

Julianna Sharik

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Tallinn

Estonia

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I interviewed Juliana Sharik in her place. Many people, who knew her and her family, told me about them with admiration. One of her former students, who is studying at the Jewish school now, talked about her as if she was her relative. It was hard to believe that a student would say such words about her teacher. When I met Juliana, I understood that she was sincere. One cannot help loving Juliana. She is very sincere, outgoing, kind and friendly. She and her husband keep their doors open. All their guests feel at home in their place. Juliana is petite and agile. She has cropped, curly hair and dark eyes. She looks younger than her age.



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My family

My paternal grandfather, Julius Kann, was born in Moscow. There is nothing I know about his parents. When he was young, he came from Moscow to Tartu [Estonia, about 170 km east of Tallinn]. The matter is that there was a 5% admission quota at educational institutions for the Jews [1](#). No more than 5% of Jews could be enrolled for a course at the university. Strange as it may be, there was no quota in Estonia, although it was a part of Tsarist Russia before the revolution of 1917 [2](#).

The southern part of Estonia together with the north of Latvia was Lifland province of Russia, and the northern part of Estonia was Estland province. Estonia was kind of detached from Russia. There were no Jewish pogroms in Estonia [3](#), which were customary in Ukraine and Russia, especially

beginning from 1905. There were no restrictions with regard to the occupation, there was no pale of settlement [4](#), which existed in the entire Russian empire. Probably, many young Jews came to study in Estonia, especially in the famous Tartu University.

My grandfather Julius Kann became a student of the Medical Faculty of Tartu University. I think that I was very lucky to find out about the adolescence of my grandpa, and not very many people can boast of that. The famous Russian writer Veresaev, who also studied in Tartu, left a very bright portrait of my grandfather during his student years. It was just a small fragment of his life, but very bright and extraordinary. [Editor's note: Veresaev was a pseudonym, the writer's real name was Smidovich, Vikentiy Vikentievich, born in Tula in 1867, and died in Moscow in 1945. He was born into the family of a doctor. In 1888 he graduated from the History and Philology Department of Saint Petersburg University and in 1894 - from the Medical Department of Derpt (now Tartu) University. The semi-autobiographical 'Memoirs of a Physician,'», published in 1901, was his most successful book.

Since Veresaev was the only witness of my grandfather's adolescence to tell the true facts, I think it would be appropriate to cite an excerpt from his story - recollections from his student life in Tartu in which Grandpa Julius Kann was also mentioned. The only thing that is not true is the fact that Veresaev thought my grandpa to be a German Jew. Maybe his ancestors moved to Russia from Germany, but Grandpa was born in Moscow. In any case, here's what Veresaev wrote:

"There was a student at the Medical Department - Julius Kann, a German Jew. He was of medium height, a slender, handsome guy with bright eyes, adroit like a cat, strong and frantically brave. He was very good at fencing, a good marksman. He was a person, who was not submissive, and flung a gauntlet to the offender. Soon he became famous for being bellicose and students started fearing him. He became a legend in the city.

One spring evening he was passing by the students' pub with two Jews. Farbentreiger, one huge guy who was sitting in the pub, called them kikes. Julius Kann darted into the caboodle and slapped the offender hard. The students recognized him and vanished. The student who was slapped took out a pistol. Kann rushed to him and took the pistol from him. The guy started running away, and Kann dashed after him. The student asked him hastily: 'What's your name?' It meant that he flung him a gauntlet. Since that moment all further hostile actions should be stopped. Kann took him by the collar and started beating him on the neck with the hilt of the pistol that he had taken away from him, and said: 'My name is Julius Kann, I live on 20 Machtstrasse, and my name is Kann!'"

My grandfather had two sisters, Anna and Minna, and two brothers. I only knew one of them - David. After the revolution all my father's kin happened to be in Soviet Russia and we stopped keeping in touch with them for a while [because it was dangerous to keep in touch with relatives abroad] [5](#). I cannot recall any information about my grandfather's sisters and brother. But we were very close with the family of Grandfather's brother David's family. Of course, we renewed our relationship after 1940 when Estonia became Soviet [cf. Occupation of the Baltic Republics] [6](#). Earlier it was dangerous to keep in touch with relatives abroad as Estonia was bourgeois. That is why we did not even try to look for anybody.

David had died a while ago and his widow Raisa was still alive. She lived in Leningrad. They were married only for a year when David died. They did not have children and Raisa considered us to be her relatives. She lived a long life. She and her daughter Irina, born in her second marriage, were

very close to us. Aunt Raisa considered my father to be her nephew, though they were not related by blood. Father and Irina thought themselves to be natural cousins. They were very friendly and saw each other every summer. Aunt Raisa received our entire family. She died in the 1990s and her daughter Irina died in 2002.

Grandfather got married in Tartu after he graduated from university. I do not know much about my grandmother Fanni Kann. I do not even remember her, though I have a picture where she is holding me in her arms. I cannot recall her maiden name. She was a pianist. She did not give concerts, but taught music. I knew a lot of Tartu Jews who were her students. Judging by their stories, she was a very good teacher. Grandfather practiced medicine. They had two children: daughter Nata and a son, my father-to-be, Alexander.

Father was born in 1909. Nata was three years older than my father. She was born in 1906. Grandfather had his own house on 20 Kalvi Street in Tartu. It is still there. Now the firefighters are based there. All Tartu inhabitants knew the house of the Kanns. It was always open for people who needed shelter and food. Poor students of Tartu University often lived in Grandfather's house. Of course, they felt like friends of the family. They did not pay anything for the accommodation.

The Kanns spoke several languages. There was a strict order – a certain language was spoken with the children by each parent. Grandfather spoke only Russian with us, and Grandmother only German. When Nata grew up, her duty was to speak English with her younger brother. Of course, there must have been great organizational skills and will to do so. As a result, the children had a chance to speak several languages fluently. Naturally, all of us knew Estonian as it was the state language. As far as I understand, my grandparents were religious people. Maybe they were not pious, but they strictly followed Jewish traditions, judging by my father.

Nata and my father studied in the Russian lyceum in Tartu. Having finished the lyceum, my father entered the Legal Department of Tartu University. Father was always a very sociable and charming man. He enchanted people. There were a lot of young people in his house – friends and pals of Nata and my father. Father joined the Jewish student organization Limuvia at Tartu University. There were two Jewish male student organizations: Khasmonea and Limuvia. Khasmonea was stricter, more Zionist. Limuvia was famous for fun. It mostly attracted students from well-off families. Every organization had its own coat of arms, statute and even uniform. The members of the organization always put the badge with the coat of arms on their uniforms.

In the early 1930s Nata left for Paris, France. There she met a young man, an immigrant from Russia called Sergey and married him. Nata and her husband had a traditional Jewish wedding. My grandparents and father went there. At that time Father was a student. He met my mom in Paris at the wedding party of his elder sister.

Strange as it may be, my mother's family as well as my father's had the surname of Kann, but they were not relatives. They had actually never seen each other before. They just happened to share the same surname. My mother's family lived in Moscow before their departure for France.

I do not remember the name of my maternal grandfather, but as far as I recall Grandmother's name was Beatrice. She had two sisters, Genriette and Catherine. Genriette – married name Gershman – was the most beautiful of the sisters. Grandmother's family was mundane. Artists, actors and writers got together in their house. The famous Russian artists Serov and Somov were

habitúés of their house. [Serov, Valentin Alexandrovich (1865-1911), one of the most eminent Russian portrait painters of his era. Somov, Konstantin Andreyevich (1869-1939): Russian artist, one of the founders of 'Mir iskusstva' (World of Art), a magazine and the artistic movement it inspired and embodied, which was a major influence on the Russians who helped revolutionize European art during the first decade of the 20th century. Following the Russian Revolution, Somov emigrated to the United States, but found the country "absolutely alien to his art" and moved to Paris. He was buried at the Sainte-Geneviève-des-Bois Cemetery. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Konstantin_Somov et al.]

Both of them made several portraits of my grandmother's sister Genriette Gershman. During the Soviet times the portraits of Genriette and her husband, the merchant Gershman, were exhibited in Tretyakov Gallery [Editor's note: Tretyakov Gallery is an art gallery in Moscow, founded in 1856, based on the private collection of paintings and sculptures by the most famous Russian artists and sculptors, which was owned by Pavel Tretyakov. The gallery still comprises one of the largest and most considerable art collections in the world.]. Their pictures were displayed next to one another and I still remember the guide, who was leading us through the hall, saying: 'Here is the portrait of the famous Russian belle Genriette Gershman, a charming and elegant woman. Here is the portrait of her husband, the rich merchant Gershman. Take a look, what an arrogant and unpleasant face!' During the Soviet times the faces of capitalists could not be pleasant, you see. The guides changed with time, but their text remained the same. Besides, there are four or five extent portraits of Genriette, but they were not exhibited. They must be in the stock of the museum.

Mother's parents were rich, they were not nouveau riche, but well-mannered secular people. There were three daughters in the Kann family and all of them had Russian names. My mother Olga was the eldest. She was born in 1911. Her middle sister, Ksenia, was born in 1912, and the youngest, Elena, was born in 1914. The family immigrated to France in 1916. Grandmother's sisters and their families moved there as well. I do not know the details as they were concealed in Soviet times.

All facts were revealed to me during my first trip to France in 1978. Neither Grandmother nor Genriette were still alive, I only saw Grandmother's younger sister Catherine. She had lived in France almost all her life. I saw an open Russian journal on her sofa. She was reading Solzhenitsyn [7](#). She was aware of the things going on in the USSR and took an interest in that. When I came to Paris, I was not a child anymore. I was 40. The stories about my family told by Catherine and my aunts were a real discovery for me. During the Soviet times my parents were frightened by the Soviet regime and thought that the less I knew the best it would be for me.

Going back to the life of my mother's family in the immigration, I should say that they left before the revolution of 1917, so they did not have to leave in a stampede, saving their lives. I think they were able to take money and precious things. At any rate, the family did not scrape through in France. All the daughters got very good education. Mother studied at the prestigious French lyceum. Then Grandpa made arrangements for her to study in Germany. Mother was the most beautiful out of all the daughters and Grandfather really pampered her. French was a native language for my mother. It was amazing that the Russian language was also spoken in their family. The middle sister, Ksenia, could speak and write in Russian. The youngest Elena, could not write, she did not even know the alphabet, but she spoke fluent Russian, though with a French accent.

Somehow my mother made friends with my father's sister Nata. My parents met at her wedding and fell in love with each other instantly. Father had to finish his studies at the university. He stayed in Paris for a little bit and then left for Tartu. Mother and he decided that they were going to get married. They were separated for a little while. Mother was not willing to wait for Father to finish his studies and come to Paris. In 1934 she went to Tartu. Her parents were shocked. My maternal grandmother was sure that her favorite daughter was leaving for a village, where cows were walking along the streets. Mother promised Grandmother that she would return to Paris upon her fiancé's graduation. My parents got married, when Mother came to Tartu. They had a true Jewish wedding with numerous guests. After the wedding they settled in Grandfather's house. Their house was large. There was enough room for everybody.

Mother picked up Estonian very quickly after she arrived in Tartu. She tried speaking the language as soon as she came. She had no complexes. I teach English and know how often people who have a pretty good vocabulary are afraid to speak a language, thinking that they will appear preposterous with their mistakes. Mother did not fear to be laughed at and was comfortable in any situation. It must have been her French upbringing. She thought herself to be worthy of respect and attention. Mother was fluent in Russian, German and French. Those languages would have been enough for her to communicate with people in Estonia, but she thought it was necessary for her to study Estonian as well. Her friends said that everybody burst into laughter when she was taking her first steps in studying the language, but she did not feel embarrassed. Soon, she was well up in the language.

I do not know for sure what Father did in Tartu upon his graduation. Once, Mother mentioned casually that he owned a sawmill. At any rate, they stayed in Tartu for a little bit after Father had finished his studies. Of course, they planned on leaving for France, but postponed their trip. Maybe it was connected with the fact that Grandfather Julius was getting sick and Father was not willing to leave him. I do not know. Grandfather died in 1937, when my mother was pregnant. He was buried in Tartu Jewish cemetery. Crowds of people came to his funeral. He was loved and known in Tartu. Besides, many Tartu denizens were his patients. I was born on 20th June 1938 and named Juliana after my grandfather.

After I was born, Grandmother Fanni went to France to her daughter Nata. I do not know when it happened exactly. There is a picture dating back to 1938, when my grandmother was holding me in her hands. She probably could not have left later because in 1939 France was occupied by the Germans. She must have left in 1938. Mother wanted me to grow up a little bit as she did not want to take an overseas trip with an infant. They decided to go after I had turned one. When I reached that age, we could not leave as Europe was occupied by fascists.

In 1940 Estonia became Soviet and we could not hope for better times. Thus, it happened that my mother was the only from her family who was living in the Soviet Union being severed from her kin. When Grandmother Fanni left, mother also visited her relatives in Paris. She took a train across fascist Germany. Nothing happened to her during her round trip. Mother was so beautiful and feminine that even German officers courted her. Mother said that on her way to Germany, one German officer tried to talk her into putting on a small swastika for protection. Of course, Mother did not do that.

Father told me that there was anti-Semitism in the Estonian Republic [8](#), but not on the state level. There was a café in Tallinn at Liberty Square, where Jews were denied access. There were a lot of cafes, and only one banned Jews. Of course, it was the owner who was responsible for it, not the state. I do not think Jews were hurt by that. They had their own life with hardly any bans. Since 1926 a Jewish cultural autonomy [9](#) was effective in Estonia. It gave Jews the right for self-government. Father said good words about that time. Such trifles as that café also made life more colorful.

Anti-Semitism was all over the world no matter how people fought it. Nobody could eradicate it. But it was not at the state level. In every day life there were cases with anti-Semites. I think they will take place in the future as well. I often go to France and always hear a message that they bombed some Jewish store or café, that the target was Friedman or Fishman. It was common. We must have got used to that, but we do not want to do that. Israel is probably the only country in the world where there is no anti-Semitism. There is another thing there: people are classified into locals and repatriates, Orthodox and infidels. There is a segregation there as well. Human nature is such that people need to hate and blame someone for everything as if they would not be able to live without it.

In 1940 my parents moved to Tallinn from Tartu. We did not discuss the reasons for that. Now I understand that it was their fear. They must have been afraid to stay in Tartu as everybody knew them there. The family was rather famous and rich. I think, if my parents had stayed in Tartu, we would not have spent our life in Estonia, but in Siberian exile. We were deeply affected by the Soviet regime. On 14th June 1941 the Soviets deported 10,000 people [10](#) from Estonia. My parents' pals were among them. Our family was not touched.

During the war

On 20th June 1941 it was my birthday. I turned three and two days later the war began [11](#). We found out from the radio that Germany had attacked the Soviet Union without having declared war. Mother was not going to leave. She did not even want to hear of evacuation. Mother would have never left Tallinn if it had not been for Father. She was so beautiful, so well-groomed and loved comfort so much. Of course, she understood what fascism was, but she could not envisage that someone would harm her personally. Father forced her to pack her things and pulled her to the train station, where the trains were ready for departure. He fully takes credit for our survival. There were very many Jews in Estonia, who did not believe the stories about the atrocities of the fascists. They stayed and died. Only few of them were able to survive by miracle.

Father was mobilized. He was not taken into the acting army as he had poor eyesight. He was on the front, but served as a clerk at the headquarters of Estonian corps [12](#). Mother and I reached Ulianovsk [now Simbirsk, Russia, about 750 km northeast of Moscow]. We were told to go there, but we did not stay for long. We were housed in a poky room in a small wooden house, where another family was living. Mother was shocked when we spent the first night there. She could not fall asleep. She turned the lights on and saw the walls were covered with some small bugs. Mother had never seen bedbugs before and could not understand what it was. She started brandishing her arms trying to get rid of the bedbugs, but they did not leave. The hosts saw that the lights were on and came to us. Mother asked them about the bugs on the wall and they burst into laughter, astonished that she had never seen bedbugs before! Mother took her sleeping child and rushed out

of the house. We spent a night outside and in the morning we moved into another house.

We had to go through many things. Soon we left Ulianovsk for Krasnoural'sk [Sverdlovsk oblast, Russia, about 1,500 km north of Moscow]. We stayed there for a while. I remember there was terrible starvation. I and other evacuated children went to the field to steal frozen potatoes. We used wooden chips to dig out potatoes from the frozen soil. Then we hid at home and gnawed on those frozen, dirty, raw potatoes. We also picked up nettle and other herbs, from which soup was made. We even did not always have a chance to salt it. We had a constant feeling of hunger. Now when I am going back to that time, I cannot picture how we managed to survive.

Mother did not learn how to do things about the house even at an elderly age. She even did not know how to pare potatoes. It was funny to watch how she tried washing some small things, even kerchiefs. I had friends in evacuation, whose urban mothers got adjusted to the life in evacuation. They planted some things. One even got a goat, to give milk to her child. My mother did not learn anything. That is why it is totally unexplainable for me how we could survive in evacuation with my mother being so helpless. There might be one explanation though. Mother was not good at doing things, but she was very sociable and people liked her. She was so fragile and feminine, not like anybody else. That is why people were always ready to help her. I think we were helped by others. We would not have survived otherwise.

There was a period of time when the things we took with us were very handy. Mother had very beautiful dresses, jewelry. She could sell them in exchange for products. Of course, we were not barefoot and naked, but there was no luxury. All was good at that time, no matter what outfit it was. Mother wore a dreadful jersey coat and felt calm about it. To survive was the most important thing at that time.

At the end of 1943 Father found us. He was in Sverdlovsk [now Ekaterinburg, Russia, about 1,500 km from Moscow]. Mother received a telegram from him, in which he told us to come to Sverdlovsk. We had no money for the trip and Mother wrote Father about it. He said that she should sell anything she could, including food cards [13](#), and leave right away.

There was a dreadful story in connection with that. Mother went to the market to find out the price for the food cards and started selling them cheaper. There was a huge crowd around her and all of them were crying out: to me, to me, to me! A man came up to my mom and asked what she was doing. She said she was selling food cards to get money for the trip to her husband. That man showed her his NKVD [14](#) ID, grabbed my mother's hand and pulled her out from the market. Mother said that the whole crowd from the market chased them asking to let her go as she was so young and did not do anything wrong.

Mother was in great danger. During the war time it was a crime to sell food cards, and she would have been put in jail at best. She was lucky. That man had her stay by some house and he went to make a phone call. Mother darted out. She said she never ran so fast. She had left me with the neighbor, a Polish lady. She came to her and told her the story. The Polish lady gave my mother a hat with a veil and she did not take it off until our departure. There was a rumor in town that Olga was arrested as many people saw her being convoyed from the market. All of them thought that she perished as nobody could assume that she managed to run away from the NKVD.

Father was demobilized from the army. He lived with us in Sverdlovsk. There was terrible starvation there as well. I went to the kindergarten where we were fed. I remember I was shaved bald on my first day at the kindergarten, for me not to be lice-ridden. I felt hungry all the time in Sverdlovsk again. I came home from kindergarten and asked for bread at night. Father gave me his entire ration. He was almost dying because of lack of food. He held on to the walls of houses when he walked in the streets in order not to swoon, but still he gave his bread ration to me. I was a little foolish girl, who could not understand those things.

I remember a funny case from that time. One lady fell in love with my dad and invited him to come over for breakfast. Mother tried making him look good as he was going to the guest! It turned out that the lady had been collecting skims from milk for several days to give them to Father. She put them in the tea. Father could not stand them since childhood, and even the feeling of hunger and feeling of being awkward towards the lady, who was trying to treat him well, he could not swallow them.

Then my mother was called to Egorievsk. There was an Estonian complex, where they trained people to work in Soviet Estonia so that the experts were ready after the war. Thus, we settled there. There was enough food and primary goods. We got parcels with food and clothes. [Lend-Lease was the program under which the United States of America supplied the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, China, Free France, and other Allied nations with materiel between 1941 and 1945. It was signed into law on March 11, 1941, a year and a half after the outbreak of World War II in Europe in September 1939 but nine months before the U.S. entered the war in December 1941. Formally titled 'An Act to Further Promote the Defense of the United States,' the Act effectively ended the United States' pretense of neutrality. Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lend-Lease>] I remember that some Estonians were frying a piglet and potatoes in the yard of a hostel. We were not hungry there.

I do not know what Mother studied. I spend time with the children of other students. We crawled in some trenches and looked for bullets. Once, I fell in the moat in the sewage. Mother ran after me so that I would change clothes, which she washed so unskillfully. Father returned to Tallinn in the fall of 1944 right after the liberation of Tallinn. Mother and I came back in December 1944.

Postwar years

The house, where we lived before war, burned down during the bombing. Father was one of the first to come back to Tallinn. Most people who were among the first to return, got settled well, getting good apartments in downtown Tallinn, in plush pre-war houses. We also settled in a huge, posh apartment in the city. We lived there for a year. Then the owners came back. We had to leave. There was a problem with housing in Tallinn. We were given one room in a communal apartment [15](#) at Jacobson Street. We stayed there for a long time.

When we had just arrived in Tallinn, I could not speak Estonian at all. I left for evacuation at the age of three and lived in Russia for three years. I came back at the age of six and was to go to school in a year. Of course, after my arrival I quickly made friends with Russian children and played with them. Once, Father told me that I would not play with Russian children any more, and showed me with whom to play. He agreed with an Estonian family, who was living in our yard, that their daughter would play with me speaking Estonian. Both of us disliked each other at first, as we were

forced into communication, which was a burden for both of us. How could we be playmates and friends if we could not understand each other? We got by with that since we did not have a way out. Gradually we became friends. I learned the language within half a year as in summer I did not play with that girl any more. I went to a summer camp for children.

In September 1945 I went to the first grade of an Estonian school. I managed to finish the first grade before we had to leave the apartment. The school I went to was not far from our house. Father transferred me to a Russian school. He was calm that both of us knew both the Estonian and Russian languages.

When I was transferred to the Russian school, I was shocked by the difference between Estonian and Russian kids. There were only Estonians at the school where I used to go. The children were neat and calm. They had stayed in the country during the war and had a good life. I was the only Jew in my class and stood out. All of them were fair-haired and I was the only dark-haired one, but I was treated very well. Even girls from senior grades patronized me. The kids in the Russian school were different, they even had a different countenance. They were poorly dressed. Though, I was also. I became a pioneer [16](#) at school, one of the first in my class. I was always very active. I took pride in my pioneer scarf.

Our apartment was terrible, damp and cold. My father was not a pusher. He was very modest, too decent. I do not know how my parents managed to exchange our apartment for two rooms in the semi-basement in a house in downtown Tallinn. There was a cement floor in the kitchen. There was a bathroom and a toilet, but we had to warm water on the stove to take a bath. By the way, our neighbors were the Shariks, the family of my future husband. We had lived for several years there and exchanged the apartment by mere luck. My classmate's mother divorced her husband. They wanted her husband to move out into a bad apartment. Our apartment suited her in those terms. He moved in there and we got settled in two rooms of my classmate's apartment. It was a good house in downtown Tallinn. We liked it there.

I was a Soviet child, who did not know Jewish traditions, religion. I know that children were raised Jewish in certain Jewish families, but it did not happen in our family. Mother was not religious, though she said that she believed in God. At the same time, she loved Christmas, because it was always richly celebrated in France. Therefore, when speaking of my mom, it would be funny to mention Jewish religiousness. She was a European woman. I think, all Jewish traditions were kept in my father's family and imbibed in them since childhood.

Father was very circumspect and did not trust the Soviet regime. He wanted to guard me from possible trouble as the Soviet regime struggled against religion [17](#). I was a convinced pioneer and later a Komsomol member [18](#). I was very active, living like anybody else. Now I cannot delete that part of my life saying that it had never happened to me. This is the way it was. Father probably did not want me to prevaricate and we did not discuss Jewish traditions at home. In general, we did not speak much.

I remember very well from my post-war childhood that there was matzah, boiled eggs and saucers with salted water in some houses. I remember that my father went to fetch matzah from the prayer house, based in the former school premises. I remember it vividly. I did not know what matzah was for and on which days it appeared. I asked no questions. I took no interest in that. We never concealed the fact that we were Jews. I was aware of that and did not hold it back. It was even silly

at times. Even in summer, when we were on vacation, and went to the Southern Caucasus bazaar, I was called by some of the salespeople: 'Hey, countrywoman, come over!' – I replied, 'I am not your countrywoman, I am a Jew.'

Father was loyal to the Jewry and its traditions. He helped anyone, Jews in particular. If there was a sorrow in any Jewish family, everybody knew that Alexander Kann would be in café Chario collecting money from the Jews for assistance. People came and gave as much as they could. Father always remembered if some of the well-off people did not bring money. He did not forgive such people. He was an amazing man: kind, decent and polite. Nobody can say a bad word about him. He was a man of principle. No matter how soft he might have been, when someone was dishonest, he stopped greeting the person. I remember he said in such cases: 'I am not taking my hat off to that person.'

Of course, my father understood what was in store for the family during the Soviet regime. He never discussed it with me. I do not think he even talked to my mom about it. I recall, after the war my father would stay by the window at nighttime and look out for a long time. I remember how worried he was when he heard the sound of a car engine at nighttime and his feeling of relief when the car left. Probably, he expected that he could be arrested any time. If somebody from the NKVD had known who the Kann family really was, they would have exiled us, but we got away.

At times, I could feel alarm in my father's words and phrases, but he never was explicit. It was customary in many Estonian families to discuss all events and concerns, but it was different in our family. Father must have tried to bar us from reality. At that time he understood many things, which I started understanding only with age. At that time Stalin's portrait hung next to Pushkin's [19](#). Father did not say anything to that and did not ask me to take Stalin's portrait off the wall. Then I understood that it was hard for him.

When the campaign against cosmopolitans [20](#) started in the USSR in 1948, we did not discuss those things at home. I also noticed that at times Father whispered about something with his friends. My parents had a lot of friends. Once a week they got together to play bridge. Very often guests came over not only on holidays and birthdays, but without any occasion: when they simply wanted to see my parents. They had a wonderful company of friends. When all of them got together, our house was full of people. Our living was very moderate, but we always found money to treat our guest. Our table was never empty. It was usual for us to have 30 people in our place. All of them were very funny, quirky and friendly. They also arranged some trips, jaunts etc. It was a good and joyful life.

We lacked money. Mother found a way to have some decent outfits, but I dressed very poorly. I had one school dress, which had patches and was too tight for me. I remember, when my future mother-in-law saw me, a schoolgirl, in that dress, she burst into tears. I was calm about it. Mother did not learn how to cook. Of course, Father was always ready to help her. I knew how to cook since the fifth grade and fixed dinner in time for my parents' arrival from work.

In 1948 the state of Israel was founded [21](#). It did not mean anything to me while my father was glad about it. Despite the fact that the Soviet Union was one of the initiators of the foundation of the state of Israel, the relationship between the countries worsened very quickly. There were numerous articles and radio broadcasts about Israel the aggressor and its threat to the world. I could see by my father's facial expression that something was wrong, but he never commented on

anything.

I started comprehending some things only in 1953 when the Doctors' Plot [21](#) started. At that time I could hear from all ends that there were doctors/poisoners. I was more mature and understood more. I understood that the Doctors' Plot was connected with the Jews, and many people were against them. It was very vivid at that time. Frankly speaking, I cannot say that I took it hard. It was somewhere in my subconsciousness, but my life was not affected by that. I was always confident that I had many friends.

When we came back to Tallinn my father became a legal advisor at the large Tallinn radio plant Volta, then he was hired by the Ministry of Commerce as an assistant to the minister in legal issues. Mother did not have any profession and my beautiful, elegant mom started to work as an authorized representative at Vtorsyrio. [The company's name originates from the words "secondary raw materials." The firm took scrap metal and paper litter from the population at dirt cheap prices and sent those materials to processing facilities]. She went to the plants and arranged for the scrap metal to be loaded in the company's truck. She worked there for a while. There were other types of jobs approximately of the same level.

Mother was not very young any more. She was hired by the textile factory Marat as a secretary. She was fluent in several languages. She was proficient in French, which was actually her mother tongue. She had no accent, neither in German nor in French, no matter that she had lived in Estonia for such a long time. Strange as it may be, but my mother had a Russian accent in her English and Estonian, but she was fluent in all those languages. She also did translations, even simultaneous translations at the cinema. Her English was not as literary, but colloquial, and was not as nice.

I went to a Russian school for three years, from the second to the fourth grade. Then I was transferred to another school, when our apartment was exchanged. In post-war times girls studied separately from boys and I went to girls' schools. There was a good Russian school not far from our house. It was in the heart of the city and children from wealthy families of the secretaries of regional authorities, ministers, top managers etc. went to that school. Of course, it was because of the close vicinity to the school.

Our class was wonderful, very good girls. I cannot say that I had an inferiority complex, but there were unpleasant moments for me. All of them were very well dressed, but I had to wear a dress with patches. I did not worry about it when I went to school, but it was a real issue when going out, but it did not happen every day, so it was not a big deal. But still, I did not feel that I was worse than anybody else. Moreover, my classmates had a very good attitude towards me. All of them came from rich families, but they did not care about it. The girl I shared a desk with gave everybody sandwiches with caviar, just because she was fed up with them and she cared for a roll one could buy in the school cafeteria.

Life under the communist regime

I had many friends, and not only in school. I met some of them in pioneer camps. I was always very active at school. When I joined the Komsomol, I became the Komsomol leader in my class, and then the leader of the Komsomol organization at school. I had no self interest, I just believed in what I

was doing. I was only two, when Estonia became Soviet and I was raised by the Soviet regime. My family did not speak against the Soviet regime, so I fully accepted it and truly believed in it.

Stalin died in March 1953. I remember we had a solemn line-up at school, where all of us cried sincerely. We, raised in the Soviet ideology, thought Stalin to be our idol, taking care of all. It was a great sorrow. After school our class went to the old part of the city and started fooling around. I recall one of my classmates, Oxana, a very emotional girl said, 'We have just barely stopped crying. What are we doing?' It was just a relief after a big stress, nobody from us rejoiced in Stalin's death. It was simply the fact that the youth cannot concentrate on grief for a long time.

Then there was the Twentieth Party Congress [23](#), Khrushchev's speech [24](#). It was hard to accept, it was a real shock just like Stalin's death. Then I started pondering things over. I dreaded to think about my crushed hopes and belief in Stalin, but still it had not shattered my belief in communist ideas. Later, life became easier. Many bans vanished.

Before Stalin's death I did not keep in touch with my relatives in France; it was taboo for Soviet citizens to keep in touch with relatives abroad. Father even destroyed all my mother's educational papers as they were issued in France and in Germany. Father was afraid to keep them and burned them. Once, after Stalin's death I came home and saw Mother crying. It turned out that she had sent an informational request about her kin to France and got the response that her parents died in 1952, one she perished. My mother's relatives identified themselves as French and they were rather prosperous. Ksenia's husband Retanau was very famous in France, he was one of the leaders of the French resistance.

Father's whole kin perished in France during the war. French people sheltered them, but Grandmother wanted to take a walk. Nobody wanted to let her out explaining that she should stay in as it was dangerous out there. She would not listen, went outside and vanished. Her daughter Nata was waiting for her, but she did not come back. Nata went out to look for her and also vanished. I do not know where Nata's husband Sergey was at that time, at any rate, he was not with them. Where was he? He must have perished too. Nata also had a little son. He stayed with the French family, who was sheltering them. He was afflicted with TB and died.

In 1966 my father went to France for the first time intending to find his kin. He came back empty-handed as none of them survived. He was only able to find out about their death from the French family that was sheltering them. During the Holocaust, my father's parents, sister and nephew died. Mother went there with Dad. Later she took frequent trips to France.

When I finished school I was eager to go to Leningrad to enter university, the English language department. The teaching at Tallinn Teachers' Training Institute was in Estonian, but I had studied at a Russian school. It seemed to me that I would not be able to study in Estonian after the Russian school. Father could not understand why I was leaving Tallinn. He had a different mentality as he was raised in a family where everybody was fluent in several languages. He could not perceive why I should care which language the studies were in. He was flatly against my departure, but I left anyway.

I wanted to have an adult, post-school, independent life. It seemed to me I could achieve everything by myself. I have been like that all my life. I always thought that I could do everything I wanted and always achieved what I wanted. Nobody ever helped me in anything. I did all by myself

with blood, sweat and tears. I worked very hard. I think this is the way it should be.

I stayed with Aunt Raisa, my grandfather's brother's wife, in Leningrad. My English skills were really pretty good and I got a good mark in English at the entrance exam, which was not enough for admission. I do not know what the reason was for that – my nationality or lack of skill. Judging by my father's reaction he knew that I would not be able to pass exams in Leningrad and expected such an outcome. As soon as I told him about my decision to go to Leningrad, he did not bring up the subject to me as if he did not care. He must have been on the qui vive because when I came back from the exam he told me to go home right away and do what he says.

Father met me at the train station, took my suitcase and told me to go to Tallinn Teachers' Training Institute immediately with my examination card from Leningrad. I was supposed to take the exam in Estonian. I was asked to write a dictation in Estonian and then the next day – an oral Estonian exam. The rest of the exams were carried over from Leningrad examination card. First I was as enrolled as an eternal student, and in a week I became a full-time student.

I came across anti-Semitism twice in my life. Once a girl called me a kike. It happened in the fourth grade. The second time was in my institute. I studied with Estonians, and in my department the subjects were taught in Estonian. There were hardly any Russians. In the fall we were in a kolkhoz [25](#), and at that time all students were supposed to help farmers for one month, and that was an obligatory assignment from the university. One Estonian student made some comments on my nationality. I was very upset. I was always very funny and energetic and my Estonian fellow students noticed that something was going on with me. They asked me what it was and I told them. I do not know if they said anything to that student. On New Year's when we gave presents to each other, she got two bars of laundry soap. It was not me who did it, and I had no idea who it was.

When I started studying in the Estonian environment, there were a lot of things which seemed strange to me. I sincerely believed in the Soviet regime. Of course, now I look at those things differently. I opened my eyes. I cannot say that I was as smart when I was 17-18. Now I understand what a criminal and cruel regime it was, but at that time I really believed everything I was told. My husband kept the letter, which I wrote to him when he was in the army. Yuri was a candidate for the communist party and I sincerely congratulated him in writing, praised his achievement, and took a pride in him.

I am not ashamed for myself and for my coevals. We did not allow ourselves falsehood and wrongfulness. We were sincere without self interest. I am not ashamed of myself. I only feel hurt a little bit as they made fools out of us. It was a good thing that we were not double-faced, when you are one person at home and out of home – a different one. It would be really bad.

I was so shocked when I started keeping with the company of Estonian students. They were so strongly against the Soviet regime and dreamed of the times when the black-and-blue-and-white national Estonian flag would fly at the city hall. They wanted the Soviet regime to collapse. It was so savage for me. I mostly spent time with two Russian girls at the university. We attended chamber music concerts, spent our leisure time together. My parents did not put any bans on my friends. There were both Russians and Estonians among my friends. Nationality did not matter when I was to choose my husband. I cannot say that it was as easy. Father did not share my opinion.

Marriage and children

I had known my husband, Yuri Sharik, since school. We had been friends for eight years before getting married. We went to neighboring schools. It was the time when there were no co-educational institutions. We went to each others' parties, excursions. We also were living close to one another. We had been friends since our school days and then we understood that we were in love with each other.

Yuri was born in Grozny in 1937, into the family of a career officer. There were two more daughters, Tatiana and Galina. He was the eldest. In general, due to his father's military service the family did not stay anywhere for a long time, moving from one place to another. In 1953 Yuri's father was transferred from Lithuania to Tallinn, where they finally settled down.

Yuri finished school. He was very good at drawing. He really had an artistic talent. After the war, Yuri went to Leningrad to enter the Academy of Arts. His pieces were admitted by the commission. He took one or two exams. Then it turned out that there was a creative competition in the program. Yuri was not ready for it and he did not pass. He came back to Tallinn with the firm intention to work at a plant for a year, get ready for exams and take another attempt to enter the academy the next year.

That year his mother died. His father told Yuri not to enter an institution with full board. He could not think of any institutes as his father was not going to provide for him. Yuri entered military school, but dropped out when he was a freshman. He went to the army, completed his mandatory term and came back to Tallinn. Upon his return he went to police school. I recall, once he asked me out, and then suggested that we should meet in some thinly populated place. I asked him why. He said that he was wearing a cop uniform and he thought that I would not be pleased to be seen with a cop. I told him not to change the place. If he decided to put the uniform on, I said that I would not be ashamed of him. That evening Yuri said that his father refused helping him and forbade his entering an institute. That was the reason for his being in police school.

When my parents found out that I was seeing Yuri, they were shocked, especially my father. He never said openly that he disliked the idea of my seeing a Russian guy. It was not common to discuss things like that, but I understand that he was worried for my future as we were living in a country where deportations, the Doctors' Plot etc. took place. I was an only child and Father was worried about anything in connection with me. I understand that he thought I would marry a Jew from the intelligentsia, but I ended up dating a Russian cop, the son of a military guy! He must have been very worried about me. I remember at that very time all kinds of Jewish guys started calling me. I do not think it was a mere coincidence. Every time Father tried to persuade me: 'Well, go to the cinema with him, or to the concert. It is not a big deal, if you go!' I said no every time.

The fact that I dated Yuri was not a shock for my family only. Tallinn was a small town and all local Jews knew each other. I was easily recognized by my tresses: long, black and thick. Since childhood I heard people whispering behind my back: 'Take a look at her tresses!' When I was 35-40 and had cropped hair I still was asked: 'Was that you with those thick tresses?' Even people from the theaters came up to me and asked me to give them my tresses if I decided to cut them. Those people who did not know me personally recognized me by my tresses. They saw me with Yuri all the time. Thus, Tallinn Jews were really shocked that Yulanka Kann, a lady from such a good Jewish

family, was going to marry a Russian, a cop to boot! The whole town was roaring. Such mixed marriages were rare; I was probably one of the first among aboriginal Estonian Jews to do that. When we were at a symphonic concert we heard the whisper behind our backs: 'Look, these are Yulenska Kann and her husband-to-be!'

Mother was not as alarmed by my decision as father was. At least she did not show it. She could have gone to the bathroom and cried for nobody to see her tears. But still, I think she was calmer about it than my father. In general, he was more concerned than Mom. He was different. Dad was a great person, and I loved him more than anybody else. It was the hardest for me to get along with him as our characters were alike. I was stubborn, and there was no way stopping me when I had made up my mind, and my father was like that too. I lived in the same apartment as my father and we did not speak for a year before I got married.

Father never told me that he was against my marriage to a Russian, and was never explicit. He just said that I should wait, postpone my marriage for a while. I was finishing the institute and Yuri was in the first course of militia school. There was not enough money: Yuri got a scholarship of 40 rubles and that was it. Thus, my father said that at first we should start working, make money. He said what kind of family life were we supposed to have, if we did not even have money to buy a chair? He must have hoped that we would part during the period of waiting.

Father was so concerned about my being serious that his friend Joseph Peisis interfered. He was a student of Tartu University when my father was also studying there. They were friends. Joseph was from a very poor family and lived in my grandfather's house in Tartu. He was in the lines during the war. He survived and came back with numerous military awards. After the war he lived in Riga and kept in touch with his father. Joseph came over pretty often. He was like a member of our family. Joseph called Yuri and they had a long conversation. They had a good talk. Yuri could not get why my father disapproved of our marriage and asked Joseph. He directly told him: because you are Russian. When Yuri came back to Tallinn and told me about it, I was shocked no less than he.

We finally got married in 1961. Father did not even want to attend our wedding ceremony. Joseph forced him into that. When Joseph met Yuri, he liked him a lot and helped us. I wrote a letter to Father asking him to come. He came to marriage registry office being pallid. I saw that he forced himself. By the way, many years later Yuri told me that some people tried to talk him out of marrying me, saying that a Jewish wife with relatives in France would be a stumbling stone in his career. Yuri was the first from his fellow students who put a wedding ring on his finger. His chief told him to take it off, but he said that he would not take it off.

We moved to Yuri's place after the wedding. His mother died young, when she was only 46. His elder sister was married and lived separately. I became 'a stepmother' for his younger sister. My father-in-law treated me pretty well. I do not know what was in his heart, but it looked like he had a good attitude towards me. We lived in a communal apartment - having one faucet and two toilets for eight apartments. We cleaned the toilet by turns. It was okay, we coped.

When Yuri finished the second course of the police school, he entered the legal extramural department of Leningrad University. Father always used to say that the police school was not an education. Yuri took up the studies to prove to my dad that he could do something.

Our son Andrey was born in December 1963, when Yuri was on his first winter term in Leningrad. Father adored his grandson. My son also loved him. He remembers his grandpa. Father barely knew my daughter Anna, born in 1970. He was very sick. Anna was a baby, when my father died. She could hardly remember him. Father was dying in the hospital. Before he died, he told me that Yuri and he did not become close, but he was calm for me as he knew that my husband was a decent man. Not only my dad changed his opinion with regards to my husband and marriage. My friend Gesya Zaltsman was also going to marry a Russian, but her mother was against it. Gesya asked why she was so upset and mentioned that my marriage was so happy. Her mother replied, 'Then take her husband and marry him, I would not be against it.'

Father was buried in the Jewish cemetery. It was a natural decision. He did not have a traditional Jewish funeral. He died in 1971, when there was no rabbi in town. When he was alive he blamed the management of the undertakers for stealing money. They took revenge and gave him a bad place at the cemetery.

I remember when in the 1970s immigration of Jews to Israel started. I was surprised to see the intentions of many of our friends to get ready for immigration. At first I simply could not get who was ousting them from motherland. We condemned them, dissuaded them, but still we kept in touch with those who left Estonia and our friendship remained. It was very strange to see close people leave, especially when I could not approve of their decision. We visit each other. Thank God , there is no Iron Curtain [26](#) any more. It disappeared during Perestroika [27](#).

I never thought of immigration. I traveled a lot, but I did not want to leave Estonia permanently. First of all, people should immigrate at a young age to fit another life smoothly. Besides, my friends in Estonia were very dear to me as well as other important aspects in Estonia. Probably I would be unable to get acclimatized. I go abroad often, I am given a warm welcome, but still I feel myself a stranger. My home is here. Traveling is good, but permanent abode in other country is not for me.

The first time I was abroad was in France in 1978. Of course, my parents had told me about their trips. But still I was in raptures about Paris. I met my relatives and made friends with Georgette, the daughter of Aunt Ksenia. Her husband Ralf was a pediatrician, a very famous doctor. Ksenia's son Alan, born in the first marriage, lives in the USA. They have a lot of kids. Alan has four and Georgette has three. Her daughter Natali with two daughters also lives in America. Georgette lives in Paris. Her younger daughter Delphin is still single. She is my daughter's age, 35 years old. I made friends with everybody. They gave me a warm welcome.

When I came to Paris, I was an ardent stickler of socialism. I remember Ralf's ironic smile, when I told him how expensive their butter was, and how cheap it was in my country. During my first trip to Paris, my belief in socialism was kind of shattered. I decided to go to the Louvre. I was given the direction. It was supposed to be a 20 minute walk, but it took me 5 hours to get there. I showed up in the Louvre with huge shopping bags. I was zigzagging from one side of Montparnasse Boulevard. It seemed to me I popped into every shop. It was my first day, though I came there for more than a month. I bought some hair pins for my daughters, statuettes of dogs and cats, jeans for my sons etc. All those things that I could not get in my country. It was a shock for me to find out that people live so good with capitalism. Then my outlook started changing.

Later years

Our children were growing up. They went to school and were raised like any other Soviet kids. Both my husband and I worked, but we did not want our children to go to the kindergarten. We hired a baby-sitter, an Estonian lady. She was a very good Estonian lady. She had lived with us for eight years and was almost like a family member. The baby-sitter plied my son with love of nature.

During his school days Andrey decided that he wanted to become a forester. When he finished school, he entered the timber department of Tartu Agricultural Academy. There was no Russian department there. The subjects were taught in Estonian. His Estonian was rather poor and he dropped out after the second course. He had golden hands and he started repairing equipment. Andrey reads a lot, loves music. His marriage did not last long. They did not have children. He did not get married again. He lives by himself in Tallinn.

My daughter lives in Moscow. She does well. She is more energetic. She graduated from the journalism department of Moscow State University [28](#). She got married and stayed in Moscow. Her married name is Kazmina. She worked as a journalist for a while and things were smooth. Then she switched to the advertisement business and opened up her own agency. She has been in that business for years. Then she was employed by a large computer firm. She is rather successful. Now she is a member of the board of directors, she is marketing director. Anna has a son called Andrey. He was born in 1996. It is a pity that we cannot see each other often, but we talk on the phone quite often.

Soon after my father's death my mother started living with us. She had always been an ideal of femininity to me. She died at the age of 92. I had never seen her without a manicure, hairdo. She worked until the age of 82. She got up very early in the morning. She ran to the hairdressers at 7am before work. Mother was always very elegant. Sometimes she even looked at herself in the window when she was passing by. Even when she was senile, she had a very fragile figure and feminine gait. Many of my friends and colleagues were enchanted. They came to see us because they liked her.

Mother was a very elderly woman, but still if some foreign delegations came to Marat factory, the director asked my mother to show them Tallinn and spend some time with them. Usually people are more pleased when they are surrounded by younger people, but people treated my mother in a different way. All visitors sent her letters, small souvenirs and 'thank you' notes. In general, my mother was charming to everyone.

During the last years of her life, she had remained by herself, as all her friends had died. Then she found friends who were much younger than she. Only in her last year my mother gave up to her age. She did not have such thick hair anymore and started to walk with a stoop. Even at that time she was a true dame, very elegant. I had never seen her in a robe doing some makeup, only in a dress, shoes and with a hairdo.

Mother died in 2003, when Estonia was independent [29](#), when the Jewish community [30](#) was acting. We arranged a traditional Jewish funeral for her. All was in line with the rite. The community helped us with that. The Tallinn rabbi read a prayer over her grave the way it is supposed to be in accordance with the tradition.

My husband and I were rapt by Perestroika in the Soviet Union. It was an interesting life. We started finding interest in tedious Soviet papers. There were a great many books, which were

banned previously. There was no ban on religion anymore, which was an attribute of the Soviet regime. We liked Gorbachev [31](#). Finally the Soviet Union had a secretary of the communist party, who was not reading from a piece of paper, but delivered a speech, and spoke pretty good Russian. He spoke about reasonable things, which everybody was interested in. We read a lot and disputed over the things we read.

Yes, it was a wonderful time. Finally, we felt that we had a normal life. No matter what they said about Gorbachev during his reign, I think that he did the right things. He could have done many more good things for the country, if the resistance of the sticklers of the former regime, the seekers of power, had not been so strong. During perestroika the Jewish Community of Estonia was officially registered. It meant a lot. I wish my father had lived to see that.

Right upon graduation, I started teaching English in the evening school. The compulsory and evening school was in one building. It was located on the outskirts of Tallinn, which was the workers' district. I loved my school very much. Gradually I started teaching both in the evening and compulsory school. Then I was transferred to compulsory school. I worked there for 31 years. I liked my job. There was a very good team. I always got along with the students.

At that time the principals were changed often. Then it turned out that the last principal was tactless towards me. I was so hurt that I decided that it was time for me to leave. Though, later the principal apologized saying that I was the last person she wanted to hurt. But my character played its part: if I decided to leave, I would leave. I worked until summer vacation as I understood that I could not quit in the middle of the year and did not want to make the teachers' and students' life more complicated.

In the summer I bumped into my former classmate Viva Glukhovskaya. I knew that she had become the headmistress of the Jewish school, based in the premises of the former Jewish lyceum [32](#) due to the efforts of the Jewish community. In 1990 the school had just been opened and there were job openings for teachers. It was less than a month before the school year. They said that they really needed an English teacher, but Viva thought that I would be afraid to work for the Jewish school and that my husband would not let me go there. I said that I was the one who tackled issues like that without asking my husband. I said I would make my final decision after taking a look at the school. I said I would go and see if that would suit me. We agreed on the meeting. When I came there, I understood that I was perfectly okay with it.

Since the beginning of the school year, I was employed at the Jewish school. It was very interesting for me. I started taking an interest in Jewish history, traditions, culture. There was a large library there and I started reading the materials that caught my eye. They sent me to the conferences, workshops. I was carried away with new knowledge, bought many books and read them. Since my first days at school I taught Jewish history in English without knowing the subject. I told them honestly that they probably had better knowledge of Jewish history than I and my task was to teach them English with the help of the Jewish theme. I was very fond of that and started finding the textbooks for all levels of the English language, made my own lesson plans.

I went to seminars in America and Sweden and found a lot of useful things for me. I found it all interesting: the topics of discussion, and the people I met. I held a speech during the seminar in Amsterdam. I talked about the methods of teaching in a Jewish school. The audience was very attentive and surprised to hear that it could be done. They even said that my experience should be

leveraged by other countries. Then it all calmed down and now there is no system. I developed very many programs, but now there are less English classes and teachers have other worries.

Back then I was involved in the teaching process even in my leisure time and I did it with pleasure. Once a week I gave a Jewish class. I picked a topic for each grade. There was the history of Jewish holidays in the twelfth grade and some small children's plays about Channukah and Purim were staged with junior classes. There were lessons devoted to famous Jewish activists. On Friday there was an English class with the Jewish theme picked by students. In general, the whole school year was comprised of Jewish studies. Now, my former students say that it was good. They do not have a system like that today.

When the putsch began [33](#) in the Soviet Union, I was at a conference in America. There were 2000 Jews, and only four of them were from the former Soviet Union, all from Baltic countries: I from Estonia, two ladies from Latvia and one from Lithuania. If it had not been for the putsch, the four of us would have quietly attended the seminar without getting too much attention, but the putsch caused agitation around us and all 2000 participants as well as the journalists of all the papers were surrounding us. We were besieged with questions about our attitude to the putsch, to Gorbachev, our intention to stay in the USA, all kinds of questions. There was a TV set in the hall for us to follow the events. They said we were free to leave the seminar any time and watch the news. If someone found any news in regard to that, they just put notes beneath the door.

A family of American Jews made friends with me. They decided that they should take care of me in the hard times. They had me jump in their car and stay in their place. Before that I gave an interview to a paper. I was asked questions about my life. I said that I was a Komsomol member and did not stick to Jewish traditions. After my interview had been published, I got calls from the editors of different papers and from readers. They were surprised and doubled checked whether they got me right, asked me if could be true that a Jew was unreligious. They could not get it. I was not the first who gave an interview, but I could not understand why they were so surprised. Maybe other people said the things that Americans wanted to hear. I did not want to lie. I honestly said that I had just started taking an interest in Jewish history and traditions.

The telephone was ringing all the time and my American friends were shouting, 'Juliana, it's for you again.' I was always given some pieces of news. My pal, who came to the seminar from Latvia, had a husband who was an activist of the nationalistic Latvian movement. She was worried: if the putschists came to power, he would be killed right away. Of course, I was afraid to hear that there were tanks in Tallinn and bloodshed in Lithuania. There was fear. Then we were relieved when it was over. We are grateful to all Americans for their help, support and care.

The breakup of the Soviet Union [in 1991] was taken for granted by me. If people want to be independent, they should be given a chance. It seems to me that Estonia did not lose from the separation as much as other former republics. I think that the Estonian government did a lot of silly things during that time. I think it happens with all small countries that want to present themselves and want to be respected.

There were also a lot of good things. Our living standard became better despite our age. Both of us are working. I am not employed full time, but my husband is. Our earnings and pension bring not only a comfortable living, but also a chance to travel. Almost every year I go to America and Israel and my husband travels, because we can afford it. Two years ago, I got sick and had to leave my

job. I have a couple of private students now. Once a week Yuri works in a Jewish school, the rest of the time in a compulsory school in our district. He teaches law to the senior students.

Unfortunately, we did not get anything when restitution, that is, the returning of the property nationalized by the Soviet regime, began in Estonia. We tried to get money for the house in Tartu, but we got nothing. At that time there were all kinds of things happening with the archive. It turned out that the house did not belong to anybody – according to one archive it belonged to Levin, according to another to some Estonian guy. It was a mess. We did not have money to hire a lawyer, so it went nowhere. The sawmill, owned by my dad, was allegedly leased. It was hard to believe in it, as the family was rich. It would have been strange for them to rent a sawmill or sell a house. Father was not alive any longer and nobody could know for sure. Thus, we only got money for the tools at the sawmill.

The Jewish community formed an essential part of my life, when I was working at school. I put my heart and soul into that. Now, I am bit aloof, but still I feel their heed and care. They never forget to congratulate me, find out how I feel. They invite me for celebrations, give me presents. In general, I am moved by their attitude. On Jewish holidays, my husband and I gladly go to the community. I like the way we mark them. All is done properly. I do not go there for idling.

At times I call on the school. I do not go there often. Everybody is busy in the classes. I just walk there, give hugs and kisses. There is not enough time to chat with everybody during the break, and I do not want to interrupt the teaching process. My husband works there on Fridays, so I ask him to say hi to everybody I know. In the evening he says hello from my colleagues.

It seems as if it was yesterday when I taught my son how to walk. Now he is 42. Time flies and life passes by in an instant. It is interesting at times to recall, retrace the paths that could have been taken. If my parents had decided not to wait for me to grow up a little bit, we would have gone to Paris and life would have taken a different turn. Who knows what might have happened? Nobody knows.

I do not regret anything. There are good things in everybody's life. There were all kinds of things, but in general it was interesting. I always had very many wonderful friends. Lately we started losing them: they die one after another. We have a company of six couples, with whom I would never part. We were lucky to meet each other and have a good time in the company of each other.

Glossary:

1 Five percent quota

In tsarist Russia the number of Jews in higher educational institutions could not exceed 5% of the total number of students.

2 Russian Revolution of 1917

Revolution in which the tsarist regime was overthrown in the Russian Empire and, under Lenin, was replaced by the Bolshevik rule. The two phases of the Revolution were: February Revolution, which came about due to food and fuel shortages during World War I, and during which the tsar abdicated

and a provisional government took over. The second phase took place in the form of a coup led by Lenin in October/November (October Revolution) and saw the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks.

3 Pogroms in Ukraine

In the 1920s there were many anti-Semitic gangs in Ukraine. They killed Jews and burnt their houses, they robbed their houses, raped women and killed children.

4 Jewish Pale of Settlement

Certain provinces in the Russian Empire were designated for permanent Jewish residence and the Jewish population was only allowed to live in these areas. The Pale was first established by a decree by Catherine II in 1791. The regulation was in force until the Russian Revolution of 1917, although the limits of the Pale were modified several times. The Pale stretched from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, and 94% of the total Jewish population of Russia, almost 5 million people, lived there. The overwhelming majority of the Jews lived in the towns and shtetls of the Pale. Certain privileged groups of Jews, such as certain merchants, university graduates and craftsmen working in certain branches, were granted to live outside the borders of the Pale of Settlement permanently.

5 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.

6 Occupation of the Baltic Republics (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania)

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

7 Solzhenitsyn, Alexander (1918-2008)

Russian novelist and publicist. He spent eight years in prisons and labor camps, and three more years in enforced exile. After the publication of a collection of his short stories in 1963, he was denied further official publication of his work, and so he circulated them clandestinely, in samizdat publications, and published them abroad. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1970 and was exiled from the Soviet Union in 1974 after publishing his famous book, The Gulag Archipelago, in which he describes Soviet labor camps.

8 First Estonian Republic

Until 1917 Estonia was part of the Russian Empire. Due to the revolutionary events in Russia, the political situation in Estonia was extremely unstable in 1917. Various political parties sprang up;

the Bolshevik party was particularly strong. National forces became active, too. In February 1918, they succeeded in forming the provisional government of the First Estonian Republic, proclaiming Estonia an independent state on 24th February 1918.

9 Jewish Cultural Autonomy

Cultural autonomy, which was proclaimed in Estonia in 1926, allowing the Jewish community to promote national values (education, culture, religion).

10 Deportations from the Baltics (1940-1953)

After the Soviet Union occupied the three Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) in June 1940 as a part of establishing the Soviet system, mass deportation of the local population began. The victims of these were mainly but not exclusively those unwanted by the regime: the local bourgeoisie and the previously politically active strata. Deportations to remote parts of the Soviet Union continued up until the death of Stalin. The first major wave of deportation took place between 11th and 14th June 1941, when 36,000, mostly politically active people were deported. Deportations were reintroduced after the Soviet Army recaptured the three countries from Nazi Germany in 1944. Partisan fights against the Soviet occupiers were going on all up to 1956, when the last squad was eliminated. Between June 1948 and January 1950, in accordance with a Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR under the pretext of 'grossly dodged from labor activity in the agricultural field and led anti-social and parasitic mode of life' from Latvia 52,541, from Lithuania 118,599 and from Estonai 32,450 people were deported. The total number of deportees from the three republics amounted to 203,590. Among them were entire Lithuanian families of different social strata (peasants, workers, intelligentsia), everybody who was able to reject or deemed capable to reject the regime. Most of the exiled died in the foreign land. Besides, about 100,000 people were killed in action and in fusillade for being members of partisan squads and some other 100,000 were sentenced to 25 years in camps.

11 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.

12 Estonian Rifle Corps

Military unit established in late 1941 as a part of the Soviet Army. The Corps was made up of two rifle divisions. Those signed up for the Estonian Corps by military enlistment offices were ethnic Estonians regardless of their residence within the Soviet Union as well as men of call-up age residing in Estonia before the Soviet occupation (1940). The Corps took part in the bloody battle of Velikiye Luki (December 1942 - January 1943), where it suffered great losses and was sent to the back areas for re-formation and training. In the summer of 1944, the Corps took part in the

liberation of Estonia and in March 1945 in the actions on Latvian territory. In 1946, the Corps was disbanded.

13 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.

14 NKVD

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

15 Communal apartment

The Soviet power wanted to improve housing conditions by requisitioning 'excess' living space of wealthy families after the Revolution of 1917. Apartments were shared by several families with each family occupying one room and sharing the kitchen, toilet and bathroom with other tenants. Because of the chronic shortage of dwelling space in towns communal or shared apartments continued to exist for decades. Despite state programs for the construction of more houses and the liquidation of communal apartments, which began in the 1960s, shared apartments still exist today.

16 All-Union pioneer organization

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

17 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.

18 Komsomol

Communist youth political organization created in 1918. The task of the Komsomol was to spread the ideas of communism and involve the worker and peasant youth in building the Soviet Union. The Komsomol also aimed at giving a communist upbringing by involving the worker youth in the political struggle, supplemented by theoretical education. The Komsomol was more popular than the Communist Party because with its aim of education people could accept uninitiated young proletarians, whereas party members had to have at least a minimal political qualification.

19 Pushkin, Alexandr (1799-1837)

Russian poet and prose writer, among the foremost figures in Russian literature. Pushkin established the modern poetic language of Russia, using Russian history for the basis of many of his works. His masterpiece is Eugene Onegin, a novel in verse about mutually rejected love. The work also contains witty and perceptive descriptions of Russian society of the period. Pushkin died in a duel.

20 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.'

21 Creation of the State of Israel

From 1917 Palestine was a British mandate. Also in 1917 the Balfour Declaration was published, which supported the idea of the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Throughout the interwar period, Jews were migrating to Palestine, which caused the conflict with the local Arabs to escalate. On the other hand, British restrictions on immigration sparked increasing opposition to the mandate powers. Immediately after World War II there were increasing numbers of terrorist attacks designed to force Britain to recognize the right of the Jews to their own state. These aspirations provoked the hostile reaction of the Palestinian Arabs and the Arab states. In February 1947 the British foreign minister Ernest Bevin ceded the Palestinian mandate to the UN, which took

the decision to divide Palestine into a Jewish section and an Arab section and to create an independent Jewish state. On 14th May 1948 David Ben Gurion proclaimed the creation of the State of Israel. It was recognized immediately by the US and the USSR. On the following day the armies of Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon attacked Israel, starting a war that continued, with intermissions, until the beginning of 1949 and ended in a truce.

22 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.

23 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.

24 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.

25 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.

26 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..

27 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.

28 Lomonosov Moscow State University

founded in 1755, the university was for a long time the only higher educational institution in Russia open to the general public. In the Soviet time, it was the biggest and perhaps the most prestigious university in the country. At present there are over 40,000 undergraduates and 7,000 graduate students at MSU.

29 Reestablishment of the Estonian Republic

According to the referendum conducted in the Baltic Republics in March 1991, 77.8 percent of participating Estonian residents supported the restoration of Estonian state independence. On 20th August 1991, at the time of the coup attempt in Moscow, the Estonian Republic's Supreme Council issued the Decree of Estonian Independence. On 6th September 1991, the USSR's State Council recognized full independence of Estonia, and the country was accepted into the UN on 17th September 1991.

30 Jewish Community of Estonia

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

31 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.

32 Tallinn Jewish Gymnasium

During the Soviet period, the building hosted Vocational School #1. In 1990, the school building was restored to the Jewish community of Estonia; it is now home to the Tallinn Jewish School.

33 1991 Moscow coup d'etat

Starting spontaneously on the streets of Moscow, its leaders went public on 19th August. TASS (Soviet Telegraphical Agency) made an announcement that Gorbachev had been relieved of his duties for health reasons. His powers were assumed by Vice President Gennady Yanayev. A State Committee on the State of Emergency (GKChP) was established, led by eight officials, including KGB head Vladimir Kryuchkov, Soviet Prime Minister Valentin Pavlov, and Defense Minister Dmitry Yazov. Seizing on President Mikhail Gorbachev's summer absence from the capital, eight of the Soviet leader's most trusted ministers attempted to take control of the government. Within three days, the poorly planned coup collapsed and Gorbachev returned to the Kremlin. But an era had abruptly ended. The Soviet Union, which the coup plotters had desperately tried to save, was dead.