

## Isaac Serman With His Friend Elman Ruben



This is me (to the right) with my school friend, with whom I shared a desk at the lyceum, my fellow soldier of the Estonian corps, Elman Ruben, at the alumni meeting of our class. Elmar was born in Rakvere in 1919. He is Estonian. After the war he worked for the paper as an editor. Out of all guys in our class we were the only ones who are still alive. The picture was taken in Rakvere in 1970.

By the middle of the 1960s I was offered the position of deputy chairman in the cinematography committee, i.e., deputy minister. At that time that committee was being formed. My comrades, who were subordinated to me in the army, were also offered a job there. That offer showed how they treated Jews in Estonia. Frankly speaking, I was not willing to accept that offer. We had a wonderful team at the radio. I was a journalist, and liked what I was doing.

Finally I was called by the first secretary of the communist party of Estonia, a very pleasant and interesting person. If somebody had told me before 1940 that I, a Jew, would be offered a position like that I would not have believed it. I said that I did not want to leave my job. In reply he said that I had the right to refuse, but I would never be offered anything again. I had to agree. Did I have any other way out? I worked in the cinematography committee for 17 years and retired in 1982.

I do not consider myself to be religious. I have always been an atheist. Many people think Judaism to be a religion, but in my opinion it is ethics. As for me, it means that I identify myself as a Jew and take pride in it, knowing Jewish history, Jewish life, my mother tongue and literature. I have always marked Jewish holidays at home. It means that I am a Jew. How can I refuse the history of my people? I think that Jewish religion is 90 percent of Jewish history, and I know the history of the Jewish people.

When I started studying in Soviet times, there were no books in Russian or Estonian. So, first I read them in English and French. Now I have a lot of books in Russian and Yiddish. I cannot believe that someone in heaven controls our lives. In that case, I would have to give up science. I tell my friends, Estonians, that all of them are Jewish as their God is a Jew. I do not say Jesus Christ, I say Jeshua ben Eyser. I cannot believe in miracles he made. I think that everyone has a right to believe or not to believe in God and no one should make anyone change his mind.