

Letter from the past

the life story of Esfir Dener

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I was born in December 1925 in Falesti, where I lived for almost 16 years. I have a brother Yuzik, and a sister, Sarah. Falesti is a small town located about 28 kilometers from Beltcy.



FALESTI

Tell me, will you enjoy eating it knowing that there are children who have nothing at all?

No, don't give me money, give it to these children.

Once I received money for the Hanukkah holiday and told my grandfather about it. He asked me: "What are you going to buy with this money?" I wanted to buy candy and sweets. But my grandfather told me that there were orphans who needed help. And after that I remembered for the rest of Chanukah, when my parents were lighting another candle, that orphans also had their sweets.



1940



On 28th June 1940, the Soviet rule began in Bessarabia. My brother and sister happened to have stayed abroad in Romania and we didn't know anything about them.



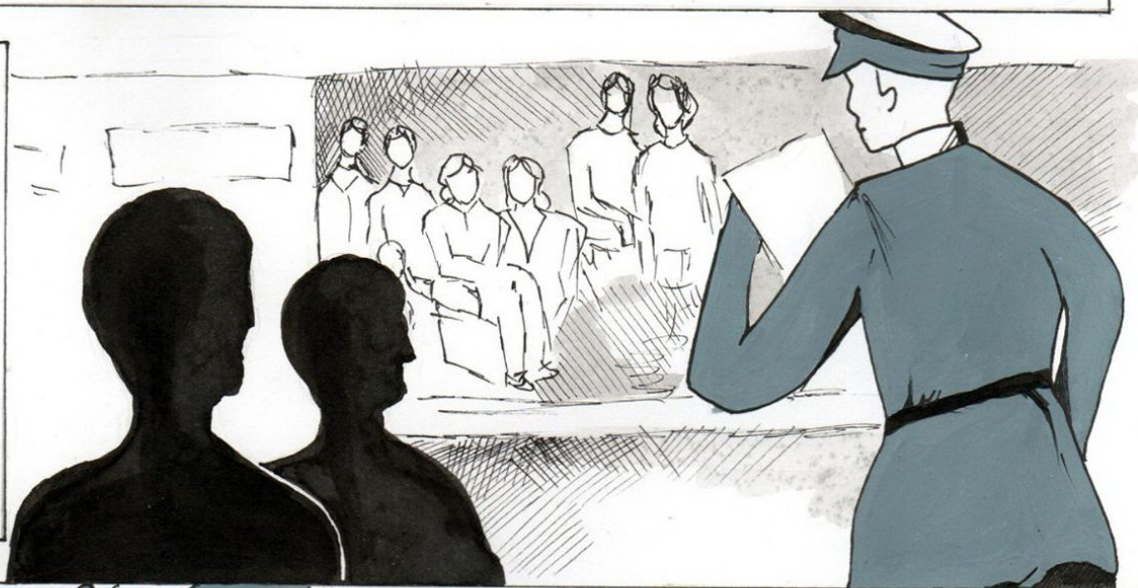
**WE
LOST
OUR
HOME**



**You have 20 minutes to get ready
and leave the place!**

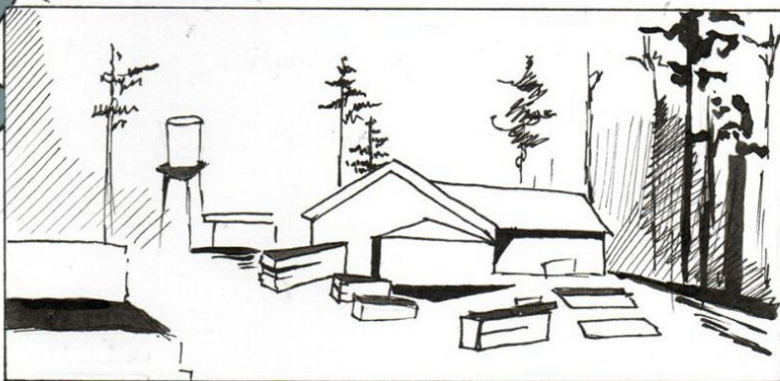
In 1941, on the night of 13th to 14th June, two officers wearing NKVD 8 uniforms and two witnesses came to our home.

Before we arrived in Tiraspol, they made lists of all men, heads of families, and on the night of 15th June they read out the list and the men were getting off the train. We never saw my father again. Our train went on and on our way we heard that Germany had attacked the USSR and that the war had begun.



SIBERIA

25 YEARS

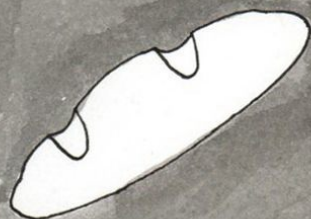


SMOKE BREAK

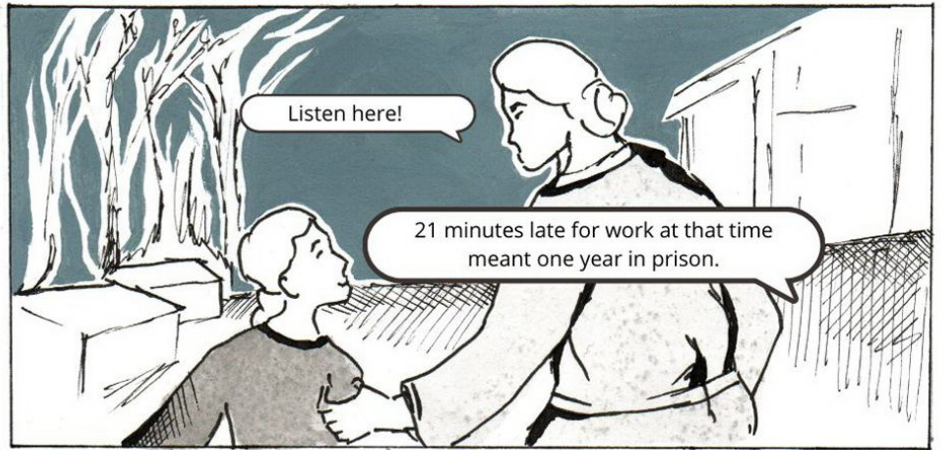
Did two hours really go by that quickly?

Of course they did. I feel like we have been working for 7 hours straight.

Back to work !



We resived 800-grams bread per day



I was 16 and we weren't allowed to go to school. We came to the commandant and I decided to use his weapon: 'What have we done wrong that they don't allow us to follow the covenant of Illich Lenin: "Study Study and study."'

STUDY STUDY AND STUDY



He spoke with the director of the sawmill, leaving us in the reception area where we could hear their conversation. We didn't see him again after that. I kept my word and studied hard.



In November 1941 my mother and I were called to the office. The officer pricked up his ears: 'What did she say?' He thought it might have been something about Stalin. 'Nothing, it was Thank God that she said', my mother replied. He turned to me saying, 'Why did you say this? And I replied, 'Because he is no longer suffering'. He said, 'You viper!'



After finishing school, I got invitation letters from some Medical colleges. I went to the commandant, he said, 'No studies! In three days you will go to the timber cutting site! I ran away on one of these three days.'



Two hours from now I will take you to the commandant.

Very nice clock.



That September happened to be warm in Siberia, which was a rare thing. I had to sail down the Ob to Novosibirsk. My mother blessed me and gave me a golden pendant for the road. There was a search on the boat and a young NKVD officer took custody of me. He saw that I had no luggage and that my only document was my school certificate. He liked my clock and got it, letting me go. I got off in Novosibirsk wearing a light dress, summer shoes, having no money, but most importantly, having no passport.



Industrial College

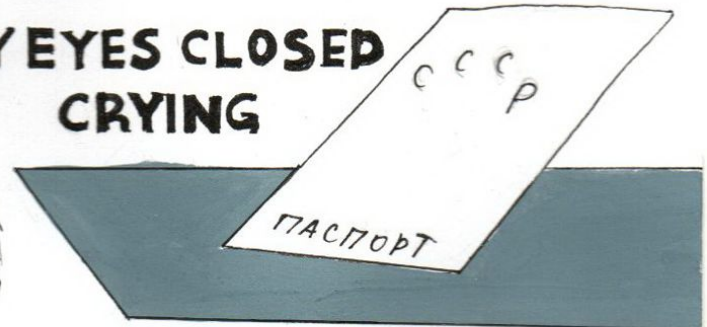


Are you Jews???

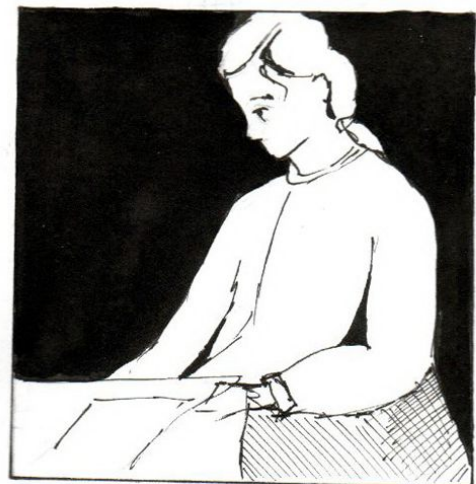
A few days later I bumped into a man, his name was Boris. He was the producer of the Minsk Jewish Theater. He helped me a lot. He helped me get a passport, risking his life.

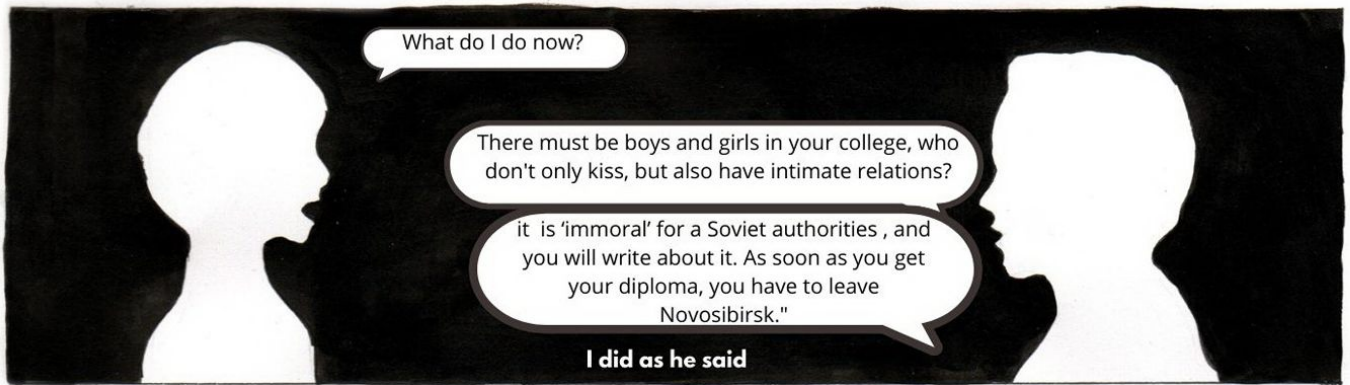


**MY EYES CLOSED
CRYING**



I was a final year student when I was called into the corridor. I left the classroom and immediately realized that the military was waiting for me and ordered me to work secretly for them. I had to report every Friday. Under the threat of arrest, I signed the document and immediately went to Boris.

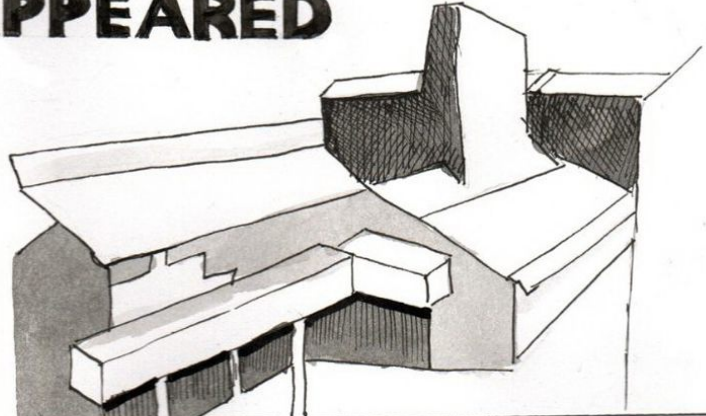




I DISAPPEARED



I found shelter at Raya Berezina's place. After some time, we went to Chernovtsy where her parents had already rented an apartment. I work as a rate setter at the reconstruction of the knitwear factory.



90 Hungarian 200 German

Chernivtsi

When I learned what you were doing to the Jews in Europe, I said there is no God

But when you, the Nazis, receive bread from Jewish hands, you must have, I say:

There is a God!

Fraulein Fira, do you think there is a God?



I was a burden for the Berezins family. There was always fear throughout this time. I woke up at night in horror, afraid they would come for me!



I married Lyonia Korol, a Jew, who liked me. I went to work at the shipyard in Nikolaev. I had no idea that this shipyard was a military site and that there was an NKVD department there.

THEY FINALLY FOUND ME

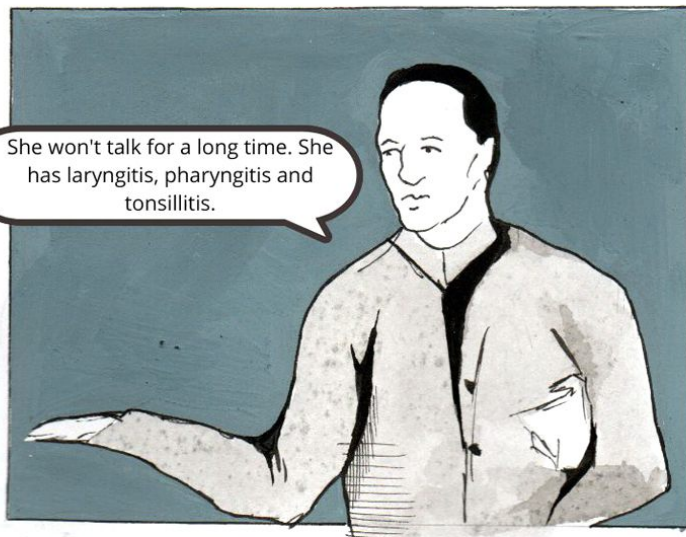


I was arrested in February 1951 I was arrested and kept in the cell with criminals in Nikolaev prison. The investigation officer insisted that I wrote that I acknowledged myself guilty in my own handwriting. I said, 'No'. He didn't let me sleep for three days.

I was 25 years old.



She won't talk for a long time. She has laryngitis, pharyngitis and tonsillitis.



No

1951



Kharkov



Gorky



Kirov



Solikamsk



Nyrob.

Then I was taken to five prisons on the way to my point of destination. The most terrible prison was in Gorky. The doors there were sliding to the sides like curtains in the theater.



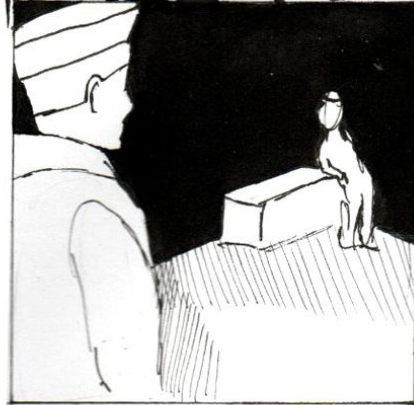
who is Daner?



Hide her, the senior officer and senior warden are inspecting the barracks!



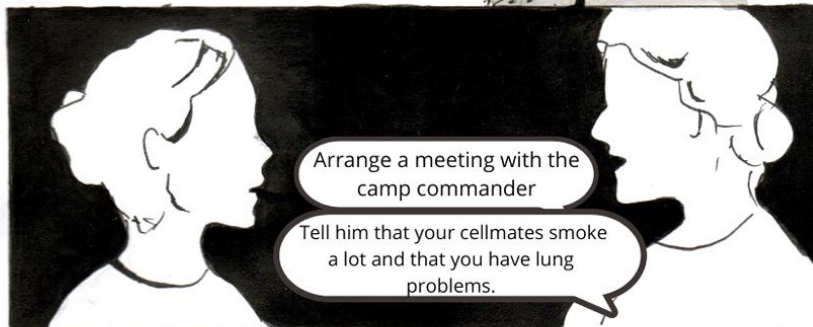
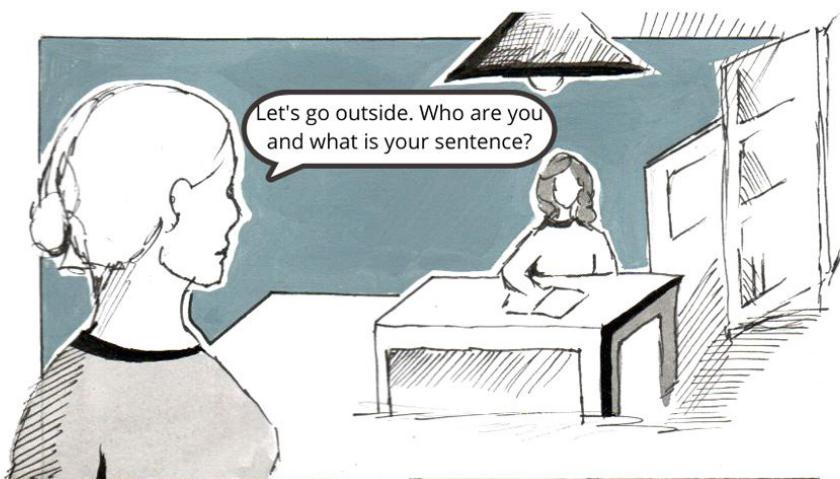
There was a big box with some papers and files in the room. I sat in this box for a whole night. Those people were putting their position in the camp at risk - later I called it "Hesed in the camp"



"HESED IN THE CAMP"



There were shelves with books on them. Guess what I found there: Mihai Eminescu, among books by other writers. it meant that I wasn't going to stay there in the camp and in exile forever!



I did as she told me. She was Tamara Logvinenko, a writer from Ukraine. The chief gave me permission to visit the political barracks.



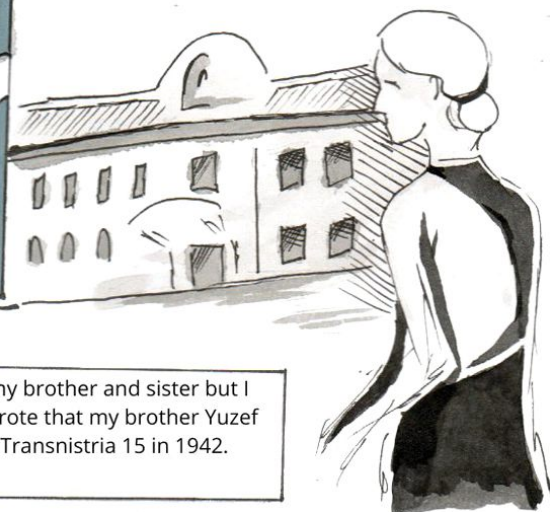
We worked at the wood cutting site. One day I was drying my gauntlet gloves, when I heard the typical grinding sound of a falling tree. Where do I run? Right, left or back? The tree fell on my back and its crown covered me.

On 5th March 1953 Stalin died on the Purim

"Indefinite exile"

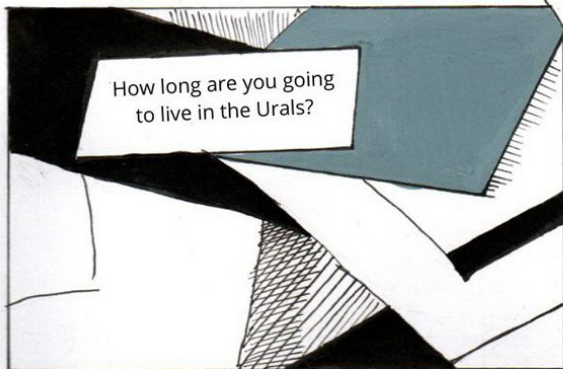
I was released from exile

1956



I didn't know anything about my brother and sister but I had relatives in Kishinev. They wrote that my brother Yuzef had perished in the ghetto in Transnistria 15 in 1942.

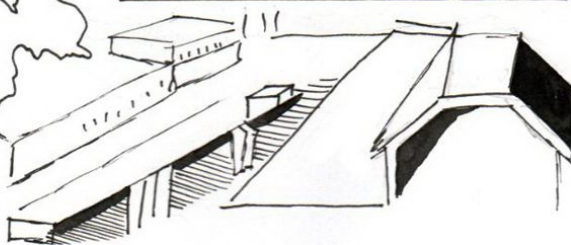
My cousin Viktoria was asking me how long I was going to live in the Ural and wanted me to come back to Moldova. I finally decided to try, and moved to Kishinev in 1964.



How long are you going to live in the Urals?

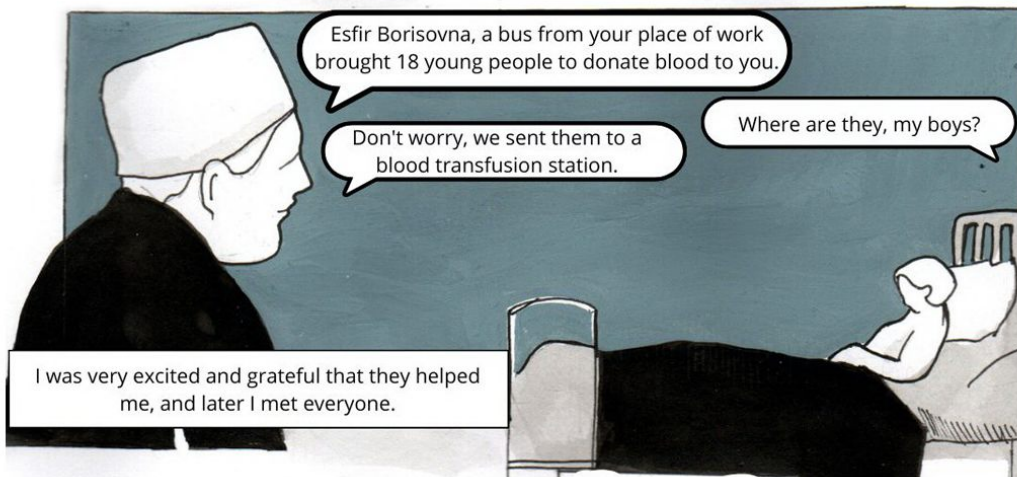


I went to work in the construction department in Krikovo near Kishinev and lived in a hostel.



When I was 44, I wanted to adopt a boy, but I was not allowed to because of my health condition. My boss overwhelmed me with social activities. I was responsible for training young specialists. I called them "my boys" and loved them like a mother.

MY BOYS



Esfir Borisovna, a bus from your place of work brought 18 young people to donate blood to you.

Don't worry, we sent them to a blood transfusion station.

Where are they, my boys?

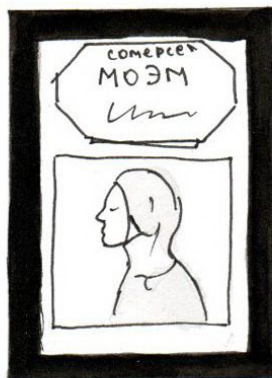
I was very excited and grateful that they helped me, and later I met everyone.

In 1978 the doctors said I urgently needed a heart surgery and that there could be no delay. My cousin Viktoria Dener was a cardiologist in the Republican Polyclinic. She helped me. When I was in hospital, somebody at work got to know that I needed blood for blood transfusions.

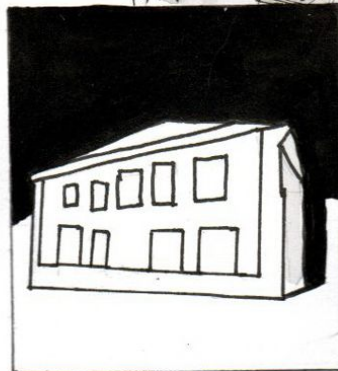
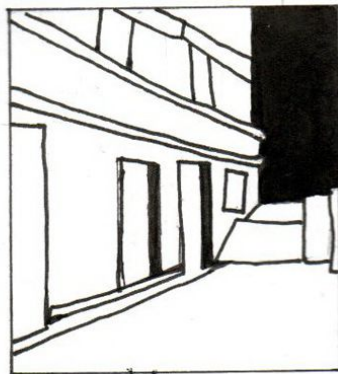
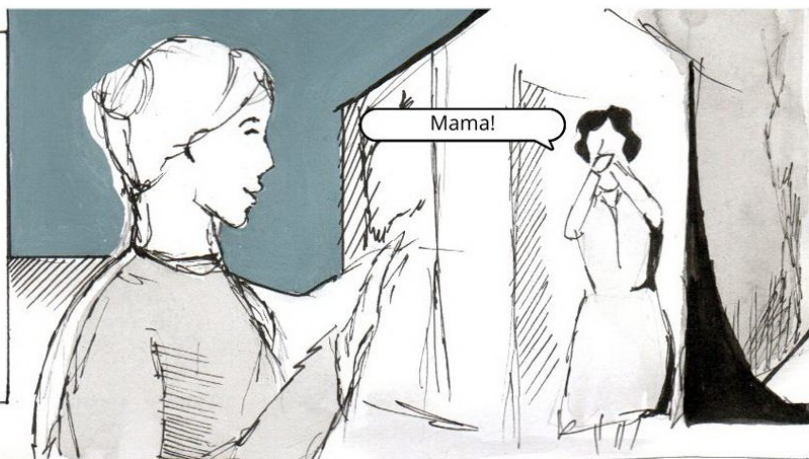
ANOTHER APARTMENT

Every year I obtained a free stay at the cardiologic centers in Moldova, Palanga [Lithuania] and Kislovodsk 16. I loved traveling and the Crimea was my favorite place.





My sister Sarah obtained a three-month visa. When I opened the door and saw her I exclaimed, 'Mama!' We hadn't seen each other for 48 years.



Perestroika made possible the revival of Jewish life. A Jewish library and an educational university were opened, and a Jewish charity center began its work.



Make arrangements to leave them your apartment



In 2000 I had a cataract surgery. To be blind would be terrible for me. I was alone in Kishinev. I borrowed money - it was a lot of money for me - on the security of my apartment through an acquaintance of mine. I wrote a request to the Hesed Relief Fund. The former director helped me a lot. Four years have passed, but I cannot think calmly about it.



After all that, I was sitting in my modest apartment, looking at a portrait of the American writer Ernest Hemingway and a bookcase in the corner with volumes of poetry on several shelves.

We resided 800 grams bread per day

Esfir Borisovna? 'Speaking, Tarakanov

How come you call so 'early'?

You know, I've recently come back from Israel where I was visiting my friends.

Do you remember how you stood up for me, when I needed a room in a hostel?

We talked until one o'clock in the morning.