

# Edith Umova

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Tallinn

Estonia

Interviewer: Ella Levitskaya

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*I interviewed Edith Umova at her home. She lives alone in a two-room apartment in a quiet street in the old part of Tallinn. Edith is short and slim. She feels quite uneasy talking to a stranger. She is a little constrained. She seems to be used to letting no one into her inner world. However, Edith changes instantly, when she develops trust in the person she is talking to. The tension and restraint disappear. Edith shows her emotions and humor in the discussion. Her secluded way of life is a burden for her, but she, probably, needs some time to get out of her shell and make sure she feels comfortable in other people's company and that the others feel at ease having her around.*



[My family background](#)

[Growing up](#)

[The Soviet invasion of the Baltics](#)

[During the war](#)

[After the war](#)

[Glossary](#)

## **My family background**

My father's parents lived in Tallinn. I don't know where exactly my grandfather and grandmother were born, but they both came from Estonia. My grandfather's name was Haim Umov, and my grandmother's name was Hel'ke. Her maiden name was Vigodskaya. My grandfather was a tailor, and he was a good one. He had wealthy clients who ordered clothes from him. My grandmother didn't work after getting married. Their family was wealthy. I didn't know any of my grandfather's relatives, but my grandmother had a brother, who lived in Tallinn. He had died before I was born, but I grew up with his son Stakh.

Grandmother Hel'ke had many children, but a few died in infancy. Six of them survived: four boys and two girls. My father Hilel was the oldest of the children that survived. He was born in 1902. After him came his sister Tsypa. The next one was Abram. Then came my father's brother Elias and his sister Zisle [Tsyliya], but I don't know the sequence they were born in. The youngest one was

Yakov.

My father's family spoke Yiddish. It goes without saying that they spoke fluent Estonian, too. My grandparents were religious. I don't know how deeply religious they were, but they observed Jewish traditions and taught their children to do so. They celebrated Jewish holidays at home and went to the synagogue together. Before 1944 there was a very beautiful choral synagogue in Tallinn [1](#).

I don't know what kind of education my father and his siblings received. Somehow, this subject was never mentioned at home. However, my father had some elementary Jewish education. When my father grew old enough, he started learning the tailor's trade from my grandfather. It was common with Jewish families that fathers trained their children in their trades. However, when their children felt like learning something different, they did so, but parents encouraged their children to follow into their business, if they were good at it. My father liked garment making and wanted to learn this trade. He was equally good at making men's, women's and children's clothing. My father was very good at tailoring. I think my father was the only one of all children, who became a tailor. His younger sister Zisle was a hat maker. I can't remember the trade of my father's sister Tsypa or his brothers.

Besides, the whole family was good at playing music. They made a real family orchestra. Zisle could sing beautifully. She could have become a professional performer, if she had studied singing. Tsypa had a less beautiful voice, but she sang beautifully as well. Elias played the violin, and my father could actually play any musical instrument he found at hand. I wish they had paid closer attention to musical talents at the time so that their children could have got some musical education.

My mother's family lived in Viljandi, a small, but very beautiful Estonian town. My mother and I never discussed this subject, but somehow I think my maternal grandparents also came from Estonia. My grandfather's name was Nohum Nahumov, and my grandmother's name was Eide. Her maiden name was Epstein. They lived in Viljandi, and this was where their children were born. My grandmother had a brother. His surname was Epstein, but I can't remember his first name. He lived in Tallinn with his family. My mother came from a very poor family. My grandfather caught fish, and my grandmother had a little store where she sold old items. People brought her whatever old junk they had: clothes, shoes, pots and pans or whatever else my grandmother sold in her store. She didn't make much on reselling these items, particularly considering that her suppliers were also poor people. They were awfully poor.

My grandparents had eleven or twelve children, but only four girls and one boy survived. The oldest one was my mother's brother Leo. The next one was a girl. Her name was Juganna. She must have had a Jewish name, but I don't know it. My mother's second sister was Sheve, but for some reason her family called her Pipsy. My mother Hasse was next. She was born in 1908. The youngest sister's name was Lintzi. Their childhood was no fun, I'd say. They were often hungry, and my grandmother couldn't spend much time with her children, being busy in her store. My mother told me their main food was bread and salted sprats, and they were happy when there was bread on their table. However, they grew up strong and healthy. My mother liked salted fish till her old age. She found it delicious.

My grandfather, Nohum, didn't live to grow old. He died in his early 50s. There was something wrong with his lungs. He was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Viljandi. I can't remember when, but

according to my mother this happened when she was in her teens and lived with her parents. When my grandfather died, his family faced an even more difficult life. The children only got some elementary education. I guess, my mother finished elementary school and had to assist her mother in the store. In 1929 my mother went to Tallinn. Viljandi was a small town, and there were more chances to find a job in Tallinn. Mama had no special education and went to work at the 'Punnale Kojt' haberdashery factory. The factory produced lace, ribbons and sawing accessories. My mother worked packing laces. She worked there for twelve years until June 1941.

My mother met my father in Viljandi. Jewish boys and girls got together visiting each other and going out to dance or chat. My father met a guy, who was from this bunch of young Jewish people. He liked joining them on weekends. My mother was at one of the gatherings, and she met my father there. Her close friend Frieda Marjenburger met my father's brother Abram. When my mother moved to Tallinn, my father often met her after work. They went out for walks or to the theater.

They got married in 1932. My mother told me that my father's parents weren't quite happy about this marriage. My father came from a rather wealthy family. He had a good job and earned well, when all of a sudden he found a beggar of a fiancée, who could hardly read or write and was a plain factory worker. Many years afterward Grandfather Haim was kind to my mother, while Grandmother Hel'ke continued disliking my mother. Well, to say the truth, even my father's sisters used to say that Grandmother Hel'ke was a difficult person. My parents had a traditional Jewish wedding in Tallinn. My father's brother Abram and my mother's close friend Frieda Marjenburger also got married at about the same time. It was interesting how two brothers met two close friends and both got married. Abram and Frieda had only one son. His name was Wulf.

My father's sister Tsypa remained single. I don't know how it happened that she never got married, though she was quite good-looking. Abram married my mother's friend. Elias wasn't married either. He was a success with women, and he used to say that he had no need to get married, considering that women liked him anyway. My father's younger brother Yakov wife's name was Rebekka. They had one son, but I don't remember his name.

My mother's sisters and brothers also had their families. My mother's older brother Leo married Sophia, nee Prenski. In 1926 their only son Avi was born. Juganna married Israel Prenski, who was related to Sophia. They had two daughters: Nehama and Veronique. Nehama lives in Israel, and Veronique died tragically, when she was 15. Nobody knew she had a weak heart. Once she and her friend went out to dance and there she fell dead on the floor. The doctors explained later that she had been going too fast, and her heart failed her.

Sheve got married in 1940. Her marital name was Kozlowski. The youngest sister got married for money, I believe. Her husband was much older than her and he was hunch-backed, but he was rather wealthy. After getting married Lintzi moved to Tartu where her husband lived. Once they went horse riding and merely disappeared. My mother assumed that they may have fallen victims to robbers, but regardless of what had happened, their bodies were never discovered. So we never found out what happened to them.

## **Growing up**

After getting married my parents rented the first floor in the house of my grandmother's brother Wigodski. I can't remember how many rooms there were. My father's cousin Stakh Wigodski lived on the second floor. He was a student of Tartu University and spent more time in Tartu than in Tallinn. We lived in this house until the start of the Great Patriotic War [2](#).

Shortly before getting married my father went to work at the Estonia Theater. He made costumes for the theater, and in the evening he worked at home making clothes for the theatrical staff. My mother kept on working as a packager at the factory. My mother had no dowry, and the newly weds had to start their marital life from scratch. However, they managed to buy whatever they needed and go on. In 1934 my older sister Lea was born. I was born in 1937. My father chose the name Edith for me.

We observed Jewish traditions at home, though I wouldn't say my parents were religious. My father never prayed at home and only visited the synagogue on Jewish holidays. We celebrated Jewish holidays at home according to the rules. My mother cooked traditional Jewish food and covered the table with a white tablecloth. On Pesach we had matzah at home and we ate no bread then. We also celebrated other Jewish holidays according to all the rules.

During the Estonian Republic [3](#) the attitude toward Jews was very good. Jews were treated like full members of the society, and there were actually no limitations of their rights. The only thing was that Jews weren't allowed to be officers in the army or hold top-level official positions, but this was the only restriction of their rights. My father was a member of the Jewish society of culture in Tallinn. After the war we found a record in the archive confirming that my father was a member of this society between 1926 and 8th June 1940. When Estonia became a Soviet Republic [4](#), this society and other Jewish organizations were terminated.

We spoke Jewish and Estonian at home. My grandmother and relatives spoke Jewish between themselves and to us, while my father spoke Estonian to my sister and me. He also spoke Estonian at work. My father believed that living in Estonia my sister and I simply had to speak the official language of the country. I think he was right. So my sister and I could speak fluent Estonian.

My father was fond of music, and one of the first purchases that my parents made together was a piano. My father often played the piano for us. The theater where he worked as a tailor also valued his musical and artistic talents. Sometimes he was given a role, and at times his roles also contained some lines. My father also took responsibility for the household. My mother went to work and gave birth to us, her two children. However, my father didn't complain. He made clothes, including underwear, for my mother, my sister and me. He even made us rag-dolls and painted their faces. He could do and make anything.

### **The Soviet invasion of the Baltics**

The Soviet regime didn't affect our family. My father continued working at the theater, and my mother retained her job at the factory. We weren't wealthy, and our family didn't undergo any oppressions. My father's brother Elias was recruited into the reserve troops. Tsypa accepted the Soviet regime with enthusiasm. She joined either the Komsomol [5](#), or the Party; I can't remember which one it was. She was dedicated to ideas, while the others kept living their routine life.

I was four years old when the war began. We heard that Germany had attacked the Soviet Union as we were listening to Molotov's speech [6](#) on the radio. Surely, after Hitler's army invaded Poland in 1939 [7](#) all residents of Estonia were aware that the fascists were exterminating Jews. However, many people didn't take it seriously. I think Jews particularly had to evacuate from Estonia. They just had to escape, but many people stayed at home. In Estonia Jews always lived side by side with their German neighbors and they never faced negative attitudes in this respect. They were probably hoping that the fascists were going to treat the Estonian Jews somehow differently. Besides, many people had been so scared of the resettlement that took place in Estonia [8](#) just one week before the war that they were more afraid of the Bolsheviks [9](#) than the Germans.

### **During the war**

My mother worked at the factory until the end of June 1941. She never missed one day of work. When the factory announced evacuation, my mother started packing. However, my father refused to evacuate. He might have evacuated to Yaroslavl [today Russia] with his theater, but for some reasons my father decided to stay in Tallinn. He was never interested in any politics and he was probably hoping he could manage all right, when the Germans arrived. They needed good tailors, didn't they? My mother didn't insist that he went with us. We evacuated on 4th July 1941. My father's sister Tsypa was with us. She was single and was very much attached to our family. Zisle was also with us for some time. My father's parents and Grandmother Eide evacuated with her daughters Juganna and Sheve.

I have vague and random memories of our trip. I remember that Lea and I wore fancy red coats that our father had made for us. We took a train and I remember my father giving us bags full of candy through the window. I remember a bombing. The train stopped, and people were jumping off the train. My mother grabbed Lea, and Aunt Zisle had me and we hid in some bushes by the track. This was terrible. Many women had babies and they were screaming so loudly that they could be heard over explosions. Then we went back to our carriages, and the train moved on and we didn't know where it was heading. Aunt Zisle and her family went to the Ural [today Russia], and we went to Siberia.

In Siberia we arrived at Novoselskiy settlement in Kurgan region [about 1500km from Moscow]. We were accommodated in a local house. My mother and Tsypa went to work in a collective farm [10](#), and my sister and I spent our days alone. I remember a large Russian stove [11](#) with a bench bed on it, which was very handy, particularly, when the frosts were severe. We spent our days on this bench bed. We had no warm clothes with us, and it was warm on the bench. We received no food cards [12](#). My mother received potatoes and some grain as payment for her working days [13](#) in the collective farm. This was the food we had then. It was a bit easier in the spring and the summer. We picked nettle, and my mother made delicious soup with it. We were actually starving and grew very weak.

Regretfully, my sister lived a very short life. She fell ill with diphtheria and was taken to a hospital. Diphtheria is a contagious disease, and my mother wasn't allowed to visit her in the hospital. Even our hut was disinfected. My mother went to the hospital to inquire about Lea's condition. There were medications in the hospital, but there was hardly any food. My mother tried to bring Lea whatever food she could find at home. On 18th July 1942 my mother went to visit Lea in the hospital, but my sister had passed away. She was only eight years old. This was a terrible shock for

my mother, and for the rest of her life she retained the feeling of guilt.

Tsypa stayed with us for some time before she went to work at the tree-cutting site. This was hard physical work that was too much even for strong men, but Tsypa was dedicated to the communist ideas and believed that she had to take every effort to expedite the victory of the Soviet army [14](#). Tsypa moved to where wood cutters had accommodations and later she moved to Cheliabinsk. In fall 1943 she convinced my mother to move to Cheliabinsk [today Russia]. She sent us a letter of invitation and we moved on there. We were accommodated in the URAL hotel. There were no vacant rooms, and my aunt was staying in the washroom. At that time the tenants weren't using it as a toilet. It was cleaned and this was where we were accommodated. It was a small room. I remember a sink, a little table and a trestle bed where my mother and I slept. Shortly afterward I fell ill with pneumonia, but I was cured. An NKVD [15](#) officer in Cheliabinsk, who was a Jew, provided assistance to relocated Jewish families. He managed to get some medications and food products for them.

After I recovered, my mother used to send me to visit him, when we were in need of something. I remember going there across the whole town. I wasn't afraid of anything. I was smart and brave, when a child. At that time I could already speak good Russian. There was also lack of food in Cheliabinsk. It was just the situation that was like this. However, it was a little better than in Novoselskiy. I can still remember the delicacy of this time. It was a slice of bread topped with some oil and sprinkled with salt. It was more delicious than any cake. Of course, we couldn't afford it every day, but my mother tried to pamper me every now and then. I went to school in Cheliabinsk. It was a Russian school. There were no other schools in Cheliabinsk. On 1st September 1944 I went to the first grade, but a couple of months later we heard that Estonia had been liberated and we started planning our return to Estonia.

### **After the war**

We left for Tallinn in December 1944. Aunt Tsypa stayed in Cheliabinsk. There was no through train to Tallinn and we went via Moscow. We were to change in Moscow. Many passengers went shopping or sightseeing, but the majority went to wash in a sauna. This was where I fell through a water drain hole. Fortunately I managed to grab the edge of the hole with my hands, and my head was still on the floor level. People found and rescued me. I remember crying so hard that they had to bring me some valerian. Mama tried hard to calm me down. I can still remember this overwhelming sense of horror with my skin.

We knew nothing about my father, who had stayed in Estonia. When we arrived at our point of destination in the evacuation, we received one letter from him. His theater 'Estonia' relocated to Yaroslavl, but he stayed in Tallinn. Many other actors also stayed at home, but they were Estonian nationals, while my father was a Jew. When the Soviet army was still in Tallinn, my father was recruited into the army. He wrote us that he had been assigned to serve on a ship. There were two other Jewish recruits on this ship, who were also from Tallinn and whom my father knew. I can't remember what else he wrote in this letter. Unfortunately, the letter got lost. In the 1980s my mother threw away our old wardrobe, and she forgot to take out the old letters and even some documents. So, everything was gone. This was the only letter from my father. This was all the information we had about him.



After the war my mother received notification that my father was missing. His ship sank near Hanka Island. I found this island on the map. It's a Finnish island. It isn't known whether these were German or Soviet forces that destroyed the ship. There was firing from both sides. Later on my mother bumped into a Jewish man, who lived in Tallinn, in the street. He told her that the ship sank near the island, and many managed to reach the shore. This man, whose name I can't remember, reached the Russians. He served at the front line until the end of the war and survived. He didn't know anything about my father. He never saw my father after the ship sank. So my father was missing from any records.

I received 16 rubles of pension for my father till I turned 18. It was a lot of money for us. My mother and I knew my father was dead, but we thought that he either sank with the ship or was shot dead before the ship sank. However, some time later we found out what had happened. My mother bumped into Arthur Rinne, a singer from the Estonia Theater. My father used to make clothes for him, and Rinne often visited our home. Rinne told my mother that he often visited my father in the Patarei jail in Tallinn during the German occupation. Once, when he went, my father was no longer there. In the 1990s I undertook an archive search trying to find whatever information I could about my father. Perhaps, if I had tried earlier, it would have been possible to know more about my father.

I wrote a letter to the archive describing all I knew from my mother. I had little hope of getting back any response. However, I received a letter. It said that my father Hilel Umov, born in 1902, was kept in the Patarei prison in Tallinn. There were archives of the Estonian police cooperating with the Germans during the war. My father's file had been retained. It said that my father was arrested on 23rd December 1941, and on 13th January 1942 he was shot in the prison. His identification number had also been retained. I don't know how my father was taken to prison. I can only assume that he managed to reach the shore and was captured by the Germans. They must have sent him to prison.

Later I got to know that there were about 1000 prisoners kept in the prison. They were Jews from Estonia and from other countries. They were all executed and my father was one of them. Now there's a memorial board on the building of this prison to commemorate those people. It's terrible, when people die at war, but it's more awful when the only reason why they are killed is because they belong to the Jewish nation. Who has the right to determine, which people have the right to live and which do not?

When we returned to Tallinn from evacuation, we had no place to live. Our house had been ruined during the war. We stayed with my mother's uncle Epstein, my grandmother's brother, for some time. He and his family lived in a large shared apartment [16](#) with a number of other tenants. Then, at some point, Epstein found out that there were two vacant rooms in the apartment where Kristik, an Estonian man, and his family lived. We could move into one room. My mother received a voucher at the executive office [17](#) and we moved into this room. We had a through room, and the Kristik family walked through our room to get into theirs. However, at that time even this accommodation seemed like paradise to us.

Soon Aunt Tsypa arrived from Cheliabinsk. She had no place to stay, and she moved in with us temporarily. This 'temporary' shared life continued for 18 years. Our co-tenants were hard to live with. The Kristik head of the family had consumption, and his wife suffered from epilepsy. She had

frequent seizures. Epileptic seizures make a terrible sight, and they were like a nightmare to me. I was afraid of staying at home alone and I couldn't sleep at night. By the end of the war my paternal grandfather and grandmother arrived and moved into another vacant room in our apartment.

Our other relatives also returned to Tallinn. My mother's sisters Juganna and Sheve and my grandmother Eide were in evacuation in Central Asia. The sisters survived, but my grandmother died from dropsy during evacuation in 1943. She was in her early 60s. My mother's sister Sheve had been married for a little less than one year, when the war began. Sheve's husband was mobilized to the Red army. He died during the first year of the war. Sheve never remarried and lived alone.

My mother's brother Leo was at the front line and survived. His son Avi evacuated to Russia with his mother Sophia, my aunt. From there Avi volunteered to the front, though he was under the recruitment age. Avi served in the Estonian Corps [18](#). He died at the very end of the war during the liberation of the Saremaa Island in Estonia. A bullet got him right in his heart. His fellow soldier found his family. Sophia met with him. They went to the place where Avi had died on Saremaa Island together. This fellow soldier gave my aunt Avi's Komsomol membership ticket with Avi's bloodstains and a hole from the bullet.

My father's brother Abram and his family were in evacuation in the Ural. After the war they returned to Tartu. My father's sister Zisle also was in evacuation. She married an Estonian Jewish man in the late 1940s. His last name was Schrudder, but I don't remember his first name. He was old, or, at least, I believed him to be old, when they got married. He was much older than Zisle, indeed. He was a musician. He played the piano. He had no music education, but he played at weddings, events and at a restaurant. They had no children. They got together too late.

Zisle worked as a hat maker after the war. She worked in a hat shop and after that she retired and continued making hats at home. Aunt Tsypa lived with us after the war. She went to work as a tutor at a factory vocational school. For some reason she quit this job and took to knitting hats. Tsypa worked at home and supplied hats to a shop. This was how she earned her living. Elias was recruited into the reserve forces before the war. At the beginning of the war he was assigned to front-line troops. After the war he returned to Tallinn. Elias never married. He was a bachelor.

My father's youngest brother Yakov was at the front. His wife and daughter were in evacuation. Yakov survived at the front and returned home having had no injuries. However, he died an absurd death at home in Tallinn. At that time everybody was inoculated against poliomyelitis. Yakov was inoculated, and the vaccine caused a disease. His wife was pregnant with their second daughter at the time. Yakov was paralyzed. He died in 1952, when his wife was at a maternity home. Their daughter was born after her father died. She was given the name Yana after her father.

After we returned to Tallinn, which was the capital of Soviet Estonia, we had no opportunity to keep observing Jewish traditions to the same extent as we used to before the war. However, we celebrated Jewish holidays according to the rules. When my paternal grandparents were with us, my mother and grandmother used to cook festive Jewish meals together. We no longer went to the synagogue, but we did everything necessary at home. We had matzah on Pesach, and my grandfather conducted the seder. My mother's brothers and sisters and my paternal relatives visited us on holidays. We had a Jewish meal: stuffed fish and chicken broth. Even during the



postwar years, when there was a shortage of food everywhere, my mother and grandmother managed to arrange for a festive meal. After my father's parents died, my mother continued this tradition, and the whole family gathered at the table to celebrate Jewish holidays.

Grandmother Hel'ke fell ill shortly after we returned from evacuation. I don't know the name of her disease. She had persistent wounds on her body. Her condition got worse, and before she died she was all covered with bleeding wounds. My grandmother was taken to a hospital where she died in 1949. She was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Tallinn. It was a traditional Jewish funeral. My grandfather lived a few years longer, and then he fell ill. There was something wrong with his urinary bladder. He was kept in the hospital for quite a while. I remember how my mother and I visited him there. My grandfather died in the 1950s. He was buried next to my grandmother.

I attended school while in evacuation for a short while, and I hadn't finished the first grade. It took my mother a while to decide which school to choose for me. I had forgotten some Estonian during the evacuation, and I spoke poor Russian. Finally she decided for a Russian school for me. I went to the first grade, when I was way over eight years old. However, I wasn't the only over age pupil in my class. There were many such children.

I did well at school, when I fell ill in the fourth grade. My legs were swollen, and I felt weak. My condition got worse, until I started fainting and walking to school became too much for me. I didn't tell my mother about this until she noticed that something was wrong with me. I was taken to the children's hospital where I stayed for three months. I happened to have severe anemia and infectious rheumatic heart disease. The most difficult thing for me was that I was staying in an infectious unit, and my mother wasn't allowed to visit me there. I was separated from my mother, and this was very hard on me. Many children were dying there. However, my physical and moral suffering was insignificant to me compared to my separation from my mother. When I was released from the hospital, my doctor told me that my heart would never be strong again. I was not allowed to go in for sports or play outdoor games. I had to be very careful.

I was still very weak after I was released from hospital. I couldn't catch up with my class. I had to go back to the fourth grade the following year. This was a different class. My friend Tsylya Perl'man was in this class, too. I knew Tsylya before the war. Her paternal grandmother, Mrs. Perl'man was the owner of the Bialik club restaurant before the war. It was a Jewish restaurant. Its visitors came to have a nice meal, talk to one another, learn what was new and listen to Jewish music. After the war Mrs. Perl'man reopened her restaurant. It goes without saying that she couldn't do this officially, considering the Soviet regime's restrictions. They had a large apartment, and she made something like a diner in one room. People came to have a meal and talk there. As for the Soviet officials, Tsylya's grandmother told them her relatives and friends were visiting with her.

When we returned from the evacuation life was very hard. Ms. Perl'man offered my mother to help her about the kitchen. She did the cooking, while my mother helped her prepare fish and vegetables and wash the dishes. My mother worked there, and I went there to have lunch every day. So I met Tsylya. We sat at the same table and found many common interests soon. We also lived close to one another. When I joined Tsylya's class, we soon became best friends. There were other Jewish girls in my class. My distant relative Pesia Marjenburger also studied in this class. Now her marital name is Speranskaya.

I was very attached to my mother. We were like needle and thread. My mother was raising me alone, and she had a hard time. My mother worked all the time. She had no specialization, but she was quick in learning new things. She worked as a shop assistant. She learned to operate a cash register, and became a cashier. My mother attracted people and was the life and soul of any party. She was very sociable and just let the others love her. Somehow this attracted other people to her. I'm quite the opposite. I need to dive for safety, while my mother only accepted the love of others. She rarely got upset. No matter what was happening around, my mother remained composed. Though my mother was a beautiful woman, she never remarried, unfortunately.

My mother sent me to pioneer camps [19](#) during summer holidays almost every year. It was hard for me. We had hiking tours in the camp, and walking was difficult for me. Once they had to take me back to the medical unit in the camp by car. Later my mother sent me to spend my summer vacations with her older sister Juganna in Viljandi. I enjoyed it there very much. I also went there during winter holidays and learned skating. My father's sister Zisle and her husband spent a lot of time with me. Zisle's husband, who was a musician in a restaurant, found me a music teacher and paid for my classes. I attended music classes since I was in the first grade at school. My teacher highly praised me. She said I had a talent and had to attend a music school. We had no piano at home. I played my drills on the keyboard drawn on a sheet of paper that I put on the table. Aunt Zisle took me to a ballet studio. I liked dancing and even performed at school parties. When I fell ill and was taken to the hospital, I terminated my ballet classes.

At school I became a pioneer. I was a pioneer for a long time otherwise my mother wouldn't have been able to obtain a place for me in pioneer camps. My classmates had all joined the Komsomol, while I was still wearing a pioneer necktie. I was short, and I was no different from other pioneers in the camp, though I was over age. I liked it in the camps. I liked sharing the company of my companions.

I studied well at school before falling ill. When I went to the fourth grade for the second time, my performance at school grew worse. When in the seventh grade, I failed my exam in geography. I passed it in the fall, and my mother decided that I had to take a year off to rest. She sent me to my aunt Juganna in Viljandi. My mother worked from morning till night and couldn't dedicate much time to me, while my health condition required care. I stayed one year with my aunt. Then I returned to Tallinn and went to the eighth grade in a different school. I grew stronger at my aunt's and did much better at my new school. I finished the eighth and ninth grades with good marks, but then I started feeling ill more often again. I realized I could not go to college due to my condition. I was thinking of taking a course and specializing in something after finishing school.

I've faced anti-Semitism since my childhood. When I was in my first school, it often happened that I was called zhidovka or I was just abused. I got very upset and cried. It hurt so much, but I was never embarrassed to admit my Jewish identity. When I came to my new school, I made friends with a boy from my class. I liked him a lot, but once he mentioned he strongly disliked Jews, and I discontinued keeping in touch with him for good.

I remember the day, when Stalin died, which happened on 5th March 1953, very well. Stalin's death was announced at school. There was a memorial meeting in the conference room at school. I remember that we were all sobbing and didn't make an effort to conceal our tears. Our teachers were also crying. I had a feeling that everything had collapsed and it was unknown what was going

to happen to the country and to me, personally. I've never been interested in politics, and now, when I look back, I can't understand why everything seemed so tragic at the time. All of us, adults and children, believed Stalin to be our idol, chief and number one person in the country. It was impossible to imagine what was going to happen, if Stalin wasn't guiding the country. In due time this grief faded away, of course. Life was going on.

After finishing school I completed a course for an accounts clerk. My specialty was operator of computing and keyboard devices. I liked this vocation. There were huge computing machines that seemed like miraculous equipments to us then. It didn't take much effort for me to get trained. I had learned playing the piano, and my fingers were well-skilled.

After working for six years my condition started getting worse, and my doctor said I had to get another job. I went to the DOSAAF [Voluntary Society of Assistance to the Army, the Air Force and the Navy], a paramilitary society of the Soviet Union. I worked as an inspector at the amateur drivers' course. I was responsible for the document control and issuance of drivers' licenses. I liked this job and worked there till 1991, when the USSR broke up. The DOSAAF was eliminated. Almost all DOSAAF employees were Russian, but I never faced any anti-Semitism there. My fellow employees were very friendly, and I even made a few friends there. However, I faced anti-Semitism, when an Estonian man became manager of the DOSAAF. He was an anti-Semite. I was the only Jew there. When all the other employees got a raise in their salary, mine remained the same. Well, he never expressed the reason directly, but I knew his attitude towards me.

I'm not sure if I should talk about my marriage here. My friend introduced me to her acquaintance Yevgeniy Kuznetsov. I didn't like him, but when I heard about the details of his life, I just felt sorry for him. Yevgeniy was born in 1933 in Kronshtadt, where he grew up. His father was in the military, and when the Soviet rule was established in Estonia in 1940, his father was assigned to service in Tallinn. His family moved to Tallinn. Yevgeniy had a hard life. After finishing the seventh grade, he had to go work. However, he was a talented person. I like talented and intelligent people. I would say that every person is born with some talent; it only needs to be developed in the course of life. It's a pity when for whatever reasons parents are unable to develop their children's talents. Yevgeniy couldn't spend two minutes idling. He drew, took to photography, liked fishing and played the piano beautifully. He didn't know the notes, but he could put together any complex tune. Yevgeniy left his home young. He had no place to live. He got accommodation in a dormitory. He couldn't quit his job for the fear of losing his lodging in the dormitory. I found it interesting to spend time with him, but there was no love. I didn't even think of marrying him. I felt sorry for him.

I always wanted to help other people. I decided that we could enter into a fictitious marriage, and then Yevgeniy could receive a stamp of residence [20](#) in our apartment. This would make his life much easier. I discussed this option with my mother. She didn't quite like the idea, but I decided that this fictitious marriage wasn't going to change anything in my life. I didn't even change my name, and my friends knew nothing of this marriage. The two of us went to a registry office and had our marriage officially registered. This happened in 1963. I just wanted to help him. We actually didn't live the life of husband and wife. Yevgeniy was away all the time. They said that he had another woman. We didn't have any common assets. It was only on paper that we were registered as husband and wife. Yevgeniy's parents didn't appreciate our marriage either. His mother was an unkind woman, and his father was an evident anti-Semite. When he came to meet me, he asked Yevgeniy why he had married a Jewish woman. Were there no Russian girls

available? Yevgeniy later cried from shame for his father.

In 1968 our house was to be reconstructed, and the tenants were to move out. We received separate apartments, and my mother separated from me. However, I spent a lot of time with her. My mother supported me a lot. When Yevgeniy died tragically in 1980, my mother and I bargained our apartments for one large apartment and reunited again for good. I was immature, basically. In my childhood my mother failed to teach me many practical things one needs in life. She had to work a lot and had no time for me. Perhaps, if I had truly gotten married, did the housework and felt responsible for my family, I would have learned things, but it happened so that I was always with my mother. She made all the decisions and she did everything necessary at home. She planned our budget, did the housekeeping and cooking, and she even shopped for my clothes.

My friends believed my mother to be tight-fisted and mean. She didn't allow me to buy new clothes, or even to do some renovations at home. She used to say, 'Keep saving for a rainy day.' I think this was so, because my mother lived a very hard life and she was used to having nobody, but herself, to rely on. I obeyed her. I was a mama's girl, and I obeyed her. God gave her good health and it never occurred to me that she would no longer be with me and I would be here on my own. My mother was like a fortress for me. She also liked having her daughter by her side. My mother didn't think that her daughter needed to live her own life. Only before dying did my mother ask for my forgiveness for having destroyed my life, but wasn't it too late to talk about it?

In the 1970s Jews were allowed to move to Israel. Our acquaintances and relatives were leaving for Israel. My cousin Nehama, Aunt Juganna's daughter, Rebekka, Yakov's wife, my deceased uncle, and her daughters left for Israel. We didn't correspond with them, and I know nothing of their life. My mother and I didn't consider relocation. We were used to living here, and changes could only scare us.

Gradually, there were fewer and fewer of our relatives remaining with us. In the early 1970s my father's brother Abram Umov died of cancer. Abram's son Wulf Umov lives in Germany. I have no contact with him. Elias, the second brother, died a couple of years after Abram. Elias was only 64. He died instantly of a heart attack. Aunt Tsypa, the one who lived with us after the war, died shortly after Elias. Zisle, my father's second sister, died in the early 1980s. My mother's brother Leo died in 1981. They were all buried in the Jewish cemetery in Tallinn.

My mother's sisters Juganna and Sheve lived a long life. Juganna died in 1993. Juganna's daughter Nehama arrived from Israel for her funeral. Juganna was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Viljandi. In my childhood Nehama and I were good friends, but she's lived in Israel for over 30 years, and we felt like two strangers meeting and having nothing to say to one another. She has her own life, her children and grandchildren. Sheve died in Tallinn in 1994. This was a hard loss for me. My aunts loved me, and I loved them, too.

In the late 1980s my mother fell ill. I worked in the DOSAAF then. My workplace wasn't far from my home, and I came home to serve my mother lunch and sit with her a little. This was during the Soviet rule, when medical care was free of charge. Doctors and nurses from the polyclinic visited my mother to give her an injection or other necessary procedures. They cured my mother then, but a few years later she fell ill again. The Soviet Union collapsed, and things became more difficult. However, we finally managed to take my mother to the hospital and she recovered again. However, then one disease followed another. She had heart problems, or biliary calcula and then

pneumonia. I no longer worked and had time to nurse my mother. My mother was at home and then in the hospital.

I guess it was only then that I felt myself as adult. Of course, I had some assistance, but I had to rely on myself and make decisions. My mother was ill for eight years, and spent her last days in hospital. She was bedridden, and it was hard for me to lift her from her bed to change the bed sheets. The Jewish community that was established in Estonia in 1985 [21](#) helped me a lot. This was the first officially registered Jewish community in the USSR. The community assigned a visiting nurse who provided medications. However, I still had to agree to take my mother to the hospital. I visited her frequently.

My mother was conscious and had a clear mind. She even made friends there. In 1993 my friends and I celebrated my mother's birthday in the hospital. My mother turned 95. I was so upset that there wasn't much I could give my mother and that she had to stay in the hospital. I was dreaming of selling our apartment and buying a smaller apartment to have some money to hire a nurse and take my mother home. Well, things do not happen that fast, and I failed to implement this dream. My mother died in the hospital on 27th January 2005. I buried her in the Jewish cemetery and had a gravestone placed on her grave. The Jewish community helped me.

I can't visit my mother's grave frequently. It takes too much effort. I cannot get used to the thought that my mother is gone. I got used to thinking that I had to help her and she was waiting. She was waiting for me. She was the only person waiting for me and the only one who was in need of me. My mother and her sisters are now dead. When no one is waiting for you, the purpose of life is lost. Once I had my mother, my work and friends. Now I'm alone. This isn't good. There's another thing, which is bad. I can't be among people. I feel like I do not fit in the circle of my friends. Perhaps, they think differently, but I feel uncertain when I'm away from home. I've isolated myself in my solitude. I know I have to change my life, but this isn't working yet.

It's hard to say whether it's good or bad that the Soviet Union collapsed. I've never been interested in politics. Politics is such a dirty thing. It's terrible! I think Estonians are happy to have gained independence [22](#). However, I often recall our life in the Soviet Union with yearning. I was young; I had my mother, my friends and the job I liked. My salary was sufficient for my mother and me to live on, though I didn't earn much. We had no problems. There were many good things in our Soviet life. During perestroika [23](#), and nowadays they write so much about all the bad things the communists did in the Soviet Union, but these people sincerely believed that they did things for the wealth of their country. I think these memories are no good. This is the past, and why disturb people's minds with the past.

Well, many things have changed, but I can't say that all changes are for the better. Anti-Semitism in our country is still alive. I can't say that all Estonians are anti-Semites. There are different people and different attitudes towards Jews, but anti-Semitism has always been there. People always found something to blame the Jews for. This is how it has been and how it is. However, there are many decent people. It's not only true for Estonia, but for other parts of the world as well.

The Jewish community supports me. Life of a lonely and unhealthy woman isn't easy. The community makes my life easier. A social worker visits me to clean my apartment and buy food products. I have no luxuries, but I don't starve. I have everything I need. Another day passes, and I'm grateful for it. I don't understand those who demand benefits from the community. They do all

they can for us, and I appreciate it. The community started providing assistance to us a few years ago, when my mother fell ill, and I received no pension. At that time the community really supported us well.

My school friend Tsylia, Laud in her marriage, started working in the community from the day it was established. Tsylia was still working at a library, and after work she volunteered for the community. They created a database and delivered food packages to the needy. Then Tsylia organized WIZO [24](#), a women's organization and after some time she became the head of the community. Our community has gained the strength and capacity to provide support to us. They don't only provide material assistance, but also give people the opportunity to communicate. The community celebrates all Jewish holidays. There are various sections and clubs. There are young and old people in the community.

I used to visit the community some time ago. It's my fault that I withdrew from the life of the community. When my mother was ill and after she died I didn't feel like going anywhere. Now it's hard to force myself to go there, and each time I find an excuse not to go there. I just have no interest in life. However, I hope this will pass. I can already enjoy a nice book, music and just a kind word. I want to get back to life, and I hope this will happen.

## **Glossary:**

### **[1](#) Tallinn Synagogue**

Built in 1883 and designed by architect Nikolai Tamm; burnt down completely in 1944.

### **[2](#) 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.

### **[3](#) Estonian Independence**

Estonia was under Russian rule since 1721, when Peter the Great defeated the Swedes and made the area officially a part of Russia. During World War I, after the collapse of the tsarist regime, Estonia was partly conquered by the German army. After the German capitulation (11th November 1918) the Estonians succeeded in founding their own state, and on 2nd February 1920 the Treaty of Tartu was concluded between independent Estonia and Russia. Estonia remained independent until 1940.

### **[4](#) Occupation of the Baltic Republics (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania)**

Although the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact regarded only Latvia and Estonia as parts of the Soviet



sphere of influence in Eastern Europe, according to a supplementary protocol (signed in 28th September 1939) most of Lithuania was also transferred under the Soviets. The three states were forced to sign the 'Pact of Defense and Mutual Assistance' with the USSR allowing it to station troops in their territories. In June 1940 Moscow issued an ultimatum demanding the change of governments and the occupation of the Baltic Republics. The three states were incorporated into the Soviet Union as the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republics.

## **5 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.

## **6 Molotov, V**

P. (1890-1986): Statesman and member of the Communist Party leadership. From 1939, Minister of Foreign Affairs. On June 22, 1941 he announced the German attack on the USSR on the radio. He and Eden also worked out the percentages agreement after the war, about Soviet and western spheres of influence in the new Europe.

## **7 German Invasion of Poland**

The German attack of Poland on 1st September 1939 is widely considered the date in the West for the start of World War II. After having gained both Austria and the Bohemian and Moravian parts of Czechoslovakia, Hitler was confident that he could acquire Poland without having to fight Britain and France. (To eliminate the possibility of the Soviet Union fighting if Poland were attacked, Hitler made a pact with the Soviet Union, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.) On the morning of 1st September 1939, German troops entered Poland. The German air attack hit so quickly that most of Poland's air force was destroyed while still on the ground. To hinder Polish mobilization, the Germans bombed bridges and roads. Groups of marching soldiers were machine-gunned from the air, and they also aimed at civilians. On 1st September, the beginning of the attack, Great Britain and France sent Hitler an ultimatum - withdraw German forces from Poland or Great Britain and France would go to war against Germany. On 3rd September, with Germany's forces penetrating deeper into Poland, Great Britain and France both declared war on Germany.

## **8 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.

## **9 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 (16th 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.

## **10 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.

## **11 Russian stove**

Big stone stove stoked with wood. They were usually built in a corner of the kitchen and served to heat the house and cook food. It had a bench that made a comfortable bed for children and adults in wintertime.

## **12 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.

### **13 Trudodni**

A measure of work used in Soviet collective farms until 1966. Working one day it was possible to earn from 0.5 up to 4 trudodni. In fall when the harvest was gathered the collective farm administration calculated the cost of 1 trudoden in money or food equivalent (based upon the profit).

### **14 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 - 2 years, for junior officers of aviation and fleet - 3 years, for medium and senior officers - 25 years. People of exploiter classes (former noblemen, merchants, officers of the tsarist army, priests, factory owners, 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 22nd June 1941 the 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 3 years and in the navy - 4 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 2 years in ground troops and in the navy to 3 years. That system of army recruitment remained without considerable changes until the breakup of the Soviet Army (1991-93).

## **15 NKVD**

(Russ.: Narodnyi Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del), People's Committee of Internal Affairs, the supreme security authority in the USSR - the secret police. Founded by Lenin in 1917, it nevertheless played an insignificant role until 1934, when it took over the GPU (the State Political Administration), the political police. The NKVD had its own police and military formations, and also possessed the powers to pass sentence on political matters, and as such in practice had total control over society. Under Stalin's rule the NKVD was the key instrument used to terrorize the civilian population. The NKVD ran a network of labor camps for millions of prisoners, the Gulag. The heads of the NKVD were as follows: Genrikh Yagoda (to 1936), Nikolai Yezhov (to 1938) and Lavrenti Beria. During the war against Germany the political police, the KGB, was spun off from the NKVD. After the war it also operated on USSR-occupied territories, including in Poland, where it assisted the nascent communist authorities in suppressing opposition. In 1946 the NKVD was renamed the Ministry of the Interior.

## **16 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.

## **17 Ispolkom**

After the tsar's abdication (March, 1917), power passed to a Provisional Government appointed by a temporary committee of the Duma, which proposed to share power to some extent with councils of workers and soldiers known as 'soviets'. Following a brief and chaotic period of fairly democratic procedures, a mixed body of socialist intellectuals known as the Ispolkom secured the right to 'represent' the soviets. The democratic credentials of the soviets were highly imperfect to begin with: peasants - the overwhelming majority of the Russian population - had virtually no say, and soldiers were grossly over-represented. The Ispolkom's assumption of power turned this highly imperfect democracy into an intellectuals' oligarchy.

## **18 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.

## **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 Residence permit**

The Soviet authorities restricted freedom of travel within the USSR through the residence permit and kept everybody's whereabouts under control. Every individual in the USSR needed residential registration; this was a stamp in the passport giving the permanent address of the individual. It was impossible to find a job, or even to travel within the country, without such a stamp. In order to register at somebody else's apartment one had to be a close relative and if each resident of the apartment had at least 8 square meters to themselves.

## **21 Jewish community of Estonia**

On 30th March 1988 in a meeting of Jews of Estonia, consisting of 100 people, convened by David Slomka, a resolution was made to establish the Community of Jewish Culture of Estonia (KJCE) and in May 1988 the community was registered in the Tallinn municipal Ispolkom. KJCE was the first independent Jewish cultural organization in the USSR to be officially registered by the Soviet authorities. In 1989 the first Ivrit courses started, although the study of Ivrit was equal to Zionist propaganda and considered to be anti-Soviet activity. Contacts with Jewish organizations of other countries were established. KJCE was part of the Peoples' Front of Estonia, struggling for an independent state. In December 1989 the first issue of the KJCE paper Kashachar (Dawn) was published in Estonian and Russian language. In 1991 the first radio program about Jewish culture and activities of KJCE, 'Sholem Aleichem,' was broadcast in Estonia. In 1991 the Jewish religious community and KJCE had a joined meeting, where it was decided to found the Jewish Community of Estonia.

## **22 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.

## **23 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.

#### **24 WIZO**

Women's International Zionist Organization, founded in London in 1920 with humanitarian purposes aiming at supporting Jewish women all over the world in the field of education, economics, science and culture. A network of health, social and educational institutions was created in Palestine between 1921 and 1933, along with numerous local groups worldwide. After WWII its office was moved to Tel Aviv. WIZO became an advisory organ to the UN after WWII (similar to UNICEF or ECOSOC). Today it operates on a voluntary basis, as a party-neutral, non-profit organization, with about 250,000 members in 50 countries (2003).