

# Rosa Linger

Rosa Linger

Riga

Latvia

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Interview: Ella Levitskaya

I interviewed Rosa Linger in the premises of social center Rahamim which is under the auspice of Latvian Society of Jewish Culture [1](#). Rosa is a slender woman of medium height. She has pepper and salt curly hair, don in a classic French roll. It was a sultry summer day. Rosa was wearing a black and white polka-dot dress with a white collar-a little bit frumpish, but still very elegant. It seemed to me that Rosa had a connate elegancy- knowing how to wear the clothes so that it becomes an organic part of her image. I was greatly pleased to communicate with Rosa. She is not only intelligent, but also a wise woman. She is cultured.

Rosa is a good story teller, and her story was very interesting in itself. Rosa said that every evening she thanked God for the day passed, for the given joy. She knows how to find a joy in everything. I wish this wonderful woman a lot of happy days in her life and let each of them bring her pleasant moments.



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My family background

My paternal grandpa Iosif Kagan was born in the 1850 on the territory of present Byelorussia, which belonged to Russian Empire at that time. Grandfather was a Cantonist [2](#). He had served in Nicolay's army for 25 years [3](#) and was granted the permit to live in Kurland [4](#). He chose Vitebsk province, the village Borovka. Now it is in Byelorussia. Government gave grandfather a land plot. Probably grandfather learnt the craft of a blacksmith in the army. He built a house, smithy on his land plot and got married. My grandmother Sora Kagan was from Riga. I do not remember her maiden name and the date of her birth. Grandmother was rather educated for that time.

Grandparents definitely knew Yiddish and Russian, which was a state language on the entire territory of Russian Empire. Grandmother was also fluent in German and French. Part of Riga population spoke German, but French could be taught only at the lyceum or by a tutor. Unfortunately, there is nothing I know about grandmother's life before she got married. When living in Borovka, grandmother worked as a teacher in a rural school. There were two children in the family. The eldest was my father Ruvim Kagan. He was born in 1890. His younger sister Zina [common name] [5](#) was born in 1899. Her Jewish name was Zelda.

Borovka was a rather big village. It was couple of kilometers away from Latvian town Dvinsk, present Daugavpils [about 200 km from Riga]. I have never been to Borovka, but from father's stories I know that there were a lot of Jews in Borovka. They made 30-40% of village population. There was everything in the village a standard Jewish community needed. There was a synagogue, cheder, shochet, Jewish cemetery. Borovka Jews were religious people. They observed Jewish traditions. Grandparents were very pious people. They were a traditional good Jewish family. Grandfather, like other Jewish men from Borovka, prayed thrice a day. In the morning he prayed at home before going to work, in the daytime and in the evening he went to the synagogue. Grandmother went to the synagogue on Sabbath and Jewish holidays, the rest of the days she prayed at home. She knew how to read from prayer book, and also knew the prayers by heart. Though there was a synagogue in Borovka, there was no mikvah. There was a bathhouse in the yard of grandfather's house, which was by the bank of the lake. Grandmother used the lake for mikvah. In summer the water in the lake was warm and there were no problems. In winter grandfather made a hole in the iced lake and grandmother dipped there for three times the way it was supposed to. Of course, grandmother strictly observed kashrut.

There were hired workers in grandfather's smithy. They had been working from dawn till sunset. The gates of the house were not closed so that the customers could come in anytime. Grandfather was a kind man. There were a lot of poor peasants in Borovka and adjacent villages, who were not able to pay for grandfather's work. The tools of those peasants were to be repaired once a year. In spring poor peasants brought grandfather their tools and he repaired everything for free. In the fall after the harvest had been yielded the carts of the peasants came one after another to grandfather's yard. Peasants brought him vegetables and fruits to express gratitude for grandfather's work.

My father got Jewish education in childhood. There was a cheder in Borovka and father had studied there until he reached 13, bar mitzvah. Then he went to eshivah somewhere in Lithuania. Father said he lived in eshivah. Every day the students of eshivah went to have lunch in some family in accordance with the custom. There were seven families for each eshivah student. Each of the families by turns fed eshivah student. Grandmother came to see my dad and brought the products to the hostesses who fed my father. For some reason father had not studied at eshivah for a long time. I do not know why grandfather took him home. Father did not become a rabbi, he was not a religious figure, but religion was the main thing in his life. Father did not get secular education. Maybe the reason why father did not go to lyceum was his being older than other students. Grandmother taught him. Father was a rather literate man. His Russian, Lettish and Yiddish were perfect. Not only his spoken language was excellent, he also had good reading comprehension and writing skills.

His younger sister Zina went to lyceum. There was no lyceum in Borovka. There was only rural school, where grandmother was teaching. Having finished that school Zina entered lyceum in Dvinsk. At that time people from other towns could live in the boarding house by lyceum, but grandfather thought it was improper for a girl from Jewish family to live in that place. Zina had to walk from Borovka to Dvinsk to attend classes in the lyceum.

I do not know what my father dealt with before he was drafted in the army. In 1908 when father turned 18, he was drafted for the mandatory service in the tsarist army. He met mother before he was drafted in the army. I do not know the story how they met. Mother's family lived in Dvinsk, not far from Borovka. Mother said that she had been waiting for father all those years of his army service. He served in remote Siberia, Irkutsk [about 5500 km to the east from Moscow]. Father said that he did well in military service. He was a disciplined soldier, so in the second year of his military service he was granted with a leave. At that time the trains were very slow, so it took father almost three weeks to get to Dvinsk from Irkutsk. He came home, visited mother and left for his service. Father was demobilized in 1911, when he was 21. In 1914 when the First World War was unleashed, father was drafted in the army again. He was in the lines in the vicinity of Warsaw, then his squad was positioned close to Riga. This is all I remember from my father's tales. He was demobilized in 1918.

My mother's family lived in Dvinsk. Grandfather Avrom Fleishman and grandmother Malka, nee Ulman, both were born in Dvinsk. Grandfather came of a wealthy family, and grandmother Malka was from a large poor family, who lived from hand to mouth. Nevertheless, grandfather and grandmother met, when they were around 18-19, fell in love with each other and asked their parents to allow their marriage. Grandfather's parents probably were not very pleased with unequal marriage as at that time wealthy wanted to marry rich, not poor, but still grandparents got married and started their own family. Grandfather had the business of selling kosher meat. He had his own stores and a house. Grandmother was a housewife. They were very rich. The family was large. They had 8 children. At that time most Jewish families had a lot of children no matter if the parents were able to provide for all those children. Wives bore as many children as God sent. I know only the year when my mother was born. I can name her siblings beginning from the eldest one. The first child was Nohum. Then mother's sister my favorite aunt Mushl was born. She was called Musya in the family. My mother Ester was the third, she was born in 1892. Then mother's brother Gershen and sister Hanna were born. Then brother Nehemye, sister Mina and brother Girsh were born. The age difference between children was not big. They were born one after another.

Mother said that the elder children were educated at home. The tutor came and taught all of them at once, age difference of one or two years was not important. The teacher taught them rudiments of reading, writing and counting. The four younger beginning from Hanna went to lyceum and got good education. Everybody got Jewish education. Boys went to cheder, melamed came home to teach the girls. They were taught Jewish traditions, religion, how to read prayers in Ivrit. All family members were pious.

Mother's sister Mushl was the first in the family to get married. It was a prearranged marriage. The surname of Musya's husband name was Knyazev. I do not remember his first name. He was a very rich man, probably the wealthiest Jew in Dvinsk. They had a plush traditional Jewish wedding, with rabbi and chuppah. Having been married Musya moved to her husband's house. They had two children, son Isaac and daughter Tanya (Jewish name Taube). Both of them are older than me.

Aunt's marriage was not happy. She and her husband had constant squabbles. Aunt did not want to depend on her husband and opened her own store of kosher meat. She worked there herself and hired some people to help her.

In 1918 Latvia declared its independence [6](#). Soon Russian Bolshevik [7](#) army came in Latvia. In 1919 Bolsheviks occupied Dvinsk. Since my grandpa Avrom was a well-off man, he did not want to meet Bolsheviks. Mother said that grandpa ordered from carpenter a cart with double bottom where tsarist golden coins were hidden. On the top of that they put blankets, pillows and other house utensils and left. The whole family left with the exception of mother's married sister Musya. They crossed Lithuania and then came back to Latvia, Liepaja [about 200 km from Riga]. Two grandpa's nephews Fleishmans lived there. Grandfather decided to stop in Liepaja, have a look and then take further steps. Everybody liked Liepaja. It was a beautiful town on the sea coast. The decision was made not to return to Dvinsk, but to stay in Liepaja. When in fall 1919 Latvian army squeezed out Bolsheviks, grandfather and his sons went to Dvinsk. Grandpa liquidated all his businesses in Dvinsk, sold houses and the family finally settled in Liepaja.

Father came to Liepaja after mother's family had moved there. In late 1919 my future parents got married. Their wedding was the next day after the wedding of mother's elder brother Nohum and his wife Etle. Soon mother's younger sister Hanna got married. Her husband's last name was Katsizna. I do not remember his first name. All of them had traditional Jewish weddings, and grandfather looked into that. My mother and all her siblings did not have prearranged marriages, but love wedlock. After Musya's unhappy marriage, grandfather said that he would not interfere in the choice of his children. Let them choose their spouses and take a responsibility for their choice. Grandfather was a very smart man. The seven of his children had love wedlock and lived happily in their marriage till the end of their days. There were neither tiffs nor divorces in our big family. After moving to Liepaja neither grandparents nor their children had their own place to live. Soon Musya and her family moved to Liepaja. They were the only ones who had their own house, the rest rented 4-5 rooms apartments. Of course everybody married only Jews, marriages with people of other nationalities were not acceptable in our families.

Paternal grandfather Iosif Kagan remained in Dvinsk. Grandparents lived there with Zina. In early 1920s Zina married Lithuanian Jew Max Brutskus, who settled in Liepaja after World War One, and moved to her husband. Zina became a housewife when married. Her husband had a small store.

Mother started her own business after getting married. Her two sisters Hanna and Mina became housewives when married, mother's elder sister Musya and mother were owners of kosher meat stores. Both of them were very clever, energetic and entrepreneurial women and they probably felt bored at home. In general, mother's family was involved in business of selling kosher meat. Apart from mother and Musya, all mother's brothers owned stores of kosher meat. In 1920s mother's elder brother Nuhim moved to Riga with his wife and four children and opened up a kosher sausage store. Father had his own business- he dealt with wholesale trade of products and had contracts with Germany and England. Our family belonged to middle class. We were neither poor nor rich.

### Growing up

I was the eldest child. I was born in 1921 and called Rosa. My Jewish name is Rohl-Leya. My middle sister Hinda was born in 1924 and younger, Sarah - in 1930. Parents ran business, so we always had maids at home- to cook food and watch children. Since childhood I could see from my parents

how hard people should work in order to achieve anything in their life. They got up at 5 a.m. While mother was cooking breakfast, father prayed. Mother fed father and I and went to the store. She had to open the store by 7 a.m.- the time when the hostesses and maids from rich houses came to buy meat for lunch. Mother had a lot of clients as Jewish ladies saw that we were a righteous Jewish family, observing Jewish traditions, so mother was trusted. Certainly, mother would not be able to cope with all that work herself, so she had an assistant working for her in the store. Apart from business father was also a representative of the Council of Entrepreneurs in Town Duma, Seim. The latter determined the amount of tax to be paid and father was involved in tax commission. Father was elected for that position unanimously year in, year out. He was much respected in the town: father was a very intelligent, kind and decent man. He was trusted. I remember from the talks of my parents that a conscientious man would levy a bigger tax on the rich and a smaller amount of tax on poor. Father was very handsome, tall and well-built.

The first words spoken by me were in Russian. People spoke Russian to me at home until I turned the age of three. Since most population of Liepaja spoke German, I went to private German kindergarten to learn German. At home parents spoke Yiddish between themselves and I was well up in that language pretty soon. In pre-school age I spoke three languages fluently. Besides, father was fluent in Polish as village Borovka was on the border with Poland, and many Borovka dwellers spoke Polish.

Liepaja was a rather large port city. Ships went to England, Baltic Countries and even USA. I remember one of mother's cousins left for America in 1929. When we were seeing her off, mother told me that steamboat would take her cousin to America. I do not know if it was the way I remembered as I was too little. When I was a child, Liepaja population was about 100 000 people, and about 10 000 were Jews. Of course, not all them were equally pious, but everybody Jewish mode of life. There were four large synagogues in Liepaja. One of them called Lithuanian, it was built by Lithuanian Jews, and there were a lot of them in Liepaja. Another synagogue was called Hasidic [8](#). My father and all our kin went there. When many rich Jews left from Daugavpils escaping Bolsheviks and got settled in Liepaja, they built separate synagogue for them as local Jewish population was more liberal in religion. I remember rabbi of that synagogue. He was a very handsome man. There were a lot of praying houses, located almost in every street. If father did not have time to pray at home in the daytime, he went in one of those praying houses.

There were big beautiful stone houses in the center of Liepaja. Two-storied houses were rare. The most common were three or four-storied houses. There were even several five-storied ones. There were small one-storied wooden houses on the outskirts. They were without conveniences, but in the center the houses were comfortable and well-equipped. Jews did not cluster together in Liepaja. The place where people rented or built houses was determined by financial factor.

Jewish community was large in Liepaja. Apart from synagogues and praying houses, community also had cheders, Jewish compulsory school and lyceum. There was also a Jewish hospital, asylum for elderly and feeble. Of course were mikvahs by the synagogues, shochets worked. There was a very beautiful Jewish community house. It was right in front of our house. That building is still there. Rabbi Garaf Polonski was the head of Jewish community in Liepaja. It was likely that there were some other rabbis, but I being a little girl was not interested in that. I remember when Jews had some misconceptions they came to rabbi for him to settle their argument. Garaf Polonski invited my father as a neutral party for such events, who could dispassionately elucidate the issue.



When rabbi said his judgment on the case, the contending parties fulfilled it unconditionally.

All members of our family were pious. On Fridays parents finished work earlier and went to mikvah. When they came back, mother lit candles and prayed over them. Then everybody sat at the table. Father said kidush over bread and everybody started festive dinner. On Saturday parents went to the synagogue obligatorily. None of my parents did work about the house on Saturdays. Father had a very beautiful voice so she worked part-time as a chazzan in Hasidic synagogue. When father came back from the synagogue, he read torah, and then all of us went to see some of our relatives. My father's sister and mother's siblings were also pious. They also always marked Jewish holidays. On holidays parents went to the synagogue with us. I and my sisters were in top gallery with our mother, and father prayed in the lower gallery with other men. A lot of matzah was stored for Pesach. There was no bread in the house during the holiday. We started getting ready for Pesach before time. All mother's tableware was kosher –separate for meat and milk. There was also a separate set of Paschal dishes, which was stored in a separate cupboard in the kitchen and it was used only once a year. When the cleaning was over in the house, all breadcrumbs were taken away. They were put in a rag and then burnt in the oven. Only after that Paschal dishes and matzah could be brought in. Father carried out Paschal seder. There was a goblet for prophet Eliagu, everybody was also given sweet Paschal wine. Children were also given a little bit. Seder was carried out in accordance with the rules: afikoman was to be stolen, father read hagad, then everybody sang Paschal songs. The door was left unlocked so that Eliagu could enter the house. Father did not go to work for the first two and last two days of the holiday mother's meat shop was also closed. Kapores was carried out before Yom-Kippur. Parents observed strict fast on Yom-Kippur. Children were allowed to eat. On Chanukkah mother lit one candle each day within a week and everybody who came in the house gave us money. In general, our family kept Jewish traditions. Sometimes in winter grandmother Sora came to us from Borovka. I remember grandmother pray in the morning, sometimes even without a prayer book, She knew all prayers by heart.

Parents wanted my sisters and I to be educated. Before I went to school, parents bought piano and music teacher came to us to give classes. I went to private Jewish school at the age of 6 with German teaching. Major subjects taught were German. We also studied there Ivrit and tanach. There were no classes at school on Saturdays and Jewish holidays. I liked to study. I was an excellent student in spite of the fact that I was the youngest in the class. I probably did well because since childhood I had seen how hard my parents worked, so I understood that I could achieve good results only if I were industrious. I loved reading. When I went to bed, I took a book and read it at night. Parent's bedroom was next to mine. Sometimes father noticed at night that the light was on in my room. When I heard his steps, I switched off light and pretended that I was sleeping. Then again I took a book.

Grandmother Sora died in Borovka in 1928. When she died, grandfather moved to Liepaja, where he lived with the family of aunt Zina. Maternal grandfather Avrom died from cancer in 1925. He was buried in Liepaja in Jewish cemetery. Grandmother Malka died in 1937. She was buried next to grandpa. Of course, all of them were buried in accordance with the Jewish rite, the way it was supposed to. Tombs of mother's parents are still in the Jewish cemetery. When I came to Liepaja after war, I always came to the cemetery. That cemetery still exists in Liepaja. When in 1991 Latvia became independent again [9](#), the territory of the cemetery was transferred to Jewish community of

Liepaja.

In prewar Latvia anti-Semitism was not felt. My sisters and I went to Jewish school and we stood out in the street in our school uniforms. We had never heard any insulting words in connection with my nationality. Latvian government always treated Jews in a good way. We felt that we had equal rights with other members of the society.

When in 1933 fascists came to power in Germany, Latvian Jews started boycotting everything connected with German beginning from German goods and up to German press, German language. The latter was always spoken in Liepaja and after Krystallnacht as of 1933 [10](#) even Liepajan Germans preferred speaking Russian or Lettish, not German. In 1933 it was decided at the meeting of Jewish community of Liepaja that Jewish school with German teaching should be closed down. There were two schools like that and both of them were closed down. The following schools were in Liepaja: state Yiddish school state Ivrit, Liepaja State Jewish Lyceum named after Shalom Aleichem [11](#), and Lettish lyceum. Children were allowed to finish school year and then they were supposed to transfer to one of the above-mentioned schools. I went to State Jewish Lyceum named after Shalom Aleichem. It was a very good lyceum. Having finished that there was a chance to enter any university. The building of that lyceum is the only one out of all Jewish schools in Liepaja, which is still there. I successfully finished lyceum in 1939. I was eager to go on with my studies, but parents could not afford tuition. They had to pay tuition for my sisters, who went to lyceum. I decided that I would work to save money for tuition. Of course, it was hard for me to find a job since I had not acquired any profession. I was offered a job in the office of a private firm. I worked in the daytime and attended evening banking courses. I had worked for that firm for a year, and the Soviets [Annexation of Latvia to the USSR] [12](#) came. New life started.

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

Father was interested in politics. He was constantly reading newspapers and told us about things he read. Of course, he read about Soviet Union. Apart from newspapers in Yiddish, he was subscribed to Russian paper «Today». We learn some information from radio as well. I remember, in the 1930s Hitler's speeches were constantly on the air. Thus, we had some sources of information about USSR. We knew that by the middle of 1930s people were constantly fired, leaders were arrested, but we definitely could not picture the scale of the repressions [13](#). At that time they were not dwelled upon. We knew that the global political situation was tense and after Hitler's attack on Poland [14](#), soviet military bases would be emplaced in Baltic countries. There was a soviet military base in the suburbs of Liepaja. Soviet militaries lived in an isolated area and rarely came in the city. They were mere foreigners for us. We lived in the port city, so we were not surprised to see the foreigners: as French, Norwegian, Finnish etc, sailors came here. We did not single out soviet people, only in a while we found out who they were. When Latvia became soviet, it appeared to be anticipated by the majority of the population. We were not scared of that. Russian was spoken in family and we were so naïve to think that it would be the only change in our life. Many people used to think like that, therefore mobilization of soviet troops to Liepaja in 1940 was smooth. I think it was like that all over Latvia.

First we took soviet regime calmly. Then the change started in our lives. Father had to close down his business, and mother's store was nationalized by the state. Mother found a job as a saleswoman and father went to work for the state enterprise. He was fluent in Russian, was a good

expert, so they willingly offered him a job. The firm, I was working at, was liquidated, and I remained without a job. I went to work in administration of power station. I was writing bills for electricity. Sisters studied. That was the way we lived.

I got married in July 1940. I met my future husband Naum Linger near the cinema building during the weekend. He was a soviet military officer, senior lieutenant. Naum lived on military base in Liepaja. He was a Jew, his Jewish name was Nuhim. He took part in Finnish war [15](#), and after war he was assigned in Liepaja. The militaries were permitted to go in the city during the weekend. He was going to the cinema. I was strolling with my friends, and we also decided to watch a movie. He liked me and started a conversation. Naum was a handsome and an interesting man. He was seven years older than me. He was born in 1914 in Ukrainian town Dnepropetrovsk [about 500 km from Kiev]. I know hardly anything about his family. Naum had elder brother, whom I had never seen. He died in early 1950s. Naum graduated from some technical institute, worked as per mandatory job assignment for three years [16](#). After that he was drafted in the army for mandatory military service and then went to Finnish war. Then Naum was convinced to stay in the army. We did not date for a long time. Naum proposed to me rather soon. My parents were against our marriage, though Naum was a Jew. Father tried to convince me that soviet Jews and Baltic Jews were totally different and said that it would be hard for us to get along. Besides, parents were afraid that Naum might have a family in USSR and he was just fooling around. I directly asked Naum and he told me his story. He got married at a very young age, and divorced his wife a long time ago. I loved Naum, and firmly decided to marry him. Youth and love can do a lot, and my parents gave in. Naum was an officer, the member of the party, so there was no way we could have a traditional Jewish wedding. Our marriage was registered in marriage register and that was it. It was painful to my parents, but they were wise people and loved me, so they found strength to abide by that.

After getting married we started living separately from parents. Naum was allowed by his chief to stay in the city, not in the barrack. We rented a 3-room apartment. I furnished it myself and purchased necessary things. I was 19 but he wanted to show my parents that I was a grown-up and independent woman, a true hostess being able to do anything myself.

I did not fully observe Jewish traditions when I got married. Of course, I never mixed meat and milk products. I still keep that rule. I did not have kosher meat. Soviet regime closed down all kosher stores. Mother got kosher meat in synagogue. I was working and it was hard for me. We did not mark holidays at home. Husband was the member of the party so he could not observe Jewish traditions in his family. On all Jewish holidays he and I went to my parents and we marked the holidays with them. On the 1st of May 1941 parents came to see us for the first time after we got married. I was going for the eight's month. On that occasion I bought new dishes for them definitely to be kosher. Though, on that day parents just had tea, but still I understood that they had forgiven us for getting married.

### **During the war**

I gave birth to a son on the 7th of June 1941. Parents and sisters came to the delivery house to meet us. We called son Ilia after Naum's father. His Jewish name was Eliagu. My parents were very happy that we did not give our son a Russian name. Ilia's brit-milah was to take place on the 22nd of June 1941. Father was proud of his first grandson and was looking forward to his brit-milah. He stayed over night on 21 /22 June to help me get things ready for the rite. At night I was awoken by



the blasts. I asked father what it was and he assumed that there were maneuvers. At noon on the 22nd of June we found out that Germany [Great Patriotic War] [17](#) unleashed the war. Night explosions were not connected with training. It was German air-raid. Husband had stayed in the barracks for couple of days. For some reason my husband was told to stay there. He called me and said that we had to leave at once. Of course, I did not want to go anywhere as I was scared to think that I would be on the road with a two-week infant. I talked mother into going with me and help me with a baby. Younger sister Sarah was just 10 years old and mother took her with us. Father and my sister Hinda refused from leaving Liepaja. Hinda was 17. She finished school and was going to enter the institute. Mother and I were going to come back home. We thought that we would go to Riga, wait until the bombing ends and return home. The whole kin, both cognate and agnate, stayed in Liepaja. Paternal grandfather Iosif was about 90 year's old. Apart from us only 5 people survived out of our huge kin. Grandfather Iosif lived with Zina's family at that time. I was told that he put tallith, tefillin on every morning and sat on the porch of his house waiting for Germans to come and get him. It happened in spring 1942, he was just shot on the porch of his house. Max Bruskus, Zina husband, was shot in Liepaja in December 1941. Zina and her children were in Auschwitz camp. It was improbable for the three of them to survive in concentration camp. Upon liberation they left for Israel. Aunt Zina died in 1966, Abram died couple of years ago, and Karmela is still living by Ber-Shivah. Uncle Nohum's son Isaac, who was in army, and son of uncle Gershen Avrom also survived. My cousin Isaac is still living in Antverpen, Avrom - in Liepaja. The rest perished in holocaust. Uncle Nohum, who lived in Riga, was the first victim of fascists. He was captured in the street and locked up with other Jews in choral synagogue at Gogol street in Riga [18](#). All those people were burned alive in the synagogue. His wife Etle and three children perished in Riga ghetto [19](#). Mother's elder sister Mushl Knyaseva, her husband and two children- Isaac and Taube, mother's brother Gershen and his son Shalom, the family of mother's sister Hanna Katsizna: Hanna, her husband and three children, 2 sons and a daughter, mother's brother Neham, his wife and son Abram, husband of mother's sister Mina, who died in 1940, their two children, mother's brother Girsh with his wife Dora and two children were shot by Germans in Liepaja in 1941 or 1942. My father and my sister Hinda perished. We found out about that after our return, when the war was over.

On the 14th of June 1941 soviet regime deported citizens of Baltic republics [20](#), including Latvia. There were a lot of Jews among the deported. They were not deported by nationality factor. Those were deported who were rich, and owned property as well as political-minded and religious activists. Fortunately, our family escaped deportation. At that time we thought that we were lucky. Then in postwar years I understood if God had had more mercy on our peoples, more Jews would have been deported. In spite of hard living conditions in Siberia, many of them would have survived and there would have been more survivors than those who were captured by Germans. Of course many of the exiled died, especially those, who were in Gulag [21](#). Their exiled families also had a hard life, but still they were not exterminated, executed. Many of those survived came back to Latvia from exile.

Husband asked his friend to take care of us. He came to us, helped us get on the body of the truck and we left. We took very few things with us. I had a small suitcase with the swaddling clothes and undershirts for my son, sister had another suitcase where she put a little bit of rice, soap and underwear for each of us. We left with the clothes we had on and that was it. The rest was left at home. The truck took us to the train station in Liepaja. Father and Hinda went to see us off and we

took the train heading for Russia. We reached Riga safe. We got off in Riga and stayed with the family of mother's brother Nohum. Then Germans started bombing Riga and at nights we could hear air-raid alarms. We had to leave again. I managed to get on the truck to take my family to the train station and get on the train. It was next to impossible for us to live, but we left by chance. God's will is in everything! I believe in fate, that God leads everybody's lot. It seems to me that our torah and the whole Jewish history prove that all thoughts we have and actions we take are predetermined by God. Not much depended on us, it was God's will to let us survive. Pskov was the first stop after Riga. Then we came to Staraya Russa. We had been traveling in the middle of bombings. There we got off the train. One Jewish family let us stay in their place overnight. Staraya Russa was bombed at night. Mother said that we could not stay there and returned to train station. One goods train was about to start and we got on that and just went in the unknown direction. We were taken out of Moscow, Yaroslavl oblast. There were thousands of carts to take the evacuees to the villages, to kolkhozes [22](#). When father was seeing us at the train station he told us not to leave too far away from the railway. At that time I could not get what he meant, but I remembered his words. That is why we did not go in the deep rear, 150-200 km from the train station and waited until one lady said that her village was 8-10 km away from the station. I thought that such distance could be covered on foot and we went with her. It certainly saved our lives. The peasants had been treating us very compassionately the whole time we stayed in the village. They were sympathetic and good-wishing, but they were destitute and could hardly help us with anything. Local people from kolkhoz said that they had not seen bread for four years, as all of it had been taken by the government. They ate mostly potatoes from their gardens. We, evacuees, were given loaves of bread. We had to cover the distance of 4 kilometers from kolkhoz to get the bread. I was ashamed to come home with bread and see the eyes of local people who had already forgotten the taste of bread. We left home in summer dresses and had not taken any warm clothes with us, but the winters were severe. From front roundups we understood that we would not be able to come back home soon. We had to leave for warmer place. We were told that winters were warm in Tashkent and in early September we were on the road. I found that Latvian government was evacuated in Kirov, now Vyatka [350 km from Moscow], not far from the place where we were. I talked my mother into making one stop in Kirov. We had stayed there during the entire period of evacuation. It was a rather large city with wooden houses. There was a good climate and pretty good people. We were lucky to be housed on the first day of our arrival. We were lodged in the house of the chief of local militia. During our conversation I mentioned that I knew foreign languages. I even did not have a passport, but the chief of militia guaranteed for me and I was given a job in military censorship office of NKVD [23](#). My job was to check incoming letters to Kirov oblast. There were a lot of letters in Yiddish and German. I was proficient in those languages. Of course, I cannot remember everything now. Some of those letters were scary and I understood that the troubles of our family were mere trifle as compared to other families. I recollect one letter which came from Leningrad to some village in the vicinity of Kirov in 1942. Such atrocity and ordeal were described in that letter that I decided that it was written by an insane person. Then I understood that the person wrote about his life in besieged Leningrad [24](#). I still remember that letter no matter how many years went by. In summer 1942 military censorship was transferred to Karelian front. I could not be transferred as I had a small child. I was offered to go through training in NKVD intelligence instead of working as a censor. The training was to last half a year and then I was promised to be given a military rank, promoted and offered a job in the rear. Of course, mother was appalled. But I cried saying that I had to take a chance to learn anything. I was sent to NKVD school in Gorky. Mother stayed in

Kirov with Sarah and little Ilia. Sarah went to school, mother was at home c my son. They received food cards [25](#), but they were not enough, of course. I got allowance as a cadet of NKVD school, and sent it to my mother. All cadets were girls and young women. Men were in the lines. We were taught the methods of counterintelligence rather than reconnaissance. We had studied there for four months, and there was an order of the commander to send everybody to the lines. What were we to do ? Some ladies had to leave children in orphanages. We were promised that we would come back , and here we were to be drafted in the lines, and no objections were accepted. I knew that there was a Lettish division [26](#) in the vicinity of Gorky and I asked to send me there. The commander sent a request in Moscow and I was permitted to go to that military unit. I came there, found the headquarters and introduced myself. They were happy to see me as they needed cryptographer, we were taught cryptography at school as well. I was good for me to be in the rear, not far from my family - only twenty four hours in a car on a highway. I did not stay there for a long time. In winter 1943 our troops started attack by Stalingrad [22](#), and I was sent there as a translator. People who were fluent in German were needed, as there were a demand for military translators. They searched people by reviewing personal records. Thus, they found me. I was housed in the hostel and I had to work for 12-18 hours per day. There were a lot of captives and a lot of documents. I was called to Moscow after Stalingrad. I worked there as a translator in the headquarters for a while. Then I was transferred to Ukraine, в 58 army of the 3rd Ukrainian front. We had to get to Odessa through liberated from Germans Kiev. After Stalingrad I was conferred with the rank of junior lieutenant, and I was heading to Odessa in the rank of lieutenant. I had covered the entire South of Ukraine with the 58th army. We went to Moldavia from Odessa, and overstepped the border with Romania. I thought that the border was a wall or some other hurdle, but it was just a strip of tilled land.

I was taken beyond the front line for two times. Once, our counterintelligence department was informed of young lady, who was collaborating with Romanians. We were supposed to trace her and check the information about her. For some reason I and one more soldier were chosen. It happened at the end of war, in March 1945. We changed for civilian clothes and crossed frontier. We had to walk for about 5 km to get to the house of that woman. I was to meet her, ingratiate with her and tell her that I ran away from Russians. I did everything what I was supposed to, and then I saw that woman leave the house and walk in the forest. We followed her and saw her meeting with Romanians. We came back in the unit and I reported to my commander. The second time I went there with two soldiers to arrest her. I lured her from the house and she was nabbed outside. We were to take her to the headquarters via front line. The first operation was a success. Though, it was the time, when both we and Germans understood that the war was winding up. There were less shooting and there was the period of lull.

### **After the war**

On the 9th of May 1945 we were informed that Germany signed unconditional surrender and the war was over. People were crying and laughing at a time, shooting in the air, congratulating each other, making plans for future and expressing ideas how to get home. I was happy that the war was over and I would see my sonny, mother, sister. I dreamt that we would come home and find our relatives. During the war we did not know anything about their fate. Of course, we heard of the atrocities of Germans on the occupied territories, but we hoped that they escaped that lot, but they had not...

I did not feel any anti-Semitism neither during the war nor during my service in the army. All of us were equal, doing one common cause. Of course, Jewish soldiers and officers were aware if they were captured by Germans, they would be treated much worse than any other captives. They did their best in order to avoid it. Though, some people could not. I knew one officer, a Jew, who was captured by Germans and survived in spite of the fact that he was circumcised. He somehow dodged from medical examination and went to the bathhouse the last. I do not know if he is still alive. Other than that, nationality did not matter. I got military awards for my front service, namely "Medal for Valor" [28](#), « Medal for Military Merits » [29](#) and « Medal for Victory in Great Patriotic War» [30](#). I do not have the orders as I did not take part in the battles. Later on I was given Great Patriotic War Order of the 2nd Class [31](#), and other awards for memorable dates in war and jubilee dates of the Soviet army. Front-line medals are the most precious for me. I keep them. When I die, they would be taken to the dump. I cannot send them to my son in Israel, and there is nobody I could give them. I did not join the party. I have no idea how I could escape it as I was an officer and worked with the documents. I was probably the only one among those who were involved in my work, who was not the member of the party. I firmly believed that only the best out of the best were supposed to be in the party and I sincerely thought that I could not assume such a responsibility. When the commissar [32](#) of the regiment regularly suggested that I should apply for the party, I honestly said that I was working to become better and when feeling that I did well, I would apply right away.

I kept writing to my mother since my departure from Kirov. It took long time for letters to get there, but I still got them. Even when the army was mobile, all letters got to destination of the addressees. I did not correspond with my husband. I did not know where he was. I did not even know if he was alive. Then I found out that Naum tried to find us, but for some reason in the evacuee inquiry service of Buguruslan he was told that nothing was known about us, though mother, sister and my son actually had lived in Kirov during the entire period of their evacuation.

I wanted to get demobilized from the army right after the victory day, when combatant army personnel was demobilized. Translators and cryptographers had not been demobilized yet. We were supposed to have a lot of work with the documents of German archives and headquarters. I submitted an application for demobilization, but I was refused. I was sent to Moscow army headquarters. In summer 1945 I was ordered to take a trip to Latvia. After that trip I decided to come back to any place in Latvia, if there was no possibility to come to Liepaja. I fulfilled my trip assignment and came back to Moscow. I wrote a report asking to transfer me to the Baltic military circle. My request was met and in November 1945 I went to Riga, to be assigned in Baltic military circle. In autumn 1945 mother with children came to Liepaja from Kirov. It was a hard time of hunger and mother found a job at a canteen. The workers were fed and allowed to take some food home. At that time it was of great importance. I sent her my officer's monetary certificate. Sister went to school. Ilia, who turned 4, went to kindergarten.

When I was transferred to Riga, I bumped into my husband. When they saw my name in the headquarters, they said that there was another Linger, and wondered whether he was my relative? Then they brought him. I look - he is my Naum! I cannot say how much joy we had. Naum also did not know what happened to us, whether we were alive. He also was serving in Riga. Naum finished the war in the rank of a captain. Sometimes we were given the days of leave and we could go to Liepaja to visit our relatives. Then militaries were given apartments in adjacent districts. I

concealed the fact that Naum was my husband, and both of us got separate apartments. Then I was able to take mother and children in Riga. Husband, I and our son got settled in husband's apartment and mother with sister lived in the apartment received by me. I still worked in military circle, but life was much easier than that during the war – I had standard working day, no working at night. I also had a lot of work with the documents, translations. There was a period of time we had much work with the captives, who were in Riga.

Husband was very reluctant to stay in the army. He managed to get demobilized in 1946. Husband had engineering education and he was assigned as a chief engineer at mechanic plant. In a while he became the director of that plant. Husband was a stunner and a dude. He liked to dress up and got dressed to the fashion. In soviet times it was hard to get beautiful fashionable attire. I was rather indifferent to clothing and husband bought me outfits himself. Sometimes, the goods were taken to the plant and sold to the employees. There were things, which were not on offer in the stores. Naum could buy things over there. Thus, we had necessary clothes and footwear. We were not rich, but we had a calm and regular life.

In 1948, when I had less work to do, I broached the subject on my demobilization again. I was scared that they would assign me to a new place. I was not willing to part with my family. I was talked into staying. I was told that I would be bereft of the benefits after demobilization. Finally, I my report had been signed. I did not work for couple of years after demobilization. I raised son, took care of house and read a lot. I lacked all that during name Ruvin after his father. Mother and I thought of putting that name in the birth certificate, but husband convinced us that it would be very hard for our son to live in Soviet Union with a truly Jewish name. Russian name Roman was put in his birth certificate.

I did not deny my Jewry even in soviet times. I have been a member of the Jewish community of Riga since 1946. It was very hard to observe Jewish traditions in postwar times. There was a deficit of standard products in the store, nothing to speak of kosher ones. The only thing I could do was not to mix meat and milk and not to buy pork. I lit candles in the house only on holidays, because it was even problematic to buy candles. On holidays my husband and I always went to the synagogue no matter that Naum was a party member. Of course, soviet regime struggled against religion in all possible ways [33](#), but we believed that we were entitled to mark our holidays, keep our traditions. We purchased the seat in the synagogue for mother and we annually paid for it. I kept that seat for myself mother's death. We tried to make contributions to the synagogue the way we could. Husband was never against it as he was raised in a religious Jewish family. He was a generous man in his nature, so he donated money without regret. Though, he could not do it by himself. He might have been fired for that. He gave the donation money to mother and she brought it to the synagogue.

Our sons were not brought in the religious spirit. We understood that they were to live in Soviet Union and did not want to create additional hurdles for them. We always marked Jewish holidays at home. Our sons knew the history of each holiday and traditions, connected with them. We did not take them to the synagogue, but at home they always took part in paschal seder, Kapores, Yom-Kippur. Even in soviet times we there was matzah for Pesach in the house. Of course, there was no place to buy it officially. There was a bakery, where people brought flour, their matzah was baked for them and then they took it. Mother got up at 5 a.m. to stand in the line of the bakery. In the evening she and my husband went to the bakery to pick up matzah. There was no way we could



miss a Jewish holiday. Of course, the regime constantly was putting obstacles but those who wanted to be a Jew, were not stopped. Mother always bought alive chicken on the market and took them to shochet. She ate only chicken out of all meat. Those who wanted, found the ways. There was Jewish cultural life in postwar Latvia. Jewish singers came from Lithuania and Russia. We had never missed the concerts and the performance. Husband was the amateur theater-goer and I gladly went there with him. We were young, and feeling happy about everything.

After war few local Jews remained in Latvia- as compared with the Soviet Jews, settled in Latvia after war, Latvian were just a scattering. There were Polish and Romanian Jews, who were taken to the concentration camps and after being released they settled here. Some militaries who served Latvia, decided to stay here. We were totally different people – having different upbringing and mentality. Byelorussian Jews were closer to us part of Lithuanian was Vitebsk province of Russia, thus some common features were preserved. I did not take most of the new-comers as Jews. I contacted with those people at work, but I had never been in friendly or close relations with them. I even did not have friendly relations with my colleagues with whom I had worked for 40 years, but keep no friendship with any of them. Apart from very few friends from childhood, who survived the war, new friends appeared only in late 1980s, when Latvian Society of Jewish culture was founded.

When cosmopolite processes [34](#) commenced in Soviet Union in 1948, of course they referred to Latvia as well. At that time neither me nor my loved ones were touched by that. We certainly were aware of those processes and we read about them in papers, but we were rather far from that. As for ‘doctors’ plot ‘ [35](#), taken place at the beginning of 1953, it was felt by all Jews in Riga. There were rumors that Jews would be exiled in Siberia and trains were ready to take the people in exile. Probably it was a tittle-tattle but did not have grounds not to believe them. It must have been Stalin’s death that saved us from that lot. One of my distant relatives lived in. We were friends. He was a doctor and studied in Italy before war. During the war he was a military surgeon in the field hospital and after war he taught in medical institute and operated on in the institute clinic. He was fired, and he was lucky not to be arrested.

I remember Stalin’s death on the 5th of March 1953. Many people took it hard and we sobbed and lamented as if he was our relative. Of course, it were soviet people who lamented. Probably none of aboriginal Latvian Jews felt sorrow. We were not dazzled with propaganda as we had not lived under soviet regime that long. Though my husband had been raised during soviet regime, he castigated Stalin. Of course, he did not criticize him in the presence of outsiders, as he understood the consequences of his sincerity. He behaved neutrally, without eulogizing the leader and the teacher. He understood that he was a tyrant and despot. Close people got together in our place on the day of Stalin’s death and made a party. We drank vodka and said toasts to the better life. We hoped that after Stalin’s death we would have a better living, with no constant fear. After XX party congress [36](#), when Khrushchev [37](#) held a speech on Stalin’s malefactions and trespassing we understood that our hopes came true. In actually, life was better, there were no repressions. Of course, there was no liberty, but we did not live like we used to having constant fear of repressions due to an incautiously spoken work or without any grounds at all.

In 1948 we learnt about the foundation of the state of Israel. Of course, before it existed under the name of Palestine, English protectorate, and in May 1948 all states of the world recognized the sovereign Jewish state Israel. We felt so proud! My husband and I invited our friends and loved ones and laid a table. Of course, we had to do it quietly, surreptitiously for the neighbors not to find

out about that, but it was our holiday and we marked it.

Father's sister Zina found us. She was not willing to come back in soviet Latvia with her children after having been liberated from Auschwitz, so she and her children immigrated to Palestine. We were very happy to receive the first letter from them and since that time we kept in touch. It was dangerous for soviet citizens to correspond with relatives abroad [38](#). In Stalin's times people could be blamed in espionage, imprisoned or sent to Gulag. When Khrushchev was at power such drastic measures were not taken, but my husband, for instance, could be fired or expelled from the party. We wrote only about our lives in letters and did not raise any political subjects, but still it was jeopardous for Naum, therefore we corresponded with them via mother, to her address. The correspondence was regular and our communication was not intercepted.

Husband and I were constantly following the evens in Israel. We were very worried in the period of the Six-day war [39](#), Domsday war [40](#). There was a very distorted and biased information in the press. We listened to rounds-up over the programs «Voice of America» [41](#) or other radio stations, we listened in at night. The jamming, created by the soviets, was not as considerable. Children went to bed, but husband and I, dove under the blankets, tuned the radio to the certain wave. Thus, we listened in radio and the next day we exchanged the news we heard with the people we knew. We were not worried only because of our kin out there, but also for the reason that we took pride in our Jewish state, rejoiced in its strength and victories.

After war our life was filled with uncommon for us soviet holidays – 1st of May, 7th of November [42](#), Soviet Army Day [43](#), Victory Day [44](#). It was mandatory for all the workers to go to the demonstrations on revolutionary holidays – the 1st of May and the 7th of November. I always tried to dodge from those demonstrations, but my husband had to attend them. Soviet holidays in USSR were days-off and we enjoyed every opportunity to get together with friends and have fun. At that time there were no stores, where we could buy pre-fabricated products or readymade dishes. We had to stand in the lines, and then had to cook from scratch having scarce products we were able to buy for the festive table.

When sons grew up, I decided to regain work. I worked in the system of consumer services, which was developing at that time. I started our from the clerk in the dry cleaners. I was a bona-fide employee, having good organizational skills. When the factory of consumer services span out its activity, director gave me a task to organize all kinds of services: repair and remodeling of clothes, watch mending, laundry etc. I set up a lot of directions and became deputy director of the factory. Again I was offered to join the party, but I lingered. I did not want to take up great responsibilities, spend my time on party meetings, follow party discipline. I understood that all of that was a game for the adults, the conventionality of which was clear to everybody, but all participants pretended to play serious. After XX party congress, I did not believe in the ideas of the party and saw that often go-getter joined the party, who wanted to use their party membership cards for additional benefits. I did well in anything I undertook. I had a task job. I coped with all tasks at work. My assistant and I did the work of the whole team. That is why, when I retired, my pension was very high.

Sons were growing up. We spoke only Russian with them at home. Husband and I mother sometimes spoke Yiddish, and sons since childhood spoke Yiddish. Elder son Ilia finished compulsory school in Riga. At that time there were a lot educational institutions in Latvia, therefore

the competition was very high among the entrants of all the institutes. Our distant relatives lived in Moscow, and elder son left to enter the institute there. Ilia entered Moscow institute of Chemical Machine Building, Mechanics Department. Son was very capable, though lazy, but still he was a good student. The first time he married the student from his institute during his studies there. His wife was not a Jew and I worried about it. My grandson Alexey was born in that marriage in 1964. Upon graduation son and his wife stayed in Moscow. They worked and lived pretty comfortably. We were in good relations with their family, wrote to them, sometimes came for a visit to each other.

Younger son finished school in Riga. He was not willing to study in the institute, entered the vocational school of consumer services. Having finished school he started working as a watch mender. He lived with us. Roman started taking interest in Jewry, Jewish culture and history. Son was born in 1953, in the times of Stalin's reign, so he did not have brit-milah and he thought it to be improper. Thus, when he was adult, he went through brit-milah without even asking me for advice.

My younger sister Sarah lived with mother before getting married. Having finished school Sarah decided to go on with her studies, but on the other hand she did not want to depend on mother and me for another five years. Thus, she went to work as an accountant's clerk in the firm and studied on the evening department of Riga Finance and Economy Institute, Industry Department. It was hard on her, but sister did not give up neither work nor job. Sarah got married in 1952. Her husband is a Jew from Riga. He studied at Riga Agricultural Academy. His last name was Fleishman, my mother's maiden name was also Fleishman, but he was not our relative, just a namesake. When he graduated from the academy, he got a mandatory job assignment in the village. Sarah went to the village with him. They had lived there for couple of years. Their daughter Inna was born in Riga in 1953. Sarah came to see us before parturition. She stayed in Riga less than a year after her daughter was born. Then she with her baby daughter came back in the village to her husband. Sarah had a hard living in the village, and she wanted to come back home in home in Riga. In every letter sister complained of her life, writing that she did not know what to do next and how to live. I was really sorry for my sister and I did my best to help her. I made an appointment in Ispolkom [45](#) in Riga, went to the municipal party and made it possible for my sister to be given lodging in Kiev. In 1957 they were able to leave the village and come back to their native town. Everything was fine, then my sister met a Lettish guy at her new work. He was a very good, decent and handsome man. They fell in love with each other. Sarah divorced her husband and married that Lettish guy. She did not change her name in the second marriage, and remained Fleishman. Sarah's daughter from the first marriage lived with her. Mother was very frustrated with her marriage and tried to talk Sarah out of divorcing her first husband and marrying a man of other nationality. Then she abided by that. Things happen. Parents have to accept the choice of their children. What are they to do? They lived very well. Sarah's husband was a wonderful man, and we had warm, friendly relationship. He died in 1996. Of course, sister was supported by friends, me, and my husband, but still she greatly suffered from loneliness. Inna, who was married and had two children, talked Sarah into immigrating to Israel. Life is hard on them in Israel, but there is no way back, so they have to get acclimatized.

Mother had a separate apartment in the adjacent house. Mother was happy to live by herself, not to be a sponger in the family of her daughter. Mother was very independent. She did not get pension. She had been a proprietress until 1940, the exploiter, it was not included in her labor

record. In accordance with soviet standards mother's record was from 1940 to 1941. Of course, I, my husband and sister helped mother, but she was too independent to live on money given by us. Mother was entrepreneurial and quick. She started making money. She worked as a baby-sitter, took orders for cooking Jewish dishes- making gefilte fish, strudels, baking any dish people ordered. In general, she tried to earn money the best way she could, and made pretty good money. When mother was over 80, we did not allow her to work. It was hard for her to buy products, cook. Even here mother found a way out: she knitted socks. At that time there were not a very good choice of goods, and what could be better in cold times than a pair of handmade warm woolen socks. Mother knitted and there were women who sold the socks. They had some income and mother received her share. Mother has always been entrepreneurial. Mother said that she was living like a queen, without owning anything to anybody. That was my mother's independent character. She died at once. She just did not wake up in the morning. She died without being a burden. It happened in 1973. She was buried her in Jewish cemetery in Riga. A beautiful tombstone was made for her. I wish I died like her, but it is up to God Almighty.

Couple of years before mother's death soviet regime allowed Jews to leave in Israel. It was practically the only opportunity to leave USSR, and it was only for Jews. Thus, the attitude to Jews became much worse as non-Jews envied Jews and hated. I was eager to immigrate. Mother could not leave, she would be able to survive such a change in climate. Mother tried to convince me that she would be able to take care of herself and earn enough money, besides she said she saved enough for a rainy day. She thought my family and I should leave. But we could not make it. If my husband had been more decisive, we would have left. He was the member of the party, and he was to go through a very unpleasant procedure- expulsion from the party at the general meeting. Maybe, Naum feared it, I do not know. Besides, we were worried that the life of our elder son Ilia would be affected. He lived in Moscow. He studied, then went to work. He had a wife and a child. He would have to indicate in the forms that he had relatives abroad, and it might complicate his life considerably. It was the major reason for our stay, and it did not let us actively look into getting a permit to immigrate to Israel. Thus, we did not leave. In the end, I remained alone here. Both sons left for Israel a long time ago...

Elder son came back in Riga in 1973. He divorced his first wife and settled with us. He got married in Riga for the second time. His second wife was not purely Jewish. Their son Dan was born in Riga in 1974. Then son with his family left for Israel. Now they are living in Ashdod. The son deals with environmental, my grandson is an engineer. His is a gifted boy, so he will find his way in life. I keep in touch with Ilia's son from the first marriage -Alexey. He lives in Moscow. We write to each other. He calls me. He never forgets to congratulate me on my birthday and on holidays.

In 1982 my husband died. He was severely ill, God did not let him have an easy death. When he was about to die, he turned completely blind. Naum was buried in Jewish cemetery in Riga. He was buried in accordance with the Jewish rite. I made arrangements for him to have a beautiful tombstone. I left a land plot by Naum. Those there is nobody from my relatives in Riga who would take care of my funeral. Social center Rahamim under the auspice of Latvian Society Jewish culture would make arrangements for my burial. My younger son Roman left for Israel in 1993 from independent Latvia. It was hard for him to get adjusted to the changes in Latvia following breakup of Soviet Union and declaration of independence of Latvia. He asked me for no advice, just informed me of his decision. He lives in Bney-Brak. His life is hard. He has odd jobs. He does not

have a permanent job. Son got married in Israel. They have been together for 11 years. Roman's wife Lilya Belevich was from Odessa. I was in Israel twice. I went to see them. Lilya likes cooking. She takes care of Roman. I am pleased with that. Lilya and I get along. The most important thing is that my son is happy. I give even more warmth to my daughters-in-law than to my sons. Let them feel my life and pass it to their husbands and children. I sent all my golden jewelry to Lilya. I do not wear them. She is young, so let her enjoy them. Roman and Lilya do not observe Jewish traditions. Though, I cannot be too strict to them, as they grew up under soviet regime.

Perestroika [46](#) brought much good in my life. A Jewish family from Liepaja lived in house. Sofia and Michael were my age. We were friends with them and after my husband's death, they became very close to me. They left for Germany in 1985. We did not get in touch for a long time. Once I sent them a card for Rosh-Hashanah and got a response from Michael saying that Sofia died. Michael invited me to come for a visit. It was 1988 during the soviet regime. I wrote to Michael that he must have been a dreamer. Then I found out that there was an opportunity to go. He sent me an invitation letter. I processed an international passport and in fall 1988 I went to Western Berlin for two months. There were a lot of wonderful times. I was shown Western Berlin. My cousin Isaac Fleishman, son of mother's brother Nohum lived in Anverpen. I called him and he asked me to come over, but Soviet consul in Germany did not issue me a permit. Isaac came to the Western Berlin and we finally met after a long separation. There were a lot of people from Riga in Western Berlin. There was even their club. I was invited there. I told them about my life, about founded Latvian Society of Jewish culture. Before my departure I was given the envelope with money and asked to give those donations to our community. I brought the money to the chairman of the community of Jewish culture and told that the money was coming from former Riga dweller in Berlin. If not for Gorbachev [47](#), I should not even have dreamt of such a trip. I think that Gorbachev did a lot to remove 'iron curtain' [48](#), existing in USSR for many years. He did a lot for people. It is Gorbachev's merit that we are not living in Soviet Union now. Though, there were good changes in that life as well. Why should I cogitate whether the breakup of the Soviet Union is for better or for worse. I am old, and have my own views. No matter what happened, it is God's will. People started living much better, became free, but life got worse for some people, especially for old ones. I believe, we should be grateful for things we have and rejoice in the chance to live another day and in joy sent by God.

### **After the fall of the Iron Curtain**

I was in Israel for two times. The first time I went in 1995, in about a year and a half after my younger son had left to Israel. I wanted to see how he got settled and he was living. He is not a very independent person. I lived there and saw that son's life was more or less satisfactory. The country was gorgeous! During my first trip I went on many excursions, trying to see as much as possible. I 'fled' the country in June, when I could not stand the heat. The second time I went there was in 2003 to the date of the 50th birthday of my younger son. I had stayed there for a month only. I lived with my sister in Tel-Aviv, I could see her hard life. How knows, how she would be living in Latvia now... It was my last trip to Israel.

Recently I had infarction and now I would not be able to travel. Many people ask me why I am not going to my sons as here I do not have any kin, just the graves of the relatives. First of all, I would not be able to live there because of the climate, but it is not the most important reason. Of course, I would be able to be materially independent from children and live on pension granted by the



state. For many years I learnt here how to get by things I have. It would be harder for me morally. I do not know Ivrit, and would not be able to learn it, as I am not young. I am not very outgoing and I do not think I would have new friends in Israel. I would pine in solitude and start calling one of my sons. I do not want to call on the wrong moment- distract that from work, or interfere with their pastime. Then I would be rebuking myself for disturbing one son or another. I do not want to be a burden or my sons. I do not want to make them take care of me. That is why I decided to spend the rest of my days here.

One thing that clouds my life is I am living in the house, whose owner was found. By 1940 that house used to belong to his family, and now it is given to him. Now I have to rent the apartment and the owner appoints the amount of rent. He sent me the bill for the amount, which considerably exceeds my pension. I took all the documents, came to him and asked to teach me how to pay 100 latts for the apartment, if my pension is 73 latts. How could I do that ? Nothing to speak that I have to pay for the electricity, telephone, food and medicine ... The owner turned out to be a good person and told me to pay as much as I could afford. There is a small park by my house and I come there for 2-3 hours. I come to the community, when I can. It is a pity, that I do not feel well enough to come here every day. Every evening I thank God for the given day. I live by myself and sometimes I feel very sad, but I try to get over such mood, I tell myself that it is God's will and I have to take my life as it is. On Friday night I light candles. I used to go to the synagogue oftener. Now I physically can't as synagogue is pretty far away from my house, and I cannot take transport. On holidays I walk there of course. I rarely go there on Sabbath. I know all the prayers, not only the texts, but the melodies as father always rehearsed at home, when he was chazzan in the synagogue.

I took part in Latvian Society of Jewish culture as soon as it was founded. There is a religious community in Riga as well. At that time people tried to do their best. Before I got ill, I helped organize the canteen for the destitute. It is still open. I worked as a volunteer in all Jewish organizations, which were being founded at that time. Of course, I received no money for that. I took an active part in our Jewish choir, which was established by Social Center Rahamim. Several enthusiasts of Jewish song got together and started making texts from bits of information they found and putting words to music. They looked for people who knew Yiddish. Our first conductor Riva had musical education. Then she left for Germany and Miron became our conductor. He came to Riga after war from Zhytomir, Ukraine. He is an engineer, he does not have any musical education, but he has a musical talent and a good ear for music, so he organized the choir very well. He taught us and learnt himself. I respect him very much. We are pals. His wife is also singing in our choir. There are few people in our choir who had been there from the moment it was founded. New people are coming and become the members of our big family, our choir. The choir is invited in other towns of Latvia. We give concerts and the audience is not indifferent to us. Many people have tears in the years when people come over to thank us after the concert.

I am also a member of the lady's club «A Yiddish mame», who was organized by our deceased rabbi Samuel Barkan. The meetings are once in two weeks. We do not get together for communication only. We read a weekly Torah passage, then we have tea and have a talk. We mark birthdays in the club. It is not far away from my house, and I attend almost every meeting. I am also a member of the union of the veterans of war, but I do not take an active part there, as I am not strong enough. My former classmate used to be the member of our community. He was very

active and did a lot of work. He had a sudden death. It was infarction. I always thought that he would be present at my funeral, but I had to take care of his burial. His relatives from America came. They left me money and ordered a monument for him on behalf of his relatives. They collected materials for the book about holocaust and talked me into writing my reminiscences. When I start writing, my story turns out thin. They sent me the first part of their book. It is written in English. Thus, I read slowly as my English is not very good. Every time they ask me how I proceed with my recollections. Now they suggested that I should record my recollections on tape and then they would put in on paper. One a journalist from Germany came to Riga. She collected materials about holocaust. She took an interview and then it was broadcast on Hamburg radio. After that received dozens of letters from Germany, and not only from immigrants, but also from Germans, who thanked me for the interview in their letters saying that young people should be aware of the things told by me. Of course, I could not respond to all letters. I chose the letters from the Northern Germany, which was close to us, and wrote them. Thus, the correspondence started with two German families. We had never seen each other, but it seems to us that he had known each other all life long. One of those people is an expert in narcology and another one is a priest. Recently one of the patients of that narcology doctor came in Riga, who gave that person my telephone, address and asked to visit me. I was pleased. This Friday I took an unusual envelope from my mailbox. It turned out that two family and their friends jointly wrote me warm and kind words and sent them to me. It was such a pleasure to get them. My German friends are subscribed to Jewish papers in Yiddish, German and Russian, which are published in Germany, Every week they send me a parcel with those papers. Every week I receive the paper from New- York «Yiddishe Forvarts» in Yiddish. Sometimes I send them short articles and they send me a paper for free. I like that paper very much and I am looking forward to getting new issues. So, now I am gladly reading only news-papers. I get enough information. As for novels and fiction, I was sated with that. The papers are very interesting. When I am through reading them, I give them to our conductor Miron, to the husband of our choir member Ella Perlman, I also take them to the synagogue. Everybody is interested in that. Every new paper I get is the sign that people remember and take care of me. It makes me warm. So, there are joys in my life. I am thankful to God for that, and for everything. There is one think I am asking him to bring peace and rest for the land of Israel. All our history, the history of Jewish peoples - is a survival, roaming in strange countries, expatriation. Our peoples survived even under such conditions. It was able to preserve the appearance, religion, language and customs. There was nothing of the kind in our history. Now there is only one thing our peoples need- to have a peaceful life on its land and build the state, not to shed blood for defense.

## **Glossary:**

### **1 Latvian Society of Jewish Culture (LSJC)**

formed in autumn 1988 under the leadership of Esphik Rapin, an activist of culture of Latvia, who was director of the Latvian Philharmonic at the time. Currently LSJC is a non-religious Jewish community of Latvia. The Society's objectives are as follows: restoration of the Jewish national self-consciousness, culture and traditions. Similar societies have been formed in other Latvian towns. Originally, the objective of the LSJC was establishment of the Jewish school, which was opened in 1989. Now there is a Kinnor, the children's choral ensemble, a theatrical studio, a children's art studio and Hebrew courses in the society. There is a library with a large collection of books. The youth organization Itush Zion, sports organization Maccabi, charity association Rahamim, the

Memorial Group, installing monuments in locations of the Jewish Holocaust tragedy, and the association of war veterans and former ghetto prisoners work under the auspice of the Society. There is a museum and document center 'Jews in Latvia' in the LSJC. The VEK (Herald of Jewish Culture) magazine (the only Jewish magazine in the former Soviet Union), about 50,000 issues, is published in the LSJC.

## **2 Cantonist**

The cantonists were Jewish children who were conscripted to military institutions in tsarist Russia with the intention that the conditions in which they were placed would force them to adopt Christianity. Enlistment for the cantonist institutions was most rigorously enforced in the first half of the 19th century. It was abolished in 1856 under Alexander II. Compulsory military service for Jews was introduced in 1827. Jews between the age of 12 and 25 could be drafted and those under 18 were placed in the cantonist units. The Jewish communal authorities were obliged to furnish a certain quota of army recruits. The high quota that was demanded, the severe service conditions, and the knowledge that the conscript would not observe Jewish religious laws and would be cut off from his family, made those liable for conscription try to evade it.. Thus, the communal leaders filled the quota from children of the poorest homes.

## **3 Nikolai's army**

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

## **4 Kurland**

in Latvian Kurzeme, (Kurland) is a historic region in the Western part of Latvia; ancient Kursa. It was conquered by German knights in the 13th century and became part of Livonia. Has been Kurland Duchy since 1561, in the period 1795-1917 was Kurland Province of Russian Empire and beginning from 1918 and at present it is a part of Latvia.

## **5 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.

## **6 Latvian independence**

The end of the 19th century was noted with raise of the national consciousness and the start of national movement in Latvia, that was a part of the Russian Empire. It was particularly strong during the first Russian revolution in 1905-07. After the fall of the Russian monarchy in February 1917 the Latvian representatives conveyed their demand granting Latvia the status of autonomy to

the Russian Duma. During World War I, in late 1918 the major part of Latvia, including Riga, was taken by the German army. However, Germany, having lost the war, could not leave these lands in its ownership, while the winning countries were not willing to let these countries to be annexed to the Soviet Russia. The current international situation gave Latvia a chance to gain its own statehood. From 1917 Latvian nationalists secretly plot against the Germans. When Germany surrenders on November 11, they seize their chance and declare Latvia's independence at the National Theatre on November 18, 1918. Under the Treaty of Riga, Russia promises to respect Latvia's independence for all time. Latvia's independence is recognized by the international community on January 26, 1921, and nine months later Latvia is admitted into the League of Nations. The independence of Latvia was recognized de jure. The Latvian Republic remained independent until its Soviet occupation in 1940.

## **7 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.

## **8 Hasid**

The follower of the Hasidic movement, a Jewish mystic movement founded in the 18th century that reacted against Talmudic learning and maintained that God's presence was in all of one's surroundings and that one should serve God in one's every deed and word. The movement provided spiritual hope and uplifted the common people. There were large branches of Hasidic movements and schools throughout Eastern Europe before World War II, each following the teachings of famous scholars and thinkers. Most had their own customs, rituals and life styles. Today there are substantial Hasidic communities in New York, London, Israel and Antwerp.

## **9 Reestablishment of the Latvian Republic**

On May, 4 1990 Supreme Soviet of the Latvian Soviet Republic has accepted the declaration in which was informed on desire 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 march, 3 1991, over 90 percent of the participants voted for

independence. On 21 August 1991 the parliament took a decision on complete restoration of the prewar statehood of Latvia. The western world finally recognized Lithuanian independence and so did the USSR on 24th August 1991. In September 1991 Lithuania 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.

## **10 Kristallnacht**

Nazi anti-Jewish outrage on the night of 10th November 1938. It was officially provoked by the assassination of Ernst vom Rath, third secretary of the German embassy in Paris two days earlier by a Polish Jew named Herschel Grynszpan. Following the Germans' engineered atmosphere of tension, widespread attacks on Jews, Jewish property and synagogues took place throughout Germany and Austria. Shops were destroyed, warehouses, dwellings and synagogues were set on fire or otherwise destroyed. Many windows were broken and the action therefore became known as Kristallnacht (crystal night). At least 30,000 Jews were arrested and sent to concentration camps in Sachsenhausen, Buchenwald and Dachau. Though the German government attempted to present it as a spontaneous protest and punishment on the part of the Aryan, i.e. non-Jewish population, it was, in fact, carried out by order of the Nazi leaders.

## **11 Sholem Aleichem (pen name of Shalom Rabinovich (1859-1916))**

Yiddish author and humorist, a prolific writer of novels, stories, feuilletons, critical reviews, and poem in Yiddish, Hebrew and Russian. He also contributed regularly to Yiddish dailies and weeklies. In his writings he described the life of Jews in Russia, creating a gallery of bright characters. His creative work is an alloy of humor and lyricism, accurate psychological and details of everyday life. He founded a literary Yiddish annual called Di Yidishe Folksbibliotek (The Popular Jewish Library), with which he wanted to raise the despised Yiddish literature from its mean status and at the same time to fight authors of trash literature, who dragged Yiddish literature to the lowest popular level. The first volume was a turning point in the history of modern Yiddish literature. Sholem Aleichem died in New York in 1916. His popularity increased beyond the Yiddish-speaking public after his death. Some of his writings have been translated into most European languages and his plays and dramatic versions of his stories have been performed in many countries. The dramatic version of Tevye the Dairyman became an international hit as a musical (Fiddler on the Roof) in the 1960s.

## **12 Annexation of Latvia to the USSR**

upon execution of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact on 2 October 1939 the USSR demanded that Latvia transferred military harbors, air fields and other military infrastructure to the needs of the Red Army within 3 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 5 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 16 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 17 June 1940 new divisions of the Soviet military entered Latvia with no resistance. On 21 June 1940 the new government, friendly to the USSR, was formed mostly from the communists released from prisons. On 14-15 July elections took place in Latvia. Its results were largely manipulated by the new country's leadership and communists won. On 5 August 1940 the newly elected Supreme Soviet addressed the Supreme Soviet of the USSR requesting to annex Latvia to the USSR, which was done.

### **13 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.

### **14 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.

### **15 Soviet-Finnish War (1939-40)**

The Soviet Union attacked Finland on 30 November 1939 to seize the Karelian Isthmus. The Red Army was halted at the so-called Mannengeim line. The League of Nations expelled the USSR from its ranks. In February-March 1940 the Red Army broke through the Mannengeim line and reached Vyborg. In March 1940 a peace treaty was signed in Moscow, by which the Karelian Isthmus, and some other areas, became part of the Soviet Union.

## **16 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 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.

## **18 Large choral synagogue in Riga**

its building is not preserved. It was built in 1871 in the downtown at the junction of Gogol Street (Voksalnaya at that time) and Dzirnavu. It was the biggest synagogue in Riga, designed by Lifyand province architect Khardenak. The ritual bathhouse –mikvah– was build close by. Synagogue was considered to be one of the most remarkable cult buildings in Riga in the XX century. It was famous for its cantors and choir. People of other religions came to the synagogue on great Jewish holidays to listen to cantor and the choir. In June 1941 about 300 Jews- fugitives from Shauliai, were sheltered in the basements of the synagogue. On the 4th of July 1941 Lettish politsei and militaries started bringing Jewish families from adjacent houses and passers-by –Jews to the synagogues. When the synagogue was crammed with people, the murderers threw rags, dipped in benzene, in all the corners, and set the synagogue on fire. The doors were locked and hammered in. After war soviet regime razed the burnt synagogue to the ground and the basement with the bones of the perished were blocked. The park was built on the place of the tragedy, where the honored plaque of the workers of the district was installed. Only in 1988 that sacrilege was put to end. On the 4th of July 1988 an insignia was installed here in the form of a big grey boulder where it was embossed Mogndovidom. On that place the monument will be erected. I will be dedicated to the victims of holocaust, all Jews, murdered on Latvian land.

## **19 Riga ghetto**

established on 23 August 1941. Located in the suburb of Riga populated by poor Jews. About 13 000 people resided here before the occupation, and about 30 000 inmates were kept in the ghetto. On 31 November and 8 December 1941 most inmates were killed in the Rumbuli forest. On 31 October 15 000 inmates were shot, 8 December 10 000 inmates were killed. Only younger men were kept alive to do hard work. After the bigger part of the ghetto population was exterminated, a smaller ghetto was established in December 1941. The majority of inmates of this 'smaller ghetto' were Jews, brought from the Reich and Western Europe. On 2 November 1943 the ghetto was closed. The survivors were taken to nearby concentration camps. In 1944 the remaining Jews were taken to Germany, where few of them survived through the end of the war.

## **20 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 Estonian 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.

## **21 Gulag**

The Soviet system of forced labor camps in the remote regions of Siberia and the Far North, which was first established in 1919. However, it was not until the early 1930s that there was a significant number of inmates in the camps. By 1934 the Gulag, or the Main Directorate for Corrective Labor Camps, then under the Cheka's successor organization the NKVD, had several million inmates. The prisoners included murderers, thieves, and other common criminals, along with political and religious dissenters. The Gulag camps made significant contributions to the Soviet economy during the rule of Stalin. Conditions in the camps were extremely harsh. After Stalin died in 1953, the population of the camps was reduced significantly, and conditions for the inmates improved somewhat.

## **22 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.

## **23 NKVD**

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

## **24 Blockade of Leningrad**

On September 8, 1941 the Germans fully encircled Leningrad and its siege began. It lasted until January 27, 1944. The blockade meant incredible hardships and privations for the population of the town. Hundreds of thousands died from hunger, cold and diseases during the almost 900 days of the blockade.

## **25 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.

## **26 Latvian division**

Latvian rifle division 201 was formed in August/September 1941. The formation started in the Gorohovetski camps in the vicinity of Gorky (present Nizhniy Novgorod), where most of evacuated Latvians were located. On 12 September 1941 the division soldiers took an oath. By early December 1941 the division consisted of 10,348 people, about 30% of them were Jews. 90% of the division commanders and officers were Latvian citizens. In early December 1941 units of the Latvian division were taken to the front. From 20 December 1941 till 14 January 1942, during the Soviet counterattack near Moscow the division took part in severe battles near Naro-Fominsk and Borovsk. The casualties constituted 55% of the staff, including 58% privates, 30% junior commanding officers. Total casualties constituted about 5700 people, including about 1060 Jews.

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

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

## **28 Medal for Valor**

established on 17th October 1938, it was awarded for 'personal courage and valor in the defense of the Motherland and the execution of military duty involving a risk to life'. The award consists of a 38mm silver medal with the inscription 'For Valor' in the center and 'USSR' at the bottom in red enamel. The inscription is separated by the image of a Soviet battle tank. At the top of the award are three Soviet fighter planes. The medal suspends from a gray pentagonal ribbon with a 2mm blue strip on each edge. It has been awarded over 4,500,000 times.

### **29 Medal for Military Merits**

awarded after 17th October 1938 to soldiers of the Soviet army, navy and frontier guard for their 'bravery in battles with the enemies of the Soviet Union' and 'defense of the immunity of the state borders' and 'struggle with diversionists, spies and other enemies of the people'.

### **30 Medal for Victory over Germany**

Established by Decree of the Presidium of Supreme Soviet of the USSR to commemorate the glorious victory; 15 million awards.

### **31 Order of the Great Patriotic War**

1st Class: established 20th May 1942, awarded to officers and enlisted men of the armed forces and security troops and to partisans, irrespective of rank, for skillful command of their units in action. 2nd Class: established 20th May 1942, awarded to officers and enlisted men of the armed forces and security troops and to partisans, irrespective of rank, for lesser personal valor in action.

### **32 Political officer**

These "commissars," as they were first called, exercised specific official and unofficial control functions over their military command counterparts. The political officers also served to further Party interests with the masses of drafted soldiery of the USSR by indoctrination in Marxist-Leninism. The 'zampolit', or political officers, appeared at the regimental level in the army, as well as in the navy and air force, and at higher and lower levels, they had similar duties and functions. The chast (regiment) of the Soviet Army numbered 2000-3000 personnel, and was the lowest level of military command that doctrinally combined all arms (infantry, armor, artillery, and supporting services) and was capable of independent military missions. The regiment was commanded by a colonel, or lieutenant colonel, with a lieutenant or major as his zampolit, officially titled "deputy commander for political affairs."

### **33 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.

### **34 Campaign against 'cosmopolitans'**

The campaign against 'cosmopolitans', i.e. Jews, was initiated in articles in the central organs of the Communist Party in 1949. The campaign was directed primarily at the Jewish intelligentsia and it was the first public attack on Soviet Jews as Jews. 'Cosmopolitans' writers were accused of hating the Russian people, of supporting Zionism, etc. Many Yiddish writers as well as the leaders of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee were arrested in November 1948 on charges that they maintained ties with Zionism and with American 'imperialism'. They were executed secretly in 1952. The anti-Semitic Doctors' Plot was launched in January 1953. A wave of anti-Semitism spread through the USSR. Jews were removed from their positions, and rumors of an imminent mass deportation of



Jews to the eastern part of the USSR began to spread. Stalin's death in March 1953 put an end to the campaign against 'cosmopolitans'.

### **35 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.

### **36 Twentieth Party Congress**

At the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956 Khrushchev publicly debunked the cult of Stalin and lifted the veil of secrecy from what had happened in the USSR during Stalin's leadership.

### **37 Khrushchev, Nikita (1894-1971)**

Soviet communist leader. After Stalin's death in 1953, he became first secretary of the Central Committee, in effect the head of the Communist Party of the USSR. In 1956, during the 20th Party Congress, Khrushchev took an unprecedented step and denounced Stalin and his methods. He was deposed as premier and party head in October 1964. In 1966 he was dropped from the Party's Central Committee.

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

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

### **39 Six-Day-War**

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

### **40 Yom Kippur War**

The Arab-Israeli War of 1973, also known as the Yom Kippur War or the Ramadan War, was a war between Israel on one side and Egypt and Syria on the other side. It was the fourth major military confrontation between Israel and the Arab states. The war lasted for three weeks: it started on 6th

October 1973 and ended on 22nd October on the Syrian front and on 26th October on the Egyptian front.

#### **41 Voice of America**

International broadcasting service funded by the U.S. government through the Broadcasting Board of Governors. Voice of America has been broadcasting since 1942, initially to Europe in various European languages from the US on short wave. During the cold war it grew increasingly popular in Soviet-controlled Eastern Europe as an information source.

#### **42 October Revolution Day**

October 25 (according to the old calendar), 1917 went down in history as victory day for the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia. This day is the most significant date in the history of the USSR. Today the anniversary is celebrated as 'Day of Accord and Reconciliation' on November 7.

#### **43 Soviet Army Day**

The Russian imperial army and navy disintegrated after the outbreak of the Revolution of 1917, so the Council of the People's Commissars created the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army on a voluntary basis. The first units distinguished themselves against the Germans on February 23, 1918. This day became the 'Day of the Soviet Army' and is nowadays celebrated as 'Army Day'.

#### **44 Victory Day in Russia (9th May)**

National holiday to commemorate the defeat of Nazi Germany and the end of World War II and honor the Soviets who died in the war.

#### **45 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.

#### **46 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.

#### **47 Gorbachev, Mikhail (1931- )**

Soviet political leader. Gorbachev joined the Communist Party in 1952 and gradually moved up in the party hierarchy. In 1970 he was elected to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, where he remained until 1990. In 1980 he joined the politburo, and in 1985 he was appointed general secretary of the party. In 1986 he embarked on a comprehensive program of political, economic, and social liberalization under the slogans of glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring). The government released political prisoners, allowed increased emigration, attacked corruption, and encouraged the critical reexamination of Soviet history. The Congress of People's Deputies, founded in 1989, voted to end the Communist Party's control over the government and elected Gorbachev executive president. Gorbachev dissolved the Communist Party and granted the Baltic states independence. Following the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States in 1991, he resigned as president. Since 1992, Gorbachev has headed international organizations.

#### **48 Iron Curtain**

A term popularized by Sir Winston Churchill in a speech in 1946. He used it to designate the Soviet Union's consolidation of its grip over Eastern Europe. The phrase denoted the separation of East and West during the Cold War, which placed the totalitarian states of the Soviet bloc behind an 'Iron Curtain'. The fall of the Iron Curtain corresponds to the period of perestroika in the former Soviet Union, the reunification of Germany, and the democratization of Eastern Europe beginning in the late 1980s and early 1990s.