

Ronny Sheyn-Kuznetsova



This is me at the age of five, before deportation. The photo was taken in Valga in the spring of 1941.

My parents got married in 1925. I was born in 1936. My name, Ronny, was chosen by my parents from a book of Hebrew female names. When I was a baby, our family was well-off and happy. It was a traditional, decent, prosperous and caring Jewish family. My parents took good care of me. After I was born, Mother kept working. I had a baby-sitter.

German was spoken at home and I started speaking that language, too. Of course, Estonian became my second language. My parents knew Yiddish and Russian. Father also knew English. Mother knew Latvian very well as she was born in Latvia. Both of them spoke Estonia like all Jews, Russians and Letts who lived in Estonia. No matter what language was spoken at home in Jewish families, all of them were fluent in Estonian.

In 1939 when the Molotov -Ribbentrop Pact was signed in Estonia, Soviet military bases were built. In 1940 Estonia was annexed to the Soviet Union, occupied to be more exact. All people who held some post the new regime was seeking, had some property, needed by the new hosts, were declared enemies of the people. New red terror and repressions started.

It was a scary time for our family. Our house was needed by the Soviet authorities. All of us were forced to settle in one room and the rest of the house was occupied by a Soviet officer. First he lived there by himself, then his family moved there, too. They lived in our house, and there was such a feeling as if they owned it, and we were importuning dwellers. Our families did not

communicate. The officer had two children, but I never played with them.

Father's enterprise was nationalized. Fortunately, Grandfather died in 1939 and didn't have to witness that. Father shared warehouses with someone and some other premises. He also owned several hectares of land and the Soviet regime took it all in 1940. I remember that Father stopped working after that and it was very strange to see him in the house.

Mother's dentistry equipment was also nationalized. She was told to give it to the polyclinic. However, after that Mother was employed there as a dentist. All the property of my father's brothers was nationalized, too.

Then the 14th of June 1941 came - deportation of tens of thousands of innocent people. It was a fatal horrible day. I was five. I remember some episodes. It was early morning and Mother woke me up. She was in tears. I woke up and saw a soldier with a rifle at the door. There were some strangers in military uniforms in the room. Dad came up to me and said, 'Get dressed, little daughter. We are leaving.' He said it quietly. His eyes were streaming with tears. I asked to take my favorite red cat with me and they didn't let me. I was sobbing and said to him, 'Good bye, Willy!'