, and she also took orders for wedding cakes. This kind of business wasn't very profitable; her family was very poor and the children were often sick.

My grandmother had twelve children, but some of them died in infancy and some died later. In the 1930s only four of my grandmother's children were still alive - my father and his three sisters: Sofia, Dina, and Asne. At that time, Grandma Haya-Sore lived in Riga [Latvia] with the family of her youngest daughter Asne Fain, nee Tsvivian. My sister and I went there for our summer holidays on several occasions. Aunt Asne rented a room for us in a Jewish summer hotel at a Riga seaside resort so we would only eat kosher food. For Sabbath we always went to Riga to our grandma's and attended the synagogue on Saturday mornings. Our grandmother was very old, she could only walk with great difficulty. She told us that attending synagogue gave her strength.

Grandma Haya-Sore, her family, her children, and their families were very religious. They strictly observed the kashrut, kept Sabbath and celebrated all the Jewish holidays according to Jewish traditions. In our living room there was a portrait of Grandma Haya-Sore at a young age - she was wearing a wig in it. She didn't wear a wig in her old age, but I never saw her with her head uncovered. Even at home she always had a little lace cap on her head. In my grandma's house everyone only spoke Yiddish. I never heard her speak Russian or Latvian, although, I believe she knew those languages. Grandma Haya-Sore was pretty even in her old age, and she was an unapproachable beauty in her youth. She told us how long it had taken her to choose a husband and her father had been very annoyed by this. Every one of my grandma's sisters had families of their own at the age of 14 or 15, but she didn't marry until she was 18.

My aunt Asne Fain was also very beautiful. She had big blue eyes and gorgeous light golden hair. Her husband, Herman Fain, was a co-proprietor of a timber-trading company so their family was

quite wealthy. Their only son, Yakov Fain, was a vocal student at Riga Conservatory in the late 1930s. He had a wonderful tenor and a future as an opera singer was predicted for him. In 1940 the Soviet regime was established in Latvia, and the property of the Fain family was nationalized. Yakov was taken off his last year at the conservatory and was sent to serve in a military performing group. Although the group was stationed in Riga and Yakov lived at home, he was outraged that instead of opera arias in Italian he was forced to sing military and sailor's songs in Russian. In the summer of 1941, when the German army instantly occupied Latvia, the entire Fain family and Grandma Haya-Sore remained in Riga and died in the Holocaust. The whole family of my father's second sister, Dina, also remained in Riga and died. She had three children - her daughters, Rachel and Golda, and her son, Maks. Both her daughters were married, Rachel had a young daughter, Aviva, and Golda was expecting a baby in 1941. The families of my father's cousins were also killed. A total of 47 of my father's relatives died in the Holocaust in Latvia. Unfortunately, the exact circumstances of their death are unknown to us.

Only my father's eldest sister, Sofia Israelson, nee Tsivian, survived the war. She and her husband moved from Latvia to St. Petersburg before the Revolution of 1917 [1](#) and lived there - in Soviet Leningrad - until 1941. They had one son, Yakov, who graduated from a technical institute in Leningrad and worked there as an engineer. In 1941 he was drafted to the army and died in combat action in the first months of the war. Sofia and her husband remained in the blockade of Leningrad. [2](#). Sofia's husband died of starvation during the first winter of the blockade - the winter of 1941/42 - and Sofia, barely alive, was carried out of Leningrad across Ladoga Lake [see Road of Life] [3](#). She survived and returned to Leningrad after the war where she had no more relatives or friends. In the summer of 1949 I went to visit Aunt Sofia in Leningrad and saw how poor and lonely her existence was. I suggested that she moved to live with us in Tallinn because she had no more relatives except my father, my sister, and me. She agreed and spent the last years of her life near us in Tallinn. Sofia died in 1962.

My father was born in 1895. He finished cheder in Kreizburg; his mother tongue was Yiddish. He wasn't very proficient in other languages - Russian, Latvian, German and then Estonian. To help his mother he started working at a young age. At first, he was a salesman's apprentice in a shop in Kreizburg, and later he worked as a salesman in a fabric shop in Riga for several years. At the end of 1916 my father went to St. Petersburg [called Petrograd between 1917 and 1924], where his elder sister Sofia and her family lived. He intended to look for a job there. Petrograd was on the eve of revolution - there were mass-meetings, strikes, and plundering. My father didn't like this at all - he liked order in all things - and after a few months he decided to return to Latvia. On his way to Riga he stopped in the small Estonian city of Tartu. He liked the city - it was a quiet, neat place with a Jewish community and, which was essential for my father, it had a synagogue. One Saturday, while visiting the synagogue, a beautiful young lady attracted his attention. They were soon introduced to each other. That's how my father met his future wife, my mother, Hesse Heiman.

I don't know if my mother's parents were born in Estonia or if they moved here. At the end of the 19th century they were already living in the city of Tartu. My grandfather's name was Tevye Heiman, and my grandmother's name was Rohel-Leah Heiman, nee Klas. I never met them - they died before I was born. Grandfather Tevye traded in cattle just like grandfather Yakov did. The only difference was he went around Estonian not Latvian villages. During one of these trips, my

grandfather was attacked by robbers and killed. This happened in the middle of the 1900s. All of my grandparents' children except my mother were adults by that time. Grandmother Rohel-Leah was taken ill with gangrene after this tragic incident; one of her legs had to be surgically removed. The doctors said it was the result of the nervous breakdown. From what my mother told me I know that my grandmother walked on crutches during the last years of her life.

My grandmother had twelve children, eight of whom survived. Yiddish was the language spoken within the family, but every one of the children could speak Russian, Estonian and German. The family closely observed Jewish religious traditions. This was carried on into our own family and into the families of my mother's brothers and sisters. Grandmother Rohel-Leah was very hard-working. Her hands were remarkably skilful - whatever household work she took up was done perfectly. This trait of hers was passed on to all her children and to many grandchildren. Every one of my grandmother's daughters could sew and embroider well; they could cook delicious meals and create a general feeling of coziness in the house. There was a saying in my mother's family - 'Heimans' hands'. Whenever one of the daughters or granddaughters succeeded in making a nice dress, a fashionable hat, or just mended something, it was said, 'No wonder! She's got Heimans' hands!' That was a top commendation. My mother's family was a united one; her sisters and brothers supported each other during their whole lives. Grandmother Rohel-Leah died in Tartu in the middle of the 1920s.

My mother's older sister, Berta Feiman, nee Heiman, born in the 1870s, died early; I never met her. Her husband, Haim-Shimon Feiman, owned a tannery in Tartu. Their only son, Tevye Feiman, born in 1905, graduated from university in Vienna in the middle of the 1920s with a physician's qualification; both before and after World War II he worked as a doctor in the town of Rakvere in Estonia. During the war Tevye and his family were evacuated to Russia; Tevye worked as a doctor in a military hospital. Before she was married, his wife, Gita, worked in a large jewelry store in Tallinn. Once married, she studied to be a medical assistant and then worked alongside her husband. Their daughter, Aviva, married a marine officer and went to live with him in Leningrad. Tevye Feiman died in the middle of the 1980s in Tallinn. Since his death Gita has been living in St. Petersburg with her daughter's family.

Rasse Fumanskaya, nee Heiman, born in the 1870s, was my mother's second sister. She married Meishe Furmanski, a very wealthy Tartu Jew. They had a big house and a clothing store in Tartu. Rasse's two sons were educated abroad. Her older son, Tevye, studied at Prague University. When he came back he brought a chemical engineer's degree and a Jewish wife along with him. In the late 1930s Tevye Furmanski lived in Tartu with his family and managed his own saw-mill. Rasse's second son, Isaac Furmanski, lived in Tallinn with his family and also had a business of his own. Rasse's daughter, Sofia Furmanski, graduated from Tartu University's department of law. She lived in Tallinn and worked as a lawyer.

In 1940 Meishe Furmanski died, and a year later the Soviet authorities nationalized the entire property of the Furmanski family. Sofia was prohibited from working as a lawyer. In 1941 the whole family with the exception of Sofia was deported [see Soviet Deportation of Estonian Civilians] [4](#). Isaac ended up in a camp in the Northern Urals, and everyone else in exile. In the camp, where Isaac felled trees, prisoners were issued their daily allowances of clay-like bread in the evenings after work. This bread had to be eaten slowly in small bits, otherwise the stomach could fail. One day Isaac forgot about this rule and ate his entire portion at once. A few hours later he had severe

stomachache and my father, who was in the same camp, watched him die in his arms.

Tevye Furmanski and his family lived in evacuation in Tomsk region [approx. 3,000 km east of Moscow]. They remained there to live. The rest of the Furmanski family returned to Estonia after evacuation. At present, Isaac's children, Joseph and Miya, live in Israel, and Sofia's daughter, Bina, lives in Tallinn.

Haya-Fanny Smolenski, nee Heiman, born in the 1880s, was my mother's third sister. Before the war, she, her husband, Simon Smolenski, and their five sons lived in Tartu where they had a sewing workshop. Aunt Fanny could sew very well. After the war she lived in Tallinn with her youngest son, Boris, and worked as a cutter at a clothes factory. During the war three of the Smolenski sons were killed. Two of them, Meishe and Ammi, served in a fighter battalion [5](#) and died in the summer of 1941. Ruven Smolenski was a lieutenant in the Estonian Rifle Corps [6](#) and died in combat action on the Estonian island of Saaremaa in 1944. He was buried there in a common grave. Immediately after the war, as soon as Aunt Fanny returned from evacuation with her youngest son, Boris - her husband Simon died in evacuation - she started her attempts to obtain permission to bring Ruven's body to Tallinn in order to have him buried in a Jewish cemetery according to Jewish tradition. She reached the top military authorities and obtained the permit. Among hundreds of dead people Aunt Fanny recognized her son by his special feature - a tooth, broken when he was still a child.

Another one of aunt Fanny's sons, Tevye Smolenski, abandoned his studies at Tartu University and went to Israel in the late 1930s. He became a naval captain. His wife, Miryam, was a German Jew; her parents lived in a kibbutz in Israel. Tevye and Miryam had three children and several grandchildren. After the war Tevye visited Tallinn on a number of occasions. In the late 1950s he brought his mother on board his ship to go for a cruise around Europe. In 1963 Tevye celebrated his 50th birthday in Tallinn. It was an unforgettable party, at which all the relatives who lived in Estonia then came together. The last time Tevye visited Tallinn was in 1991. He died in Tel Aviv four years later. Fanny's youngest son, Boris, now lives in the USA and works as an engineer. Aunt Fanny died in Tallinn in the late 1960s.

The fourth sister, who my mother was very close to, was Basya Mayofis, nee Heiman, born in the 1880s. She, her husband Leib Mayofis, and their children lived in Tallinn. Basya had a small millinery where she made hats. There were three children in her family - two sons, Mordukh and Tevye, and a daughter, Sima. During the 1930s Tevye Mayofis was one of the leaders of the Betar [7](#) youth Zionist movement in Estonia. In 1940 he was sentenced by Soviet authorities to serve ten years in camps [see Gulag] [8](#) for promoting Zionism. Out of all the Betar activists sentenced at that time he was the only one to survive the camps. After ten years of camps Tevye spent several further years in exile in Siberia. His girlfriend moved from Tallinn to live with him, they got married and had a daughter, Rosie.

In the late 1950s Tevye's family was allowed to return to Estonia. He had golden 'Heimans' hands'. A small car with 'Tallinn' painted across it, which he had made all by himself out of old spare parts, could be spotted in the streets of Tallinn by surprised pedestrians. In the 1970s, as soon as he had an opportunity, Tevye Mayofis and his family went to live in Israel. He is an honorary citizen of that country; his name is in the golden book for his contribution to establishing the state of Israel. His granddaughters are now adults. Tevye's entire family lives in Haifa.

In the summer of 1941, when fascists were approaching Tallinn, Basya and Leib Mayofis and their elder son, Mordukh, decided to stay although they still had a chance to escape and go east. Perhaps, they thought that there was nobody worse than the communists who had arrested their son. Fascists killed them in the fall of 1941. Leib and Mordukh Mayofis were executed in Tallinn prison. Today, one of its walls carries a memorial plate in honor of the Jews who died there. I don't know anything about the way Aunt Basya died. Their daughter, Sima, and her husband were evacuated to Russia and their family broke up there. At present, Sima and her second husband live in Israel with their children and grandchildren. They never returned to Estonia after the war.

My mother also had three brothers. One of them, Hirsh Heiman, born in the 1890s, died in the Estonian War of Liberation [9](#) in 1919. The name of the second brother was Samuel Heiman. He was born in the 1880s. When he was young he was a good mechanic; later he opened a shop in Tallinn where he sold kosher food. During the war he and his wife Gita were evacuated to Russia. While there, Uncle Samuel once again worked as a mechanic so his family wouldn't starve. After the war they returned to Tallinn, where Uncle Samuel worked as a manager in a small grocery store. Samuel and Gita Heiman died in Tallinn in the 1950s. Their daughter, Rasse Paturskaya, nee Heiman, went to live in Israel with her husband, Abram, and her son, Yakov.

Rasse and Abram lived and died in Natanya; their son, Yakov, is presently working there as a doctor. He was educated back in Estonia, at Tartu University. He occasionally visits Tallinn where many of his friends live. Uncle Samuel's second daughter, Leah Bolonov, and her husband, Israel Bolonov, lived and died in Tallinn after the war. Rina, their daughter, is living here at present.

My mother's favorite brother was Leib-Zelik Heiman, born in the 1880s. He and his family lived in Tartu. Leib-Zelik had some kind of chronic disease - he was unable to work for extended periods of time - so his family lived in poverty. My mother used to help them a lot. Leib-Zelik's elder daughter, Sarah, was an activist in the Betar movement. In the middle of the 1930s she was among a group of young Jewish people that went to Palestine to build up Israel. All of Sarah's relatives helped to equip her for the journey; Sofia Furmanski was of the most assistance buying her clothes and everything else necessary. At the train station, just before her departure my father, who disliked listening to words of gratitude, shoved a large pack of British Pounds down Sarah's pocket.

In June 1941 Leib-Zelik's two sons, Bentzion and Hone, volunteered for the militia and fought alongside the Red Army troops holding back the German forces at the Tartu frontline for almost a month. Both of them were killed in battle in the summer of 1941. Their names are inscribed on the monument commemorating Jews who were killed in Tartu while fighting the fascists. Because of his sickness Leib-Zelik couldn't follow his wife and daughter into evacuation. He remained in Tartu and died in the fall of 1941. Just like all the other Tartu Jews he was shot in a tank ditch on the city's outskirts. Later on, his wife, Gita Heiman, and his daughter, Leah Eidus, went to live in Israel. Gita has already died there, but Leah still lives in Tel Aviv.

My mother, Hesse Heiman, was born in Tartu in 1895. She was the youngest child and the favorite in the family. When Grandfather Tevye died my mother was 12 or 13 years old, and the elder siblings helped my grandmother to bring her up. For a few years my mother studied in some school in Tartu, I believe it was a cheder. When she was 15 she went to Warsaw to study sewing. [Editor's note: Before WWI Warsaw and much of Poland as well as Estonia were part of the Russian Empire.] My mother studied there for two years in a school that trained tailors of top qualification. She had a

certificate confirming her graduation from that school; it was later posted on a wall in my mother's workshop.

In 1912 my mother returned to Tartu and worked there for several years in a privately-owned sewing workshop. In March 1917, when she came to the synagogue on a Saturday, she saw a strange young man who looked at her with curiosity. My mother was very pretty and, besides, she was tastefully and fashionably dressed. They started to see each other. My parents' wedding took place on 1st May 1917, in the same synagogue where they had first seen each other. A year later they had a daughter - my elder sister, Riva.

My parents were young and full of energy and they really wanted to start a business of their own. In the small provincial university town of Tartu the conditions weren't very favorable. After the [First] Estonian Republic [10](#) was established in 1918, Tallinn started developing rapidly - there were factories, a port, and state institutions. My parents decided that their future clients lived in the capital and moved to Tallinn in 1919. They rented a small flat there and opened a corset workshop. At first my mother worked there alone, but later, as orders flowed in, she hired several workers.

My mother was an excellent expert, she always followed the European fashion. Moreover, she was an extremely charming and friendly woman. She was proficient in Yiddish, Estonian, and Russian, and could speak some German, too. Her business was thriving. After I was born in 1929 my parents rented a larger apartment in the center of the city. I recall that the largest room contained six sewing machines, mannequins with finished products on them, and lots of fashion magazines lying around. For celebrations all this was pushed against the wall and the room turned into a living room.

In 1935 my parents rented yet larger premises in which they opened a corset shop. It was called 'Madame Tsivian.' Apart from my mother, it employed eight more workers. They produced corsets, brassieres, abdominal supports for pregnant women and for women after childbirth. At that time it was the most fashionable corset shop in Tallinn. Among the shop's numerous clients were wives of the highest Estonian state officials including the president's wife. In the 1930s our family was quite wealthy and the basis for our prosperity was earned by my mother's hands. Certainly, my father worked as well. He helped my mother by setting up the workshops, purchasing equipment and fabrics, maintained financial affairs, and then, in the middle of the 1930s, he opened a furniture shop of his own. They both built and sold furniture there.

After the corset shop moved to its new premises the apartment where we lived became much more comfortable. It was a well-equipped five-bedroom apartment - it had electricity, running water, and a central heating system. I remember very well the way it was furnished. There was mahogany furniture and blue silk tapestries on the walls. My father said our living room was 'Napoleon style.' My mother loved china and crystal, and there were delicate cut-glass figures and porcelain statuettes in a pretty little glass showcase. There was a separate row of busts of famous musicians - I knew them all by heart. We had black oak furniture in our dining room. There was a large round table, two cupboards, and leather chairs. In my parents' bedroom there was antique furniture: a king-size bed, a wardrobe, and a dressing table. In my nursery there were two beds - one of them belonged to me and the other one belonged to my governess - a writing desk and a corner full of dolls. My sister's room had stylish modern furniture from my father's shop. An expensive German piano was in there, too.



Our family was very religious. For his whole life, even in the hardest times, my father was a true believer. He started his morning by washing his hands and putting on his tefillin. He prayed at home several times a day, often went to the synagogue for evening prayers, kept the Yom Kippur fast, and attended the synagogue every Saturday and on holidays. We always had strictly kosher food at home. We only bought kosher food sold in special shops. There were three kosher food shops in Tallinn. In our kitchen there were two cupboards: one of them contained cooking ware, dishes, and cutlery for meat, and the other the same for dairy products. There was one stove.

My mother, supported by an Estonian servant, cooked the food. My mother knew many Jewish dishes and could cook them well. Unquestionably, we always observed Sabbath in our house. On Friday night the whole family gathered at the table, my mother lit Sabbath candles, and my father recited Kiddush. Our shops were closed on Saturdays.

There were always careful preparations for Pesach celebrations. My sister and I, my mother, and the servant cleaned and scrubbed. Pesach tableware was stored for the entire year in a locked box. Glassware that had been in use throughout the year was soaked in large wooden barrels for two weeks to make it kosher. My mother's sister, Basya, and her family would always visit for seder. And we always invited some single people to come. An Ivrit teacher, Gronimov, joined our seder celebrations for many years in a row until he got married.

For Rosh Hashanah my mother would make a round bun with a braid on top, and for Yom Kippur she made a ladder-shaped bun. On the morning of Yom Kippur my father used to swing a live white chicken over my head. It was supposed to drive all the troubles away from me. I was very scared of that chicken so my father changed the ritual - he used a handkerchief with some coins tied into it instead of a chicken. We baked hamantashen and gave presents to our relatives and friends for Purim. For Sukkot celebrations a shed was constructed in the synagogue yard and our whole family went there. When I was little I liked Simchat Torah. The synagogue was beautifully decorated and people danced and had fun. Children were given presents - large bags full of sweets and biscuits. My mother, my sister, and I went to the synagogue on every Jewish holiday.

Within the family we always celebrated my birthday to which my relatives and other children would come. We didn't usually celebrate birthdays of adults. Our house was always full of young men and girls who came to visit my sister. Riva was a very independent child. She never went to kindergarten because there were no Jewish kindergartens then. Our parents couldn't afford to have a nurse or a governess at the time. They were busy doing their work, and little Riva would wander around the building and visit the neighbors. Later, our parents often recalled the episode that happened when she was five. She went to the apartment next door, which was a privately-owned sewing workshop. There Riva found a beautiful brand-new beaded wedding dress. She cut the beads off the dress and, back at home, cut off a piece of a new curtain and started making a dress of her own. She was a lively girl, a tomboy even - all of her childhood friends were boys and she was their leader. She would gather all the boys from our street and lead them to a different street to fight. Later on, of course, she grew up and became more serious and quiet. In 1926 Riva went to the Jewish Gymnasium [11](#). Younger pupils studied Ivrit but all the other subjects were taught in Russian, whereas older pupils studied everything in Ivrit.

Riva started learning the piano when she was little, she had a talent for music, and she was taught by Tallinn's best music teachers. They thought that Riva could grow up to become an excellent

pianist. In order to do that Riva had to spend hours practicing, but she was an outgoing, cheerful, expressive person. She wanted to do sports and spend time with her friends. However, we had a strict and asserting father, at times he simply forced Riva to the instrument. And when her friends came to visit her she played the piano and all of them sang wonderful songs in Yiddish and Ivrit. I can still remember some of those beautiful songs.

While Riva was still in high school she started studying at a conservatory. She graduated from high school in 1936. That was the tenth graduating class of the Tallinn Jewish School. The graduation ceremony was held in the school gym, which was decorated in an unusual way. Tablecloths, window curtains, and everything else were white and blue just like the flag of Israel. Many of my sister's classmates were leaving right after graduation and going to Palestine to build up Israel. Riva really wanted to go, too, but my father didn't let her. He believed that she had to finish her conservatory studies first and then decide whether she wanted to go to Palestine. Our family always donated money to every Jewish foundation intended for settlers in Palestine. A sign of this was the golden heart posted on our door.

I was born in 1929. I was named Rachel in honor of my grandmother Rohel- Leah who wasn't alive any more then. In my education my parents tried to correct their former mistakes. When I was two a governess was employed for me. Her name was Karoline Kins; she was from a Germanized Estonian family. She spoke German with me, and my parents also tried to address me in German. In those days many Estonian and Jewish families would send their children to be educated in Germany, and my parents wanted me to be able to speak German freely. They spoke Yiddish to my sister and to each other, and Estonian to the servant. Russian wasn't used in our family.

When I was four I was enrolled in a Jewish kindergarten. From my first day there I heard Ivrit being spoken. The songs we sang there were also in Ivrit. When I was six and went to the Jewish school I could speak and understand Ivrit quite well. In the school there were two first grades. One of them had Yiddish as the language of instruction, and the other one Ivrit. It was up to the parents to make a choice. I learned in Ivrit. Our class was very united. There were three sets of twins in it: two pairs of girls and a pair of boys. Those boys remained here during the war and were killed just like many of my other classmates.

In school I loved music lessons. Our music teacher, Gurevich, often complimented me for my musical talent. However, when my parents offered to sign me up for special music lessons I said no. Then my father told me, 'If you don't want to learn music then study something else.' I decided to study English. For several years I learnt English from a very remarkable teacher. She didn't teach lessons and we didn't read or write. We just talked - in the kitchen while she was cooking dinner, walking outside or visiting her friends. Her friends were a Russian countess, Sofya Volkonskaya, and the wife of the English ambassador, Lady Kingford. They walked with us through the park and engaged me in genteel conversations in English. As a result I mastered spoken English quite well.

When I was little I often fell sick, my lungs weren't strong enough and doctors were concerned about me getting tuberculosis. That's why almost every summer my parents rented a summer house in a community of Hiiu [island] near Tallinn. The houses were located in the middle of a pine wood - forest air was supposed to restore bad lungs. I stayed there with my governess. Occasionally Riva stayed with us, too, but our parents visited only for Sabbath and worked the rest



of the time. Karoline, my governess, knew all the regulations of a kosher cuisine because back at home she always helped my mother around the house. Our parents brought or sent us kosher groceries and Karoline cooked food following the kashrut laws. That year, when Riva entered the conservatory, she and I spent the summer at the seaside in Haapsalu. To avoid any interruption of her music lessons a summer house with a piano in it was rented, and Riva's music teacher stayed there with us.

In 1937 my mother fell seriously ill. She got very nervous and some mental deviations were recognized. She reacted particularly inadequately to the news of spreading fascism and anti-Semitism in Germany. The doctors diagnosed her with schizophrenia, placed her in a hospital in Tartu and proposed an experimental course of treatment. My father gave his written consent for this. My mother spent eleven months in the hospital and was finally cured. Later they examined her, searching for the cause of her illness and found some alterations in her thyroid gland. In July 1938 my mother went in for surgery. Our family wasn't poor and my father insisted that my mother should have surgery in Switzerland where doctors had better experience. She refused because she didn't want to be away from her home and family. Although the surgery was performed by the best surgeons in Tallinn it was unsuccessful. My mother died right on the operating table.

It's difficult to imagine how we outlived her death. My mother was so kind and so sensitive. I remember how our parents came to visit us in the summer house that very last Saturday before the surgery. We went for a walk in the woods; my father was very nervous but my mother tried to appear cheerful. She held our hands and told us that everything would be fine because she had the best husband and the most wonderful children in the world. My parents loved each other very much.

Our life changed after my mother's death. My father couldn't live in the old apartment where everything reminded him of our mother. We moved to a different building. We rented a large apartment in a house owned by a Jewish family named Yaskovich. My sister gave up the conservatory although she had finished the complete course and only had to prepare for her graduation concert. She took my mother's place in the shop and became the manager. Surprisingly my father didn't object. With my mother's death my childhood was over. I began to think and reason the way adults do. I was the one lighting Sabbath candles. Our household was managed by Karoline and the servants.

In June 1940 the Soviet regime was established in Estonia and nationalization began. Someone suggested a resourceful idea to my father. In order to display his loyalty to the Soviet authorities my father gave both of our shops to 'spetstorg', that is to the trade network belonging to the NKVD [12](#). He continued working there - he just wasn't the proprietor any more. Our Jewish school was renamed into a secondary school with a number [see School #] [13](#) that I don't recall. In the USSR Ivrit was banned so it was subsequently banned in Estonia as well, but we could still use Yiddish. The house we had moved into was taken over by the Soviet authorities for some reason and all its inhabitants were ordered to leave within 24 hours. My father's friend, our gabbai Rakovski, came to our help. He let us have three rooms in his seven-bedroom apartment. We were cramped in there because we had a lot of furniture. But we were thankful to gabbai Rakovski for giving us shelter. A few months later we managed to move into a five-bedroom apartment close to the city center. The former owner of the apartment, an Estonian ship captain, somehow succeeded in moving his family to Sweden after the Soviet regime took over. We let one of our rooms to a Soviet pilot because it

wasn't good to own such a large apartment.

My sister married in December 1940. Her husband, Yakov Kozlovski, also graduated from the Jewish school albeit four years earlier than Riva. Their wedding was quite modest with only close friends and relatives present. Some arrests and nationalization of property had already taken place in Tallinn by that time so it wasn't really a very joyful time. Meishe Furmanski, Aunt Rasse's husband, died just before the wedding, the funeral was held on the wedding day, and many of the relatives were attending that event. The wedding ceremony took place in the synagogue's registry office and was conducted by Aba Gomer [14](#), the chief rabbi of Estonia.

Yakov Kozlovski and some of his companions had a small necktie workshop. They wove necktie fabrics and made ties all by themselves. They had no hired laborers so they weren't considered exploiters and weren't repressed by Soviet authorities.

At night, on 14th June 1941, we were visited by several NKVD employees and presented the decree of our deportation. My father, my sister, and I were all on the list. We started gathering our things. The pilot, our lodger, wasn't at home at that time, but his wife, who had just come from Leningrad the day before, was there. She heard the noise and realized what was happening. She peeked out of her door, beckoned Yakov Kozlovski to come closer, and whispered her advice. She said that Riva couldn't be deported because she was married, considered a member of a different family and had a different last name. 'Don't be afraid, stand up for your wife!', the woman told Yakov. Yakov stepped up gingerly to an NKVD official and, stammering, told him all that he had just been advised. The official made several phone calls and my sister was released.

My father and I were sent to the station. When we were standing next to a train car holding our things, a person wearing a military uniform came up to us. He asked my father who I was going with and where my mother was. After my father replied that my mother was dead the man left. A little later he returned and asked if I had any relatives remaining in Tallinn. When he heard that my elder sister remained there he ordered to have me sent home. I believe that man saved my life because my father was sent to a camp and I would have gone to an orphanage and probably died there. When I was brought back home my sister and I realized in terror that our father had left carrying nothing and certainly without any food. All of our things and food were in one basket, which my father had passed on to me. My sister immediately called Aunt Basya who lived close to the train station. Aunt Basya's son, Mordechai, ran to the station to give a package of food to my father. The train was still there but Mordechai wasn't allowed through. My father left wearing a summer coat, light walking shoes, and without a morsel of bread. Since then I cannot rest if there is no bread in my house.

Early next morning Aunt Asne called from Riga and asked Riva one question, 'Is your father well?' Riva replied, 'He is sick.' Aunt Asne understood everything because deportation was under way in Latvia as well. We thought that our father's arrest influenced his sisters' decision not to go to the Soviet rear. The war started a week later. My sister and I instantly decided to evacuate because our father was somewhere in Russia and we hoped to find him. We packed our things and actually sent our luggage to Kuibyshev [presently Samara, Russia] because everyone around was saying that Germans wouldn't get as far as the Volga. Just like all men of call-up age Yakov Kozlovski wasn't permitted to evacuate. They were all called up to the labor army [15](#). Yakov managed to leave Estonia later. He and his brother escorted the Red Cross lorries that carried medical supplies and

equipment out of Estonia.

My sister and I left on 5th July 1941, traveling east in a sleeping car. When we crossed Narva River - formerly the border between Estonia and the USSR - it turned out that our permit was missing some kind of stamp. We were ordered to get out of the train and sent back to Estonia. We walked carrying our things across a bridge that was being bombed by German aircrafts; it was very frightening. We obtained the stamp and were allowed to continue our journey. When we got to Leningrad, we stopped at Aunt Sofia's for several days. Our clothes made us look different from the local people, whose clothes were plainer and poorer, and Aunt Sofia was anxious that Riva could be taken for a German spy and arrested.

Then we traveled in a freight car for a long time with several transfers and during one of those transfers two of our suitcases were stolen. A certain Polish Jew did this. He had been traveling in the same car with us, spoke Yiddish and kept asking me what was in our suitcases. I told him everything. He offered to help us and made off with our things. At length we arrived in some town on the bank of the Volga with lots of churches; we were transferred to a boat and went down the river. At one landing stage someone called from another boat nearby. It was our uncle, Samuel Heiman, and his family. He wanted us to come to his boat so we could all travel together. Riva said no because she and her husband arranged to meet each other either in Ulyanovsk or Kuibyshev. Afterwards we regretted very much that we refused to go with Uncle Samuel because his 'Heimans' hands' could have provided not only for his own family but also for us. My father knew a Jewish saying which stated that whenever a person had something to do he was king.

Riva and I finally reached Ulyanovsk where we met the Kozlovski family. Yakov's parents and his two sisters were there. Yakov arrived after some time. With great difficulty we found and recovered our luggage. We stayed in Ulyanovsk for about a year, and, when the front line approached the Volga, we went on to Kazakhstan. It was winter time and I fell ill during the journey; I had pneumonia and a very high fever. At some station, where we had to change trains, we weren't allowed into the station building - people were concerned that I had typhus. I lay resting on our suitcases out on the platform. Then my sister and her husband took me to a first-aid post. The doctor looked at me and said that I wouldn't make it through another day. My sister started crying but her husband told the doctor, 'We will pay you good money if you can just save the girl.' When he heard this the doctor found a medicine called sulfidin; we had to pay 10,000 rubles for ten tablets. That was a lot of money. My sister went to the station and sold her and our mother's golden rings to buy the medicine. Those ten tablets saved my life.

In Kazakhstan we settled in a small place called Talgar, near Alma-Ata. Now it is a town. I went to school there. Before the war started I had finished six years of school in Tallinn but I spoke very little Russian so I had to do year six again.

Riva's husband, Yakov, was in the labor army. He worked at a tungsten mine in the mountains of Tian Shan. Yakov was a foreman and sometimes went to Alma-Ata on business. Soon after we arrived Riva gave birth to a boy who died a few days later. At the end of 1943, another boy was born and named Hessi in memory of our mother. We lived half-starving; the things that we had brought with us helped us survive. We would sell them or exchange them for food. Soon we had nothing left to sell. Because of malnutrition my sister was very weak and fell ill for a long time after her delivery. I rarely went to school as I had to nurse my sister and her baby; then I was placed to

work in a clock repair shop. Yakov Kozlovski's father was the repairman, and my job was to receive and dispatch the orders; I was the cashier, too, and even fitted watch crystals.

Yakov Kozlovski's father was out of luck in evacuation. A person bearing the same surname had disappeared in Ukraine at the beginning of the war after lifting a jewelry shop. Both in Ulyanovsk and in Talgar the apartments where the Kozlovski family and we lived were searched. Everything was turned upside down, the old Kozlovski was arrested and questioned, and only after it became clear that he was the wrong man he was released. Several months later the whole thing repeated itself. Yakov Kozlovski fell very ill while in the labor army. He had typhoid fever with severe complications, and he was dismissed from the labor army. This happened at the end of the war.

Throughout this time my sister and I tried to get news about our father, but it was all in vain. It was only in 1945 that my former classmate, Brazhinski, sent me a letter, in which he told me that his father was in the Northern Urals in the same camp with my father. We wrote a letter there and the reply said that Hirsh-Leib Tsivian was sent off from the camp to settle in Omsk region [Western Siberia, 2,200 kilometers east of Moscow]. Soon we received his first letter.

In the summer of 1945 we returned to Tallinn after evacuation. I arrived barefoot since my only pair of shoes fell apart on the way, and I had a nightgown with a waistband on instead of a dress. I had no other clothes. We had no place to live in Tallinn so my sister and her child lived with her husband's family, and I was accommodated by my aunt, Haya-Fanny Smolenski. Later I lived with my uncle, Samuel Heiman. Although I had only finished seven years of school I found employment as a manager's secretary at a large factory. I entered the eighth year of a school for adults and had my classes in the evenings after work.

At that time Yakov Kozlovski's relatives resolved to have me married. My fiancé was a Jew and an old bachelor; he was 38 and I was 17. He was very fond of me; as for me I was tired of wandering about my relatives' apartments - I wanted to have a place of my own to live in, and my fiancé had a room. There was neither a synagogue nor a rabbi in Tallinn at that time but we did observe some of the Jewish wedding traditions. The wedding took place in Uncle Samuel's apartment. A chuppah was set up there; an old friend of my father's who was a very religious Jew recited the blessing, then the wine glass was broken. So I was married off in November 1946.

Yakov Gershanovich, my husband, had a small workshop. He was supposed to work there making half-stock for the shoe factory. But that was just show. In fact Yakov's business was speculation: he purchased and re-sold commodities that were in short supply. This was considered a grave criminal offence in the USSR. Yakov even tried to engage me in his affairs. He would send me to a bank to buy state bond certificates as he thought them more reliable than Soviet money. I went to the bank a few times but then I realized that this could get me in trouble and refused. That was our first great quarrel.

In the summer Yakov managed to get us two places in a health center in the resort town of Parnu. Everything was wonderful there but my husband kept disappearing from my sight for some reason. He turned out to be a reckless card player; he lost a fortune through gambling. We lived together for nearly two years; fortunately, we didn't have any children. Yakov Gershanovich was arrested in 1948, right in our room, and sentenced for speculation to eight years in jail. This marriage hadn't brought me happiness, but I still waited for my husband's return for three years. While visiting my friends in 1951 I met a young man from Riga. We liked each other, dated, and corresponded, but

eventually drew apart due to some circumstances. However, I decided never to return to my first husband and obtained a divorce in the spring of 1952.

My father returned from deportation in 1946, just a few weeks before my wedding. He was present at the wedding. He didn't talk much about the camp. He said that it was horrifying and that human life was worth nothing there. My father believed that he managed to survive only due to his faith in God and to the prayers he directed to God. While in the camp my father and other Jewish believers calculated the dates of Jewish holidays and observed the traditions as best they could. On Pesach my father didn't eat bread even though there was nothing else to eat.

After his return our father worked as a manager in a sewing workshop. He had no place to live as he didn't want to trouble me or my sister and he couldn't afford to rent an apartment. For several years, until he was given an apartment, he lived in his workshop sleeping on the table where they cut the fabrics. Every day after work he went to repair the city ruins. He was actually awarded an honorary badge for his active work in restoring the city. Later he worked as a manager of a large department store.

In the summer of 1952 I went to stay at a holiday home in the resort place of Vosu, near Tallinn. The staff of Tallinn Polytechnic Institute was staying there at the same time. One of them, a tall athletic Estonian of about 40, started to pay his addresses to me. His name was Tarmo Randvee. He took me to the cinema, picked no one but me as his dancing partner, and accompanied me to the beach. He was constantly next to me and I didn't really like it. I had just been free after my divorce and now I was annoyed again. Besides, he was much older than me and not a Jew. However, one of Tarmo Randvee's colleagues, who stayed in Vosu at that time, turned out to be a former classmate of mine. He counseled me to take a closer look at Tarmo since he was an interesting and honest person. I followed his advice and realized that my classmate was right.

Tarmo and I dated in Tallinn for two and a half years. After that my father had got used to the idea of his daughter marrying an Estonian. We got married in 1955. I never met Tarmo's parents - they had died earlier. His father was a construction worker, and his mother was a housewife. They lived in Tallinn; their family was poor and they couldn't afford their son's education. That's why he worked at a building site and studied at the same time. Before the war Tarmo Randvee graduated from Tallinn Technical College and had a construction engineer's diploma. He married in 1939; in 1941 he was enlisted in a Soviet labor army and went to Russia. Later Tarmo fought against fascist forces in the Estonian Rifle Corps.

Hilda Randvee, his first wife, was a nurse. During the war she took a five- year-old Finnish girl out of a concentration camp and adopted her. The girl's parents had been shot by fascists in her presence. In 1949 Hilda died at childbirth; the baby died as well. Tarmo Randvee only had his adopted daughter, whom he had brought up and educated. When we got married Tarmo was working at Tallinn Polytechnic Institute; he had the academic status of a professor and was the head of the construction technology department. He was a man of versatile interests and had a sociable, open- hearted character. Among his friends were writers, actors, scientists, and athletes. We had a very exciting life. We went to theatres, concerts, exhibitions, and often received guests. We had a harmonious relationship.

Our daughter, Ene, was born in 1955, and our son, Riho, was born in 1958. I didn't work while the children were small. I decided not to waste time and went to university to study foreign languages.



For an entire year I applied myself to serious studies at a university preparatory course, then successfully passed my entrance examinations. However, my application was refused. I was told that the foreign language department wasn't intended for children of public enemies [see enemy of the people] [16](#). It was extremely vexing.

When our son started school I went to work at the large book-store in the department of foreign literature. Before that, I was tested for my command of the German language. It was an interesting job, but a few years later my sister's relative, who managed a manufactured goods warehouse, persuaded me to change my work place. He was looking for an honest person to supervise a jewelry stockroom. I assented. The job was a very important one; in the stockroom there were great valuables that were later dispatched to all the jewelry stores in Estonia. I was in a constant state of nervous strain. After 16 years of this work the doctors advised that I should do a more tranquil type of job. For the last ten years before I retired I worked as an inspector at a knitting mill.

We have always lived in the apartment where I live now. During the 1950s and 1960s it was a communal apartment [17](#) accommodating three families - a total of 13 people. In the mornings, when everyone was in a hurry to get to work or school, we had to wait our turn to use the toilet or the bathroom. Gradually our living conditions got better; our family was the only one left in the apartment.

My father had a separate room in a building not far-off. He never remarried although he did have relationships with women. He was a religious and a secular man at the same time. On Saturday nights my father would sometimes go to a restaurant, order a glass of wine and a piece of cake, and sit there listening to music. He prayed three times a day; he had a tallit and tefillin. The floor paint on the spot where he used to pray in his room was rubbed away.

There was no rabbi in Tallinn at the time, but a synagogue was operating in a small old building. The visitors were mostly old religious Jews. My father often went to this synagogue. While my father was alive we celebrated every Jewish holiday - Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Chanukkah, Purim, and Pesach. My sister and I took turns hosting the celebrations. My family, my father, and I visited Riva for one holiday, and Riva, her family and my father visited me for the next one. After Riva's husband died all celebrations were held at my place. My husband and children knew all about these holidays. Before they sat down to eat my husband and my son put on their kippot. Everyone listened to the prayers that my father recited. My father often had lunch with us on weekends. On days like those I tried to observe the basic laws of the kashrut. The rest of the time my father had his meals at a dietary restaurant. Naturally, kosher food wasn't served there, but there was no pork.

My husband was on very good terms with my father; both of them were intelligent, kind and honest people and had respect for each other. The only matter they disagreed in was the Soviet regime and its policies. My husband, who grew up in poverty in bourgeois Estonia, could see many positive things in the Soviet policy, but my father, who had suffered by wrongly being in a camp, didn't support his view. They had frequent disputes. Despite all his sufferings in the camp, my father took Riva and me to a cafe every 14th June to celebrate the day of our deliverance. He said that unless he had been deported on 14th June 1941 our family would have remained in Tallinn with rabbi Aba Gomer and all of us would have died. My father died in Tallinn in 1984. Some time after his death I was issued an official document affirming that he had been subject to unlawful repression. [see

Rehabilitation in the Soviet Union] [18](#)

My husband wasn't religious so we never celebrated Christian holidays at home. But we did have a Christmas tree and Christmas presents for our children to enjoy. My children always knew that their mother, grandfather, and aunt were Jews; it was never kept a secret. They knew our holidays and our food because my sister and I often cooked it. But their father was Estonian, their first language was Estonian, they went to Estonian schools, and lived in the Estonian environment. That's why they never had second thoughts when they recorded their Estonian nationality in their Soviet passports. This was the choice suggested to them by life. They don't feel Jewish.

My daughter, Ene, graduated from the economics department of the Polytechnic Institute, then worked as a chief accountant for a large company for many years, and is now working as a manager at the same place. She isn't married. My son, Riho, graduated from a construction college, worked for construction companies, and then set up a company of his own. He is married and has two daughters - his first wife's daughter, Merilin, and his second wife's daughter, Jaanika. Merilin is a journalist; she speaks several foreign languages, and is married. Jaanika goes to school. Riho is now having serious health problems, and this makes me very anxious. All of us live together in our old apartment - Riho, his wife and daughter, Ene, and I. My children go to work, my granddaughter goes to school, and I do the housework. Tarmo, my husband, died in 1992.

My sister Riva's life took a different course. Our mother's death, the war, children and disease had all prevented her from becoming a piano player. After the war Yakov, Riva's husband, was the manager of a knitting mill, and Riva worked there as a seamstress. Later Yakov changed his job and worked at a theatrical society's industrial plant; Riva followed him. The department she worked in produced something from silk. Yakov was a handsome man and sometimes permitted himself to fall for women, but Riva was wise enough to disregard her husband's weaknesses. She maintained peace and harmony in her family. Yakov suffered from heart disease; he died at 62.

They raised three sons. Hesse, the eldest son, now owns a large business in Tallinn; he is a trustee of the Jewish Community of Estonia. He has a Jewish family; his daughter married a Jew and they live in the USA. Gabriel, his second son, has a mixed marriage, but his children are now interested in Jewish life. Pesach, Riva's youngest son, is a very sensitive and kind person. He always cared for his mother and helped her with everything. Pesach has always been near his mother, and, perhaps, that's why he is still single. Riva died in 2000.

When the Jewish Community of Estonia was re-established in 1988 I got involved immediately and became a member of WIZO women's organization. [19](#). We visited the elderly and sick members of the community, talked to them, brought them presents, and celebrated Jewish holidays with them. I was younger then and never refused any kind of work. For Purim celebrations other women and I baked enormous amounts of hamantashen, enough for everyone visiting the celebration. For Pesach we served potato pancakes [latkes] to everyone. Even now, as my health permits, I'm trying to participate in all community events. I love attending class reunions of the pre-war Tallinn Jewish School. Beginning from 1994, we've been getting together every month in the Jewish community center. About 15 to 20 people are able to come every time. We drink coffee, chat in Yiddish, recall our school years, and exchange news. Unfortunately, our news aren't always happy, and after these meetings I have both warm and sad feelings.

I am happy that Estonian independence was re-established in 1991 and that the country's citizens are able to travel abroad freely. During the last ten years, I've taken three trips to Israel, got acquainted with this beautiful land, and met relatives and friends of mine who live there. That gave me great moments of joy.

In January 2004 I will be celebrating my 75th birthday. I hope to see many of my relatives - not only the ones living in Estonia, but also those who will come from Israel, USA, and Russia. This will be a great joy to me.

## Glossary

### **1 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.

### **2 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.

### **3 Road of Life**

It was a passage across Lake Ladoga in winter during the Blockade of Leningrad. It was due to the Road of Life that Leningrad survived in the terrible winter of 1941-42.

### **4 Soviet Deportation of Estonian Civilians**

June 14, 1941 - the first of mass deportations organized by the Soviet regime in Estonia. There were about 400 Jews among a total of 10,000 people who were deported or removed to reformatory camps.

### **5 Fighter battalions**

militarized troops made up of civilians. They were assembled on Estonian territory at the beginning of the war for the purpose of resisting the Nazi forces. The battalions consisted of people who took an active part in establishing the Soviet regime in Estonia. Local NKVD branches were in command of the battalions.

### **6 Estonian Rifle Corps**

a military unit established in the USSR in the late 1941 as part of the Soviet Army [then, Red Army]. The Corps was made up of two rifle divisions. Those signed up for the Estonian Corps by

military enlistment offices were: ethnic Estonians resident in the USSR; men of call-up age regardless of nationality if they resided in Estonia right before the war.

## **7 Betar**

(abbreviation of Berit Trumpeldor) A right-wing Zionist youth movement founded in 1923 in Riga, Latvia. Betar played an important role in Zionist education, in teaching the Hebrew language and culture, and methods of self-defense. It also inculcated the ideals of aliyah to Erez Israel by any means, legal and illegal, and the creation of a Jewish state on both sides of the Jordan. Its members supported the idea to create a Jewish legion in order to liberate Palestine. In Bulgaria the organization started publishing its newspaper in 1934.

## **8 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.

## **9 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 Landswehr's army formed of German volunteers. The War of Liberation ended by the signing of the Tartu Peace Treaty on February 2, 1920, when Soviet Russia recognized Estonia as an independent state.

## **10 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 and in proclaiming Estonia an independent state on February 24, 1918.

## **11 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.

## **12 NKVD**

People's Committee of Internal Affairs; it took over from the GPU, the state security agency, in

1934.

### **13 School #**

Schools had numbers and not names. It was part of the policy of the state. They were all state schools and were all supposed to be identical.

### **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 Labor army**

made up of men of call-up age who were not trusted with carrying firearms by the Soviet authorities. Such people were those living on the territories annexed by the USSR in 1940 and Germans living in the USSR. Labor army was doing tough work in the woods or in mines.

### **16 Enemy of the people**

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

### **17 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.

### **18 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.

### **19 WIZO**

Women's International Zionist Organization, founded in London in 1920. After WWII its office was moved to Tel Aviv. It implements projects in the areas of education, vocational training, and social aid.