

Itsik Margolis

Itsik Margolis

Riga

Latvia

Interviewer: Svetlana Kovalchuk

Date of interview: March 2002

I don't remember when my maternal grandfather, Motl Kopelovich, was born. I only know that in his last years he was completely blind. He died as soon as the Germans came, in 1941 [1](#). My grandmother, his wife, Enta, was killed by the Germans. The date of her birth can be determined like this: when her elder son Khaikl was about 60, she must have been about 80.

Grandfather worked as a joiner. As far as I remember, he had a workbench, and was a cabinet-maker. He worked at home. We lived in Dvinsk [today Daugavpils, a city 230 km east of Riga]. Once, most likely in 1937, there was a fire in Dvinsk, and their house burned down completely. Then they moved to another apartment. I think, they rented the apartment as it wasn't their own. I remember them very well. I was spending most of my time at their place. Daddy worked and Mum worked, too. I was mostly taken care of by my grandmother. Granddad was very religious and Grandmother, too. They ate only kosher food. They always observed Sabbath. I remember that Grandfather couldn't see anything any more and I used to take him to the synagogue on holidays.

We spoke only Yiddish at home: Mum, Daddy, Grandmother, Grandfather - all of us! My maternal grandparents had, I think, ten kids, but I could have missed someone. Aunt Fanya got married and left for the town of Vilaki. She might have had a Jewish name, but she was commonly called Fanya [2](#). Then came my mother Riva, as far as I remember, born in 1897. Then there was Moisei, Moisha Kopelovich, he was 92 years old when he died. Moisei was an electrician. He got married only after the war. Then came Kopl; he was a porter, his job was to deliver flour to shops, if I remember correctly. There was Grisha [Grigoriy], then Lyova [Lev], and Isaac, the father of Abram Kopelovich [Itsik's cousin]. And there was Khaikl Kopelovich - the eldest.

Then there was Sonya [Sara], the youngest of the children. Sara Kopelovich lived in Daugavpils, and she was a Communist. In 1935 she was sentenced to death, even though people organized actions in her support.

My paternal grandfather's name was Itsik Margolis. Grandfather was killed in 1920, as he was returning home from the synagogue. I am named in honor of my grandfather. I cannot remember what my paternal grandmother's name was. She didn't live to see the war. There is a district in Daugavpils named Gaek. That's where they lived. They had their own house. I remember how she died. It was approximately in 1936-1937. Father had a sister, Sonya. Her husband also was a joiner, like grandfather. His name was Gedalia. They had three children [Itsik, Hata and Manya].

Father, as far as I remember, was born in 1890. He was born in Dvinsk. Father's name was Abram Margolis. In what year my parents got married is difficult to say. My sister [Rose] was born in 1924, and I - in 1927. I should think that Mother and Daddy had a chuppah. I mean, I don't know for sure, but I think, there was a chuppah. Father, too, wasn't an ardent believer. You can say, half and half.

But, nevertheless he did follow the traditions a little bit. Father didn't eat only kosher food. Only in Grandmother's house was he a little bit religious. But on Friday challah was baked. Father seldom visited the synagogue. But Mother always lit the candles on Friday night. We recited the Kiddush before the meal. Only my grandparents kept Sabbath, but my father sometimes worked that day. I had my bar mitzvah when I was 13 years old.

My parents' education was minimal. Father worked as a house manager in 1941. He did some sort of a bookkeeping job, they wrote something. Maybe he finished some school in Dvinsk. My mother might have completed four-five classes. I don't know. During World War I they lived in Daugavpils. They didn't leave the town. Then, when the Soviet power came, four of my mother's brothers were called into the Red Army [3](#). And they found themselves in Belarus, in the regional center - Vitebsk [4](#).

My father was a house painter. But basically he glued wallpaper. He didn't have his own company, it seems, he was just a free-lance painter. He had a partner. They repaired whatever they were ordered to. In winter there was little work. Mum worked in a sewing studio before the war. There was a firm called 'Markon.' They sewed clothes of very high quality. They took a whole week to sew one coat. There was a cutter named Rutenberg working with them, who was also Jewish. And then something went wrong with their cutter - they had a quarrel or something. They divided the property into shares and they started to work in an apartment. Before the war Mum worked there.

Father enlisted in the army. I can't remember exactly if it was during the revolution [5](#) or after, maybe in 1918 or 1919. I remember that he was wounded. I remember he would touch his shoulder and tell me that's where he was injured.

We lived on Alleinaya Street. Grandmother lived nearby, about 300 meters away. And there was a cellar in my grandmother's house. Once Mum made a cranberry drink, poured it into bottles with long thin necks, closed them with rubber corks with clips. I was carrying them to Grandmother's cellar, striking them one against another lightly - just for fun. And there comes a passer-by saying, 'Don't do it, boy!' And in the next moment I am standing there with only the bottlenecks in my hands. Boy did I get in trouble!

Children very rarely got sweets and candies. I used to earn two santims [small change] from time to time - if I went on an errand and brought something. But very seldom. Or my uncle would give me two santims. This way I could buy myself a toffee with these two santims. When I fell ill, which was very seldom, someone might bring me a small chocolate bar. We were poor. But we were to observe one rule very strictly. If we were on a visit somewhere we weren't allowed to take anything at all from other people! No food, no sweets, nothing! Thank you - I am not hungry! That's how strictly our parents treated us. I was even severely punished in 1940, by both Daddy and Mum. When the Reds [6](#) came, there was a lunch organized for the children in the club - the pioneer organization [7](#) - and I went there. There was coffee there. When I went home I was scolded because I had gone there - because in our family we didn't consider ourselves poor. We thought that really poor people were those who lived in basements. I was frequently punished and I really got in trouble that time. Father was very strict. Father didn't keep kosher, but he told me: 'You must eat only at home.'

We had no toys. I remember, Grandmother had sewn a red ball for me from scraps. We played football with it. We also collected candy wrappings. Other children ate sweets, and all we did was

collect the wrappings. We played like this: we folded up a wrapping and threw it, and then measured the distance, and if yours was the farthest, you took all the others.

My sister was quiet, but I was a brawler. Once I had a fight during a lesson: somebody called me a son of a bitch. He wouldn't understand my words of reason, so I had to slap him in the face. The teacher came to our home and complained about me. I was always looking for trouble. I was beaten, I was punished, and all the same I continued to scuffle. I was really very restless. I tried to come home late, so that they wouldn't have time to punish me. I would come home late, when it was time to go to sleep, and the next day - go to school. I tried to undress as fast as possible, get to bed and hide under the blanket. Mum wouldn't permit Daddy to punish me then: 'He's sleeping, don't touch him.'

We lived very close to Mother's mother and father. Grandmother wouldn't mess around with me. She only complained about me. Their apartment had several entrances. She would drive me out of one door, and I would slip in through the other. But my sister was touchy - 'Why is Rose not coming?' Grandma would ask, it means she took offence for something. I had a really good relation with my sister. She was so feeble, and if I was given something good to eat I would give it to her. I was healthier. If she was given a cake, I thought, that's all right, I'll do without it somehow. If something was given to me, I would always give it to her.

I can write and read Yiddish. There were two schools with teaching in Yiddish in Dvinsk. At first we studied near the Dvina [Daugava in Latvian] River, there was a pre-school institution there. We studied there for about one year, I can't remember exactly. I can't even remember the teachers in that school. We hadn't studied there for long and we were transferred to another school, on Dvoryanskaya Street. In the first grade of school I remember there was a teacher named Maimin. Lern Maimin lived in Daugavpils, she's dead now. She entered the classroom, as I now recollect, and we rose up, and she said: 'Sit down! My name is Haya Maimin. You can call me Lern Haya,' or teacher Haya in Yiddish. I studied up to the 4th grade in that school. Lern Haya used to play the piano and sing and dance with us. She gave us good marks. Our class supervisor in 1940 was called Lern Kats, teacher Kats, her first name I have forgotten.

Every subject was in Yiddish. There was also Latvian language and the history of Latvia. We also had religious classes. We called the religion teacher Rebele. Religious classes were given quite frequently. I remember the teacher, a small rabbi. We had lots of out-of-school activities, too. Our school had a very good choir and dancing club. A lot of kids from my class were killed in the German concentration camp in Daugavpils.

I took part in Jewish organizations. When I was small, I was a member of the 'Hertslic' [named after Theodor Herzl] [8](#), I was six-seven years old then and wanted to get accustomed to Jewish traditions. In the summer we went hiking; I was the youngest, but I didn't look so young. Interestingly, there was also table tennis. Later I was a member of the Hashomer Hatzair [9](#) - the Zionist scout organization. We were planning to leave for Israel [then Palestine]. Legally it was impossible to go. So we meant to emigrate illegally.

Nevertheless, to be accepted in your people's state it was necessary to undergo a serious preparation. We - members of the Hashomer Hatzair - were assigned a plot of land and we worked on that site. Members of the Hashomer Hatzair worked one or two years in agriculture, and then they illegally sent you to Israel. In 1939 I was only twelve, I worked only one summer, but on 17th

June 1940 Latvia became Soviet [10](#).

Everything changed dramatically as soon as the Soviet power was established. When the Soviets came, schools were not closed but changed. We began to wear pioneer ties and badges. I was a pioneer, later a Komsomol [11](#) member. From members of Jewish organizations we all changed into pioneers, as if there had never been any Jewish organizations at all! We were so afraid - they could arrest you at once and that's it! The synagogue was closed right away. I remember, there was a pioneer palace or a club of some kind in the synagogue.

When the war began the next year with the German invasion, we couldn't stay in Latvia. We escaped at the last second: Mother, Father, my sister Rose and I ran away on foot. We first arrived in Novosibirsk in Russia, at a collective farm [12](#) named after the 18th Party Congress. At first we had hardly any clothes to wear. There, I remember, bread was baked with aniseed, and it tasted somewhat bitter. But at least there was bread. We had at least something to eat.

Then we went to Toluchin. Mum got a job there. She was an expert at dressmaking. People told her that if she continued to work such long hours as she did, she would die of hunger. She did very intricate work, whereas the others sewed haphazardly. And Daddy went to look for a warmer place to live.

That is how we left for Kazakhstan, the Almaty region, Taldykurgan district. We went to live on a collective farm called Belokamenka. Ukrainians used to live there. A very beautiful place, especially in the spring. High mountains, as I remember, near the Chinese border. Mother fell ill with dysentery there and died in a hospital in 1943. And before that, Father was taken away, drafted into the labor army [13](#). I don't know how that happened, but my sister says he said something wrong, something against the Soviets, presumably that we had a better life in independent Latvia or something like that. Later he was shot [14](#). I was still there when Father was arrested and taken to the labor army. That was about 1942 or the beginning of 1943.

When my mother died several people, who were evacuated like us, moved away. I also went to Tashkent [the capital of Uzbekistan] soon, and my sister stayed. My sister was suffering from hunger - there was nothing to eat. She was all swollen from hunger, I never asked her the details, it's too painful to think about it. Anyway, later Rose was taken in by a Jewish family in Taldykurgan. She was ill, was in hospital, they looked after her. I returned in 1944 and she arrived later. We arrived in April, the war was still going on. We were a Latvian group in Tashkent. We were gathered in a group of young guys of 14, 15, 16 years of age. We studied in a vocational school. My specialization was in tool mechanic. Then our entire group was taken to Riga, together with our teachers. We completed four years in that vocational school, and finished it. Some of the students got a job at VEF [the State Electrical Factory].

I was transferred to another technical school, and spent two years studying there to acquire the profession of a shoe repairman. Education wasn't quite comprehensive there, but at least it was some education. We worked occasionally, too, to earn some money.

My sister came from Kazakhstan in 1945 and lived in the family of Sonya Kopelovich [our maternal aunt], all the time. They lived at first in Rezekne [town 240 km east of Riga], then for a short time in Auts, and then Sonya's husband was assigned somewhere else. He worked for the KGB [15](#). Sonya had three children, and Rose brought them up, she served as a housekeeper. And then, after

the kids grew up, she went to work. She now lives in Riga. My sister never married. She stayed alone. She suffered a lot during the war. She is weak and timid. I have a very nice sister, but I don't have the right to tell my sister's life story. I don't want to speak with her about the war years.

I finished school and started to work in the Industrial Association of Moskovsky district [16](#). By vocation I am a shoe repairman. Then I worked in different places. I worked in a workshop, in a studio, at the factory 'Rigas Apavi,' at the 'Record' factory. Almost all my life I worked at this last factory. I have an uninterrupted work experience; I retired at the age of 60, but worked for five more years. I was a member of the workers' committee of the factory. I traveled a lot all over the Soviet Union. I have been to many places - in Central Asia, the Crimea, Moldova, Moscow, Armenia. Now if I have orders for repairing, I work, if not, I relax.

When I was a young guy, I visited my relatives several times when I was on holiday or during the summer vacation. I had no one left - neither father nor mother. At first I went to see Sonya in Rezekne, then I went to Daugavpils for holiday. My maternal uncle Moisei lived in Daugavpils. My relatives supported me financially while I was on vacations. I spent most of the time in Riga in the family of my cousin Zelik Kopelovich.

I continued to live in Riga, in rented apartments, in hostels. I got married in 1961. With much effort I managed to get an apartment - a room of 6.8 square meters plus kitchen of 2.5 meters. The courtyard was beautiful, green, with apple trees and a garden. There were even vegetable beds divided between the residents and I had one too, but we failed to grow anything there except for grass. My spouse's name is Libe-Leya Girshovna, Lyuba, maiden name Nagle. She worked with me at the same factory. She is from Ludza [town 170 km east of Riga]. She was born in 1936. My wife had no special education and finished a secondary school in Ludza. She was a young girl when her mother died. Her father Hirsh Nagle went with the children - with Lyuba and her brother Yakov - to live in Riga. She worked in different places. We had no chuppah at our wedding. We had only a civil wedding. We have no money and our wedding was really modest. I speak Russian with my wife, although she perfectly understands Yiddish.

Lyuba's father's name is Hirshl Naglya or Nagle. After the evacuation they returned to Ludza, and then moved to Riga, in approximately 1946-1947. When he died, nobody knew how to spell his second name - neither his brother, who is in Israel now, nor my wife Lyuba.

All throughout the long Soviet period I remembered that I am a Jew [17](#). I had no negative consequence in my work places for my Jewishness [18](#). I have many friends - Jews, Russians and Latvians. But my Jewishness wasn't something special - I could still attend the synagogue, but I worked on Sabbath. My factory worked on Saturday and Sunday. I didn't keep kosher. We kept our Jewish tradition in our family.

Each year, on the third Sunday in August, we go to Ludza, where the Jews shot by the Nazis are buried. I had a friend Arkady - Jewish name Abram - who always wrote the scripts on the stones in Hebrew. But he died recently. Who will organize everything now?! The graves in Ludza are maintained fairly well. There are no unattended graves. There are many graves of those who died during the war, of whom Jews make up 70-80 percent. There is a monument in the city near the lake. And there is a monument in Pogulyanka, too. They take very good care of the graves - better than anywhere! Financing? The administration gives them something before this commemorative event, but people look after the graves even without that. Schoolchildren also help. There are nine

to ten Jews left in Ludza now.

I have one daughter, Raisa or Raya, born in 1963. She worked at a factory as a secretary and a typist. Then she worked in a cafe in a school. Now she isn't working, she is a housewife. She got married in 1983. The wedding took place in Moskovskaya Street, where I worked. Later my daughter had a chuppah, too. The chuppah was set up separately from the synagogue, as was customary. In the Soviet Union Church was kept separate from the State. A wedding ceremony in the synagogue wasn't recognized by civil Soviet law [19](#). Of course, there was a violin playing. At the chuppah we got even more drunk than we did at the wedding. I wasn't a Communist, so I could drink as much as I like. Communists weren't allowed to go to the synagogue, either. My daughter is like me, externally and in character. My granddaughter is also like me. They are dashing girls.

My granddaughter's name is Elena or Lena for short. In June she will turn 18. About the time when Latvia became independent [20](#), the first Jewish school was established in Riga. Lena attended the Jewish school. She is in Israel now - she went under the program 'Alle.' She doesn't want to leave Israel. She likes it there so much, in spite of the fighting. Her paternal grandfather and grandmother live in Krustpils [town 140 km east of Riga]. They are Jews. In our family - my wife and me, my daughter's husband and parents - all are pure-blooded Jews from far back in history. We have never had such a thing as 'friendship of the peoples' [mixed marriages] in our family!

I have always attended the synagogue! Not very often, of course, but on holidays for sure! Especially on Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Chanukkah, Pesach. How could we observe traditions in this country, if we usually worked on Saturdays? In the old times I worked both on Saturdays and Sundays. But, nevertheless, we tried to support the national spirit a little bit. Now I regularly go to the synagogue. I mean each Saturday. I very rarely miss the occasion. I pray and I have got my own coverlet - the tallit. I have a friend whom I often meet in the synagogue - Mathew, a teacher of history, and we talk only in Yiddish between ourselves. He doesn't want to talk to me in Russian. If I say something in Russian, he is angry with me.

I've never been to Israel, although my wife has been there; her brother lives there. I spent three months visiting my cousin Zelik Kopelovich in America at his invitation. He told me that his father had been a joiner, but was never a hard worker. His mother had had a job in the market place selling second-hand articles. They bought overcoats, repaired and resold them. And footwear they sold, too. It was a hard life. And then they moved from Daugavpils to Riga. In Riga she opened a store as well. Life became easier. They began to live better. Then the Soviet power was established. Their life didn't change for the worse - they were workers, not that rich. Selling and buying operations were then carried out by both Latvians and Jews. The poor were being resettled from the basements to the apartments of the rich, who were sent to shared apartments [21](#).

Zelik and his wife Bella had their wedding in Riga in 1958, and they had a chuppah, too, in accordance with all the rules. It is a canopy on four posts made of fabric, with which they cover the groom and the bride and lead them to the prayer house, and people are walking around with lit candles. Music plays, serious music, everyone is crying. Then they pour wine in glasses, give a sip to the groom, a sip to the bride. Then they put the glass on the floor, and the groom must step on it and break it into pieces! And at once you hear a burst of cheerful music! Now's when merrymaking starts! The glass is usually wrapped in a cloth to prevent pieces from scattering. But the chuppah was put up not in the synagogue, but at the wedding. They have one daughter.

Glossary:

1 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.

2 Common name

Russified or Russian first names used by Jews in everyday life and adopted in official documents. The Russification of first names was one of the manifestations of the assimilation of Russian Jews at the turn of the 19th and 20th century. In some cases only the spelling and pronunciation of Jewish names was Russified (e.g. Isaac instead of Yitskhak; Boris instead of Borukh), while in other cases traditional Jewish names were replaced by similarly sounding Russian names (e.g. Eugenia instead of Ghita; Yury instead of Yuda). When state anti-Semitism intensified in the USSR at the end of the 1940s, most Jewish parents stopped giving their children traditional Jewish names to avoid discrimination.

3 Soviet Army

The armed forces of the Soviet Union, originally called Red Army and renamed Soviet Army in February 1946. After the Bolsheviks came to power, in November 1917, they commenced to organize the squads of worker's army, called Red Guards, where workers and peasants were recruited on voluntary bases. The commanders were either selected from among the former tsarist officers and soldiers or appointed directly by the Military and Revolutionary Committee of the Communist Party. In early 1918 the Bolshevik government issued a decree on the establishment of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army and mandatory drafting was introduced for men between 18 and 40. In 1918 the total number of draftees was 100 thousand officers and 1.2 million soldiers. Military schools and academies training the officers were restored. In 1925 the law on compulsory military service was adopted and annual drafting was established. The term of service was established as follows: for the Red Guards- two years, for junior officers of aviation and fleet- three years, for medium and senior officers- 25 years. People of exploiter classes (former noblemen, merchants, officers of the tsarist army, priest, factory owner, etc. and their children) as well as kulaks (rich peasants) and cossacks were not drafted in the army. The law as of 1939 cancelled restriction on drafting of men belonging to certain classes, students were not drafted but went through military training in their educational institutions. On the 22nd June 1941 Great Patriotic War was unleashed and the drafting in the army became exclusively compulsory. First, in June-July 1941 general and complete mobilization of men was carried out as well as partial mobilization of women. Then annual drafting of men, who turned 18, was commenced. When WWII was over, the Red Army amounted to over 11 million people and the demobilization process commenced. By the beginning of 1948 the Soviet Army had been downsized to 2 million 874 thousand people. The

youth of drafting age were sent to the restoration works in mines, heavy industrial enterprises, and construction sites. In 1949 a new law on general military duty was adopted, according to which service term in ground troops and aviation was three years and in navy- four years. Young people with secondary education, both civilian and military, with the age range of 17-23 were admitted in military schools for officers. In 1968 the term of the army service was contracted to two years in ground troops and in the navy to three years. That system of army recruitment has remained without considerable changes until the breakup of the Soviet Army (1991-93).

4 Vitebsk

Provincial town in the Russian Empire, near the Baltic Republics, with 66,000 inhabitants at the end of the 19th century; birthplace of Russian Jewish painter Marc Chagall (1887-1985). Today in Belarus.

5 Russian Revolution of 1917

Revolution in which the tsarist regime was verthrown 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.

6 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 Bolshevikize the Soviets and prepare for a proletariat revolution. Agitation proceeded on a vast scale, especially in the army. The Bolsheviks set about creating their own armed forces, the Red Guard. Having overthrown the Provisional Government, they created a government with the support of the II Congress of Soviets (the October Revolution), to which they admitted some left-wing SRs in order to gain the support of the peasantry. In 1952 the Bolshevik party was renamed the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

7 All-Union pioneer organization

a communist organization for teenagers between 10 and 15 years old (cf: boy-/ girlscouts in the US). The organization aimed at educating the young generation in accordance with the communist ideals, preparing pioneers to become members of the Komsomol and later the Communist Party. In the Soviet Union, all teenagers were pioneers.

8 Herzl, Theodor (1860-1904)

Jewish journalist and writer, the founder of modern political Zionism. Born in Budapest, Hungary, Herzl settled in Vienna, Austria, where he received legal education. However, he devoted himself to journalism and literature. He was a correspondent for the 'Neue Freie Presse', the well known Viennese liberal newspaper, in Paris between 1891-1895. In his articles he closely followed French society and politics at the time of the Dreyfuss affair, which made him interested in his Jewishness and in the fate of Jews. From 1896, when the English translation of his 'Judenstaat' (The Jewish State) appeared, his career and reputation changed. He became the founder and one of the most indefatigable promoters of modern political Zionism. In addition to his literary activity for the cause of Zionism, he traveled all over Europe to meet and negotiate with politicians, public figures and monarchs. He set up the First Zionist World Congress (Basle, 1897) and was active in organizing several subsequent ones.

9 Hashomer Hatzair

'The Young Watchman'; A Zionist-socialist pioneering movement founded in Eastern Europe, Hashomer Hatzair trained youth for kibbutz life and set up kibbutzim in Palestine. During World War II, members were sent to Nazi-occupied areas and became leaders in Jewish resistance groups. After the war, Hashomer Hatzair was active in 'illegal' immigration to Palestine.

10 Annexation of Latvia to the USSR

upon execution of the Molotov- Ribbentrop Pact on 2nd October 1939 the USSR demanded that Latvia transferred military harbors, air fields and other military infrastructure to the needs of the Red Army within three days. Also, the Soviet leadership assured Latvia that it was no interference with the country's internal affairs but that they were just taking preventive measures to ensure that this territory was not used against the USSR. On 5th October the Treaty on Mutual Assistance was signed between Latvia and the USSR. The military contingent exceeding by size and power the Latvian National army entered Latvia. On 16th June 1940 the USSR declared another ultimatum to Latvia. The main requirement was retirement of the 'government hostile to the Soviet Union' and formation of the new government under supervision of representatives of the USSR. President K. Ulmanis accepted all items of the ultimatum and addressed the nation to stay calm. On 17th June 1940 new divisions of the Soviet military entered Latvia with no resistance. On 21st June 1940 the new government, friendly to the USSR, was formed mostly from the communists released from prisons. On 14-15th July elections took place in Latvia. Its results were largely manipulated by the new country's leadership and communists won. On 5th August 1940 the newly elected Supreme Soviet addressed the Supreme Soviet of the USSR requesting to annex Latvia to the USSR, which was done.

11 Komsomol

Communist youth political organization created in 1918. The task of the Komsomol was to spread of the ideas of communism and involve the worker and peasant youth in building the Soviet Union. The Komsomol also aimed at giving a communist upbringing by involving the worker youth in the political struggle, supplemented by theoretical education. The Komsomol was more popular than

the Communist Party because with its aim of education people could accept uninitiated young proletarians, whereas party members had to have at least a minimal political qualification.

12 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.

13 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. [14](#) 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.

15 KGB

Committee of State Security, took over from NKVD: People's Committee of Internal Affairs; which earlier used to be called the GPU, the state security agency.

16 The mandatory job assignment in the USSR

Graduates of higher educational institutions had to complete a mandatory 2-year job assignment issued by the institution from which they graduated. After finishing this assignment young people were allowed to get employment at their discretion in any town or organization.

17 Item 5

This was the nationality/ethnicity line, which was included on all job application forms and in

passports. Jews, who were considered a separate nationality in the Soviet Union, were not favored in this respect from the end of World War II until the late 1980s.

18 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. 'Cosmopolitan' 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'. (Also see Doctors' Plot below)

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.

19 Struggle against religion

The 1930s was a time of anti-religion struggle in the USSR. In those years it was not safe to go to synagogue or to church. Places of worship, statues of saints, etc. were removed; rabbis, Orthodox and Roman Catholic priests disappeared behind KGB walls.

20 Reestablishment of the Latvian Republic

On 4th May 1990 Supreme Soviet of the Latvian Soviet Republic has accepted the declaration in which it was informed of the demand to restore independence of Latvia, and the transition period to restoration of full independence has been declared. The Soviet leadership in Moscow refused to acknowledge the independence of Lithuania and initiated an economic blockade on the country. At the referendum held on 3rd March 1991, over 90 percent of the participants voted for independence. On 21st August 1991 the parliament took a decision on complete restoration of the prewar statehood of Latvia. The western world finally recognized Latvian independence and so did the USSR on 24th August 1991. In September 1991 Latvia joined the United Nations. Through the years of independence Latvia has implemented deep economic reforms, introduced its own currency (Lat) in 1993, completed privatization and restituted the property to its former owners. Economic growth constitutes 5- 7% per year. Also, it's taken the course of escaping the influence of Russia and integration into European structures. In February 1993 Latvia introduced the visa procedure with Russia, and in 1995 the last units of the Russian army left the country. Since 2004 Latvia has been a member of NATO and the European Union.

21 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.