

## Maria Sorkina With Her Great-Niece Yelena



This photo was taken at my home. My great niece Yelena Shein, my step niece Irene Shein's daughter, was visiting me. This photo was taken in Tallinn in 2005.

During perestroika a Jewish community was officially established in Estonia. Regretfully, I can't take an active part in the community life, but I know what is going on and watch the Jewish life in our country. Of course, not everything is smooth. When something goes wrong with the policy, they need to distract people's attention from their failures, and then there are anti-Jewish demonstrations in mass media and on the radio. I don't like this. It's good that the community responds to this adequately. In some cases, the community has sued people for anti-Semitic demonstrations, and won. I like Zilia Laud, the chairman of our community. She is a very nice lady and a wonderful manager. She ensures that the older Jews have sufficient food, medications, care and assistance. The community also pays much attention to children and teenagers, and this is a very important aspect. They ensure that they know they are Jews, Jewish culture, religion and traditions. There is also a singing and dance studio, a computer class and a language studio where children can study English, Yiddish and Hebrew. Jews have always wanted to study, and our community helps them.

On the 2nd floor of the former Jewish gymnasium, which is now our community building, there is a synagogue. It has the first rabbi in Tallinn since the war. A new synagogue is being built near this community building. The community always arranges the holidays. My niece tells me about them since I can't attend them. I always read Jewish papers. Our community publishes its own newspaper: Hashahar, which means sunrise. I always read it with interest. Reading is one of the few joys I still have in life. I read books and magazines. I also read a lot about the Jewish life. I want peace for Israel and wish they didn't waste their effort on this terrible war imposed on them by their neighbors. I wish Jews could have a quiet life wherever they reside. Of course, Jews are different like any other people. The deputy chief of the Estonian NKVD was a Jewish man, and he was to blame for all the arrests. His last name was Yacobson. Yankelevich, an NKVD officer in Valga, beat his prisoners who were taken to his office for interrogation. They were tied for him to be able to beat them. He was a small puny man. There were Jews like this, but fortunately, there was only a bunch of them, while Jews as a nation deserve recognition and respect.