

# Anatoli Kraemer

Anatoli Kraemer

Tallinn

Estonia

Interviewer: Ella Levitskaya

Date of the interview: March 2006

I met Anatoli Kraemer at his place. He and his wife Mayli live in a new district of Tallinn, in a nine-storied house constructed in the 1970s. Their apartment is spacious and cozy. Anatoli's large portrait, made when he was a child, is one of the highlights. Anatoli looks younger than his age. He is not very tall, athletic and brisk. Despite feeling unwell and having difficulties to speak, Anatoli willingly told his story accompanying it with jokes. His wife Mayli is a tall lady. She is very calm and affable. It looks like they love each other very much and have a perfect understanding.



[My family](#)

[My childhood](#)

[During the war](#)

[After the war](#)

[After the fall of communism](#)

[Glossary](#)

## My family

My maternal grandfather, Abram Pasternak, was from Latvia. Apparently, his wife, my grandmother Vera, was also born there. I do not know anything about my grandparents' life before their arrival in Estonia. I think my grandmother came from a very poor family. Even back in that time, the girls from well-off families were given some education, but Grandmother Vera was totally illiterate, she even could not sign for herself. The only relative from grandmother's side I knew was her brother, who lived in Riga. I cannot recall his name. I remember that Grandmother told me about him. He was a very wealthy man, the owner of a company. I do not think it was inherited from his parents.

During the tsarist time Latvia and Estonia were part of Russia, which had a pale of settlement [1](#). In Latvia Jews were not permitted to live in Riga and other big cities. There was supposed to be a special permit to live outside the pale of settlement. Within the pale, Jews were entitled to settle wherever they wished and do for a living what they wanted. There were two restrictions for the Jews in Estonia – they had no right to be in the government and be officers in the army. Other than that they were free. There was no anti-Semitism in Estonia, no Jewish pogroms, which were rather

frequent in the Russian empire. I think that was the reason for Grandfather's decision to move to Estonia. My grandparents settled in Tartu. It was the second largest city in Estonia, an old university city. There was a large Jewish community in Tartu. There was a very beautiful choral synagogue [2](#).

Grandfather worked hard and became rich. He owned a ready-made garment store, located in the center of Tartu at Alexandera Street. He also owned several houses. One of them was in the center of Tartu, where the whole family lived, and he also had a house in the resort area Elva, not far from Tartu. Grandmother was a housewife. She raised the children and did a lot about the house.

My grandparents had four children. All of them were born in Tartu. Mother's elder brother was Rolli. The second child was her sister Rebecca. My mother Paulina was born in 1895. Her younger brother David was two or three years younger than she.

Grandfather took the education of his children serious. There was the famous Russian Pushkinskaya [3](#) lyceum in Tartu. All their children finished it and then entered Tartu University. There was no admission quota for Jews in Estonia [4](#), which existed in Russia at that time. Jews were admitted to the university along with students of other nationalities. There was even a Jewish aid fund for students. Rich Jews made contributions to the fund, out of which the tuition was paid for gifted poor Jews. Of course, Grandfather could afford the tuition for his children.

I do not remember which faculty Mother's elder brother Rolli graduated from. Mother and her sister Rebecca studied at the dentistry department and David at the medical one, but my mother did not finish her studies. I do not know how she met my father, Samuel Kraemer. They married when she was in the third year at the university. She quit her studies, after she got married.

Aunt Rebecca and Uncle David graduated from the university. Rebecca became a dentist and David a physician. Though, Rebecca did not work after graduation. When she studied at the university, she met a Jew called Semyon Kremer and married him upon graduation. Semyon was a gynecologist. Rebecca gave birth to two children. Her elder son Alexander was born in 1921 and three years older than me, and her daughter Margalit was born in 1931.

David married Ester, a lady from Tartu. I do not remember her maiden name. Ester was a true beauty. In summer all of us went on vacation to Narva Joesuu, a very popular recreation place. There were all kinds of amusements for the tourists. Every year there was the Narva Joesuu beauty contest called 'The Queen of Narva Joesuu.' Ester was chosen the beauty queen. David and Ester had two daughters, Aviva and Ilana. Both of them were much younger than me.

The eldest child of my maternal grandparents was my mother's brother Rolli, who perished during World War I. He was drafted into the army and killed in action. Rolli remained single.

I cannot tell you much about my father. All I know is that he was born in 1884, but I do not know exactly where. He probably was not from Tartu as someone would have known something about his family in that case. I do not know how he happened to be in Tartu. Mother mentioned that they had a true Jewish wedding: Grandfather made all the arrangements in accordance with the Jewish traditions.

Our family lived in my grandfather's house. It was a large, two-storied house. There were huge rooms, looking like parlors with columns. The first floor was occupied by my uncle David and his

wife Ester. There were also a large kitchen and a dining-room, where the whole family had meals. There were three apartments on the second floor. My grandparents lived in one of them, my mother's sister Rebecca with her husband Semyon and children lived in the second one, and our family lived in the third one.

## **My childhood**

I was born on 24th April 1924. I was called Anatoli. For some reason I did not have a Jewish name. My father did not live with us for a long time. He was not a bad man, but he had a great flaw, which was not characteristic of Jews, he was a drunkard. It also spoke for the fact that he was not a local as people would have known about it and Grandfather would have never let my mother marry him. Before getting married my father concealed his habit from my mother and her relatives, but shortly after that he took to the bottle. I was a year and a half, when Mother divorced him. Father moved to Tallinn after the divorce. We never spoke about him at home; my mother even destroyed his pictures. One little picture was kept by chance, and I still have it.

After my parents' divorce, I saw my father only several times. I remember, once he came to us looking very weak after a drinking bout. He asked Grandfather for money. Grandfather did not give him anything and Father asked me to help him. He must have thought that I would ask Grandpa, but I did not do that. I loved tinned soldiers. I had a great many of them. They cost a lot of money and my kin always gave them to me on special occasions, like birthdays etc. I was sorry for my father as he looked so miserable. Thus, I gave him my soldiers so that he could sell them and have money. It was the last but one meeting. The last time I saw my father was in July 1941, when he was going to the war. I will talk about it later.

Grandfather was a very religious man. Jewish traditions were kept. We lived together and had meals together not only on holidays, but on other days as well. We marked Jewish holidays. On Saturdays all men – Grandfather, Uncle David and Rebecca's husband Semyon – always went to the synagogue. On major Jewish holidays all Jews went to the synagogue – men, women, children. We marked all holidays at home. Of course, I do not remember much, as it was so long ago and there were so many events.

On Purim my grandmother always baked tasty triangular pies with poppy seeds, called hamantashen. On Yom Kippur adults always fasted for 24 hours according to the tradition. Small children were released from fasting. When I started going to lyceum, I was also supposed to fast. I was very active and agile, feeling hungry all the time. I managed to snatch some food in the kitchen, without anyone seeing it. Adults spent the whole day in the synagogue on Yom Kippur praying, until the first evening star appeared in the sky. My cousin Alexander and I went to the synagogue with the adults, but we could not stay there all day long, so we played football with other Jewish guys in the yard of the synagogue.

There was only kosher food at home. Grandmother had a Jewish cook, who fixed scrumptious Jewish dishes. There was a shochet not far from our house. We bought kosher meat from him and took living chickens to him that were to be cut in accordance with the kashrut rules. This is all I remember from that time.

Grandfather died in 1931, when I was six. I remember his death vividly. I was in the kitchen, when he came home for lunch. The cook put the food on the table for me and went to meet Grandfather. I heard him entering the hall and falling on the floor. He had a stroke. He had died before the doctor arrived.

Grandfather was buried in Jewish cemetery in Tartu. The funeral was in line with the Jewish rite. There were crowds of people. Grandfather was famous in the city. There were Jewish volunteer fire fighters in Tartu. All of them had other jobs, but when there was a fire somewhere, they got together, put on their uniforms and started putting out the fire. When Grandfather was young, he was also a member of that team. When he physically could not participate in putting out a fire any longer, he provided considerable monetary assistance to the team. He was an honorary member of the fire team of the city. All Tartu fire fighters came to his funeral. There was a large monument on my grandfather's grave in the Jewish cemetery in Tartu. Unfortunately, the Tartu Jewish cemetery was destroyed during World War II. There is nothing left of it.

I entered the Estonian lyceum in 1932. It was a famous lyceum in Estonia named after its founder Hugo Treffner. During the Soviet regime the lyceum was turned into an ordinary compulsory school, but it was restored in 1991 when Estonia became independent [5](#). Now it is considered to be one of the best lyceums in Estonia. There were quite a few Jewish children there. Jews have always been positively treated in Estonia. We never felt anti-Semitism. There were classes in the lyceum on Jewish holidays, but Jewish students were exempt from them.

When I was a lyceum student, I joined the children's Zionist organization Betar [6](#). Most of my friends were enrolled there. At that time we were not interested in the political aspect of the organization, we just enjoyed being there. We played all kind of games, went in for sport. We had meetings, where we were told about the history of Israel, life of the modern Palestine. I was very energetic, liked bossing around and soon I became the group leader of Betar.

In 1937 my mother married a German Jew called Mark Schynzvit. They had known each other for several years before getting married. Once my mother went on a trip to Germany and France. At that time the fascists were already at power in Germany [7](#), but tourists were still safe there. Mother met Mark during one of the excursions in Germany. He was a widower, six years older than my mother. Mark had his own company. They liked each other and wrote to each other for a while after she returned to Estonia.

At that time they did not think about whether Mark would move to Estonia or Mother would go to Germany. Then it became clear, Jews would not be safe with the fascists being at power in Germany, so Mark moved to Tartu. By that time the fascists had seized his enterprise, he only managed to take some money with him. At least he could feel safer here.

Mother and Mark got married in Tartu. They had a traditional Jewish wedding, but a rather modest one. Mark could not get Estonian citizenship immediately, but the Estonian government gave him temporary passport, issued for fugitives. He could not be in the government, but other than that he had equal rights with Estonian citizens. With time that passport was changed to Estonian passport.

## **During the war**

We had a pretty comfortable living before 1940. My cousin Alexander, with whom we were friends, graduated from lyceum and entered the Law Department of Tartu University. I was still studying at the lyceum. In 1939 Hitler attacked Poland [8](#). Polish fugitives appeared in Estonia. We were not thinking of the threat, as the war seemed to be far away from Estonia, and reckoned that the Germans would not come to us. In actuality, the war was over soon. The Soviet Union commissioned troops in Poland and the German army was defeated, and Germany signed a non-aggression treaty with the Soviet Union, the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact [9](#).

Shortly after that Soviet military bases were constructed in Estonia and it did not cause any concern. At that time people did not worry as they hoped that Estonia would be safe thanks to Soviet military bases. Moreover, the first fascist organizations appeared in Estonia. Some people, who had fought for the independence of Estonia [10](#) in 1918, became its members. Other fighters for independence, including the president, Konstantin Päts, were against fascism. [Päts, Konstantin (1874-1956): The most influential politician of interwar Estonia, Päts headed the Estonian Provisional Government (1918–1919), although being imprisoned during the German Occupation. In the Provisional Government, he also served as Minister of Internal Affairs (1918) and Minister of War (1918–1919), that left him organizing Estonian troops for the War of Independence. In 1938 he became the first President of Estonia. During his presidency, the Soviet Union occupied Estonia in 1940. As President, he was forced to sign decrees for over a month, until he was finally arrested and deported to Russia, where he died in 1956. Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Konstantin\\_P%C3%A4ts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Konstantin_P%C3%A4ts)]

At that time the Soviet Union took advantage of the disparity in Estonia and managed to annex it [cf. Estonia in 1939-1940] [11](#). When Estonia became a Soviet republic, they violently dismissed the government. There was upheaval for our president Päts, and appointment of a new government. Repressions and nationalization began. Three days after the new government was appointed, the Soviet regime took our house. Some militaries moved there and our entire family was turned out into the street with our things. They took the houses, stores, and everything else and nationalized them.

Probably, the adults understood that it was only the beginning and they decided to leave Tartu, where everybody knew that our family was rich. Aunt Rebecca, her family and Grandmother left for Haapsalu and my mother with Mark and Uncle David with his wife and daughters went to Tallinn. We hoped we could stay there quietly and wait for better times: My cousin Alexander, who was a freshman at Tartu University, and I, a lyceum student, stayed in Tartu. We lived in a rented apartment, and the hostess was supposed to provide meals for us as well.

I accepted the new regime easily. I was about 15-16 years old – an age when it is easier to get used to new things. Of course, during the Soviet regime Jewish youth organizations were banned. The new regime founded a youth organization in Tartu, called ‘Union of Young Workers,’ which was actually the Soviet Komsomol [12](#). My friends joined the organization and talked me into it too.

I was young and energetic. I had good organizational skills and experience in Betar. It was the time when the pioneer organization [13](#) was founded in Estonia, and I was one of its organizers, the pioneer leader. At that time I did not think of helping the new regime. I just enjoyed what I was doing. We organized military and sports games like it was in Betar. I was very active. In summer 1941 the first pioneer camp in Estonia was established in Oru, Toila province, not far from Narva.

There was an estate of President Päts. I was sent there as a pioneer leader.

In 1939 when the war was unleashed in Poland, I understood the atrocity of fascism. I was involved in anti-fascist propaganda in the camp. I held pioneer meetings, where I talked about the horrors of fascism. On the roofs of the camp houses, we drew caricatures of Hitler and wrote anti-fascist slogans. I found out about the outbreak of the war, when I was in the camp. Germany had attacked the Soviet Union [cf. Great Patriotic War] [14](#).

Mother was in Tallinn at that time. She was by herself as her husband, Mark Schynzvit, was deported on 14th June 1941 [15](#). At that time deportation was taking place all over Estonia. Mark had nothing to do with politics, but he did not have an Estonian passport and was considered to be a citizen of Germany. He was sent to the Gulag [16](#) for allegedly being a German spy.

I was all Mother had and she knew nothing about me. She sent a telegram to the camp for me to go to Tallinn as soon as possible for us to leave for evacuation, but I could not do it swiftly. The Germans had not reached Estonia yet, but Estonian fascists started acting. They seized the railway station in Kivioli and blocked the trains. There was no other way to get to Tallinn. I was trying hard to get there, but could not leave because the trains did not go. I was not going to be in evacuation.

I wanted to be a volunteer in the Red Army. I had to wait for two years before the call-up, but I was not willing to wait, I wanted to defend my motherland. Finally, Soviet troops got Kivioli station back and I managed to leave for Tallinn. On the way there we passed by a train in which my mother and David's wife with her daughters were heading for evacuation. Their train was at the substation and ours was passing by. I saw my kin through the window.

I did not have anybody to see in Tallinn. When we arrived, I found out that my uncle David was still in Tallinn. He was drafted into the army as a military doctor and he was waiting to go to the front. When we met he gave me his Swiss Omega watch. I started thinking where to go to be drafted into the army. I went to the municipal Komsomol committee and there I was given the paper for the military registration and enlistment office. There I was given a Russian rifle, the type used in 1898, and two grenades. I did not know what to do with the weapon.

We had military classes at the lyceum, taught by a lieutenant of the Estonian army. It was the time when the Germans were approaching Tallinn, and there was a working battalion to fight them. As soon as I got the weapon, I went outside and suddenly saw the working battalion marching with the orchestra. There was my military teacher from school among them. He also noticed me and cried out, 'Join us!' That's what I did and headed to the front. Here I also saw my father, who took notice of me as well. He dashed up to me and gave me some chocolate. We hugged each other and continued on our way.

We had walked for about 20 kilometers from Tallinn and reached the place where we were supposed to have a battle. We did not have equal forces. In our battalion almost everybody was armed the way I was – an old rifle and two grenades – while the Germans had guns, mortars etc. A lot of our fighters were wounded and killed in action right away.

At that time I did not take death seriously. I could not even picture my death. It was most likely that I and my coevals looked at it as if it was a military game. My friend suggested walking closer to German positions and take a couple of mortars. We ran to the Germans and they started



shooting at us. I got injured by the fragment of a mine and as a result of the explosion I was thrown into the bushes.

Then Germans came up to me and said, 'This Bolshevik [17](#) is dead.' They took my watch, my uncle's present, and left me in the bushes. When they left, I started crawling to our people. There was a sanitary battalion with our wounded in the nearby forest. Then buses came from Tallinn and took the wounded to the hospital in Tallinn, which was set up in a former school. Later my daughters went to that school. They cleaned my wound, applied a bandage and left me in the ward. I stayed there before the Germans arrived in Tallinn at night. Nurses in the hospital calmed down the wounded and said that the Germans would do no harm since it was provided by the international convention that wounded people could not be hurt. I did not believe in that. Besides, I understood that I, a Jew, would be murdered by Germans at once, whether I was wounded or not. My Jewish friend and I started thinking of how to escape the Germans.

The next morning all of us were taken to the harbor. There were several ships and people were getting on them very quickly. We boarded a large Latvian ship, which was in Tallinn port. I saw that Tallinn was on fire. The wounded were put in the hold and the ship headed towards Leningrad. The harbor was mined. When the ship was in the sea, it was shot at from both coasts – the Estonian and the Finnish one. Besides, the Germans bombed from planes. Several ships were sunk; the bomb hit our ship as well. The hold with the wounded was flooded. It was impossible to go up as there was a fire. People understood that it was the end. Some people even hung themselves on the ties, straps etc. to wait for the torturing death.

I had no illusions as I understood that death was inevitable, but I was scared to die in the cold hold. I somehow managed to climb on the top and hid on the deck. When a new portion of bombs hit the ship, I jumped into the water. I was lucky to find a floating piece of wood in the water and I climbed on it. Cadavers were all around me. The water was very cold. First the feeling of cold was very acute, then I got used to it. I stayed there for three hours. Finally the bombing stopped and I was noticed by people in a passing ship. They lowered the lifeboat, helped me get in it and took me on the ship.

In the end, I reached Leningrad, where I was sent to hospital right away. I did not know a single word of Russian. I could not understand anything. My stay in the hospital was not long as I was not severely wounded. I even did not catch a cold after having been in cold water for three hours. When I was discharged from the hospital, I went to the military barracks, where Estonian soldiers were living. At that time Stalin issued the order not to let people from Baltic countries and Germans go to the front. [Editor's note: The Soviet regime did not trust those who lived in the areas that were annexed to the USSR. In particular, it restricted their freedom of movement. They were not supposed to be close to the border to prevent them from escaping from the country.] We stayed in the barracks and waited for the unknown.

Then the Germans started attacking Leningrad. It was a terrible day when German airplanes started bombing grocery warehouses. There was flour, sugar etc, and all of that was set on fire. We ran into the burning warehouses trying to save what we could. It was the only food we could get. Finally, there was another order: to dismiss from the army all people who had not reached the draft age. The rest should be sent to labor camps [18](#). I and a couple of other volunteers were demobilized and sent to the evacuation point across Lake Ladoga [19](#). We were starving on our way.

There was no food. After that we went to the train station, which was on the front line. Everything was on fire and the last trains were dispatched from Leningrad, which was besieged [20](#).

My friend from Tartu and I took the train heading to Siberia. We reached Sverdlovsk, wherefrom we went to Chelyabinsk. We went to the platform and saw Estonian ladies. They came up to us and we asked if there were some more people evacuated from Estonia. Without any hope, I asked whether they happened to know Paulina Schynzvit, my mother. It turned out that those ladies were living in the settlement Nizhnyaya Uvelka, not far from Krasnoyarsk [Russia, about 3000 km from Moscow] where Estonians were evacuated. So my mother and aunt Ester were living there. Those ladies accompanied me to Nizhnyaya Uvelka and took me to my mother's home.

I was shocked by what I saw in the village. None of the Estonian villages was so poor and filthy. There were even some clay houses. I was told that I would recognize my mother's house right away as it was the only place in the village with curtains. Mother was at home, when I came. She saw me and swooned. Somebody told her that I was in Tallinn, when the Germans came and perished there. Aunt Ester and her daughters lived with my mother. Shortly before I arrived, my mother's brother David, who was demobilized from the army, also came. I stayed with my mother in Nizhnyaya Uvelka.

There was a Russian school, but taking into account the many evacuated Estonians, who did not speak Russian, an Estonian school was also set up in an annex to the Russian school building. There were a lot of Estonian teachers. Several classes were held in one room, but still they managed to teach us. I finished the eleventh grade in Tartu and had to finish the twelfth one. There were twelve grades in Estonia, while there were ten grades in the Soviet Union. So, I was enrolled in the tenth grade so that in a year I could have my school certificate. Of course, both students and teachers treated me specially. In their eyes, I was a hero, having been wounded in the lines.

I was going to finish school to be drafted in the army when reaching draft age. When I found out about the Estonian corps [21](#) being formed in Ural, I went to the military enlistment office with the request to join the lines as a volunteer. I was 17 and the draft age was 18. They closely reviewed my case in the military enlistment office and I was assigned to the Estonian corps. Uncle David was also sent there. Of course, I did not tell my mother about my decision. She found out about it shortly before my departure. Of course, she was horrified. Once she had to be in the state of abeyance and she was put through that once again.

Uncle David and I went to the place of formation of the Estonian corps. I started my military life. My uncle was killed in action. He was a doctor and he was trying to make it so that our Estonian corps soldiers got a better ration and living condition. Our commanders were perturbed by that. To boot, they found out that my uncle was from a rich family, i.e., an alien element, an enemy of the people [22](#). That is why he was sent to the penal battalion, which was the worst punishment. A common saying for it was 'washing off the guilt with blood.' If a person from the penal battalion was wounded in battle, he was to return to the ordinary union and nobody would be concerned with his past. It happened rarely. As a rule, people from the penal battalion were used as cannon fodder. They were the first in the fierce battles, being the targets for the guns. There were very few of them who survived. Thus, Uncle David perished. His squad was the first to go to the German positions when our troops were to attack. Uncle David was killed in that battle.



Our Estonian corps was supposed to be sent to Stalingrad, where severe battles were being held [23](#). We were most likely to die there, but we were not sent to Stalingrad, but to Velikiye Luki. The town was captured by Germans, and the Soviet army encircled it. The winter was frosty and we had to walk 100 kilometers. At last, we got there. The battle for Velikiye Luki started. [The Velikiye Luki offensive operation was executed by the forces of the Red Army's Kalinin Front against the Wehrmacht's 3rd Panzer Army during the Winter Campaign of 1942-1943 with the objective of liberating the Russian city of Velikiye Luki. It is particularly notable as an example of the failure of German operational combat in relieving an encirclement, similar to those employed at the Battle of Stalingrad. Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle\\_for\\_Velikiye\\_Luki](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_for_Velikiye_Luki)]

Our corps was in the lines. We were supposed to hold the part of the position, where there were no Soviet troops for the Germans not to be able to break through to the town. There were fierce battles. There were a lot of casualties on both sides. Finally, we ousted the fascists from the town, but there was a small group of Germans left. The commander of Velikiye Luki, also the commander of the garrison, was a German baron, who had lived in Estonia until 1939, and then as per request of Hitler went to Germany. When our troops took the town, the baron hid in an air-raid shelter with a small group of Germans, which was constructed during the Soviet regime. We could not get them out of there. First, we flung gas pots there, then bombs, but it was futile.

We had to negotiate with them, but we did not have a translator, who was fluent in German. Somehow, General Lembit Pärn, the commander of the Estonian corps, got to know that I was fluent in German. I was called to the headquarters, they told me to wear white sheepskin and an officer's sword belt, and sent me to conduct negotiations with the German baron. General Pärn spoke and I interpreted. He said if the Germans voluntarily gave themselves up, they would remain alive. Finally the deputy commander left the air-raid shelter. He was promised that nobody would be executed if leaving the shelter, so he returned there trying to convince his comrades to do that.

The negotiations lasted for a long time and finally the entire garrison came out. There were a lot of wounded among them. We looked for a German doctor. He was at the railway station, where German captives were held. General Pärn talked and I interpreted. The doctor said that both of his sons were killed in the vicinity of Moscow, his wife stayed in Berlin, and he did not even know whether she was alive. The general suggested that he should take care of the wounded, but the doctor said that we would help only civilians. I stayed in the headquarters for several days acting as a translator; then I headed farther.

We were sent to Leningrad. When besieged Leningrad was liberated, our Estonian corps was sent farther, in the direction of Estonia. At that time the Russian and Estonian border was not along Narva, but about 12 kilometers away from it. We crossed the border. I saw Estonian guys taking earth in their hands and kissing it. We were happy to take part in the liberation of Estonia.

Near Narva we had to hold a battle with the German militaries from the SS Estonian legion. That legion was founded by Germans in the spring of 1944. Young Estonian lads were enlisted in the German army. Many Estonians were against the Soviet regime and hoped that Germany's victory would make Estonia independent, and free from Soviet oppressions. The Germans were spreading their propaganda among the soldiers of the Estonian legion, convincing them that they should not give away a single meter of Estonian land, as in the event of German retreat, the Soviet army would occupy Estonia.

Thus both belligerent parties put Estonians in the battle near Narva. There was the Estonian corps on our side, and the Germans had the Estonian legion. Estonians fought against Estonians. There were cases when the members of one family fought for different armies. There were 30,000 Estonians, clad in German uniforms. It was horrible, inhuman. We stood at one bank of the Narva, and they were at the opposite one. In the evening, during the intermission between the battles, one and the same Estonian songs were sung at both banks. There were cases when some Estonians swam from the opposite bank to join us.

We went on to liberate Estonia from the fascists. Our corps took part in the liberation of Tartu. Then we liberated Tallinn. Our tank column was the first to enter Tallinn. But my regiment passed by Tallinn and went to the island. There was the Klooga [24](#) camp on our way and it was the first time I saw what the fascists had done on our land. It was a terrible concentration camp. Not only Estonian Jews, but also Jews from all over Europe were executed there. Before our attack Germans murdered all Klooga prisoners. We came to the camp a couple of hours after the fascists had run away. The fires, where logs and human cadavers were put, were still burning. The Germans burnt some people alive. When we were in the camp, the blood of the shot people had not been absorbed by the earth yet. It was like water after rain, ankle-deep. It was horrible and I saw it with my own eyes.

We did not stay in Klooga as we were to head to the islands. There were fierce battles. The Germans stuck to the isle as they had a real chance to get to Finland by ships. By that time Finland was out of the play. Apart from the Estonian corps a Russian military unit was also taking part in the fierce battles. I was wounded at Sõrve Peninsula in the combat with the Germans and was sent to hospital in Tallinn aboard a Finnish ship.

When I was discharged from the hospital, our corps was sent to liberate Kurland [25](#). Our commanders were in a hurry to do away with the Germans there and to put an end to the war, but the Germans hung in there, fighting desperately for their other units to be able to get evacuated. We moved very slowly. The area was open without any place to hide. There were a lot of casualties and it was very scary as many soldiers from the Estonian corps managed to drop by in Tallinn and see their relatives. And still, some of them were to face death.

On 9th May 1945 [26](#) we were supposed to attack German positions... I went through the entire war and was always sure that death would go past me. But before that battle, I had a feeling that I would not survive it. On the eve of the battle, I went to bed earlier in the dug-out. Suddenly I heard shots thinking that the battle was on. I ran out and saw our soldiers shooting from guns and pistols and crying out that the war was over. It was on the night of 8th May, the last shots of war. I hugged a tree and burst into tears as I was sure that I would have perished the following day. It was as if someone had granted me life.

The Estonian corps marched to Tallinn from Kurland, passing Riga. Anywhere we were walking the road was strewn with flowers. We were welcomed as the winners, rescuers. We covered a distance of 600 kilometers with the full kit and weapons. When we reached Tallinn, my legs were chafed and I could hardly walk. It was a serious distance. Mother, who had already come back from evacuation, could not wait for the Estonian corps to enter Tallinn; she went to meet me in Klooga. When we arrived in Tallinn, the streets were crowded. People gave us flowers, willing to give us hugs and handshakes. The flowers were coming from everywhere.

Now we, the fighters of the Estonian corps, are called the occupants, though at that time we were called liberators. Is it our fault that at the conference in Yalta [27](#), when discussing the borders of the new postwar Europe, neither Roosevelt, nor Churchill, nor Stalin thought of regaining independence of the three Baltic countries? Why did they agree on the Soviet Union's further occupation of the Baltic countries? Maybe because the latter were not strong enough; much weaker than the Soviet Union. Soviet tanks were all over Europe, subduing Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Eastern Germany and other countries. Why aren't they blaming Roosevelt and Churchill as it was the redistribution of the world and we could have become free. We, the soldiers, who did not spare their lives in the liberation of our country from fascists, are now blamed for the Soviet Union's post-war occupation of Estonia lasting over 50 years – making a clear way for Soviet occupants. It is a terrible tragedy, but it is not our fault. The soldiers of the Estonian corps did their best to liberate our motherland.

## After the war

My relatives who were in evacuation during the war returned to Tallinn. Aunt Ester with her daughters and Mother's sister Rebecca and her family came back. During the war they were in evacuation in Ural, and Grandmother Vera was with them. Apart from Uncle David, my cousin Alexander did not come back. He was drafted into the army during the first days of the war. Then, when Estonians were demobilized from the army as per Stalin's order, Alexander, along with many Estonian guys, was sent to a labor army in Siberia. Then many of those Estonians joined the Estonian Corps. Alexander died of typhus in the camp before the Estonian corps was established. Grandmother's brother, who lived in Riga, perished in Riga ghetto [28](#).

My father had a dreadful fate. For some reason he was not willing to leave Tallinn. Many Jews decided to stay thinking that the Germans would do them no harm. But it was not the case. Hardly had the Germans entered Tallinn, all Jewish men were arrested and sent to Tallinn camps. They were interrogated and mutilated, then murdered. When Estonia became independent, the archives were opened and I was able to read the protocol of my father's interrogation on 2nd August 1941 carried out by Evald Mixon, an Estonian. The sentence was also attached. The line 'Charged with?' says only one thing: Jew. Conclusion: sentenced to death. Before 6th October 1941 almost 1000 Jews were shot in Tallinn.

I was really willing to be demobilized from the army. They were reluctant to let me go, offering me to work as a translator in the headquarters of the Estonian corps, but a military career did not appeal to me and I was demobilized. I was 20, but had neither education, nor profession. All I had were military awards: an Order of the Red Star [29](#), a Medal for Valor [30](#), a Medal for Victory over Germany [31](#), an Order of the Great Patriotic War [32](#) of the 2nd class. Jews in the Estonian corps were awarded the same way as Estonians were, without any bias.

I went to the municipal Komsomol committee, and I was assigned a Komsomol instructor. [Editor's note: Komsomol units existed at all educational and industrial enterprises. They were headed by Komsomol committees involved in organizational activities.] I was given a room in the hostel. There was a lot of work in Tallinn. The city was demolished by bombing. All the streets were in shambles. The Komsomol members cleaned them, preparing the sites for constructions of new houses. We worked 12 to 14 hours daily and coped with the work. Then Komsomol members started with the construction of the stadium. Everybody was involved.

When the construction was over, I was assigned to lead the propaganda section. There was a large truck that visited all parts of Estonia. We showed movies, held lectures. It was the first propaganda truck in the Soviet Union. Its work was highly appreciated in Moscow, where I was called to share my experience with others.

When the Doctors' Plot [33](#) began, I was dismissed from work on that day. When the campaign against cosmopolitans [34](#) was over, the attitude towards Jews did not change in Estonia. There was another stage – deportations in 1948-49, but it had nothing to do with cosmopolitans. Rich peasants and Estonian nationalists were exiled. During the Doctors' Plot I was not the only Jew who was fired, many were. First, I did not understand that it was the state politics, not something directed against me. I was just a Jew, and was supposed to be treated like other Jews. I understood that when I went to the central committee of the Estonian party, where many of my brothers-in-arms were. They turned their backs on me, being afraid to talk to me. It was very sad.

Then one of my pals turned out to be brave and offered me a job. He was aware of my leadership skills, and he could have offered me a different job, but the only offer I could get was the position of an engineer in Vtorsyryo bureau [company's name originates from the words "secondary raw materials". The firm took scrap metal and paper litter from the population at dirt cheap prices and sent those materials to processing facilities]. Under those circumstances that job saved me, so there was no other way but agree. I worked there until 1956.

After the Twentieth Party Congress [35](#) they started to look into the cases of those who suffered under Stalin. It was the period of time when many repressed people came back. My stepfather Mark Schynzvit also came back. He was exhausted, feeble, but still alive. I was called to the central party committee of Estonia and asked where I would like to work. Despite them being unfair to me during the Doctors' Plot, I was still a great patriot of Estonia. I saw the poor performance of kolkhozes [36](#). Estonia, having been world food exporter until 1940, could barely cover domestic needs. I decided that I should go to the villages. My friend was assigned the first secretary of the regional party committee in Otepää district, now a famous ski training area. He asked for my help. I moved there from Tallinn and worked there for four years.

I went to Otepää with my family. I got married in Tallinn. I am not willing to tell you anything about my first wife. We parted a long time ago. We had two daughters: Ilona, born in 1949, and Viola, born in 1951. I was appointed the director of the people's theater in Otepää. It was an amateur theater, the producer was the only professional there. They needed an organizer, who could make it work. I started organizing work enthusiastically. We repaired the theater building, chose a couple of plays and started rehearsals. It was very interesting; I even played some minor parts. I worked all day long.

Of course, it hurt my family. My relationship with my wife got very tense. What woman would like her husband to come home for sleep and then run away to work in the morning? Thus, things went well at work, but it was vice versa in the family. Our group became very famous not only in our district, but all over Estonia. We got prizes and honorary mentions at all amateur contests, but I broke up with my wife. My wife said that she was fed up with being a wife on paper and filed for a divorce. After that she took our daughters to Tallinn. Of course, I saw my daughters as much as I could, trying to go to Tallinn more often.

When our theater became solid and well-organized I was offered a job in the district party committee. I accepted the offer. I had a good reputation there and soon I was in charge of the department, but they said that it was the highest position I could get, as the next top position was the secretary of the district party committee and I was clearly told that a Jew could not be assigned to that post in the Soviet Union. Of course, I knew that anti-Semitism was very strong in the Soviet Union, but it was not accepted in Estonia, at any rate within the aboriginal population. Those who arrived from the USSR remained with their views in Estonia. It hurt me.

There were recreation centers for party activists in the south, in the Crimea, Sochi. Of course, they were much more comfortable than ordinary spas. I got vouchers to go there twice. The first time I went there, I did not understand why they looked at me with surprise written all over their faces. Then when I met some people, one of them asked me a straightforward question: how did you get here, being a Jew? At that time I could not understand why nationality should have something to do with a bonus for good work. If someone got a trip voucher only one criterion mattered – good performance. When the people from the recreation center found out that a Jew in Estonia could have such a position and get such a trip voucher, they were sincerely astounded. It was out of the ordinary for them.

In general, life in Estonia differed a lot from other places in the USSR. We were like Europe for them. It could be seen even in trifles. I did not like hats and was wearing a beret, which caused no emotions in Estonia. When I came to Moscow in that beret, everybody was very surprised because the officials of the district party committee were wearing only hats as if it was a part of their uniform. A modern beret was like a challenge to them.

After Otepää I was offered a job in Tallinn: to run the municipal culture palace. I was not provided with an apartment in Tallinn, but I could stay with my mother. After the war she received a small two-room apartment in the semi-basement. She managed to make it clean and cozy. My stepfather Mark Schynzvit was still alive. Neither my mother, nor my stepfather worked after the war. They got some skimpy pension, but they could get by with that. Of course, I tried helping them out with money, though my salary was not high. Besides, I was supposed to support my daughters. I could give my mother much less than I wanted to.

Mother was a good homemaker and she managed to make a living with the money she got. We did not observe the kashrut after the war, it was next to impossible. There was a deficit of primary products, not to mention kosher ones. But still, if Mother bought live chickens on the market, she took them to a shochet to have them cut. We marked major Jewish holidays.

After the war there was no synagogue in Tallinn, just a small prayer house. There was no rabbi. An old Jew, who knew traditions, was acting as rabbi. Before Pesach matzah was sold in the synagogue; it was brought from somewhere. On holidays my mother and Mark went to the synagogue. At home holidays were marked in accordance with the rules – no crumbs on Pesach and strict fasting on Yom Kippur. If I was in Tallinn during a holiday, I marked it with Mother and Mark. It did it only for them, as I personally did not need it.

My stepfather Mark died in 1967. He was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Tallinn. My grandmother Vera Pasternak is also buried there. She died in the middle of the 1950s, when I was working in Otepää, so I could not even come to her funeral.

There was a lot of work in Tallinn. I wanted to make our culture palace into a place that people would enjoy to visit in the evening and on days off. I wanted it to be a center of culture and recreation. We established several vocal and dancing groups. There was a very good ladies' vocal group called Elektra, which was also famous outside Estonia. Our symphonic orchestra had tours overseas with that group. It was the time when it was hard for USSR citizens to go abroad even as tourists, but we went there on concert tours as participants of festivals and contests.

It was the time when I got to know that the KGB [37](#) followed everybody, especially abroad. There was also somebody in our group who was assigned by the party committee to go with us on tour. He had nothing to do with our group, his only task was to follow the members of the group, eavesdropping on people and keeping a record on everyone. First, I was very naïve and I could not believe it when somebody told me about it. Then I believed that it was true.

Our symphonic orchestra was supposed to go to Berlin on an excursion. It was Eastern Germany, but still a foreign country to us. Suddenly, some musicians from the orchestra came up to me and told me that one of their colleagues would not go to Berlin as per order from Moscow, and a man and woman were sent instead of him. Those two people turned out to be from the KGB and they were supposed to report on our trip. Even in Berlin, when we went on a city tour, they stayed at the hotel and checked our things.

At times the KGB turned some of our musicians into informers. Once, I went to Finland with the ladies band. We were talking with the group leader, and suddenly I heard some sounds behind the door. We opened the door and saw a musician who was instructed to eavesdrop on us. His task was to follow what other people were doing. Those were unpleasant things, which made me feel despondent.

In general, it was hard to work at that time. Everything was to be approved, and God forbid if someone found 'a Western influence' in any activity. That tag was attached to everything that was even slightly different from the Soviet routine. I came across that when we organized a jazz club in the culture palace. It was in the 1960s, it was the time when Saturday was made a day off. I found a place for a chill-out. On Friday people got together there. There was some wine, coffee, desserts.

Those were jazz evenings. Such types of cafés existed abroad, and I liked them very much. It was not a concert where you were supposed to stay in your seat and listen to music. This café was a place, where we could communicate, dance and listen to good jazz. Our jazz café became very popular. It was not attended by young people only. There were middle-aged people as well. Whole families came there.

At that time the USSR disapproved of jazz like many other things that were popular in the West. Our jazz club was not open for a long time. People willingly came to us. Once, the instructor from the municipal part committee came to us. He had been sitting all evening long with a poker face and the next day there was a scandal and I was on the carpet. There was a big scandal: I was reproached by the municipal party committee for spreading cheap bourgeois culture and they were going to close the club.

Fortunately, I managed to convince them not to close down the café and we promised that we would not call it jazz club. People liked the place a lot and even the papers wrote about it and it was good having the café. None of the party activists attended our evenings. It was a hard time. I



do not even want to go back to it.

I left the culture palace after one incident that took place on the 1st May parade. Our orchestra always took part in the parades on 1st May and on 7th November [38](#). We marched passing by the tribunes. Once, my boss, who was a member of the central party committee as well as a member of the Supreme Council [39](#) of Estonia, wanted our orchestra to play Labor March on the demonstration devoted to 1st May, but our orchestra had never rehearsed that march. We did not have enough time for the preparation, but we managed. We were playing the march, when we passed by the tribunes.

After the demonstration I went to the boss and asked him if he was pleased, and he was perturbed that we started playing too far from the tribunes where the government was staying. He was shouting at me why we had started playing so early. I did not want to justify myself. It do not think it is right to justify oneself when you do not understand where your fault lies. I left tacitly and the next day I wrote a resignation letter. At that time the Tallinn culture palace was one of the best in the entire Soviet Union. They wanted to talk me into staying, but I was not willing to.

Then I was offered a job as editor of the photo department of the news agency Eta, which provided materials for almost all printed editions of the Baltic countries. Eta was actually a political organization. We had to adjust all news from the different parts of the world for the Soviet press and of course make a certain coloring. Soon I was assigned chief editor of the photo department.

Often I had to attend seminars in Moscow or Leningrad and I noticed the way they looked at me. It was a miracle for them that a Jew could be offered such a position – chief editor – in such an organization. There were Jews who held lower positions. When I talked to them it turned out that they were totally different. I thought that a Jew would always understand a Jew, but they had different views, another ideology. Many of my colleagues treated me fairly and did not hurt me. But still I had a feeling at times they were not very glad to see me there.

In the post-war years Russian culture was imposed on Estonia. People who came to Estonia from the USSR did not find it necessary to study the Estonian language, but all Estonians were supposed to know Russian. When I was working in Eta, we had a meeting with the management every morning. Most of the editors spoke poor Russian, but those meetings were always held in Russian. This was the ideology. I was the only one in the meeting, who was speaking Estonian.

Once, this issue was brought up at a party meeting. One Estonian from our publishers got up and said that Kraemer was not willing to speak Russian, which was wrong in his opinion. I replied, 'Where do you live, my dear? You live in Estonia, where Estonian is the main language, therefore I prefer speaking good Estonian to broken Russian.'

Such kind of pressure lasted during the entire period of the Soviet regime. When I was working in Eta, I was compelled to go through training in the higher party school [40](#). The school was based in Moscow. I had extramural studies, only attending examination sessions in Moscow. I had to take my final exams in Moscow in Russian. I made so many mistakes in the dictation that I thought I would never obtain a diploma. There were three of us from the Baltic countries, and for all of us Russian dictation was an unsurpassable hurdle. It was good that our teacher understood that. She dictated us the text and then she said that she would leave the classroom for a minute. The three of us copied the dictation from Russian guys. This is how we passed the exam.

In general, the Soviet system was built on deception and hypocrisy. The bright example of that are the elections to local council and up to Supreme Council of Estonia and the USSR. For a number of years I was the chairman of the electoral board. It's hard to call that procedure election – there was only one possible candidate that people were supposed to elect. The only choice was pro or contra his name. The votes were counted in a peculiar way. I received a call from the party committee and was told: today we were supposed to have 98%. That was the issue. It was all false, we were not supposed to do that. I never made that approach, but those things took place nevertheless.

When in 1948 the state of Israel was founded [41](#), I gladly welcomed it. I took the foundation of the Jewish state seriously and I was happy that after 2000 years the state was revived. Soviet Union was one of the initiators of the foundation of the state of Israel, but after a while the relationships between the states were not that friendly. The Soviet Union even terminated diplomatic relations with Israel [42](#). Official propaganda called Israel the aggressor. We started to support Arab countries, supplied weapons, military experts and probably also provided monetary assistance.

During the Six-Day-War [43](#) and the Yom Kippur War [44](#) the Soviet mass media even said that Israel was the first to attack, though all of us knew that it was not the case. We could follow the events in Israel from the transmissions of the foreign radio. We were worried about Israel. Everybody understood that the Arab countries wanted to exterminate Israel with the help of the Soviet Union. I remember how happy we were over the Israeli victory. We exulted over all the victories of Israel. At that time it was noticeable that the Soviet Union was biased against Israel. Unfortunately, very few things have changed since then. Russia, considering itself the successor of the Soviet Union, treats Israel the same way.

I often went abroad with our concert groups. I probably communicated with foreigners more than other people from the USSR and I saw that they hated the Soviet Union. I remember in the 1950s, when Soviet troops were in Hungary [45](#), we went there on a concert tour. During the weekend we were taken to Lake Balaton. When I was swimming in the lake, a stranger swam up to me and asked if I was from the Soviet Union. I said that it did not matter where I was from. He told me that for him it was very important, as the Hungarians hated the Soviets, who were shooting at them in their motherland. I was at a loss, and then he added that I would run inform against him. I remember that conversation clearly.

When in 1968 the Soviet Union commissioned troops in Czechoslovakia [46](#), I was concerned. I understood that all the citizens hated Soviets, and I was also a USSR citizen. I understood that there was nothing that could be changed and my lone protests were useless, but on the other hand I was ashamed to keep silent. I wanted to cry out loud that it was a crime against an independent sovereign country. I remained silent and felt ashamed.

Soon after the Czechoslovakian events I happened to be in Germany with the ladies' group. My pal, the director of the culture palace in Dresden, invited me to the restaurant. There were German militaries, generals of the East German army, sitting at the table. They drank a lot and had fun. I asked what they were celebrating. One of the generals replied that his division was in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and they said they gave them a hard time. I had a feeling that I had come back into Hitler's time, when the German army also killed inhabitants of Czechoslovakia. And again we were there, and now the Soviet Union was in with them and it was terrible. I hurried from the restaurant. I still have bad reminiscences of that conversation.

In early 1970 Jews from the Soviet Union were allowed to leave for Israel. Officially it was called family reunion, but in fact even those who did not have kin there were also leaving. Many of my friends left, my cousin Margalit, the daughter of Aunt Rebecca. She and her husband had died before Margalit immigrated to Israel with her family. We write letters and call each other.

I was happy for those who managed to leave. I helped them with what I could, but I was not eager to leave Estonia. I will always have ties with this country. There were my relatives here, and most of time I had stayed here and felt that I was needed. What would I be doing in Israel at my age? Maybe if I were 20-30, I would think of immigration. But at that time I was over 50 and clearly understood that at that age it would be hard for me to get acclimatized.

I met my second wife, an Estonian lady called Mayli Kurg, a long time ago, in the 1950s. I was still married when we met and we were just friends. Mayli is a very kind and smart person. I always asked for her advice when I had some difficulties with work. We started seeing each other more often when I moved to Tallinn. By that time I had been divorced. I really needed Mayli. We got married in 1975. The wedding was not special, we just had our marriage registered and in the evening we had a party at the restaurant with relatives and friends.

Mayli had a small apartment. We exchanged Mayli's and my mother's apartments for a nice three-room apartment in a new building in a new district of Tallinn. We are still living there. My mother lived with us until her death. She loved Mayli, who was like a daughter to her. Mayli looked after my mother and helped her a lot. My mother died in 1978. She was buried in the Jewish cemetery next to my stepfather. It was a traditional Jewish funeral. There was a synagogue at the cemetery and we stuck to the rite. My friends also helped me out. We put a memorial plaque on the tombstone mentioning my father's name Samuel Kraemer.

My and Mayli's name are also mentioned there. In due time, my daughters will have to insert the date of death. Here I had some disagreement with the rabbi of our Jewish community. First, according to the Jewish traditions, a dead Jew cannot be put in the grave with other bodies, even if they were buried 20-30 years ago. I do not think it is right. Secondly, I would like to be cremated after I die. I know that for instance in America, Jews are cremated and nobody considers it a violation of Jewish traditions. But we cannot do it here. Why not?

Things are changing in the world, why should we stick to the old times. This is wrong. There are so few Jews left in Tallinn, can't there be a concession to us? I am so old that I can die any day and I want it to be done my way. The last person who died from the senior generation of our family was my aunt Ester, the wife of mother's brother David. She died a couple of weeks ago at the age of 97. She had a sound mind until her last day.

Now, let me tell you something about my wife Mayli. She was born in 1933 in the small hamlet of Cambia near Tartu. Mayli's father, Arthur Kurg, was a gardener, and her mother Leine was a housewife. Mayli also had an elder brother. He is dead by now. In 1948 Mayli finished the eighth grade of compulsory school and left for Tartu to study in the ninth and tenth grade. Shortly after that her father died. Mayli came back home after having finished school. She was supposed to work and help her mother. She worked as a teacher in the elementary school and studied at Tallinn pedagogical school at the extramural department.

Mayli had worked for two years in Cambia, when she decided to find a job in Rakvere. At that time Rakvere was a hamlet, there was neither transport, nor modern conveniences. Then Mayli moved to Tallinn. First she worked in the kindergarten, then she was offered a job in a seamstress vocational school. She worked there for a long time. Her teacher's salary was skimpy, and she had to think of her pension. Mayli went to work as person in charge of the warehouse at the milk factory. She worked there for ten years and retired in 1988.

### **After the fall of communism**

When Estonia became independent, life was getting difficult. There was not enough money and Mayli started working as a librarian at school. She stopped working in 1998. Mayli is a wonderful person. Both my daughters loved her very much. Mayli treated them like her own. She loves her grandchildren. Both my daughters are married. The elder, Ilona, lives in Switzerland with her family. Her son Oscar is 22. My younger one, Viola, married name Eek, lives in Finland with her husband and her daughter Anne. Both of them often come to our dacha [47](#) on vacation with their families. They are happy to see Mayli as much as to see me.

I welcomed the breakup of the Soviet Union. Estonia regained independence, but for all of us, born in Estonia, it was a revival. Many people who are younger than me do not remember many things, but I am the one who can compare. I remember how Jews were treated in pre-soviet Estonia. Jews had all opportunities to study and live comfortably. Estonian Jews were helped and protected by the state. Really, Jews had a good living in bourgeois Estonia. There were poor and rich ones. Indeed, the rich helped out the poor.

During the Soviet regime there was special attention paid to the Jews, but with the purpose for the Jews to know their place and understand that they should not be seeking to be in the highlight. As soon as a Jew demonstrated his skills seeking a better position, he was put in his place right way. I know that perfectly well. Officially there were talks about brotherhood and equality of USSR peoples, but those were mere words. In actuality the attitude towards Jews was very bad.

Now things have changed. I do not think it is right to say that we are living in a new Estonia. It is not a new Estonia, it is Estonia, as it used to exist before 1940. Here people are the most important, their lives, the development of the country for people to have a better living.

I feel no anti-Semitism in Estonia. I am Estonian citizen, enjoying all the rights of a citizen and having certain responsibilities. Though, it is not the same for Russian Jews, who settled in Estonia after 1940. Estonians consider them to be occupants along with Russians and it is noticeable in the attitude towards Russian Jews. And such an attitude is also directed towards veterans of the Estonian corps. We are also called occupants or accomplices of the occupants. It hurts.

I am chairman of the Council of War Veterans in our community. Every year on 22nd September we celebrated the liberation of Tallinn from the fascists. All of us, veterans of the Estonian corps, go to the Monument to the Unknown Soldier on that day. I also go there with a feeling of pride as I was also among the liberators of Tallinn. And now, young guys, who even read books, cannot imagine what war is like, and are telling me that I am an occupant, not the liberator. What is my fault? What was I supposed to do? Reach Narva and stop saying that I am not willing to go liberate Estonia for the Soviet Union? What were we to do, especially the Jews, the soldiers of the Estonian corps, who

were aware of fascists exterminating Jews in concentration camps in Estonia? What were we, the army, supposed to do? Should we have said, 'we are not going to Estonia, let it be liberated by the Russians?'

I do not think that such an attitude is correct. We are not the occupants. We did not think of ourselves, when we were fighting fascists. For example, so many of our guys died in Velikiye Luki. When we, the veterans of the Estonian corps, decided to collect money for a monument dedicated to them, nobody wanted to give us money. Finally, the left party helped. On jubilee dates we go to Velikiye Luki to meet with other war veterans who took part in that battle. We commemorate those who perished there. This should be kept in our memories. Veterans should be respected. It is an utter disrespect to our own history, when we, the elderly people, the veterans, on the day of the liberation of the city have to beseech somebody to give us a bus to go to Tallinn cemetery, where thousands of our guys are buried, and to bring them flowers. And not to mention the trip to Kurland...

Probably, time will sort things out, but I doubt that I will live to see that. I am too old, and I am ready for death. I am not afraid to die; I have been walking with death hand-in-hand all war long. The only thing I fear is helplessness, making me a burden to my kin. They also had a lot of things to go through. When I had a stroke, Mayli had to stay with me all day long. I do not know whether she had a chance to sleep even for an hour. She helped me survive and regain my footing. I was operated twice. I had my renal calculus [kidney stone] removed during the first operation, and a carcinoma during the second one. I am still alive. So much time has passed.

Estonia is getting capitalistic, which is good. What is good in capitalism? It is good for constant development. You cannot remain where you are, as the others will be ahead of you. Everybody thinks of improving things, coming up with a new idea. There was nothing of the kind in the Soviet Union. Socialists gave people no chance to grow, making all people stay at the same level. It was hard to go past that level. Initiative was not encouraged. It was a good and calm time for those people who were not willing to learn new things. I have always been eager to do something interesting, better, innovative. It was hard for me as I was going upstream.

At times I am asked why I joined the communist party. What was I supposed to do? At that time I could not have acted otherwise. I thought it was right to be a party member. I was very young and I did not understand how hypocritical the policy of the Soviet Union was. We were always told that it was the party that fought fascism and defeated Hitler in that horrible war. I saw the atrocity of fascism with my own eyes and I believed that I belonged to those who were fighting against it.

Now many people are blamed for it. There are constant press releases, where the leaders of today's Estonia, are defamed for being party members. Our president is also blamed for it. Of course, here canvassing plays its part, those who run for presidency are trying to defame the other candidates. Can the president be blamed for it? It was the time when it was mandatory for the leaders to be party members. Where would you find a smart person who was not a party member back then? At that time our current president did a lot for Estonia. It was his merit that we had a much better living than other places of the Soviet Union. He is an honest and adamant man. They wanted to dismiss him from his post and failed. Now they are willing to do that as well. I cannot understand it.

In general, it seems to me that it does not make sense to groundlessly reject all things that happened during the Soviet regime. There were both good and bad things. In the past the state paid close attention to children, the youth. It was free to go in for sport. There were all kinds of sections, circles to anybody's liking and propensities. There were different events for the youth, where they could dance and have fun. There are things like that now as well, but they are not affordable for most young people. The state is not looking into that. The most important thing for modern people is money and nobody is thinking of raising a good and prudent generation. That is why such bad phenomena as addiction to drugs and alcohol, and crime emerge.

The easiest is to wine and moan over a bad life, but it is very hard to do something to improve life, and for this one should not only focus on his own well-being, but also think of sharing with the poor. There is now bourgeois Estonia. Today, most politicians do not think of improving life for people, but having more people to vote for them during the ballot. It is possible, of course, that I do not understand many things in present-day life. I am very old and it is very hard for me to change.

I am surprised with the lenient attitude of our government to the military crimes. I remember that during the war there were articles of an Estonian military reporter who was in German troops and wrote how the Germany army was fighting the Soviet Union. He now lives in Estonia. He is a respectable man. Actually he is a military criminal, but there is no imputation against him.

There is another example: last fall there was a ceremonious opening of the new art museum. Invited was an Estonian, a fascist, who was working in the German political police. He interrogated the Jews like my father was interrogated and sentenced to death. He did not shoot people, there were others who did it as per his order. Our prosecutors said that there was no blood on him and therefore no indictment. Those who killed were guilty. He personally did not do that, therefore he was not guilty.

I know that the American ambassador who was going to attend the opening ceremony refused from it after learning that the fascist was to attend. It is a big minus for Estonia. I do not know how that person can be considered non-guilty. Maybe I think like that because I am a Jew, who perfectly understands that those things were not supposed to be done. They acted in the wrong way.

During the years of perestroika [48](#) the Jewish Community of Estonia [49](#) was founded. The community does a lot for us. Here like anywhere else we can find differences between Soviet and other Jews. It is so vast, but often we cannot understand each other, as if we are talking about different things. A Jew should understand a Jew, and our views differ so much that we cannot find an understanding. The Jewish community helps everybody, be it Estonian or Soviet Jews. Apart from monetary assistance, we are given food.

Different festive events are also organized for us. My 80th jubilee was marked in the Jewish community. It was great. I was so moved. Every month the birthdays of all people born in that month are celebrated. It is great, as most of them have neither family nor friends. Who would congratulate them at home? They do it in a nice way in the community – a festive dinner, presents, greetings. It is very important for us old people. It is hard to feel lonely and unwanted. Jewish holidays are always arranged for us, we celebrate them in the community with a rabbi.

## Glossary:



## **1 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.

## **2 Tartu Synagogue**

It was built in 1903 by architect R. Pohlmann. This synagogue was destroyed by fire in 1944. The ritual artifacts of the Tartu Synagogue and the books belonging to Jewish societies were saved during WW II by two prominent Estonian intellectuals – Uki Masing and Paul Ariste. A part of synagogue furnishing has been preserved in the Estonian Museum of Ethnography.

## **3 Pushkin, Alexandr (1799-1837)**

Russian poet and prose writer, among the foremost figures in Russian literature. Pushkin established the modern poetic language of Russia, using Russian history for the basis of many of his works. His masterpiece is Eugene Onegin, a novel in verse about mutually rejected love. The work also contains witty and perceptive descriptions of Russian society of the period. Pushkin died in a duel.

## **4 Five percent quota**

In tsarist Russia the number of Jews in higher educational institutions could not exceed 5% of the total number of students.

## **5 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.

## **6 Betar**

Brith Trumpledor (Hebrew) meaning Trumpledor Society; right-wing Revisionist Jewish youth movement. It was founded in 1923 in Riga by Vladimir Jabotinsky, in memory of J. Trumpledor, one of the first fighters to be killed in Palestine, and the fortress Betar, which was heroically defended for many months during the Bar Kohba uprising. Its aim was to propagate the program of the

revisionists and prepare young people to fight and live in Palestine. It organized emigration through both legal and illegal channels. It was a paramilitary organization; its members wore uniforms. They supported the idea to create a Jewish legion in order to liberate Palestine. From 1936-39 the popularity of Betar diminished. During WWII many of its members formed guerrilla groups.

## **7 Hitler's rise to power**

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

## **8 German Invasion of Poland**

The German attack of Poland on 1st September 1939 is widely considered the date in the West for the start of World War II. After having gained both Austria and the Bohemian and Moravian parts of Czechoslovakia, Hitler was confident that he could acquire Poland without having to fight Britain and France. (To eliminate the possibility of the Soviet Union fighting if Poland were attacked, Hitler made a pact with the Soviet Union, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.) On the morning of 1st September 1939, German troops entered Poland. The German air attack hit so quickly that most of Poland's air force was destroyed while still on the ground. To hinder Polish mobilization, the Germans bombed bridges and roads. Groups of marching soldiers were machine-gunned from the air, and they also aimed at civilians. On 1st September, the beginning of the attack, Great Britain and France sent Hitler an ultimatum - withdraw German forces from Poland or Great Britain and France would go to war against Germany. On 3rd September, with Germany's forces penetrating deeper into Poland, Great Britain and France both declared war on Germany.

## **9 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact**

Non-aggression pact between Germany and the Soviet Union, which became known under the name of Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Engaged in a border war with Japan in the Far East and fearing the German advance in the west, the Soviet government began secret negotiations for a non-aggression pact with Germany in 1939. In August 1939 it suddenly announced the conclusion of a Soviet-German agreement of friendship and non-aggression. The Pact contained a secret clause providing for the partition of Poland and for Soviet and German spheres of influence in Eastern Europe.

## **10 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 2nd February 1920, when Soviet Russia recognized Estonia as an independent state.

## **11 Estonia in 1939-1940**

On 24th September 1939, Moscow demanded that Estonia make available military bases for the Red Army units. On 16th June, Moscow issued an ultimatum insisting on the change of government and the right of occupation of Estonia. On 17th June, Estonia accepted the provisions and ceased to exist de facto, becoming Estonian Soviet Republic within the USSR.

## **12 Komsomol**

Communist youth political organization created in 1918. The task of the Komsomol was to spread 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.

## **13 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.

## **14 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.

## **15 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.

## **16 Gulag**

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

## **17 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 ('Sotsialrevolyutsionery', 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 Bolshevikize 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.

## **18 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.

## **19 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.

## **20 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.

## **21 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.

## **22 Enemy of the people**

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

## **23 Stalingrad Battle**

17th July 1942 - 2nd February 1943. The South-Western and Don Fronts stopped the advance of German armies in the vicinity of Stalingrad. On 19th and 20th November 1942 the Soviet troops undertook an offensive and encircled 22 German divisions (330,000 people) and eliminated them. On 31st January 1943 the remains of the 6th German army headed by General Field Marshal Paulus surrendered (91,000 people). The victory in the Stalingrad battle was of huge political, strategic and international significance.

## **24 Klooga**

Subcamp of the Vaivara camp in Estonia, set up in 1943 and one of the largest camps in the country. Most of the prisoners came from the Vilnius ghetto; they worked under extreme conditions. There were 3,000 to 5,000 inmates kept in the Klooga camp. It was eliminated together

with all of its inmates in spring 1944, before the advance by the Soviet army.

## **25 Kurland**

In Latvian Kurzeme, Kurland is a historic region in the Western part of Latvia; ancient Kursa. It was conquered by German knights in the 13th century and became part of Livonia. It was Kurland Duchy since 1561, in the period 1795-1917 Kurland Province of Russian Empire and beginning from 1918 and at present it is a part of Latvia.

**26** Victory Day in Russia (9th May): National holiday to commemorate the defeat of Nazi Germany and the end of World War II and honor the Soviets who died in the war.

## **27 Reparation Agreement at the Yalta Conference**

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, US President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin met at Yalta, Crimea, USSR, in February 1945 to adopt a common policy. Most of the important decisions made remained secret until the end of World War II for military or political reasons. The main demand of the 'Big Three' was Germany's unconditional surrender. As part of the Yalta Conference an agreement was concluded, the main goal of which was to compensate Germany's war enemies, and to destroy Germany's war potential. The countries that received the most reparation were those that had borne the main burden of the war (i.e. the Soviet Union). The agreement contained the following: within two years, removal of all potential war-producing materials from German possession, annual deliveries of German goods for a designated amount of time, and the use of German labor. Fifty per cent of the twenty billion dollars that Germany had to pay in reparation damages was to go to the Soviet Union.

## **28 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.

## **29 Order of the Red Star**

Established in 1930, it was awarded for achievements in the defense of the motherland, the promotion of military science and the development of military equipments, and for courage in battle. The Order of the Red Star has been awarded over 4,000,000 times.

## **30 Medal for Valor**

Established on 17th October 1938, it was awarded for 'personal courage and valor in the defense of the Motherland and the execution of military duty involving a risk to life'. The award consists of a



38mm silver medal with the inscription 'For Valor' in the center and 'USSR' at the bottom in red enamel. The inscription is separated by the image of a Soviet battle tank. At the top of the award are three Soviet fighter planes. The medal suspends from a gray pentagonal ribbon with a 2mm blue strip on each edge. It has been awarded over 4,500,000 times.

### **31 Medal for Victory over Germany**

Established by Decree of the Presidium of Supreme Soviet of the USSR to commemorate the glorious victory; 15 million awards.

### **32 Order of the Great Patriotic War**

1st Class: established 20th May 1942, awarded to officers and enlisted men of the armed forces and security troops and to partisans, irrespective of rank, for skillful command of their units in action. 2nd Class: established 20th May 1942, awarded to officers and enlisted men of the armed forces and security troops and to partisans, irrespective of rank, for lesser personal valor in action.

### **33 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.

### **34 Campaign against 'cosmopolitans'**

The campaign against 'cosmopolitans', i.e. Jews, was initiated in articles in the central organs of the Communist Party in 1949. The campaign was directed primarily at the Jewish intelligentsia and it was the first public attack on Soviet Jews as Jews. 'Cosmopolitans' writers were accused of hating the Russian people, of supporting Zionism, etc. Many Yiddish writers as well as the leaders of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee were arrested in November 1948 on charges that they maintained ties with Zionism and with American 'imperialism'. They were executed secretly in 1952. The anti-Semitic Doctors' Plot was launched in January 1953. A wave of anti-Semitism spread through the USSR. Jews were removed from their positions, and rumors of an imminent mass deportation of Jews to the eastern part of the USSR began to spread. Stalin's death in March 1953 put an end to the campaign against 'cosmopolitans.'

### **35 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.

### **36 Kolkhoz**

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

### **37 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.

### **38 October Revolution Day**

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

### **39 The Supreme Soviet**

'Verhovniy Soviet', comprised the highest legislative body in the Soviet Union and the only one with the power to pass constitutional amendments. It elected the Presidium, formed the Supreme Court, and appointed the Procurator General of the USSR. It was made up of two chambers, each with equal legislative powers, with members elected for five-year terms: the Soviet of the Union, elected on the basis of population with one deputy for every 300,000 people in the Soviet federation, the Soviet of Nationalities, supposed to represent the ethnic populations, with members elected on the basis of 25 deputies from each of the 15 republic of the union, 11 from each autonomous republic, five from each autonomous region, and one from each autonomous area.

### **40 Party Schools**

They were established after the Revolution of 1917, in different levels, with the purpose of training communist cadres and activists. Subjects such as 'scientific socialism' (Marxist-Leninist Philosophy) and 'political economics' besides various other political disciplines were taught there.

### **41 Creation of the State of Israel**

From 1917 Palestine was a British mandate. Also in 1917 the Balfour Declaration was published, which supported the idea of the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Throughout the interwar period, Jews were migrating to Palestine, which caused the conflict with the local Arabs to escalate. On the other hand, British restrictions on immigration sparked increasing opposition to the mandate powers. Immediately after World War II there were increasing numbers of terrorist attacks designed to force Britain to recognize the right of the Jews to their own state. These aspirations provoked the hostile reaction of the Palestinian Arabs and the Arab states. In February 1947 the British foreign minister Ernest Bevin ceded the Palestinian mandate to the UN, which took the decision to divide Palestine into a Jewish section and an Arab section and to create an independent Jewish state. On 14th May 1948 David Ben Gurion proclaimed the creation of the State

of Israel. It was recognized immediately by the US and the USSR. On the following day the armies of Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon attacked Israel, starting a war that continued, with intermissions, until the beginning of 1949 and ended in a truce.

#### **42 Severing the diplomatic ties between the Eastern Block and Israel**

After the 1967 Six-Day-War, the Soviet Union cut all diplomatic ties with Israel, under the pretext of Israel being the aggressor and the neighboring Arab states the victims of Israeli imperialism. The Soviet-occupied Eastern European countries (Eastern Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria) conformed to the verdict of the Kremlin and followed the Soviet example. Diplomatic relations between Israel and the ex-Communist countries resumed after the fall of communism.

#### **43 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.

#### **44 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.

#### **45 1956**

It designates the Revolution, which started on 23rd October 1956 against Soviet rule and the communists in Hungary. It was started by student and worker demonstrations in Budapest and began with the destruction of Stalin's gigantic statue. Moderate communist leader Imre Nagy was appointed as prime minister and he promised reform and democratization. The Soviet Union withdrew its troops which had been stationed in Hungary since the end of World War II, but they returned after Nagy's declaration that Hungary would pull out of the Warsaw Pact to pursue a policy of neutrality. The Soviet army put an end to the uprising on 4th November, and mass repression and arrests began. About 200,000 Hungarians fled from the country. Nagy and a number of his supporters were executed. Until 1989 and the fall of the communist regime, the Revolution of 1956 was officially considered a counter-revolution.

## **46 Prague Spring**

A period of democratic reforms in Czechoslovakia, from January to August 1968. Reformatory politicians were secretly elected to leading functions of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSC). Josef Smrkovsky became president of the National Assembly, and Oldrich Cernik became the Prime Minister. Connected with the reformist efforts was also an important figure on the Czechoslovak political scene, Alexander Dubcek, General Secretary of the KSC Central Committee (UV KSC). In April 1968 the UV KSC adopted the party's Action Program, which was meant to show the new path to socialism. It promised fundamental economic and political reforms. On 21st March 1968, at a meeting of representatives of the USSR, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, East Germany and Czechoslovakia in Dresden, Germany, the Czechoslovaks were notified that the course of events in their country was not to the liking of the remaining conference participants, and that they should implement appropriate measures. In July 1968 a meeting in Warsaw took place, where the reformist efforts in Czechoslovakia were designated as "counter-revolutionary." The invasion of the USSR and Warsaw Pact armed forces on the night of 20th August 1968, and the signing of the so-called Moscow Protocol ended the process of democratization, and the Normalization period began.

## **47 Dacha**

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

## **48 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.

## **49 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.