

Liya Epshteyn And Her Family



From left to right: my cousin Isai Rosenfeld, my mother, Revekka Epshteyn, me, mother's sister Rahil Rosenfeld, during the celebrating of my mother's birthday at our home in Tallinn in 1965. My parents and our kin kept on observing Jewish traditions. At that time the Soviet regime began struggling against religion. We understood that Father should not go to the synagogue, but no regime could ban marking Jewish holidays at home! We did not mark Soviet holidays at home. Those, who were working, were to attend festive demonstrations on 1st May, 7th November with their organization. For us Soviet holidays were ordinary days-off. In the late 1960s the Soviet regime permitted Jews to leave the USSR for permanent abode in Israel. Many our relatives immigrated. My favorite cousin Isai Auguston and his wife are living in Cleveland, USA. Isai left Latvia, when it became independent. It was not their choice. Their children were leaving, and Isai with his wife did not want to part with them. Now Isai and his wife are living in the seniors' community in Cleveland. Isai is nostalgic about his home, Riga. He often writes me in his letters: 'Feel happy, that you never got to immigrate, have your own apartment, vernacular walls, chance to walk along native streets ? You do not have a disease called nostalgia, for which there is no cure. Rejoice in every day you spend at home.' At his age, it is hard to change your mode of life, you whereabouts. The older the man, the harder it is for him to find new friends and adapt to a new life style. Besides, Isai is a very active man, it is hard for him to loiter. He is a historian. He was a history teacher, one of the founders of the Jewish school in Riga. When he retired, Isai founded the Museum of Latvian Defense in Riga. He visited places, liberated by the Latvian division, gathered documents, photographs and it appealed to him. If he found things to do in Cleveland, he would not suffer from nostalgia. My father was happy to have an opportunity to leave for Israel. He, a Zionist, thought Israel to be the symbol of revival of the Jewry, the dreamland. I was also willing to leave. Unfortunately, we could not do that because of Mother. She was very sick and the doctors prohibited her to change climate. There was no way we could leave Mother here.