

# Morris Schiff

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Tallinn

Estonia

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Interviewer: Ella Levitskaya

*Morris Schiff is living by himself. He suggested being interviewed in the premises of the Jewish community of Estonia as he might feel uncomfortable for the mess in old bachelor's house [1](#). Morris eagerly agreed to tell about his life and the life of his family. His tale was long and detailed. Morris is of short height, bald, with childish gullible eyes. He is very sociable and easy-going. In spite of having finished five grades of compulsory school, Morris read a lot. He was especially keen on history. It is interesting to talk with him. His views on many things are unconventional. Morris daily goes to the synagogue. There are a lot of his friends there. He does not have relatives. Morris studies the history of his family. He also asked me to convey the following message in his biography. His grandmother's brother Morris Klein, after whom Morris was named, had lived in Vienna, Austria, until 1930s. Then he immigrated to the USA. This is all Morris Schiff knows about Morris Klein. He would like to find out more about the person, after whom he had been named. Morris Schiff would be happy, if someone could tell him about Morris Klein.*



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## **My family background**

There was time when I was interested in origin of my surname, Schiff. In German Schiff means a ship. This surname is common in many countries where German is spoken, but mostly Jews carry it. In my opinion, the surname originated in Frankfurt upon Main. I was in the Jewish block of the city Frankfurt upon Main in Germany, and noticed that there were drawings instead of numbers on the building. There was a house with a picture of ship. I was told that if the person used to live in that place and then left he was given the nickname «Schiff» - «ship». It think it must be the origin of my surname. I also found out that about 400-500 years ago there was rabbi Schiff in this district. All my ancestors (up to the line of my paternal grandparents) were the subjects of Hungarian and

Austrian Empire. My paternal great grandmother Mrs Klein, was a businesslike woman and owned one of the best leather haberdashery stores in Vienna. There is hardly anything I know about great grandfather. He died at a rather young age, when his kids were small and great grandmother raised all her children and managed to come into money.

Grandmother's parents had one son and a lot of daughters. I even do not know how many sisters grandmother had. My grandmother Adel Elisabeth Klein was born on 8 December 1879 in Vienna. Great grandparents were Jews, but all their daughters were baptized for some reason, though their son remained a Jew. I do not remember what his name was exactly: Moritz in German or Maurice - the French way. I hardly know anything about him. I do not know when he was born and when he died. Morris was wealthy. That wealth was the merit of paternal grandmother, and after her death Morris was the main heir. He inherited one of the best leather haberdashery stores in Vienna and shares of train station. I cannot tell when he exactly left Vienna, either when fascists occupied Vienna or before that. At any rate he settled in America before the outbreak of Great Patriotic War. Being sagacious, Morris did not have to flee in the 1930s like other European Jews. He even managed to take his capital out of the country. In America he became even richer. Morris remained single and had no children. Of course, there were a lot of heirs after his death- nephews and nieces. My grandmother, his only direct heir had been dead by that time, so nobody informed us of Morris's death. This is all I know about Morris Klein. I would like to know more about the person after whom I had been named: his correct name, his birth place, date of his death and his burial place. I would be happy, if someone could tell me about him.

Great grandmother was very businesslike and entrepreneurial. She worked very hard and finally she became the owner of the posh store in the center of Vienna. Great grandmother did not rely on manager and ran the store herself. She purchased the goods, and serviced the most respectable clients herself. According to the family legend, the paramour of heir of the throne, the son of Emperor Franz Joseph II, was one of her customers. I think, great grandmother's store really must have been the best, if such person went there.

Of course, my great grandparents looked into good education for their children. At any rate, my grandmother, apart from mother tongue, German, she spoke fluent English and French. My father said that she composed verses in three languages. I think that she knew some more foreign languages. French was her favorite.

In childhood grandmother had some deceased (I think it was scarlet fever), which resulted in hearing problems. She was not deaf, but just dull of hearing as they say. That is why it was hard for her parents to marry her off.. Finally my future grandfather Heinrik-August Schiff wooed to her. Grandfather was much older than grandmother; he was born on 3 January 1870. For some reason, grandmother did not like him and she refused to marry him. It was very hard to argue with great grandmother. She was a dictator, and it never let unpunished those who were against her. Grandmother said that great grandmother always used to tell her daughters that she gave them life and they were ought to do what she said, but grandmother was flat and even took some poison, which did not help. Doctors saved grandmother, but she became completely deaf after having taken the poison. So, great grandmother had my grandmother marry grandfather. Their wedding was in Vienna on 10 March 1898.

My great grandmother was a real dictator and had her daughters get married without their accord. There was only one of her daughters who had love wedlock. I do not remember her name. Grandmother said about her sister that she had mother's character – was very decisive and tough. She refused from her dowry and inheritance, and married a poor man, whom she loved. She was the only one from the sisters who had a happy marriage. Great grandmother did not feel her fault for ruining her daughter's life. She felt that she was guilty only because of one daughter. Great grandmother married one of her daughters off to a bankrupt aristocrat, who was allured by the dowry. Money even made him forget that his future wife was a baptized Jew. When he married her, he constantly reproached her for that, even beat. Once, he hit her head with a whip so hard that she became insane and had to stay in the mental asylum till the end of her days. Great grandmother tried to redress her wrong-doing and put her daughter in the best clinic, but still it was of no help.

The family moved to Estonia before my father was born. We settled in Valga, in the town bordering on Latvia. At that time all that territory, both Latvia and Estonia were part of Russian Empire. German and Russian were spoken there. German was a mother tongue for grandmother, but she did not know Russian at all, but in spite of her deafness she managed to learn the language. Grandmother was a housewife, which was customary for those times. My father Max Schiff was born in Valga on 30 November 1903. His full name was René-Maks-Aleksander-Johann. In 1910 father's younger brother was born in Valga. I cannot recall his name. The matter is that we never talked about him in the family. Both of them were baptized when they were born.

Before the outbreak of World War One my grandfather kept a café at the train station in Valga. In 1914 World War One was unleashed. Neither grandfather nor grandmother had Russian citizenship; both of them were the subjects of Austrian and Hungarian empire. They were not affected by that before the war and did not see the sense in getting Russian citizenship. During the war their family was deported to Irkutsk [far north of Russia, about 4500 km from Moscow] for being the citizens of bellicose to Russia country. They stayed there during the war and then moved back to Estonia, but not in Valga, but Tallinn. It was the period of war for Estonian independence [2](#), and only during that time [3](#) grandmother and grandfather got Estonian citizenship. My father and his brother were subjects of Estonia, since they were born there.

I would not say that the family of father's parents was rich, but they were well off rather. They did not have their own lodging in Tallinn, so they rented a big apartment in the center of Tallinn. In spite of the fact that grandmother had big hearing problems, they had two grand-pianos and she could play the piano very well. She took care children and of the household, while grandfather earned money. Grandfather kept had a small café in Tallinn in Chernogolov club (there was an aristocratic club). Grandparents were very different. Grandmother must have been like her mother-tightfisted, but grandfather knew how to make money and how to spend them. He was a womanizer, he liked guests and feasts. It is strange that they had lived together for such a long time. It seems to me that in 1939 grandfather divorced grandmother, but he often called on her to have a cup of coffee. He lived with a lover, who was much younger than he was. She was about 30. Grandfather died in 1941 couple of weeks before Germans entered Tallinn. He had an easy death-his heart stopped beating. He was much luckier than many Tallinn Jews – he was not killed, but died at the eleventh hour, not to see the atrocity of German occupation.

Father and his brother studied at lyceum in Tallinn. Having finished lyceum father entered Tartu University. I do not know what department he entered. When he was a little over 20, being in the third year, it turned out that he had tuberculosis, at that time it was fraught with lethality. At that time almost all TB patients died.. Father quitted studies. My great grandmother from Vienna interfered. She was a very wealth woman and sent father to the sanatorium in Alps having covered all expenses. Tuberculosis was treated there, but they only took patients with healthy heart and stomach. The treatment cost a lot of money though it was without any medicine. The sanatorium was in the mountains. No matter how cold it was outside the patients had to stay outside all the time, wrapped up in the quilts. They inhaled mountain air and that the treatment. Another important constituent was nutrition. They had to eat a lot, even if people were not hungry, they were made to eat. There were stables by the sanatorium, where horses were milked for koumys. Apart from food, each patient had to drink one liter of koumis per day. People really got cured. My father had stayed there for half a year until full convalescence. After that he never had problems with his lungs. Though, in sanatorium he got in habit to eat a lot and his good appetite was always there.

After sanatorium father had spent one year in Vienna as great grandmother insisted. He liked Vienna very much. Great grandmother was entrepreneurial. She was the only who made money and she enjoyed respect of businessmen. As for her agents, the Christians, she could enter their place only from the back door, because she was a Jew. These were such humiliating rules for the Jews and even money could not change it. A Jew had no right to go to the ball room. My father was baptized and those rules did not apply to him. He was a habitu  of the dancing parties. He was often invited there as he was considered to be a rich heir. Great grandmother was cruel. He did not let father live in her apartment, she rented some lodging for him.. Father told me about one case, which characterized great grandmother. Once father came home and saw that the door was burgled in. He came in the room and saw that his desk was open and papers were all over the floor. Father could not get what was happening. The neighbors told him that some old lady came, rang the door and when nobody answered, she called the janitor, pointed at the door and said: «Break!». Great grandmother came to see what her grandson was doing. She had the toughest character.

Only in Vienna father found out that he came of Jewish family and that his great grandmother was a Jew and her son Morris was a Jew. Father did not know anything about his Jewish origin before that. It changed his life. Probably in Vienna he decided that he would marry only a Jew. At any rate when he was back home, he started looking for a bride among Jewish girls, without telling anything to his parents. Grandmother would definitely be against that marriage. My father met mother by chance. Mother told me that during the shopping father came up to her and asked her why she had such accent when speaking Estonian. Mother lied to dad saying that she was from Russia. In actuality she was born in Estonian town Narva [about 200 km from Tallinn], bordering on Russia. My mother really spoke bad Estonian and her Russian was no so good. Narva dialect differed from typical Russia. Somehow mother felt awkward to tell father the truth. This is how they met and started seeing each other.

I do not know much about mother's family. My maternal grandmother's name is Gita, nee Garus. Her father's name was Saul Garus in grandmother's words, but in her birth record, which was lost during WW2, his name was Saveliy. Thus, I do not know what his name really was. Great

grandfather had served in the tsarist army for 25 years [4](#). During Crimean war [5](#) he was awarded with St. George Cross [6](#) and was given honorary title « Hero of Sevastopol». I cannot tell for sure how many St. George Crosses great grandfather had, either 3 or 4. There was a law in tsarist Russia, according to which the cavaliers of St. George cross were granted land plots from the state. That rule worked for everybody, but Jews. Nevertheless, grandfather got the land. I do not know whether it was an award or offense as he was given the land without the right of entailment- he was not entitle to demise him or sell, but he had the right to use it. The land plot was in the remote place. The nearest house was three kilometers away. Besides, great grandfather was offered some position in the state, which was rare with the Jews. He was a light-keeper on Neva, in the vicinity of Ladoga lake. While great grandfather was working there, his family used that land. They had a cow and other husbandry. The family ate what they had grown.

There is little I know about Sevirov. It is as pity. Grandfather, must have been a very good and unusual person. He was born in 1868 in the city of Gdov, Pskov, oblast, Russia, about [700 km from Moscow, close to Estonian border]. I even do not know if it still exists. Great grandfather was also the soldier of the tsarist army. He had served for 25 years. When he was decommissioned from the army, he married. There was a pale of settlement in Russia [7](#), and Jews were no allowed to live anywhere they were willing to. This did not refer to those Jews who had served in the army- they were permitted to chose from larger territory of Russia. There were several children, but I did not know them. Grandfather was a tailor. He moved to Narva from Gdov. I do not know how grandparents met. Probably it was a prearranged marriage. When they got married, grandmother moved to Narva. Grandmother, as most of the married Jewish women was a homemaker,. She gave birth to children, raised them and took care of the house. Grandparents did not have their own house. The rented the 2nd floor of the loghouse from one Estonian man. The first floor of the house was occupied by the landlord and his family. There were 7 children in the family. The eldest son was Isaac, then was daughter Esfir was born on, the third was my future mother Rebecca, born on 1 February 1906. At the end of 1907 son Lazar was born in son and in couple of years another son, Mulya, and then another one, Abram. The last child was daughter Ida.

All children got religious education. Boys went to cheder and daughters were taught by. All children went to the elementary school only. Only Lazar got a secular education, whom grandfather sent to lyceum. Lazar was very gifted since childhood. Grandfather paid his son's tuition, but there was no money for the books. Lazar managed to become the second top student in the lyceum without having his own books.

Shortly after WW1 elder son Isaac left for Russia to seek fortune. When revolution took place in Russia [8](#), Isaac happened to be on the soviet territory and was separated from his family. First he wrote letters to the family, especially to Esfir, as they were bonded. Then it became dangerous for the citizens of Soviet Union to keep in touch with the relatives abroad [9](#), and they stopped writing to each other. Esfir was very worried thinking that Isaac was dead., but there were other people in Estonia, whose relatives were living in the USSR, and they also got no letters. Suddenly, one letter came from Isaac. It resembled the headlines of the soviet newspaper- eulogy to the soviet regime. The last phrase was: a lot of food, full abundance, especially there is much kadoches [editor's note: in Yiddish kadoches mean trouble]. The last phrase contained the main message in the letter. The censorship let the letter go. It was great that the censor was not a Jew. There were no other letters from Isaac and did not know what was happening with him.

Grandfather was very religious. Narva Jew respected him, listened to his words, though he was a simple man. He was considered almost a saint. He kept the door open for people and almost anybody could come to him for a support. If the new-comer did not have a place to stay, he went to grandpa. He was given food and a place to sleep. Of course, grandfather always tried helping people the best way he could. He was the only bread-winner in the family, though the family was large. If grandfather could not help anybody himself, he went to other Jews and said: «Need help!». If grandfather said it, nobody refused him. There was a trarist regiment in Narva and there were some Jewish soldiers. They were given absence without leave, where could they go in a strange? Grandpa always had a door open to them, especially in Sabbath or on the days of Jewish holidays. We had a lot of people in our house on Jewish people. Some people forgot about grandfather, but he was friends with some of them. Once, one Jew, whom grandfather helped, left for America. He got settled well there and started suggesting grandfather move to America with the family. He also offered his support. Grandfather started processing the documents for departure. It was the year of 1913. Pictures were needed for the documents to be processed, and grandfather went to rabbi to ask where he could take picture for the photograph. Of course, rabbi gave him permission. It was the only photograph of grandfather that I have. Grandfather was 46 in that picture. When grandfather got the documents, WW1 was unleashed and they could not leave. In 1920 grandfather Iosif Sevirov died. He was buried according to the Jewish rite in the Jewish cemetery in Narva. All Narva Jews came to his funeral. According to the Jewish law, the defunct cannot be brought in the synagogue with the exception of the prophets. The Narva Jewish community, which was rather large, made grandfather equal to the prophet, and brought him in the synagogue. They say it was very rare. Then they carried his coffin in hands for about 5 or 7 kilometers to the grave. It was a big honor for my grandfather for his living like a saint and helping people, taking care of those who needed support. Nobody helped the orphaned family. Grandmother remained by herself with five children. She did not have any profession, and she started working as a seamstress. There was not enough money and soon family turned into very poor. The family starved, had no money for the rent. They had lived for three years without paying for the rent. The Estonian landlord helped them a lot. He had not asked them to pay for accommodation. The eldest sister Esfir was the first to leave for Tallinn. Soon the whole family went there. Children started working and save money. One day they came in Narva and paid off the debt to the landlord. He told them: «Children took after their father ».

Mother had worked since childhood. First she helped grandmother about the house. When she grew up a little bit she sold the berries and fruit in the resort area of Narva. Mother went to dachas and offered berries for sale. Once, mother came to one dacha and the hostess wanted to buy the whole punnet from her. Mother honestly warned her that the berries on the top were nice and a little bit stamped at the bottom. The hostess, a very sweet lady, praised my mother for honesty and said to revert to her when she needed work later on in Tallinn and gave her address. When the family moved to Tallinn, mother came up to her and that lady helped her get a job of the manicurist apprentice. Nobody trained her, mother was just a maid. She cleaned the workshop and at home, was a baby-sitter for her children. When mother cleaned in the salon, she watched how the manicurist worked and gradually she learned this profession so well that the hostess offered her a job as a manicurist. With time, mother became one of the best manicurists in the city.

My parents did not date for a long time before father proposed to her. At that time father decided that his children should be the Jews, but he was baptized himself. Father went through giur and

took Judaism along with circumcision. When father told his kin that he was going to marry, they were strongly against it. Mother was a poor uneducated Jewish girl. Grandmother did not think her to be the perfect match. Grandmother even offered my mom money for her to turn down father's proposal. Of course, mother took no money. Father's younger brother was a member of Estonian fascist party. When he found out that father turned to Jewry, he started instigating grandparent even more, but my father had always been mulish and persistent. Then there were incessant scandals at home, he just left the house without taking nothing home.

My parents got married in 1930. The wedding was very modest, but in accordance with the Jewish right. Then father borrowed some money and had the ad printed in the paper that Max Schiff was married Rebecca Sevirov. He did it because his brother spread the rumor in town that my mother was not the wife, but the lover of my father. Thus father decided to do away with that. After wedding the parents rented apartment Tallinn's suburb Nõmme, as they did not have enough money to rent the apartment in Tallinn.

### **Growing up**

At that time it was customary in Jewish families for women to be housewives. Husbands were supposed to be bread-winners. After getting married, mother decided to keep working. It was the right choice. Being one of the best manicurists in town, she had good clientele. Besides, she considered that lady should be independent in anyway. If she had no money, nor profession she was dependent. She did not want to be dependent of father. Of course, she did not work for some time after I was born. My grandmother Gita later started taking care of me and mother came back to work in the salon. I was born on 27 July 1931. I was named Morris after the brother of my paternal grandmother, the last agnate Jew. I do not know what father did for a living when he was single. When married, he became a traveling salesman. She was not a born salesman, but strange as it might be he did well. The merchants are businesslike people and they liked dealing with an honest man, whose word had weight. My father was the man for whom honor was dearer than life. But his character was very complicated. He was a dictator. It was easier to respect him than love. I do not know why, but father lost his job in a while. Fortunately, mother made pretty good money, which helped our family get buy. Father found a job only in a year.

Father did not keep in touch with his brother. In four weeks after getting married father had a heart attack, and grandmother besought grandpa to call on him and forgive me. After that parents' relationship got better, but brother could not forgive father.

Probably, father loved me in a special way. He did not show it to me. He was very strict, even cruel at times- he never play with me, did not take me for a walk. He was very rigid even when I was a small child. He never repeated his instruction twice. If I failed to do what I was told the first time, I would get slapped in the best case. There were times, when father took a throng and beat me for 25 times in spite of the cries and tears of mother. After such chastisement I could not sit for couple of days. Usually we talked couple of minutes a day. Father put me in front of himself and told me to look in his eyes. He repeated once and the same the whole day: father said that I should remember that I was Jew and the second : his brother was no my uncle: then added that I should be interested in many things, study history, politics, but no joining any party.

We did not observe Jewish very strictly. Of course, on Sabbath mother lit candles and made a festive dinner. Jewish holidays were also marked in accordance with all traditions. Parents went to

the synagogue on holidays. While we were in Nõmme, father did not take me with him. There was a synagogue in Tallinn, and parents thought it was too long of a trip to me. As soon as we moved in Tallinn in 1940 I began going to the synagogue with father. At times grandmother took me there. On holidays mother cooked traditional Jewish dishes. She had Pascal dishes, which were used once a year. In other times we did not observe kashrut. Of course, we did not eat pork, but we did not have separate dishes for milk and meat. Mother said that rabbi came in our place one. He even did not want to have a cup of tea when he saw that mother did not have kosher dishes. She had to treat him to the cake that he brought to us as he refused from eating anything else.

When I reached school age, mother wanted me to go to the Jewish school. There was no such school in Nomme and we had to move to Tallinn. Father decided that I had to study in a state school, Estonian. Mother was not willing to argue with dad, and I went to Estonian school. I was fluent in Estonian and had no problem with that. I had another issue. I was a feeble child, which is apparently the reason for my small height. There were boys in my class, who teased, pushed me and hurt me when they had a chance. Other than that, I was treated fairly. The teachers liked me. I had two teachers- one taught compulsory subjects the other one –Bible. Being a Jew, I was not supposed to attend the latter. If it was the last class, I went home. If it was in the middle of the day, I gladly attended it. The things taught in that class I remember like engrossing fairy-tales.

I cannot say that there was anti-Semitism in Estonia. There were Jewish schools and lyceum. There were no restrictions for young Jewish people to enter educational institutions. The government gave Jews the cultural autonomy [10](#), which guaranteed their rights and liberties. There were practically no restrictions in the profession- trading, craftsmanship, medicine,law. There were equal ownership rights for Estonian and Jews. But there were prejudices. Officially there were no bans for the military officers, but actually there was not a single Jewish army officer. There was a top –secret instruction not to let the Jews become the officers. There were not only Estonians among the officers of the Estonian army – there were Russians, Germans, but no Jews. It was also hard for a Jew to serve the state. Thus, there was no full equality in Estonian republic. There was an interesting story. One Jew wanted to marry the officer of Estonian army. The government could not ban it. If for example the officer married a fallen woman, the marriage could not be banned, but he was dismissed. If he married a Jew, who would be baptized, he could stay in the army. If she remained a Jew, he would be dismissed. Probably it was almost like marrying a fallen woman. So, one lady married Estonian officer and got baptized. After baptism other Jews looked at her like at a traitor. So, she had no ties with Jewish community. They had a son. Then during occupation, her husband was the officer of German army and she had to hide in his parent's house with her son. As a result, she stayed with her son, but her husband perished.

There was anti-Semitism in everyday situations. I was teased by the boys : «small green kike is running on the rope ». Yes, I was tiny, but why green. I had a green suit. I could not understand those words. Those who teased me probably, could not understand that either. Well, children! Where could they hear that- they could not have come up with that! I also remember one case when I was playing with my friend, Estonian girl, in the yard of our house. The neighboring yard was fenced. A young guy jumped over than fence with a pole. He was a sportsman. I was standing with my back turned to the fence and the girl cried out : watch out! I turned back and felt a prod in my back. That guy did it. I could hardly stand on my feet, and then the sportsman told me with spite «bloody Jew!». I was looking at him and could not get what my fault was. I will always



remember how I was hurt. From that moment I had identified myself as a Jew.

## **The Soviet Invasion of the Baltics**

In 1939 soviet military bases were constructed in Estonia [11](#). It is accounted for the fact that Germany was getting ready for war, and the bases were needed for defense. Then the bases were all over the country. But it did not affect the life of our family as well as the lives of other people in Estonia. In 1940 when Estonia was annexed to Soviet Union, the life of Estonian population was changed considerably. I do not agree with those who call this annexation occupation – as Estonian citizens had equal rights with Russians. Estonians held the main posts in the country, classes were taught in Estonian at schools and universities – what kind of occupants would have allowed that?! As usual, the occupants do not provided the same rights to the people of the country they occupy. The difference is huge. Of course, soviet people started to bring the same rules in Estonia as anywhere else in the Soviet Union. People were arrested, the property of the rich was seized, and people were evicted from their own houses. Then there was deportation of Estonian population [12](#) – on 14 June 1941 before the outbreak of war, Several thousands of Estonian and Jewish people were deported. Men were sent to barb-wired camp Gulag [13](#), where the lethal rate was very high. There were very few survivors. I do not have exact information, without which the estimate is very superficial. The families of Gulag prisoners were exiled. Some of them also died, but there were not as many deaths as in the camp. Probably the actions would have taken place further on and the attack of Germany on USSR on 22 July 1941 [14](#) frustrated Stalin's plans. He did not think of deportation at that moment. At that time we moved to from Nõmme and rented an apartment. Our family was lucky- we were rather well-off, but not rich as we had neither own house nor enterprise. Nobody was arrested nor exiled. They just took the money from paternal grandmother's bank account. Maybe it was influenced by the fact that my uncle Lazar, mother's brother, was the member of the banned communistic party in Estonian time. He was deputy commander of NKVD [15](#) of Estonia, the commander was Jakobson, also a Jew.

The family of mother's elder sister Esfir also suffered from soviet regime. She was married to Abram Frank, whose family moved to Estonia from Latvia a long time ago. Fran's eldest brother was wealthy. He owned textile factory in Tallinn. Two more brothers were very well-off. They had their own houses, only Abram worked hard to earn his bread and butter. He was a shoe-maker. He had his own workshop, so the family lived comfortably. Then he acted foolishly: moved to another district and lost his clients, and could not get the new customers. The equipment and materials were purchased from loan. He failed to payoff the loan and went bust soon. He started working at a shoe factory and had to give his entire salary to the bank to payoff the loan, but still he could get out of that situation and early 1939 he managed to payoff all the debts and purchase workshop. Soon, the soviet regime came to power and his workshop was sequestered. He was lucky not to be sent in the camp. He went to work to the shoe factory.

My father was a traveling salesman- all commercial enterprises were owned by state, therefore his profession was not needed. He was offered a position of the director of store. Father had never dealt with such work, but he cope with than. Then he was in charge of two stores. Tallinn denizens worked there in good faith. They did not steal in contrast to soviet people. So, father got along with them.

My uncle Lazar, mother's brother, was a big cheese during soviet time. In 1936 entered communist party, which was banned in Estonia at that time. My uncle was an ardent communist, who were rare. When Estonia became soviet, he was promoted very swiftly, first in the party, then in trade. At that time in hard post soviet times, uncle never took advantage of his position. He also demanded that his subordinates were honest and decent.

There were few changes in my life. I went to state Estonian school. Though, during soviet regime the Bible classes were canceled and the history of USSR was added. I went to the 3rd grade, and we did not have that subject yet. Once the teacher came in the class and said that all children would be enrolled in Young Oktobrist [16](#). I remembered that father told me not to join any party and I decided to refuse flatly. I did not know what that young oktobrist was. When I grew up, I understood in what trouble my parents could get with such a refusal. Fortunately, our consent was not needed. The next day the teacher came in and said that our class joined young oktobrist.

### **During the war**

My father, who was fluent in German, closely followed the events in Germany from the moment when Hitler came to power. Of course, he was informed in a much better way than most Estonian Jews. I remember that he turned the radio on and listened in Hitler's speech. I remember it vividly as I could not sleep because of that. Only due to the father we were evacuated. Mother understood nothing in politics. In Estonia local Germans had a good attitude towards Jews. Mother said, when she was a child, once a rich German, bought her a pair of boots, having noticed that her old ones were falling apart. Mother thought Germans to be kind people. She did not fear fascists at all. Most Estonian Jews were not going to leave thinking that the war would be put to an end soon. They thought that Germans would bring better life as the one after annexation. Our Tallinn rabbi doctor Aba Gomer [17](#) is to be blamed for some many deaths of Jewish people in concentration camps, who decided to stay in Tallinn. He was from Germany, where he was taught for rabbi. When he got educated, he came in Tallinn. He was a very good and decent man, so Jews people took his opinion into account. He helped many people. I remember, when mother's younger sister Ida, was getting married in 1938, her wedding party was in rabbi's house. When the war was unleashed, Aba Gomer addressed to the Jews in the synagogue and said that for Jews life was hard in any time, and with Germans it probably would not be that easy. But Germans would not kill the Jews?! He advised Jews to stay in Estonia, and he also stayed there with his family. I was told that Germans arrested him on the first day of German occupation of Tallinn. They teased him, walked him on the rope in the street. and killed him finally. The entire rabbi's family perished. I think that Doctor Gomer is guilty. He had the right to make the decision for his family, but he oughtn't give any advice to the others to stay in the city.

My mother, was against evacuation, like most of Jews. Why leaving the place, going for inconveniences, if even rabbi advised to stay? Moreover, things were rather calm during the first day of the war. My father did not have the right to leave as he was supposed to be drafted in the lines. He persuaded mother not to linger with evacuation. Mother would not agree and father knew if mom was so much against something, it was really hard to convince her. Father managed to talk her into leaving. Mother said she could not get why Germans should persecute her. Father objected that she could be persecuted for her brother. Lazar was the second deputy minister of commerce and in 1940 he took part in the nationalization of Estonian banks. Besides, he was a communist. Father assured mother that having such a brother would not be come unnoticed and she should leave.

Finally, mother agreed and taked into her other relatives to leave. Grandmother Gita, mother's sister Esfir with her children and Ida. Both mother's brothers went to the front as volunteers. Lazar was refused as he did not go through medical examination commission by the military enlistment office: he was a very sick man. He had stomach ulcer, and renal calculi. To boot, he had a head trauma in adolescence and he was semi-deaf and had poor eye-sight. In general, the army did not need anybody like that. Lazar was persistent saying that his place was in the lines until Estonia was liberated and he happened to be in the lines. He went through the war and was wounded, but he came home alive. A younger brother Abram perished in 1941 in the battle for Tallinn.

When we were leaving Tallinn, it was still calm in the city, no shooting. Evacuation was well organized, the echelons were at the stations. I remember that the train was moving very slowly as there were long stops at the stations. Besides, there were unplanned stops. During evacuation each person was allowed to carry 15 kilos of luggage. We had not got used to the Soviet union style and to break the rules without being punished. Mother weighed the luggage very scrupulously when packing our things, but in actually we could take more as long as we could carry it. Those, who took more things, lived more or less comfortably as compared with us. They could sell their things or exchange them for products, but we had to starve a bit. We came in Nizhnyaya Uvelka not far from Krasnoyarsk [Russia, about 3000 km from Moscow], where most of Estonian citizens were evacuated. I do not remember exactly how long it took us to get there, but it was definitely more than a month. Nizhnyaya Uvelka was a settlement in Taiga, consisting of one long street. We were temporarily housed in the building of local school. In a while, all evacuees were housed in with the locals. We got some food cards [18](#), but it was impossible to get by with that ration. Grandmother and other ladies went to the forest to pickup mushrooms, berries and some roots. Mother worked in the field. I had to go to school. I finished 3 classes of Estonian school but I had to go to the first grade of Russian school in Nizhnyaya Uvelka. I was about 11 years old. Children always easily learn foreign language and by the time I started school. Mother and grandmother spoke better Russian than Estonian as they used to live in Narva, which was a Russian spoken town.

Soon mother's elder brother Isaac accidentally found us. He left Russia for Tashkent before revolution of 1917. One of all USSR papers Izvestia [one of the most popular communistic papers in the USSR, issued in the period of 1917- 1980s, with the circulation exceeding eight million copies] the article about Lazar was published along with his picture. Isaac saw that paper and wrote to the publisher. In their reply to him it turned out that it really went about his brother. Isaac managed to find us via inquiry bureau for evacuees. He sent us the letter and asked to come. Mother's sisters decided to leave later, but mother, grandmother and I headed there. It was a long way. There were no trains available at that time, only locomotives. We had to sleep on our suitcases. Then grandmother's suitcase was stolen. Isaac met us in Tashkent. Mother was very little when he left, so it was as if they got acquainted once again. Isaac turned out to be a very good person. We moved in his place. He found a job for mother, and helped us with anything he could. Apart from money and food card mother was also fed at the canteen, which was very handy for us at that time. I cannot say that we had enough food to eat, but we were not starving as hard as most evacuated people. Soon, mother stopped working there as the person in charge of the canteen started demanding that mother should become his lover. Mother turned him down and he fired her right away. Our family started having really hard times. Mother found a job, but it was not enough for us to get by. Mother and grandmother were practically starving trying to give extra piece of

food to me. Isaac was drafted in the army at that time and the three of us stayed together. Then, mother's sister came. Eldest son of Esfir was drafted in the lines, when he was in Nizhnyaya Uvelka.. Esfir and Ida found lodging not far from our place.

We had eaten mostly pomice, sunflower seed cake, for couple of month. Pomace was the cheapest product and mother often bought it on the market. Now I cannot imagine eating it, but at the time it was the only food we could get. I had chafed tongue due to eating sunseed hull, which was the major component of sunflower seed cake. It was easier for us when they started to hand out bread and cereal by food cards. It still we were starving. People died like flies. They did not die by hunger, but because of having feeble organism, not being able to resist disease and famine. There was another adversity- lice. Soap was such a great luxury. If someone could get a small bar of soap one the market, it was used very economically. Water was also a luxury item. We had to walk for once kilometer to get to the water pump. There was another trouble in winter time- fire wood. There was a round iron stove in the middle of our. We had to buy fire wood in the wintertime to heat the room. A small bundle cost a lot of money. So, we were constantly freezing in wintertime. All of us understood what war was like. We were not the only ones, whose life was difficult. There were people who were in much worse conditions than we were. A lot of evacuees came in Tashkent and not everybody could find a place to live. Some people had to stay straight at the train station, and died there in lice and rags.

When we came in Tashkent, mother put our clothes and footwear aside. We put local 'rags' on. It we were really starving, mother took some of our clothes and sold on the market, to buy some food with that money. There were a lot of paupers by the market. Nobody gave them arms, some people even teased them. I saw somebody putting a stone in the box of the blind lady. There was only one time when I saw people give somebody to the pauper. It was an amazing case. When I was on my way to the market, I saw a person without two legs who was at the patched mat. There were a lot of cripples during the war, and people remained indifferent. The pauper was with his back turned to the passersby and it was amazing, but in that position one could tell that he was a decent man, whose life made him ask for alms. There was a hat by his mat and people came up and put money there. The pauper did not even take it right away. The hat happened to be full of money. I saw that pauper only once.

There was another case in Tashkent, which I will always remember. I was on my way to the water pump and saw a four-wheeler (something like we had in Tallinn, though it was covered with the yellowing Tashkent dust. I stopped and started looking. The horse looked terrible it was so meager that its bones were protruding like spears. That 'skeleton with the skin' was hardly moving. The top of the four-wheeler was open and there was a lady there with her arms flung open. It was sultry and the sun was shining directly at her. The coachman was sleeping. The horse reached water pump and stopped. The coachman woke up, took the bucket and gave water to the horse. I think water was all that horse could get. Having been watered, the horse moved on. I looked at it with my mouth open. The horse reached the next water pump and stopped, the coachman watered it once again. I asked passersby what it was and I was explained that it was the "ambulance" !

I had to go to the 1st grade once again in Tashkent. I was short, though I was the oldest in the class. I was not a very good student, taking no interest in studies. All I cared was to be transferred in the next grade. When I was in the 3rd, we were to join pioneers [19](#). It was not the same way as it was with the young octobrists, each candidate for pioneers was to be discussed by the whole class.

Having remembered father's words, I refused from joining pioneers. First, my teacher and pioneer leader had a talk with me. Then the principal of the school talked to me. Thus, three adults again one boy. They called me on the carpet, trying to convince and threaten me. I was adamant and had not agreed to become a pioneer. If my dad told me not to join any party, I should obey him.

My father and I wrote letters to each other. Father was mobilized in the army after our departure for evacuation, but Stalin's government did not trust the inhabitants of Estonia, recently annexed to USSR, and all mobilized in the army were sent in the labor camps [20](#). There the mobilized were in the position of the camp prisoners. They were given skimpy food for them just to stand on their feet. They were exhausted with physical labor. Many guys, even the young ones died by hunger, beriberi. Father was made to work with cement-mixer. I do not know how he managed to survive. In 1942 Estonian corps was established [21](#) in Red Army and saved those Estonians who had to trudge in labor camps. Father was also drafted there as a supply officer. He had great organizational skills. He was supposed to receive the freight in the rear and accompany them to the front. Father's rank was the captain of Red Army. Once father managed to come to Nizhnyaya Uvelka, but we were gone. He found out from mother's sister Ida that we had moved in Tashkent. He visited us there when he got a chance. It was a very short visit, he was just passing by. The second time father came in Tashkent was in 1944 when we had already left for Tallinn. That visit was doomed for father. He caught typhus fever there and died in the hospital on 19 December 1944. There was a typhus fever epidemic in Tashkent and people were buried in common graves. We even do not know where father was buried.

All of us had suffered from hunger, but it was the hardest on grandmother. She was very pious and had observed kashrut for a long time, even during the war. Even if she was to die by hunger, she would not touch non-kosher food. As the rest, they did not think of kosher or non-kosher- the only thing that mattered was how to survive. I was very feeble, got sick very often, so mother and grandmother gave some of their food. Life was also hard on mother, but she was young and healthy, but grandmother got feeble because of hunger and practically did not get out of bed. She died in 1943. I think she died by hunger. She was buried in Jewish cemetery in Tashkent, to be more exact it was Jewish section of the city cemetery [22](#). There were quite a few Jews, including the local ones. There were minian, and rabbi, who did things in accordance with the rite. We came to the cemetery in two days, but could not find her grave. There were so many people buried daily that they could not put nameboards on time.

Only shortly before our departure from Tashkent, mother found a well-paid job. We had a feast on the day, when mother got her monthly salary: we bought potatoes and mother made the so-called stew from unpeeled potatoes. She boiled potatoes, added fried onion and some flour at the end. It was so delicious that I still remember that taste. It was very rare though. Usually life was very hard, but nobody complained as we understood that it was the war. Notification on somebody's death was worse than famine. When the mailman appeared, everybody was standing still, hoping that the news was not for them. We got those notifications twice. At the very beginning of war mother's brother Abram died in the battle near Tallinn. He was less than thirty. In the fall of 1943 mother's elder brother Isaac died during Stalingrad battle [23](#).

We were constantly following the news from the front. When there were battles in Estonia, we listened to every roundup. We were so agog to come back home. As soon as the troops of Estonian corps liberated Estonia, mother and I started planning our return home. We only were the first to

go. Mother's sisters had to stay in Tashkent. We had been on the road for two months. We crossed Estonian border at night, when the train arrived in Narva, native city of my mother. We stayed there until dawn. When I looked out of the window, there was nothing I could see but the ruins. There was not a single building left in Narva. During the battles in Narva artillery was shooting incessantly from both sides and local people left the city. Very few people came back, therefore postwar Narva population consisted mostly of new-comers. Later when I was in Narva, I went to Jewish cemetery, where my grandfather Iosif Sevirov was buried, but I could not find his grave. All of them were upturned by tomb raiders, who were seeking gold. I do not know if they found anything, but there was no grandfather's grave.

### **After the war**

We came in Tallinn. The house, where we used to live before the war, was still there. It was a wooden house in the center of city. Before war we rented an apartment there, but during soviet regime it was nationalized. We used to occupy three rooms, all of them were passage ones. That apartment was for one family only, but when we came back the apartment was turned into communal one [24](#) where three families were living: one room was taken by mother and I, the second one by mother's younger sister Ida and her husband, the third one by some Estonian family. It was very hard for everybody- we had to walk through somebody else's room. Before evacuation Ida lived in the house of her husband's father. When they were going in evacuation, her father-in-law, was against leaving. He said that he was sick old man and Germans would not touch him. He stayed in his place. When Germans came in for a search, he was in hiding and came back when Germans left. Once Germans came and did not find anybody. When they were about to leave, the neighbor ran after them and said that an old Jew was hiding next door. He was found and executed. When Ida and her husband came back and found out about it, they could not settle there, and decided to live with us.

Upon our return mother went to the place where my paternal grandmother used to live. Grandmother's neighbor told that granny's and father's brother had died. My father's brother perished in 1944 in the battles for Narva. He was a German officer during the war. He also was a member fascist party. He even managed to get some certificate saying that he was pure-blooded Aryan. Probably there were some rumors about my father having giur and his brother was to prove all the time that he was not only a good officer, fascist, but that he was the best to beyond suspicion. Probably that was the reason why he faced bullets. He was killed when the soviet troops were on their way back having liberated Narva. Grandmother also died because father became a Jew. She was very old and sick. Her legs were so swollen, but she could not walk. She was also deaf as a doorpost. The neighbors said that a group of Estonian guys came to get grandmother. They cried out «Bloody Jew!», beat her, threw her from stairs and then demanded that she should go with them. She could not walk and they shot her straight in the yard. It happened in September 1941. Thus probably God does not forgive treason ...

Mother started working as a manicurist in the salon and I went to school. I had completely forgotten Estonian during the years of evacuation, so I had to go to Russian school. I was down-in-the-mouth for being the eldest child in the class, though Tallinn. I was lice-ridden. We had tried to fight them in evacuation for three years without any result. Then I started having normal food in y Tallinn, they vanished. Then I was told, that lice did not like sated people, they breed on feeble and hungry people. Probably I got sick because of them. I was lucky that it happened in Tallinn. I would

have died in Tashkent. I barely survived in Tallinn hospital being unconscious for 10 days. Then mother took me home and gave me good food. I missed almost two months of school. It was hard for me to study. Frankly speaking I was also rather lazy. Languages were the hardest for me. I spoke good Russian as I learnt it in evacuation, but my writing was poor. The teacher was surprised to see my mistakes as they were so untypical. As for Estonian, both oral and written were literate, but I did not have a very good vocabulary stock. My handwriting was poor. I was pretty good with humanitarian sciences, where I could retell things, but it was hard for me to remember names and dates. It was also hard for me to learn poems by heart. I was bad at drawing. I had no ear for music. Before the war the music teacher in Estonian school told me to sit quiet and keep my mouth shut. Alas, I had no capabilities. Finally, I started cutting lessons. Mother knew nothing about it of course. Only by the end of the fifth grade, she found out that I had poor marks in 5 subjects, and she went after me. When I came back home from school,, mother gave me some food, and had me study right away. She sat next to me and checked my homework. Though, I was not a gifted student, but such diligence was fruitful: I had good marks in almost all exams. I did not want to study when I was in the 6th grade. I told mother that I wanted to learn some profession. In 1947 I became apprentice of clock mender. It became my profession for the lifetime.

In 1946 mother got married. Her second husband Arthur Kartner was Estonian. I do not know how they met. All I know is that Arthur's first wife was also a Jew, who perished during the war. He was a dictator, a very obstinate man, but faithful. He was really reliable and honest. Arthur never prevaricated. He was the officer in Estonian republic, lieutenant colonel of Estonian army. During the war for Estonian independence he fought against Bolsheviks [25](#), and was awarded with a Cross. When the Soviets came to power, he got notification from the military enlistment office. He indicated his name and the fact that he fought against Russians. He was given the title of sergeant in the army. Arthur was perturbed and filed a report: if his previous rank- lieutenant colonel - was not confirmed, that he was ready to be rank and file soldier rather than having the rank of his sergeant. Finally the commanders decided that he almost beyond draftees' age and decide to that it was easier to decommission him from the army than solve the issue with the ranks. During the war Arthur was appointed representative of Estonia [26](#) in some city, where Estonians were evacuated. I saw how Genz, the representative of Estonia, lived in Tashkent - as if there was no war. His family had everything they need. The representatives of Estonia distributed humanitarian aids, which came from other countries and lived pretty comfortably. Arthur was an honest man. He could have died by hunger having the bags of food next to him. This is how maximalistic he was! He was so famished in evacuation and after war he had to be treated from dystrophy. He was very decent man, but there were very few women who could live with him. He even washed dishes himself as it seemed to him that mother did it worse. He liked to put things in order in mother's purse.

After war Arthur worked as a joiner. He was obviously very hard-working. He could not make money though. While most people worked to live, Arthur lived to work. He was a very interesting man with his positive and negative traits. When mother's got married, we moved to Arthur. When I became independent having started working in the clock workshop, I decided to return in our apartment. Arthur treated me very well, but he wanted me to be his copy. It was very hard for me. When I moved, we still were keeping in touch. Arthur took care of me, helped me with all he could. I know he treated me like his own son, though Arthur had never talked about it. In general, he did not like rant. He even did not say the words of love to mother. When mother got sick, there was

nobody who would take better care than Arthur. He was a very kind man. He liked and understood animals, and they treated him likewise. Though, he did not get along with very well.

In 1948 when cosmopolite processes started [27](#), anti-Semitism became state politics. At that time Jews were dismissed from leading positions and assigned Russians. Anti-Semitism became particularly strong during doctors' plot [28](#). Though, it was not as common with Estonians, as most of them hated Stalin, and soviet regime as a whole. Estonians even said: «who could not those doctors assassinate Stalin, if they wanted it?». Soviet regime was blatantly anti-Semitic. They fired Jews. People with Jewish appearance could be insulted in the street. My uncle Lazar, mother's brother, gladly welcome soviet regime starting from the fist days. He was a convinced communist. The party enrolled uncle for 2-year party courses, upon completion of which he could get higher education in commerce required for management positions. We had studied in Leningrad for two years, and also managed to obtain diploma in economy apart from those courses. When he came back in Tallinn, he held different posts in commerce. When doctors' plot was took place Lazar was in charge of trade department by the ministry of commerce. He always worked for three people and was very strict with his subordinates. When the doctors' plot started, his subordinates stopped listening to him as they understood that he would be dismissed soon, but he was not dismissed. It was his decision to resign. Even the minister did not want to let him go. Finally, he was talked into staying. He was not touched after Stalin's death. As far as I understand, it was not so dangerous for uncle Lazar to lose his job, he feared expulsion from the party. It did not happen. Uncle was happy as at that time many Jews were fired.

Mother and I did not understand how dangerous it was for us, but Arthur understood it clearly. I remember him saying once: «I would never leave you ». Then I got what he was talking about, when mother showed me two packed bags. Arthur got them ready in advance in case Jews would be exiled in Siberia. There were rumors like that, and there were grounds for them. I remember, Arthur went to the train station every day to see if the trains were ready for deportation. He understood that it was realistic. I am sure he would never let mother go by herself, and would join her in exile. Luckily in March 1953 Stalin and we signed with relief. It happened on the day of Purim. I still regret not getting drunk on the day when we were exempt from that felon- not a mythical Amman, but real person. Tallinn people took Stalin's death differently. Aboriginal population of Estonia did not mourn, as they had reasons for it, but new-comers from USSR did, as if they actually lost a close person. I remember once a Russian lady came in the clock shop, where I was working, and brought watch to be repaired. While her watch was being repaired, she was sitting and crying over Stalin as if he was her son. It was very funny for me, but I could not laugh. I turned my back to her and put my hand to the mouth until she left. I took Stalin's death as a holiday. At first, I did not know anything about things happening in USSR in late 1930s, about mass repressions [29](#), executions. Late on, during the cosmopolite processes I started reading on the history of USSR. Then I understood that Stalin was a murderer. I cannot understand how people living in USSR, and witnessing all those crimes, could not get that Stalin was a murderer. How did I understand it? It was simple. All military leaders did not spare their life for their country and were killed by Stalin: Tukhachevskiy [30](#), Yakir [31](#), Blucher [32](#) etc. All Lenin's [33](#) brothers-in-arms, with who he made revolution— Trotskiy [34](#), Kamenev [35](#), Zinoviev [36](#) and many other people were executed as per Stalin's order. All people who were outstanding during Lenin's time, being famous party activists, turned out to be traitors and peoples' enemies. How can one believe in that? There is no logic! Then I started to understand that he was a murdered. Then I started reading about



collectivization [37](#), kulaks [kulaks] [38](#), mass exile of peasants in Siberia, famine of 1932-33s [39](#). I was getting more and more information and was appalled with that. That was the power of fraud. Hitler was always called a villain. Yes, he treated other nations much worse than Stalin did. But Stalin treated his people much worse than Hitler did. The thing built by Bolsheviks did not resemble socialism. It was a dictatorship, extermination of everybody who had his own opinion, and even ability to think.

In 1964 Arthur Kastner died. In 1966 mother got married once again. Her husband was a Jew Ruvim Rubinstein.. Mother was 60. Ruvim as almost 15 years older than she, but he looked good- tall, slender and brisk, with thick grey hair. He was a very handsome man with a good posture. Women liked him when he was old. Ruvim was very well educated and tolerant. My mother was his third wife. He got divorced twice. My mother was against divorces considering that a lady was entitled to get married only being a widow. She considered divorces to be even. This is the way she was brought up in her family.

Ruvim was born in Warsaw, Poland. His father was a very rich dealer. When he was conferred with the title of the merchant of the first guild [40](#), the family moved to Russia, Saint Petersburg. There were a lot of children in the family and all of them got a good education. Ruvim went to private lyceum, where the children of famous Russian people were studying. When Ruvim finished lyceum and wanted to continue studying at the university, he was not admitted. At that time there was admission quota for the Jews in higher educational institutions - 5% out of the total number of students [41](#). Ruvim went to Belgium and graduated from legal department of the university. He came back in Russia in 1917. Ruvim told that when the cabman took him home, they were stopped by policemen and told to take a bypass road from Nevskiy avenue. Ruvim asked the policemen what happened that he replied that there was some revolt. But it was October revolution ! Ruvim lived at home for a bit, and then understood that he would not survive the new regime and left for Estonia. His family refused to immigrate from Russia. Ruvim did not know what happened to them. He began working as a lawyer in Tallinn. He did so well, that soon Ruvim purchased a large house in the center of Tallinn jointly with his companion. When soviet regime came to power, their house was seized. The funniest thing was that even after sequestration they still had to pay the house tax. Ruvim was not exiled. Maybe they merely did not have time. He was in evacuation during the war, and then he came back in Tallinn. After war soviet regime did not have any claims against him. He worked as a legal counsel until retirement. Of course, mother and Ruvim differed a lot, both from the point of upbringing, education and character, but still they were happy together. Ruvim observed Jewish traditions and mother started lighting candles on Sabbath, mark Jewish holidays at home. On holidays mother and Ruvim went to the synagogue together and I also joined them for festive dinner.

I was very small and feeble and was not supposed to be drafted in the army. When I turned thirty, I was told to go to the military enlistment office. It was the first and the last time I went there. My military career did not last long. During one month I cleaned the gun following the instruction of the officer. I was not allowed to shoot even once. Then I saw a tank, even looked in the hatch, but I was not willing to get in there. Then, I was given the military card, where it was written that I was an expert in tank electric equipment. Though, all I can do with electrics is to change a light bulb. Other soldiers treated me well. I had two nicknames in the army: «brave soldier Schweig», and the second - «professor», maybe because I was the only one wearing glasses. All of them were

educated, but I dropped studies in the 5th grade. For some reason, all of them came up to me with questions, asking me to tell them something. Often they even suggested doing something instead of me so that I would tell them a story in the evening. Officers did not hurt me. On my first day I was straightforward enough to say that I would not become the defender of motherland and added that I was not interested in military science. Other thing if I were the war with Germany, when Hitler's troops attacked Soviet Union. In general, I did not have any patriotic feelings and was not going to defend that regime. Though many Jew, especially the Russian ones, sincerely considered themselves to be patriots, but not me. Estonia was my motherland, not Soviet Union. I served in the vicinity of Kiev, and once when I had absence without leave to see the city. My military service passed by very quickly and I came back in Tallinn. There I regained work of the clock mender.

Russians were not friendly treated by Estonians. There were strange things happening: Russians were called occupants, but they had to do all dirty and hard work. During the true occupation such jobs are done by local populations, while the occupants command. Here it was vice versa. Our workshop was in the corner of Tallinn department store. The building was large and there were several crews of the janitors. There were hardly any Estonians among them. There were mostly Russians and Ukrainians. Estonian ladies were not willing to do that dirty work. There was a large construction company in Tallinn, where the workers were mostly Russians, and the managers were Estonians. In general all hard jobs were taken mostly by Russians. As for ideology, Estonians always wanted to empathize that they were not accepting soviet ideology. I noticed it in 1967 when Israel was having a six-day war [42](#). One Estonian worked with me, who was a terrible anti-Semite, but when there was a six day war in Israel, she was worried for Israeli troops and followed the events. She was very happy when Israeli militaries defeated Arabs, «soviet clients» in her words. Many Estonians rejoiced Israeli victory.

I never was a religious man, but after my return from the army I ordered kippah for myself. There was a hatter in Tallinn, an old Jew, who knew my grandfather Isif. I ordered it from him. I showed him grandfather's picture, where he was wearing a black kippah and asked him to make the same for me. I still have it. I am atheist, but still I go to synagogue really. I put kippah on there. I never concealed that I was a Jew, moreover I spoke about it openly. In spite of having Jewish appearance, some people took me for Estonian. In those cases I always said that I was a Jew and behaved accordingly.

I had never been married. Ladies did not pay attention to me. I was very bashful when I was young and I did not know how to get acquainted with the ladies. Then I became a convinced bachelor. I am used to that. I am OK with that. My wife probably would be irritated by my arguments. I do not regret being alone. I am fine with my loneliness.

In 1991 I retired before the breakup of USSR. I felt as if my life was only beginning. I had my own lodging, pension, bank account. My aunt Ida, mother's younger sister was childless and demised me about 20 000 rubles, which was huge for that time. Monthly interest was like the second pension to me. I was foretasting calm and happy life, thinking that I could do what I wished- read and communicate with my friends. I was hardly interested in politics. I could not even picture breakup of USSR. I hoped that it would happen one day, but not in my lifetime. It happened. I was born in independent Estonia, and was lucky to live in independent Estonia [43](#) in my old age. I cannot say that my life was unbearable for that time. I just lived. There were things that upset me. I disapproved of dictatorship of the Soviet Union, political persecution of the people who had their

own option, persecution of writers, artists, whose works were not in line with the party course. I did not like the idea of peasants being forced to join kolkhoz [44](#). All those things did not affect me personally.

Probably it was good for USSR to collapse, but I personally do not care. I am living at my place. I have no reasons for being a Russian patriot. I am not an Estonian patriot either. I cannot identify myself as Jewish patriot either, though I am ready to give my life for my peoples. If I knew that if I had to explode a car with myself and it would be good for my peoples, I could do that.

I am the citizen of Estonia, and my passport is Estonian. When I was exchanging it, I asked for a copy. There was no nationality line in Estonian passport. I wanted to have that copy where it would be documented which nation I belong to. I think if they start destroying Jews, they will find me without that line in the passport.

Our Jewish community was founded during perestroika [45](#), in 1988. We did not have a rabbi, and those people who knew Jewish traditions were supplying for him. My mother died in 1993. She was buried Jewish cemetery in accordance with the traditions thanks to the community. They made minian like it was supposed. Now we have a true rabbi. I am unreligious. I cannot understand how people can believe in God after holocaust. I cannot deceive myself, I take interest in religion and traditions as without that religion Jewish people would stop existing. Jewish customs and traditions are interlaced with the belief and cannot be classified. I cannot believe in the deity. The issue is in my opinion belief petrifies, but the life goes on. Religion cannot keep abreast with the times. I do not see it possible for our belief to be closer to the modern life. Now there is such a trend as progressive Judaism and I think that it is a fake, a surrogate. It is too simplified and adapted. I do not like orthodox Judaism either as it is another extremity. I like many customs, but not all of them. I do not think it makes sense to observe kashrut nowadays. In due time it was to be observed at least from point of hygiene, but now it is obsolete. And again the ban to use transport on Saturday, take money in hands. It was rational when the towns were small, when people could walk from home to home, from home to synagogue and now we have such distances that this ban is even harmful. As for ban to work on Saturday, I agree it is better not to work and to devote this day to God and oneself. What is work? Now some people even believe that opening a fridge and switch the light is also a job. These are extremities, there is a limit to dogmas! In general there are too many bans. I think that the word you cannot is the main one in Jewish religion. There should be some way to make our belief more adapt to modern life, but I do not know this way. It is very complicated ... there are a lot of things I like in Jewish traditions. E.g., the rite to plant trees on Bi Shvat. I had never done that, and I do not have garden or a land plot. I like this rite anyway, and I think all people should follow it. Not only because there would be more trees, as the team of gardeners would do it quicker and faster, but if a person planted a tree, grew it, he of XVII-XIX centuries they did not find it necessary to wash hands before meal and they ate with dirty hands. As for Jews, washing hands was always a cult. They could pray only after having washed hands. Recently we were given torah in the community. I started reading it and was so absorbed that I could not notice that I spent half a night reading it. I liked it so much!

As compared to Soviet times there is hardly any anti-Semitism in Estonia. There is a different classification –citizens and non-citizens. I think that a certain share of anti-Semitism is useful. I think if there was not a notion like that, we, the Jews, would not survive. There would be no

incentive to study better as every Jew understood that to get a job he should be a better expert than non-Jew. Of course there were a lot of victims of anti-Semitism, probably there are much more perished Jews than survivors, but still anti-Semitism was impetus, stimulus for survival and improvement of Jews, and it disappears we would probably stop existing as the nation. Though frankly speaking I do not consider Jews to be peoples, but the group of propinquity people. E.g., if comparing me and Moroccan Jews, the difference would be so vast, that we would not be reckoned as the representatives of one peoples. Our history is very complicated. Jewish history is a half of world history. Now there is a real threat of extinction of Jews, not because of physical destruction, but due to assimilation. The more there are mixed marriages, the quicker Jews disappear as the peoples. In my opinion, the Jew is not the person with Jewish blood, but the one who identifies himself as a Jew. Those whose father, mother, grandparents are Jews, but they are not trying to be the Jews, are they Jews? I do not think that we are any better than other people, but I cannot say that we worse than anybody else and should be exterminated. That is why I cannot accept holocaust and belief in God who allowed it. I do not think we deserved it.

Jewish community of Estonia means a lot to me. Of course, they do a lot of kind deeds- provide food, medicine, care etc., but still it is not the most important for me. Jewish community helps preserve the remaining representatives of Jewish peoples and this is the most essential for me. I want the Jewish peoples to exist and I am ready to do my best in that.

## **Glossary:**

### **1 Jewish community of Estonia - on the 30th of March 1988 the meeting of Jews of Estonia consisting of 100 people, convened by David Slomka, made a resolution to establish community of Jewish Culture of Estonia (KJCE) and in May 1988 the community was registered in Tallinn municipal Ispolkom**

KJCE was the first independent Jewish cultural organization in USSR to be officially registered by the Soviet authorities. In 1989 first Ivrit courses were opened up, although the study of Ivrit was equaled to Zionist propaganda and was considered to be anti-Soviet activity. The contacts with Jewish organizations of other countries were made. KJCE was the part of Peoples' Front of Estonia, struggling for state independence. In December 1989 the first issue of KJCE paper Kashachar (Dawn) was released in Estonian and Russian languages. In 1991 the first radio program about Jewish culture and activity of KJCE 'Sholom Aleichem' came out in Estonia. In 1991 Jewish religious community and KJCE had a joined meeting, where it was decided to found Jewish Community of Estonia.

### **2 Estonian War of Liberation (1918-1920)**

The Estonian Republic fought on its own territory against Soviet Russia whose troops were advancing from the east. On Latvian territory the Estonian People's Army fought against the Baltic Landswehr's army formed of German volunteers. The War of Liberation ended by the signing of the Tartu Peace Treaty on February 2, 1920, when Soviet Russia recognized Estonia as an independent state.

### **3 First Estonian Republic**

Until 1917 Estonia was part of the Russian Empire. Due to the revolutionary events in Russia, the political situation in Estonia was extremely unstable in 1917. Various political parties sprang up; the Bolshevik party was particularly strong. National forces became active, too. In February 1918, they succeeded in forming the provisional government of the First Estonian Republic and in proclaiming Estonia an independent state on February 24, 1918.

#### **4 Nikolai's army**

Soldier of the tsarist army during the reign of Nicholas I when the draft lasted for 25 years.

#### **5 Crimean war**

1853-1856, in many respects the first modern war in History. The Russian Empire with aspirations concerning the Balkans occupied the Ottoman principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia in July 1853. The great powers fearing from a Russian advance in the region and wanting to preserve the European equilibrium sided with the Ottoman Empire in the conflict: Great Britain and France declared war on Russia in March 1854. Although the Habsburg Empire remained neutral its threats to enter the war forced the Russians to evacuate the two Ottoman principalities and they were occupied by the Austrians. In September 1854 allied troops landed on the Crimea in order to capture Sevastopol, the major Russian Black Sea port. The Russians defended the city heroically for 11 months under the command of V. Kornilov and P. Nakhimov. Allied commanders were Lord Raglan for the British and Marshal Saint-Arnaud, succeeded later by Marshal Canrobert, for the French. Military operations, which were marked on both sides by great stubbornness, gallantry, and disregard for casualties, remained localized. Famous episodes were the battles of Balaklava and Inkerman (1854) and the allied capture (1855) of Malakhov and Redan, which preceded the fall of Sevastopol. The accession (1855) of Tsar Alexander II and the capture of Sevastopol led to peace negotiations that resulted in the Treaty of Paris (February 1856). The Crimean war stopped Russian aspirations towards the Balkans and the Straits for another 22 years and rescued the position of the Ottoman Empire as a great power. It also resulted in spoiling the previously very good Habsburg-Russian relation.

#### **6 St**

George Cross: Established in Russia in 1769 for distinguished military merits of officers and generals, and, from 1807, of soldiers and corporals. Until 1913 it was officially referred to as Distinction Military Order, from 1913 as St. George Cross. Servicemen awarded with St. George Crosses of all four degrees were called St. George Cavaliers.

#### **7 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.

## **8 Russian Revolution of 1917**

Revolution in which the tsarist regime was overthrown in the Russian Empire and, under Lenin, was replaced by the Bolshevik rule. The two phases of the Revolution were: February Revolution, which came about due to food and fuel shortages during World War I, and during which the tsar abdicated and a provisional government took over. The second phase took place in the form of a coup led by Lenin in October/November (October Revolution) and saw the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks.

## **9 Keep in touch with relatives abroad**

The authorities could arrest an individual corresponding with his/her relatives abroad and charge him/her with espionage, send them to concentration camp or even sentence them to death.

## **10 Jewish Cultural Autonomy**

Cultural autonomy, which was proclaimed in Estonia in 1926, allowing the Jewish community to promote national values (education, culture, religion).

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

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

## **12 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.

### **13 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.

### **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 NKVD**

People's Committee of Internal Affairs; it took over from the GPU, the state security agency, in 1934.

### **16 Young Octobrist**

In Russian Oktyabrenok, or 'pre-pioneer', designates Soviet children of seven years or over preparing for entry into the pioneer organization.

### **17 Aba Gomer (?-1941)**

born in Belostok, Poland, and graduated from the Department of Philosophy of Bonn University. He lived in Tallinn from 1927 and was the chief rabbi of Estonia. In 1941, he was determined not to go into Soviet back areas and remained on the German-occupied territory. He was killed by Nazis in the fall of 1941.

### **18 Card system**

The food card system regulating the distribution of food and industrial products was introduced in the USSR in 1929 due to extreme deficit of consumer goods and food. The system was cancelled in 1931. In 1941, food cards were reintroduced to keep records, distribute and regulate food supplies to the population. The card system covered main food products such as bread, meat, oil, sugar, salt, cereals, etc. The rations varied depending on which social group one belonged to, and what kind of work one did. Workers in the heavy industry and defense enterprises received a daily ration

of 800 g (miners - 1 kg) of bread per person; workers in other industries 600 g. Non-manual workers received 400 or 500 g based on the significance of their enterprise, and children 400 g. However, the card system only covered industrial workers and residents of towns while villagers never had any provisions of this kind. The card system was cancelled in 1947.

### **19 All-Union pioneer organization**

a communist organization for teenagers between 10 and 15 years old (cf: boy-/ girlscoouts 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.

### **20 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.

### **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 Jewish section of cemetery**

In the USSR city cemeteries were territorially divided into different sectors. They often included common plots, children's plots, titled militaries' plots, Jewish plots, political leaders' plots, etc. In some Soviet cities the separate Jewish cemeteries continued to be maintained and in others they were closed, usually with the excuse that it was due to some technical reason. The family could decide upon the burial of the deceased; Jewish military could for instance be buried either in the military or the Jewish section. Such a division of cemeteries still continues to exist in many parts of the former Soviet Union.



### **23 Stalingrad Battle (17 July 1942- 2 February 1943) The Stalingrad, South-Western and Donskoy Fronts stopped the advance of German armies in the vicinity of Stalingrad**

On 19-20 November 1942 the Soviet troops undertook an offensive and encircled 22 German divisions (330 thousand people) in the vicinity of Stalingrad. The Soviet troops eliminated this German grouping. On 31 January 1943 the remains of the 6th German army headed by General Field Marshal Paulus surrendered (91 thousand people). The victory in the Stalingrad battle was of huge political, strategic and international significance.

### **24 Communal apartment**

The Soviet power wanted to improve housing conditions by requisitioning 'excess' living space of wealthy families after the Revolution of 1917. Apartments were shared by several families with each family occupying one room and sharing the kitchen, toilet and bathroom with other tenants. Because of the chronic shortage of dwelling space in towns communal or shared apartments continued to exist for decades. Despite state programs for the construction of more houses and the liquidation of communal apartments, which began in the 1960s, shared apartments still exist today.

### **25 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 (16 April) they proclaimed his program of action (the April theses) and under the slogan 'All power to the Soviets' began to Bolshevize 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.

### **26 Estonian Government in Evacuation**

Both, the Government of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Central Committee of the Estonian Communist Party were created in 1940 and were evacuated to Moscow as the war started. Their task was to provide for Estonian residents who had been evacuated or drafted into the labor army. They succeeded in restoring life and work conditions of many evacuees. Former leaders of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic took active part in the formation of the Estonian Rifle Corps assisting the transfer of former Estonian citizens from the labor army into the Corps. At the beginning of 1944, top authority institutions of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic were

moved to Leningrad, and the permanent Estonian representation office remained in Moscow. In September 1944, Estonia was re-established as part of the USSR and the Estonian government moved to Tallinn.

## **27 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'.

## **28 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.

## **29 Great Terror (1934-1938)**

During the Great Terror, or Great Purges, which included the notorious show trials of Stalin's former Bolshevik opponents in 1936-1938 and reached its peak in 1937 and 1938, millions of innocent Soviet citizens were sent off to labor camps or killed in prison. The major targets of the Great Terror were communists. Over half of the people who were arrested were members of the party at the time of their arrest. The armed forces, the Communist Party, and the government in general were purged of all allegedly dissident persons; the victims were generally sentenced to death or to long terms of hard labor. Much of the purge was carried out in secret, and only a few cases were tried in public 'show trials'. By the time the terror subsided in 1939, Stalin had managed to bring both the Party and the public to a state of complete submission to his rule. Soviet society was so atomized and the people so fearful of reprisals that mass arrests were no longer necessary. Stalin ruled as absolute dictator of the Soviet Union until his death in March 1953.

## **30 Tukhachevskiy, Mikhail Nikolayevich (1893-1937)**

an ardent revolutionary, Soviet military leader, marshal of the Soviet Union. During the Civil War he was the commander of a number of armies in the South, the Urals, Siberia; troops of the Caucasian and Western front. In 1921 he took part in the suppression of anti-revolutionary uprising. He was

commander of the troops, which put down a rebellion of the peasants in Tambov and Voronezh provinces. Since 1931 deputy minister of the army and navy, since 1934 deputy minister of defense, since 1936 1st deputy of defense minister of the USSR. In 1937 he was commander of the troops of Volga Military District. Tukhachevskiy's works had an impact on the development of Soviet military science and military practice. He was repressed and shot in 1937 on the grounds of treason against the motherland; in 1956 he was posthumously exonerated.

### **31 Yakir**

One of the founders of the Communist Party in Ukraine. In 1938 he was arrested and executed.

### **32 Blyukher, Vasiliy Konstantinovich (1890-1938)**

Soviet commander, marshal of the Soviet Union, hero of the Civil War, the first to be awarded the Order of the Red Banner; in 1921-22 Minister of Defense, chief commander of the People's Revolutionary Army of Dalnevostochnaya Republic. In 1929-38 commander of the Special Dalnevostochnaya Army. Arrested and executed by Stalin.

### **33 Lenin (1870-1924)**

Pseudonym of Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, the Russian Communist leader. A profound student of Marxism, and a revolutionary in the 1890s. He became the leader of the Bolshevik faction of the Social Democratic Party, whom he led to power in the coup d'état of 25th October 1917. Lenin became head of the Soviet state and retained this post until his death.

### **34 Trotsky, Lev Davidovich (born Bronshtein) (1879-1940)**

Russian revolutionary, one of the leaders of the October Revolution of 1917, an outstanding figure of the communist movement and a theorist of Marxism. Trotsky participated in the social-democratic movement from 1894 and supported the idea of the unification of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks from 1906. In 1905 he developed the idea of the 'permanent revolution'. He was one of the leaders of the October Revolution and a founder of the Red Army. He widely applied repressive measures to support the discipline and 'bring everything into revolutionary order' at the front and the home front. The intense struggle with Stalin for the leadership ended with Trotsky's defeat. In 1924 his views were declared petty-bourgeois deviation. In 1927 he was expelled from the Communist Party, and exiled to Kazakhstan, and in 1929 abroad. He lived in Turkey, Norway and then Mexico. He excoriated Stalin's regime as a bureaucratic degeneration of the proletarian power. He was murdered in Mexico by an agent of Soviet special services on Stalin's order.

### **35 Kamenev, Lev Borisovich (1883-1936)**

Soviet communist leader, member of the first Politburo of the Communist Party after the Revolution of 1917. After Lenin's death in 1924, Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Stalin formed a ruling triumvirate and excluded Trotsky from the Party. In 1925 Stalin, in an effort to consolidate his own power, turned against Zinoviev and Kamenev, who then joined Trotsky's opposition. Kamenev was expelled from the Party in 1927, but he recanted, was readmitted, and held minor offices. He was arrested in 1934 accused of complicity in the murder of Kirov and was imprisoned. In 1936 he, Zinoviev, and

13 old Bolsheviks were tried for treason in the first big public purge trial. They confessed and were executed.

### **36 Zinoviev, Grigory Evseyevich (1883-1936)**

Soviet communist leader, head of the Comintern (1919-26) and member of the Communist Party Politburo (1921-26). After Lenin's death in 1924, Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Stalin formed a ruling triumvirate and excluded Trotsky from the Party. In 1925 Stalin, in an effort to consolidate his own power, turned against Zinoviev and Kamenev, who then joined Trotsky's opposition. Zinoviev was removed from his party posts in 1926 and expelled from the Party in 1927. He recanted and was readmitted in 1928 but wielded little influence. In 1936, he, Kamenev, and 13 old Bolsheviks were tried for treason in the first big public purge trial. They confessed and were executed.

### **37 Collectivization in the USSR**

In the late 1920s - early 1930s private farms were liquidated and collective farms established by force on a mass scale in the USSR. Many peasants were arrested during this process. As a result of the collectivization, the number of farmers and the amount of agricultural production was greatly reduced and famine struck in the Ukraine, the Northern Caucasus, the Volga and other regions in 1932-33.

### **38 Kulaks**

In the Soviet Union the majority of wealthy peasants that refused to join collective farms and give their grain and property to Soviet power were called kulaks, declared enemies of the people and exterminated in the 1930s.

### **39 Famine in Ukraine**

In 1920 a deliberate famine was introduced in the Ukraine causing the death of millions of people. It was arranged in order to suppress those protesting peasants who did not want to join the collective farms. There was another dreadful deliberate famine in 1930-1934 in the Ukraine. The authorities took away the last food products from the peasants. People were dying in the streets, whole villages became deserted. The authorities arranged this specifically to suppress the rebellious peasants who did not want to accept Soviet power and join collective farms.

### **40 Guild I**

In tsarist Russia merchants belonged to Guild I, II or III. Merchants of Guild I were allowed to trade with foreign merchants, while the others were allowed to trade only within Russia.

### **41 Percent of Jews admitted to higher educational institutions**

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

### **42 - Six-Day-War**

The first strikes of the Six-Day-War happened on 5th June 1967 by the Israeli Air Force. The entire war only lasted 132 hours and 30 minutes. The fighting on the Egyptian side only lasted four days, while fighting on the Jordanian side lasted three. Despite the short length of the war, this was one of the most dramatic and devastating wars ever fought between Israel and all of the Arab nations. This war resulted in a depression that lasted for many years after it ended. The Six-Day-War increased tension between the Arab nations and the Western World because of the change in mentalities and political orientations of the Arab nations.

#### **43 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.

#### **44 Collective farm (in Russian 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.

#### **45 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.