Avi Dobrysh

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Tallinn
Estonia
Interviewer: Ella Levitskaya
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I met Avi Dobrysh in the Jewish community of Estonia 1. Avi is a member of the committee. Being a professional construction engineer, he pays a lot of attention to the construction of the synagogue, which is underway in the yard of the Jewish community in Tallinn. He is so pressed for time, that every minute is counted, but still he found the timeslot to give Centropa an interview. I interviewed him in the hotel, where I was staying during my business trip to Tallinn. Avi and his family live in a suburb of Tallinn, so we didn't have time for commuting. Avi is of medium height. He looks quite athletic. He is still playing tennis. He started playing tennis during his school years. Now he plays tennis twice a week. In general, Avi leads an active life in spite of his age.

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My family background

My father's family lived in the Russian town of Pskov [about 700 km west of Moscow; approx. 40 km from the Estonian border]. My grandfather, Abram Dobrysh, was one of the best tailors in town. He made fur-coats for the merchants. He was paid good money for his work and the family did well.

I don't remember my grandmother's name. Her maiden name was Zaretskaya, and she kept it after she got married. I don't know the reason for that. One lady from Pskov, who knew Grandmother, said that she was very beautiful and she allegedly came from a family of impoverished gentry. Maybe grandmother wasn't a Jew, and my grandparents couldn't get married in accordance with Jewish traditions. I don't know that for sure, as I don't have any information or any documents. In Pskov I couldn't find any information about Grandmother either. At any rate,

something is unclear here.

I got all the information about my family I could from the Pskov Regional Studies Museum. The building rented by Grandfather both for living and working, is still there. Currently, there are some office premises there.

There were three children in the family. All of them were born in Pskov. Father's brother Hirsh was the eldest in the family. He was two or three years older than Father. My father, Isaac Dobrysh, was born in 1909. Father's younger sister was born in 1913. She was called Lena in her family. I don't know her Jewish name. Neither do I know whether Yiddish was spoken in my father's family. Father spoke Russian.

When in 1917 the revolution began in Russia 2, Grandfather decided to get away from the Bolsheviks 3. In 1919 the family moved to Pechory and then farther. They settled in the Estonian city of Tartu, which was called Yuriyev during the time of the Russian empire. It was a university town, the second largest city in Estonia. They lived in Estonia under the Nansen passport 4. Such a passport was issued in Estonia without the need to have citizenship.

Father had to start working at the age of 15. I don't know exactly what education he had. I think he finished either six or seven grades. The revolution broke the life of our family. When they fled to Estonia, Father stopped studying. He started working for Mr. Bakst, a Jewish merchant of the first guild 5, an owner of several stores. Most likely Father could cope with his work. Then he started working as a traveling salesman. He went to the south of Estonia and sold goods there. Father worked for Bakst until 1941.

My grandparents passed away either in 1930 or in 1931. They were buried in the Jewish cemetery in Tartu. Father's sister was still a child when her parents died and my father brought her up.

Mother's family lived in Tallinn. My maternal great-grandmother was born in Vilnius. Her name was Chesse. She was still alive when I was a baby. I called her 'bobe' [grandmother]. My great-grandmother probably moved to Tartu from Vilnius when she got married.

My maternal grandmother, Roche-Leya, was born in Tartu on 29th November 1884. Grandmother was illiterate. She started working at the age of 13. She rolled cigarettes. Grandmother stopped working when she got married. I don't know where my paternal grandfather, Zalman Meyertal, came from He was born in 1880.

Mother's parents lived in Tallinn. Grandfather was a cobbler, Grandmother was a housewife. She raised five children. The eldest, Isaac, was born in 1905 and the second, Hirsh, in 1907. Mother's third brother, Pesach, was born in 1910. My mother Miriam-Deborah was born in 1913 and the youngest, Sheine, in 1916.

All children got good education. My mother and her sister finished the German lyceum in Tallinn, studied music. Mother's three elder brothers got higher education. They studied in Estonia and then in Czechoslovakia, in Prague, in the technical high school. Subjects were taught in German; all Estonian inhabitants knew German.

I have no idea why my uncles studied in Prague. Many young Estonians went there to study as the tuition for higher education was cheaper there than in other European cities. Besides, at that time

there were no technical universities in Estonia. Mother's eldest brother, Isaac, finished the machine-building department. The other two brothers studied at the chemistry department.

Mother's brother Hirsh, who was called German in the family, was a wonderful sportsman. He was very good at ping pong and football. He was a goal-keeper in the Maccabi 6 sports team, and he was also a goal-keeper of the Prague team Sparta 7, when he was studying there. There are pictures of my uncle in some museums in Prague, snapshots taken at the matches in which he participated. His active participation in sport contests interfered with his studies. There was no chance for him to pass a certain exam because of a match with a Spanish team, as German's team refused to play without him. Only after the match, he was given the opportunity to finish his studies. He came back to Tallinn with the diploma of a mechanical engineer.

The youngest of the three brothers, Pesach, got a diploma in chemical engineering. He later became a chemical engineer.

Mother's family was religious, Jewish traditions were kept. And the children always stuck to Jewish traditions even though they were modern people.

My parents met in Tallinn. Father came from Tartu to their acquaintances in Tallinn, and met mother there. It was not a pre-arranged meeting. They simply met in the place of people both of them knew. As far as I understand, Grandmother was very authoritarian and Mother was happy to get married and get away from Grandmother's control. My parents got married on 25th December 1933, on Christmas. They had three days off and took advantage of that. They had a traditional Jewish wedding under the chuppah. After getting married, Mother moved to Tartu from Tallinn.

Father's brother Hirsh also lived in Tartu. He had a store of ready-made clothes in downtown Tartu. Hirsh was married. He had two sons.

When Father got married, his sister left for Tallinn. She lived there with Grandmother Roche-Leya. Lena found a job in a company, owned by a Jew called Mirvits. She painted cups. At work, she met her future husband, Ioan Emelianov, a local Russian from a family of old believers 8. They got married in late June 1941, during the first days of war [cf. Great Patriotic War] 9.

Mother's elder brothers also got married. Their wives came from wealthy Jewish families. Only the youngest brother, Pesach, remained single. Mother's younger sister, Sheine, married a Jew from Riga. All of them had Jewish weddings under the chuppah, in accordance with the tradition. I remember the wedding of my aunt Sheine, which took place in our Tallinn choral synagogue 10. I remember that there were a lot of people at her wedding. There was loud music. It was mirthful. We had fun. Then my aunt moved to her husband in Riga.

My parents didn't have their own house. They rented apartments. Before the war, within six and a half years, we changed four apartments. Our last apartment was in the center of Tartu, in front of the theater. The house was destroyed during the war. There is nothing in that place now. There is only grass. We lived in a large apartment, consisting of five rooms. Father worked for the merchant Bakst. Mother was a housewife after getting married. I was born on 14th December 1934. They named me Avi. I am an only child.

Growing up

My first words were in German. My mother finished a German lyceum. She knew only German baby songs and fairy-tales and so she sang songs and told me children's stories in German. I learned Estonian by playing with kids in the yard. My father's mother tongue was Russian. Of course, he was fluent in Estonian, but he wasn't very good at writing in it. He sent me postcards from the front in Estonian and there were mistakes in them.

At home, my parents spoke Russian, especially when they were trying to hide something from me. In time I started understanding their conversations. Once, in my presence they talked about going to the cinema without me. I couldn't speak Russian at that time, but could understand everything. I told them in Estonian that I wouldn't stay home by myself and would go to the cinema with them. They laughed at me, but still didn't take me to the cinema with them. Then I gradually learned how to speak Russian. So, my third language was Russian. Yiddish wasn't spoken at home.

Before the war, our family had a good life. First, Father was the only bread-winner. Mother was a housewife. I even had a baby-sitter. Then my mother was probably very bored and also started working. We weren't rich, but lived comfortably. We had a large apartment. There was enough money for good food and all the necessary clothes. We couldn't afford expensive things. I remember when Father bought his first Philips radio. It cost a fortune. I think my parents won at a lottery at some Jewish event. In general, they could afford pretty much everything at a reasonable price.

Life was good and peaceful in the Estonian Republic 11. Even during the tsarist regime, when Estonia was part of Russia, it never had such an attitude towards Jews as was the case in Russia. There were no Jewish pogroms 12 in the entire history of Estonia, and no anti-Semitism in pre-Soviet times.

On Sundays all members of the family spent time together. We used to walk around Tartu, had lunch in a restaurant. I was friends with the elder son of Father's brother Hirsh. He was two years older than me, and his brother was two years younger than me. I was closer with the elder one. In summer we went to the small town Elva, not far from Tallinn.

Jewish traditions were observed in the family. Of course, my parents weren't as religious as my grandparents, but still we stuck to traditions. It has always been like that. Mother cooked dishes of the Jewish cuisine. We marked Jewish holidays at home. On holidays Father went to the synagogue. Unfortunately, I don't remember the details of the holiday. I remember that there was a whole box of matzah on Pesach. When I was a baby, I stealthily crawled into that box and ate matzah.

My grandmother Roche-Leya often came from Tallinn to see us. I often went to Tallinn to see them. I was her first grandson and she loved me dearly. The family of my mother's parents lived on Raua Street in Tallinn. They owned some houses. Grandmother bought two log houses, and leased one of them.

I remember two things from my childhood. My first recollection goes back to the time when the Swedish king came to Estonia for a visit. He came to Tartu and we went to welcome him. It was a warm spring day. There were crowds of people on the central square and an abundance of flowers. The orchestra made it even more festive.

I also remember, when I was four, I underwent an appendix operation. The surgeon who had operated on me often came to my ward and played cards with me. When I asked where my appendix was he said that he had given it to the cat. When I was an adult, I bumped into that doctor in a restaurant. He put a bottle of cognac on the table and asked if he could join the youth. I said that I remembered him and told him the story. The doctor made a joke saying that I was a lucky patient, as most of his patients could not say that.

I also remember events organized at the Jewish lyceum 13. There was a charitable lottery. As far as I remember, such events took place on Chanukkah. In 1941 I was enrolled in preschool at the Jewish lyceum. I didn't have a chance to go to school because the war broke out.

In 1939 Soviet military bases 14 were established in Estonia. The Estonian population didn't take the presence of Soviet militaries with hostility, as it had been agreed on by the governments of both countries and people were calm about it. Soviet military pilots and their families lived in our neighborhood. My parents got acquainted with them as they were fluent in Russian. Those pilots came to see us in the evening. One of them was a lieutenant, Mikhail Trivsik, a Jew. He was a very pleasant man. His wife Capitolina was Russian. Mikhail told her that she he wouldn't have dinners at home until she learned how to cook like my mother. We had fun when they came over. I started speaking better Russian.

By the way, after the war we kept in touch with Trivsik. He survived the war and got the rank of Soviet general – lieutenant. In 1995 I met his nephew Trivsik during a seminar in Jerusalem. It's a small world.

Soviet invasion of the Baltics

I didn't notice any changes in the year 1940 when Estonia became a Soviet republic 15. Maybe my parents felt them, but I did not. I was not hostile towards the Soviet regime. Though, Bakst's store, where Father was working, was nationalized. Father kept working there in the same position.

The Soviet authorities nationalized both houses that belonged to my grandmother. The houses and the plots of land were returned only after 1991 when restitution commenced in independent Estonia 16. I had those buildings demolished. A new building was constructed on that site. The construction company involved in that project was named after my grandmother Meyertal.

It happened later that my kin and friends suffered from nationalization. Of course, people that were affected by nationalization weren't happy about the new regime. If someone puts his hand in your pocket and takes money away from you, it means that he is your enemy. These were the times when the Soviet regime plundered many people. The straw that broke the camel's back was what happened on 14th June 1941, a turnaround for many Estonian families – deportation 17.

Before I start talking about that, I will name some historic facts. Beginning from the 18th century Estonia had been occupied by Germany. In Estonian history Germans were described as oppressors. On the one hand, Germans were not so much liked by Estonians. But on the other hand, German culture is very similar to the Estonian one. Our Estonian culture was not very strong, as German culture had been imposed on Estonia for over 600 years. Estonians accepted German culture, which was very dangerous for them – there was an issue whether Estonians would have their own culture. Estonians did not accept Russian culture.

Recently I watched a program where an Estonian writer was invited. The anchorman asked him the following question: 'Which occupation was more dangerous for Estonians – the Fascist or the Soviet one?' The writer's response astounded the anchorman as he had anticipated another answer. The writer said that the German occupation was definitely more dangerous for Estonians. The anchorman expected a different response: how could three years of German occupation be compared to 50 years of Soviet occupation? The writer explained his point of view along these lines: if the German occupation had lasted for 50 years as the Soviet one had, nobody would have spoken Estonian in Estonia as Estonians would have accepted the German culture right away. As for the Russian culture, they would have resisted it. That is why the Estonian culture and the Estonian language have been preserved.

During the war

Until 14th June 1941 Estonians regarded Germans as oppressors and enemies. When in 1939 local Estonian Germans left Estonia as per Hitler's call, Estonians were happy about it. After the deportation, when 10,000 people were deported from Estonia to Siberia, Russians and Soviets became the enemies. The deportation of Estonian population was a gross mistake of the Soviet regime.

Two of my mother's elder brothers, Isaac and German, and their families were deported. Only the youngest brother, Pesach, remained untouched. He was single at that time. Isaac and German were married to wealthy ladies and the Soviet regime thought them to be capitalistic parasites, who were supposed to be deported.

When Grandmother found out about that, she rented a car and followed the train from Tallinn up to the Southern border of Estonia. At every stop she gave her sons and their wives money, food and everything she could possible give. After that trip Grandmother came to see us in Tartu. She never went back to Tallinn. A week after deportation we found out about the outbreak of war on 22nd June 1941. We heard on the radio that Germany had attacked the Soviet Union. The war began.

My parents, Uncle Hirsh and some other relatives had a long discussion whether to get evacuated or not. We had discussed it for about two weeks and finally decided that we had to leave. On 5th July 1941, Father went to work in the store. He called Mom from there and said that the store was closed down and all employees were told to evacuate. We left on the same day, and on 9th July Germany occupied Tartu.

Grandmother, Uncle Hirsh and his family left with us. We didn't know anything about Mother's relatives who stayed in Tallinn. We went through Pskov, wherefrom we went to Chuvash. We didn't stay there for a long time. All of us worked in kolkhoz fields 18. It was harvest time.

In September, when the German army was approaching Moscow, we were told to go farther, towards Central Asia. Grandmother was with us. So we went to Central Asia from Chuvash. In Kazan, at night, Grandmother got off the train with her things. She wanted to go to her daughters-in-law in exile. We knew that Mother's brother Isaac and German were involved in timbering in Siberian camps 19, and their wives were exiled in Siberia, in Kirov oblast, and the settlement Darovskoy was not far from the town of Molnyzh.

Thus, Grandmother got off the train to look for them. She didn't know Russian at all, but she managed to find her daughters-in-law. Grandmother knew that German's wife left for the exile when she was in her last months of pregnancy. In 1941 my cousin Marina was born in Darovsk. Grandmother stayed with them during the period of exile and helped them out.

We moved on and reached Kyrgyz. We were sent to a kolkhoz – I cannot recall its name – in Talass oblast. Germans from Volga region 20 lived there. They were dispossessed in 1932 21. Men were exiled to the Gulag to work in timbering and women and children were to stay in the kolkhoz. They treated us pretty well since we knew German. We were starving all the time. The Germans had everything they needed. They were well-off, but they were not generous. Apart from Germans, there were also wounded people in the kolkhoz, the ones who couldn't return to the lines because of severe wounds. I remember one of them –a Ukrainian guy, who sang very beautiful Ukrainian songs and played the guitar. When Mother went to work, she often had me stay with him.

My father and Uncle Hirsh were with us at first. In early 1942 when the Estonian corps 22 was established, they were mobilized in Kyrgyz. Mother and I stayed on our own. Mother worked in the kolkhoz. I went to the 1st grade of the local Russian school. The school was in a small one-storied building. Students from the 1st to the 4thgrade studied in one room: the first row of desks – 1st grade, the second row – 2nd grade, the third row – 3rd grade, and the fourth row – 4th grade. There was one teacher for four grades.

In 1942, Mother was invited to study in a place near Moscow, the town of Egoryevsk. One Estonian college trained future experts of Soviet Estonia, so that people could start working upon the liberation of Estonia. There were economic and planning departments. There were also colleges for trade and industry experts. The students were trained for different branches of economy.

Estonians came to Egoryevsk from all over the Soviet Union. They didn't care about nationality – Estonians or Jews, it didn't matter; the most important thing was that their motherland should be Estonia.

We left for Egoryevsk. I remember it was the first time for me to see fireworks on the way to Egoryevsk. An Estonian boarding school was established for the children of those who studied at the Estonian college. It was on the same street as the college. There were 95 Estonian children. Both studies and communication were in Estonian. Again I had to go to the 1st grade, but this time in an Estonian school.

We were following the course of military events. There was a map of Europe on the wall, and every day we marked the changes on the front with colored flags. We were looking forward to the liberation of Estonia, as all of us were agog to go back home.

In 1943, I joined the pioneers 23 in boarding school. There was a case when they wanted to expel me from the pioneers. We went hiking and I tied my pioneer scarf on the tent as if it was a flag. They wanted to expel me for such a 'sacrilege.' I don't remember whether I was expelled, but I know for sure that they wanted to do that.

We corresponded with Father. Uncle Hirsh and he went through the entire war. In 1944, Hirsh ended up in hospital. He was driving a truck with ammunition, fell from the truck and was hit by one of the boxes. My uncle broke his leg and had to stay in hospital. When he got better, the war

was over.

My father went through the entire war and took part in the liberation of Estonia. He perished on Saaremaa – an island in the western part of Estonia. There is a shoal head at Saaremaa, where the Germans set up a port at the end of war so that they could get evacuated. The Estonian corps had an order to capture that shoal head. Landing troops carried out that operation and about 500 men died there, including my father. Two vessels were sent to Saaremaa with land-troopers. The people from one vessel survived, the rest drowned.

Over the past years, I've collected the interviews with Estonian inhabitants. There was an interview with a man, a land trooper, who jumped in the sea after my father. He told me the story. He knew how to swim and survived, but my father didn't know how to swim. He perished on 12th October 1944, when he was 35 years old. On that day, Father's sister gave birth to a daughter, my cousin Asya. My other cousin, the son of Father's brother Hirsh was also born on that day. What a coincidence. We erected a memorial tombstone devoted to all Jewish men from Tartu that perished during the war. My father's name is also there.

Before Estonia was liberated from fascists, the Germans started mobilizing Estonians in the German army. I know many guys, who served them. They were young boys, who finished school in spring and they were drafted into the army, the Waffen-SS division, the so-called Estonian legion 24. It was compulsory. There were very few volunteers.

My father didn't join the army voluntarily, he was mobilized. One of those people told me that he put on an SS-uniform once when his picture was taken for the documents. Then he wore the ordinary German military uniform. Germans ordered those young guys to fight with Soviet troops. Estonians fought against the Soviet army because they didn't want the Bolsheviks to return. It was not their fault. They knew what the Soviet regime was about. They fought for independent Estonian Republic.

Why did Estonians, who had always disliked Germans, welcome the German army? Because they hoped to get rid of the Bolsheviks and the communists, who did so much harm to Estonian people during the Soviet regime that Estonians forgot about their hostility towards the Germans. Everybody remembers the deportations of that time and it is still cutting to the quick. Even now, many Jews, who came to Estonia from the USSR, who were fighting for the Soviets, are not willing to understand those Estonians who fought on the German side. They call them Nazis and fascists, but it is not like that in actuality. It is not as easy and nobody can talk about it like that.

A new occupation of Estonia started with the liberation from the fascists. Many Estonians are perturbed, when those veterans of the Soviet Army get together near the Bronze Soldier of Tallinn in order to mark the anniversary of the liberation of Tallinn from fascists. [Editor's note: originally named 'Monument to the Liberators of Tallinn' and located in a small park in the center of Tallinn, it was relocated to the Defense Forces Cemetery in Tallinn, following riots in April 2007.] Yes, the Soviet Union, and the Soviet army liberated Estonia from fascists. But it also occupied it right away.

Estonians say that had the Soviet army liberated Estonia from fascists and left, giving Estonia a chance as an independent country, everybody would have been thankful to the army, the liberator. And for us, the citizens of Estonia, who had left for evacuation in Russia, it was clear in the year of 1944 that there would be a chance to come home only once the fascists had been ousted from

Estonia. It was unconditional for us that Estonia should be liberated from fascists.

After the war

On 22nd September 1944 Tallinn was liberated from the Germans. My mother was one of the first to be sent to Estonia. On 14th October we were in Tallinn. I remember that date clearly, as we went to the birth center to visit Father's sister, who gave birth to her daughter Asya.

My aunt had an amazing fate. She is one out of the five Estonian Jews, who had remained in Estonia during the war and survived. She married her husband, Ioan Emeliannikov, shortly before war. When over the war started, he changed apartments right away. He chose a district where nobody knew them. Then he hid Lena on a farmstead not far from Tallinn. The villagers were Estonians, whom Ioan knew. They sheltered Lena in the daytime and at night she came out for a walk. She didn't look like a Jew. After two years they came back to Tallinn. The Germans were still there and Lena walked around Tallinn and wasn't afraid of them. The Germans arrested Ioan and my aunt went to the police and Gestapo, trying to save him. She managed to rescue him from prison. This is their story.

The day when my father died, 12th October 1944, is the day when their daughter Asya was born. She is my cousin. She is currently living in Tallinn, in the house built by her father. Her parents are not alive any more. My aunt died in 1983 and her husband in the early 1990s.

My grandfather Zalman Meyertal, mother's father, didn't get evacuated and stayed in Tallinn. He thought that someone had to watch the house. He was 64. Grandfather was to a great extent short-sighted and he thought that nobody would touch him. The Soviet army left Tallinn on 28th August 1941 and within a couple of days, Grandfather ended up in Tallinn prison. I have a protocol of interrogation of my grandfather from 2nd September 1941. According to the documents from Tallinn prison, 207 Jewish men from Tallinn were executed in September. There is a list of the executed and my grandfather is among them.

Mother's younger sister Sheine stayed with her family in Riga. Sheine was pregnant, and most likely was afraid to travel. She and her husband were taken to Riga ghetto 25. She gave birth to a son there and the three of them died there.

First, we came to Tallinn. At that time we didn't know yet that Father was dead. Mother's younger brother Pesach, or Pavel, was already in Tallinn. He knew about Father's death, but he was afraid to tell Mother about that. Pavel worked in the food industry. He was in Moscow during the war and worked at a confectionary. When he came to see him, he had a great deal of sweets and chocolate. Pavel got married while in evacuation. He met an Estonian lady on his way to evacuation and they got married. He married a Jew the second time.

Pavel talked us into staying in Tallinn, gave us the keys to his brother's apartment, but Mother insisted that we should go back to Tartu. In Father's last letter that we received he was writing that we should come back to Tartu. Mother was supposed to receive a job assignment in the state planning department of Estonia. She asked to be assigned to Tartu. We went there. We were given a room in a communal apartment 26 downtown. Our wonderful Tartu suffered a lot during war, since there were battles on both banks of the river. In Tartu we found out about father's death.

I went to Tartu secondary school #1 27. It used to be Trefner's lyceum before 1940, named after its founder in the 19th century. He was a great man. His school is still considered to be one of the best ones in Estonia. I studied there until the 4th grade.

Mother worked in Ispolkom 28, in the planning commission. Then she was admitted to the Party and offered a position to be in charge of the card bureau of Tartu. There were practically no products on free sale; all of them were given out by food cards 29.

Mother was an honest person and probably trusted people too much. At the end of each month the remaining cards were supposed to be destroyed. It was most likely that not all the cards were destroyed and some people pocketed them. We didn't have anything extra at home. There were the cards that the two of us were supposed to have. I went to the store to get the things with the cards, as Mother didn't have time.

There was an audit in the commission and there was a want of cards. Since Mother was in charge, she was detained. Mother was sentenced to seven years in prison. I moved to Tallinn, to my grandmother. I lived in Tallinn since the 4th grade. Mother was in Kharku camp, nearby Tallinn. In tsarist times, there were women's prisons and camps. When the Germans occupied Estonia, Jewish ladies and children were taken to Kharku and shot. It was turned into a women's prison after the war. Grandmother and I went to see Mother, brought her food.

During the war we were not aware of the mass execution of Jews. Only after the war the information started seeping through. We found out about the mass execution of Jews in Kiev, at Babi Yar 30, in Belarus, Ukraine, concentration camps in Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia. Of course, before the war was over, it was clear what was going on, but the Soviet regime was not willing to talk about the execution of the Jews, trying to conceal it from people.

Klooga 31 was the worst concentration camp in Estonia – only few people managed to survive. I know one survivor from Klooga. His name is Benjamin Anolik. When Estonia gained independence, the memorial devoted to the victims of fascism was unveiled in Klooga. Every year on 19th September people come there from all parts of the world to commemorate the innocent victims. This year the presidents of Estonia and Israel were present at the 51st anniversary of the camp. Recently, a new pavilion was opened in Yad Vashem 32, where the exposition starts with Klooga. Many people ask the following question: 'Why Klooga?'

In 1944, attachés of alliance troops addressed Stalin with the request to visit Tallinn. The first model of an acoustic torpedo was there and they wanted to see it. Stalin gave them permission for their visit and suggested bringing along reporters as there were other things to see apart from the torpedo. In late September 1944, they were taken to Klooga. In 1944 neither Oswenzim [Auschwitz] nor Buchenwald 33 nor any other camps were liberated. There were rumors that nobody saw them.

In Klooga, they saw burning piles of people. The fires were made in the form of a square, six by six meters: a man – a log. A person lay down, he was shot in the head and another person lay down next to him. There were two fires like that. The Germans didn't have time to make more fires like that as Soviet troops were attacking. The young journalists Graham Greene, Harrison Salisbury, Erenburg 34 and others came to Klooga. It was the first time when people saw in real life what the Germans did to people, to Jews. Those pictures were on the pages of all newspapers in the world. A newsreel was shot. For the first time the world found out about the fascists' crimes, namely from

Klooga. That is why the exposition of Yad Vashem begins with Klooga.

I entered the Estonian school in Tallinn. I lived with Grandmother. I received the pension of my perished father, but the amount was skimpy. Grandmother had an additional income. She started rolling cigarettes. She knew how to do that since adolescence and it became her source of income after the war. Acquaintances brought Grandmother some things to sell. She went to the flea market and sold those things. She earned a little bit with that as well. So, that was the way we lived.

Grandmother remained religious after the war as well. She explained to me right away that her belief in God was her personal issue and it should not concern me. Grandmother strictly observed Jewish traditions. She worked really hard, but she didn't do anything on Saturday.

The great Tallinn synagogue burned down in 1944 and there was no synagogue in the city right after the war. Then the municipal authorities gave a small house to the Jewish community and Grandmother's brother established a prayer house there. The Park Hotel is currently on the spot of the former synagogue. When the hotel construction was underway, the prayer house was demolished as it interfered with the construction. The synagogue was given new premises.

There was no rabbi in Tallinn. Doctor Abu Gomer 35, the Tallinn rabbi, was murdered by fascists in 1941. His functions were performed by someone from the community, who knew Jewish traditions and Yiddishkeit very well. The first professional rabbi, Shmuel Kott, came to Tallinn only five years ago. Even at that time Jewish traditions were observed – there were weddings under the chuppah, and the bar mitzvah ceremony was carried out.

Of course, the Soviet regime struggled against religion in Estonia 36, but not on such a scale as it was the case in the Soviet Union. Certainly, those things were done unofficially, quietly at home. For the brit milah an experienced doctor was invited to the family's home. I was present at the brit milah of my cousin Eric, German's son. It was a holiday at home. Men wore traditional attire and hats. We always had matzah. First it was brought from Riga and Vilnius; later they began baking it in Tallinn. Grandmother marked all Jewish holidays in line with the traditions.

I was a Soviet child, raised during the war. All of us children, who survived the war in evacuation, were looking forward to the victory of the Soviet army. We were for the Red Army. I became a pioneer in Egoriyevsk, and then I joined the Komsomol 37 at school. Mother was in prison at that time and I honestly told them about it in the district Komsomol committee. I was admitted in spite of that. It was very important for me at that time as I was a Soviet person.

Mother's brothers, who were deported in 1941, came back. They were not permitted to live in Tallinn and so they lived in small Estonian towns. They worked upon returning from the camps. Uncle German went in for sport again after work. He lived in a small town called Sindi, not far from Tallinn. There he founded a football team, Kalev. He was a trainer and a goal-keeper. German was very good at ping-pong and even took part in the Estonian championship in table tennis. When I was a schoolboy, I saw German playing in the group of masters, the six best tennis players of Estonia. One Estonian guy became the champion of Estonia. He said if German Meyertal, his partner in tennis, had not lived in Sindi, he would have never become a champion. German was an example to follow. I went in for sport at school thanks to him. I am still into sport.

In 1948 the state of Israel was officially founded 38. Our family was very happy about it. In my heart I have always regarded Israel as our state. It was very important for me. I think that for many Jews the foundation of a Jewish state was a very strong moral support. It was not spoken out loud, but very many Jews had that feeling inside. It was very important.

When in 1948 the campaign against 'cosmopolitans' 39 began in the USSR, we knew about it from the papers, but it didn't reach Estonia. Maybe something happened in the highest party strata, but we didn't feel anything, it wasn't felt in everyday life.

There was something different here. The struggle against Estonian nationalists began. Many writers, composers were blamed for nationalism. They were dismissed from their posts; some of them were even exiled to Siberia, the Gulag, though only for a short term. It did not refer to the Jews. In the USSR they fought with rootless 'cosmopolitans,' and in Estonia with bourgeois nationalists. There were so many efforts taken in that direction that there was nothing left for the Jewish 'cosmopolitans.'

In 1949 there was another stage of deportation of the Estonian population. Jews remained untouched, Estonian peasants, the owners of land, were exiled. The Soviet regime started the formation of kolkhozes in Estonia. Estonian peasants have always lived on farmsteads. They lived separately and worked in their husbandry. Before 1940 agriculture was one of the major export trends in Estonia. People could not understand why they should unite in kolkhozes and create large state joint ventures. It was savage for them.

Thus, the Soviet regime started the same campaign of dispossession that was carried out in Russia and Ukraine in the 1930s. Those peasants, who refused joining the kolkhoz, were deported. Lists were made. Moscow sent the figures: numbers of people to be deported, but the lists with the names were made on the spot in order to come up with the right number of people. Back then the Estonian population was about 1.5 million people, of which 24,000 were deported in 1949. That's a huge number.

There wasn't a single peasant family that could escape that. The lists were made by local authorities, who knew people. The richest were included in the list. Since Jews were not involved in agriculture, they were not touched, only those ones were deported who came back from exile without permission.

My wife and I have very close friends, a mixed couple, a Jew and an Estonian. The mother of my friend Maria was deported when she was only two months old. She survived only because she was an infant and was breastfed by her mother. If she had been older, she would have definitely died of hunger.

When the deported families came to the place of exile, there was no lodging. They practically lived in the open. They started making dug-outs or shanties at first. Then they began building better houses and a husbandry. Estonians are hard-working. One should work hard to be well-off. The exiled worked very hard and started living even better than in their motherland, as Estonian soil is not very fertile. Siberia was rich in fertile soil, forests and those huge territories were unoccupied. Most of the exiled came back to Estonia. Some of them died in exile.

We were untouched and deportation passed by us. I was 14 years old, a student of the 6th grade. A girl from the parallel grade, who I liked, was deported too. After the holidays, four boys from my class didn't return to school. Then we found out that their families were deported. There were all kinds of rumors. Nobody explained anything. It was quiet and surreptitious.

I finished seven grades of compulsory school and entered the Architecture and Construction College in Tallinn. I learned how to draw very well during the first year of my studies. I got an excellent mark in drawing. I decided that I could make money on that. We were needy. Grandmother also made some money, but she was mostly maintained by her sons. She also tried to help out German, the only one out of the three sons, who had children. His elder daughter, Marina, was born in exile, and when he returned to Tallinn in 1955 his son Eric was born. Isaac and Pesach did not have children. I started working alongside my studies. In general, I financed myself. When I was studying in the college, I worked as a draftsman in the design institute Estonproject.

The Doctors' Plot 40 in January 1953 almost passed by me unnoticed. Jewish doctors in Estonia kept working and there was no persecution. We read in the newspapers what was going on in the USSR, but it was not happening in Estonia. Maybe party workers did something to show that they were fighting against these so-called 'doctors/poisoners,' but at any rate we were not affected by it.

In general, life in Estonia differed from life in other republics of the USSR. We noticed that when we went for sports competitions to other republics of the Soviet Union – life there was absolutely different. We were the West, and everybody who came here understood that Estonia was western.

In March 1953 Stalin died. I was working at Estonproject at that time. I remember everybody stood up to listen to the radio broadcast of Stalin's death. The Russians were crying. I was not; I didn't feel the sorrow. Yes, there was a man called Stalin and he died – it is a natural process. I didn't have a feeling of an irreplaceable loss. I looked at people who were crying and could not understand. Why cry if an outsider has died? When a close person dies, it is a tribulation, it touches your soul, but Stalin … I was probably not a 'red' in my soul.

I must have recognized the Soviet regime ideologically. I read Lenin's works 41. I found them interesting, but still I had mixed emotions. I always remembered a good life in Estonia before war, before the Soviet regime. Our life was different and not as good during the Soviet regime. I often questioned Soviet politics.

I didn't feel anti-Semitism, neither in school nor in college, though I could see that during the Soviet regime the authorities propagated anti-Semitism. It was a state policy of the USSR.

I graduated from college in 1954. I got my mandatory job assignment 42 in a construction company in Tallinn. That year I entered the extramural construction department of the Tallinn Polytechnic Institute. I could only study extramurally as I was supposed to work for three years under the mandatory job assignment. In a year I got rid of the job and switched to the daily department of the institute. Three more guys from college studied there with me. I kept living with Grandmother. She fed me, took care of my clothes and tried to influence me.

I was friends with Jews and Estonians. Grandmother was always worried when I courted Estonians, saying why I wouldn't find a Jewish lady. I said that I didn't mind if she found me a Jewish lady.

Grandmother started thinking of all the girls she knew in Tallinn, and couldn't find a match. Then she uttered a wise prophecy: that my lady was yet to be born. And so it was: my wife Faina, who gave birth to our children, and with whom I have been happy for many years, living in love and harmony, was born only a year after I had this conversation with my grandmother, in 1954. Grandmother was a very wise woman, though illiterate. She died on 20th January 1958, but I still remember her.

I graduated from the institute in 1959. For the last two years I combined my work and studies. My friend and I chose the topic on heating and ventilation for our diploma. There wasn't any teacher specialized in that subject in the Polytechnic Institute, but both of us were knowledgeable about that since during studies we also worked in design institutes on heating and ventilation. My diploma paper turned out to be good.

I got a mandatory job assignment to Tallinn, to the construction project Santechmontazh [sanitary and technical adjustment works]. The trust company gave me, a young expert, a one-room apartment. I couldn't leave the job any earlier than after three years and I was also obliged to stay in the apartment I got.

At the institute I was offered to enter postgraduate studies in the School of Engineering and Construction in Leningrad and then come back to our chair to teach heating and ventilation. At that time other USSR institutions of higher education gave Estonia target postgraduate admissions. I wanted to quit trust without aggravation for the people who treated me well. I decided to enter the postgraduate studies in order to leave in a good way.

This was the first time in my life when I came across anti-Semitism. I submitted all the necessary documents. My papers were successfully admitted by our Polytechnic Institute, the Ministry of Higher Education and the central committee of the Communist Party of Estonia. They were sent to Leningrad by official bodies.

A letter from Leningrad was sent to my home address. It was signed by the chief of the postgraduate department of the School of Engineering and Construction in Leningrad, Postnikov, and addressed to the rector of our institute. The letter read: 'We cannot admit your targeted postgraduate student to the entrance exams since he is not working in the system of higher and secondary education and has not provided a recommendation letter from his job. Enclosure: 11 pages.'

A letter of recommendation was written on the letterhead of the trust Santechmontazh, where I was working. It was stamped and signed by the secretary of the party organization, the manager and chairman of the trade union. The letter of recommendation didn't include the place where it was sent. The documents were sent by the republic, not by me personally. They just needed a pretext to reject the candidacy of a Jew to the postgraduate studies.

Then that issue was discussed by the ministers of higher education of the Soviet Union republics. 11 proctors of Leningrad institutions of higher education were dismissed for displayed anti-Semitism. I was not the only one who hadn't been admitted to the post-graduate department . All Jews got their documents back. Estonia was the country, where the nationality factor wasn't considered among the candidates for the target postgraduate studies. It didn't matter whether the person was a Jew, Russian or Estonian. They selected people by their capabilities and skills, but

they did pay attention to the nationality in Russia.

However, I managed to enter the postgraduate department. It was decided in Estonia that I was treated unfairly and the situation should be corrected. The Academy of Science in Estonia opened a postgraduate department and I was assigned to our construction institute. I think that this case vividly demonstrates the attitude towards Jews in Estonia – as I was a Jew, and everybody understood why I hadn't been admitted to the postgraduate department in Leningrad.

They did everything to correct that situation. I don't think that in other USSR republics anyone would have made life difficult for himself just because of some Dobrysh, who hadn't been admitted to the target postgraduate department. I talked to the examination board myself and found my scientific supervisor in Moscow.

Frankly speaking, anti-Semitism was a state policy in the Soviet Union. I have never felt –being different from other inhabitants of Estonia because I'm a Jew. People treated Jews so well in Estonia that every summer Jewish school-leavers from all over the Soviet Union came because they could freely enter any educational institution if they passed the entrance exams. Jews were never underestimated at the exams just because of their nationality. The grades were given fairly.

This didn't only apply to students. Tartu University offered jobs to many graduates of Leningrad University, who failed to find a job in Russia. They are now professors, academicians. At that time they were simply talented young Jews. Academician Bronstein, and the outstanding Lotman 43 are among them.

The philosopher and professor at Tartu University, Stalovich, told me that he sent out his CV to 100 universities in Russia and other republics of the Soviet Union. Some institutions never responded to him and other universities sent a letter of regret. Only in Tartu he was first offered a part-time job and then full time jobs. In the end he became an academician, a professor at Tartu University. There is an entire pleiad of such people. Tartu University and Estonia on the whole take pride in them.

When I was a postgraduate student, I joined the Party. By that time I had fully gotten rid of my adolescent illusions in connection with the communist party and ideology. When, at the Twentieth Party Congress 44, Khrushchev 45 divulged Stalin's cult of personality, it revealed to me the opportunities and horrors of totalitarianism. Nobody could ever be sure that the same things 'only in a different view' would not continue when Khrushchev or someone else was at power. There was no democracy in the USSR. The Party ruled and governed and everybody understood that.

I started criticizing the Soviet regime even more after the Twentieth Party Congress. The more I found out about the things happening in the USSR, the more I rejected that ideology. The more I pondered over and understood things about life, the more enlightened I got that the Soviet ideology didn't match my ethics and morale. I joined the Party as I was aware that it was necessary to live prosperously and work in the Soviet Union. I understood that it would be easier for me to graduate and find a good job being a party member. I have always remained a Jew no matter whether it was good or bad for me.

I started going in for sport in my childhood. I played tennis. I was the champion of Estonia in tennis among the juniors. I felt that I wouldn't become a first-class tennis player, but I was fond of it. I am

still playing tennis two to three times a week. I haven't become a professional tennis player, but I became a referee.

I have been the chairman of the referees of the Estonian Tennis Federation and was arbiter at the most important competitions in Estonia, such as the Olympics of the USSR, 'World Tennis Stars.' I was famous in Estonia, and it probably helped. I knew all tennis referees of the entire Soviet Union. In Moscow almost all referees were Jews. There were less in Leningrad, only a few in Ukraine and in Lithuania and Latvia there were almost no Jewish referees. I knew the referees and trainers very well. They treated me very well. It helped a lot in my life. They still know and remember me.

I got married for the first time in 1958. My first wife, Aleftina Zavadovskaya, was born in Russia, in Kalinin [now Tver], in 1939. Aleftina was half Jewish: her father, Mikhail Zavadovskiy, was a Jew, and her mother was Russian. Aleftina finished seven grades of compulsory school and worked as a sales assistant. Her family moved to Tallinn after the war.

Our elder daughter, Ilona, was born in 1961 and the second one, Daniela, in 1963. My family life wasn't easy. Aleftina was extremely jealous and she was even treated by a psychoanalyst at a certain point, but it didn't help and our life turned into a nightmare, not only for us, but for the daughters as well. It was dreadful and finally I asked for a divorce.

This was right before I finished my postgraduate studies. At that time it was considered that a party member had not right to get divorced. The party committee of our institute told me to choose: to put my party membership card on the table or to go back and live with my family. I said that I could do neither. My decision was final and I wanted a divorce.

As a result, I was expelled from the Party in the institute, where I was a postgraduate student. My membership was restored by the secretary of the municipal committee of the party in Tallinn, who knew me very well as a tennis player. His previous position was the secretary of the central Komsomol committee of Estonia. Every winter we had an open competition for the Komsomol cup of Estonia, and I was an arbiter. He stood up for me along with the director of the enterprise where I was working. At that time I was employed as deputy department chief by the design institute Estgiproselstroy, involved in design and construction in rural areas of Estonia. My party membership was restored within a couple of months and I got my membership card back.

Now I could not defend my thesis. All leading positions in the construction institute were taken by the communists and they were members of the dissertation board. I passed all exams for the scientific degree, but I was aware that they wouldn't admit me to defend my thesis no matter what, so I decided not to make any attempts. My efforts would have been futile anyway.

I could have tried to defend my thesis in another place, but I didn't do that. I got an offer from the polytechnic institute to hold lectures on the topic I was working on at Estgiproselstroy. I assisted my colleague in entering the postgraduate department in Leningrad. Then he wrote a book on his topic and gave it to me with the following inscription: 'This book should have been written by you.' But he was the one who wrote it.

I was expelled from the Party once again, during the period of the Six-Day-War in Israel 46. In the party meeting the letter from the central committee of the Party was read to us. It was about the termination of diplomatic relations with Israel 47. I took the floor and said that the Soviet Union had

supported the foundation of that state back in 1948 and Israel was the progeny of the Soviet Union. Now the Soviet Union is playing the game to be in favor of the Arabs, the bigger Arabic world. It is historically clear that diplomatic relations with Israel will be regained.

That was my speech and the KGB 48 was informed of it. Again, they wanted to expel me from the Party. I said that I wasn't willing to be a hypocrite, that I thought our life would be better if we would be able to talk in the party meeting about what we are talking about at home. That was the way I was thinking and expressed myself. Again, I got away with that.

In the 1970s the Soviet regime permitted Jews to immigrate to Israel. I think that was a great move. I found it good when someone was leaving for Israel, and I think if Jews decide to immigrate, it is Israel where they should go to . I would never think that those who left the Soviet Union were betrayers of the motherland. I consider them to be patriots, as Jews have only one motherland – Israel.

My friends and pals left. I went to visit them. We still keep in touch. I didn't think of immigrating to Israel. I was born here and the Estonian culture is close to me, but I know that I am a Jew, and I stick to traditions. My daughters from the first marriage have lived in New York since the 1970s. They have children of their own.

I have never understood Jews, who were leaving for Germany. Of course, there are exceptions. My aunt, German's wife, was born in Germany before the fascists came to power. Her family left Germany for Estonia before the war. My aunt was in the third year of her studies at the conservatoire. Germany was her motherland, but my aunt and her family had to leave it. They left behind their houses in Germany. When, during perestroika 49, my aunt immigrated to Germany, I understood that. She went to her motherland, from which she was forced to leave. It was natural for her to go back. She got a lot of prerogatives upon her arrival in Germany.

There are Jews, who have never been connected with Germany in any way, and immigrate there for the sake of material prosperity. This is what I cannot comprehend. They are living in a country, where they will always be strangers. Many of them are not willing to get acclimatized in the new environment, study the language, and follow the customs. They speak Russian. Of course, they have a better life there than in Russia, for instance, but both they and their children and grandchildren will always be treated like strangers in Germany. I know German. I have been in Germany many times, but I've never been willing to move there.

I got married for the second time in the early 1980s. My second wife, Faina Kaminskaya, was born in the Ukrainian town of Zaporozhye in 1954. It is also her second marriage. She was divorced when we met. She had two children, a son and a daughter, in her first marriage. Both of them are currently living in Israel. The son left for Israel earlier. The daughter went to the Jewish school in Tallinn and left to continue her education there. She has lived in Israel for five years now.

Faina and I have two children together, two sons called Daniel and Alan. They have one year age difference: Daniel was born in 1985 and Alan in 1986. They were raised in independent Estonia; they were babies during the Soviet regime. My sons were raised Estonians and don't identify themselves as Jews. Both of them are currently studying at the Tallinn Technical University. They are very good boys.

Faina graduated from the Foreign Languages Department. She is teaching French. Our first economic university, the-Estonia Business Club, was opened in Tallinn, and Faina is teaching there. She is considered to be one of the best French teachers in Estonia.

During Soviet times I worked on construction sites and in design institutes. I have worked for 16 years in Estgiproselstroy. We designed Estonian villages. 40 years ago I met our current president, Reutel. He was the director of a sovkhoz 50 at that time, and I was involved in designing buildings in that village.

I was in charge of all the Olympic constructions in Tallinn, built in 1980. In the course of the Moscow Olympics of 1980 there was a sailing regatta in Tallinn. A sailing sport center was to be built for the regatta. Hotel Olympia, the amusement center and restaurant Pirita, the Sports Palace on the shore were to be built as well. I was in charge of those construction projects. It was a very interesting and the most pleasant job for me, as I am a sportsman, and I knew that what was built at that time would remain. Apart from the budget we received from Estonian we were also funded by Moscow.

When perestroika began, I felt confident being a manager. Taking advantage of the situation, I founded a joint Finnish and Soviet enterprise. I met my Finnish friends during the construction for the Olympics. I purchased boilers from them. We've remained friends until today. We founded a joint enterprise dealing with the production of heating equipment.

When I got Grandmother's house back, I formed a company to be able to build a house. My company was one of the first in independent Estonia; its number was 566. My company built a new six-story house in the place of Grandmother's two wooden houses. We still keep building a lot of custom-made houses. I think that I took the most from perestroika.

There was a time when I seriously thought of immigration. It was in the period when perestroika was winding up, when there was a putsch in Moscow 51. I was really frightened that with that putsch all would come back, and I said to myself that I would leave as I didn't want to have such a life like I used to before. There was no way back. Luckily, the putsch ended up with a flunk and the breakup of the USSR. I am still living in Estonia.

During perestroika I got a chance to go to Israel for the first time. It is hard to describe my impressions of Israel in a few words. I was deeply impressed. I went to the southern part during my first trip. I was in such southern countries as Armenia and Georgia and I thought that I would see the same things in Israel. The first thing that impressed was the cleanliness of the toilets by the Dead Sea and by a small shop. I couldn't expect to see that in a southern country.

Secondly, I was impressed by the Israeli youth. I saw many young people and all of them carried guns and pistols. I thought: if in the Soviet Union – my first visit to Israel was in Soviet times – young people were give weapons, it would be scary to walk outside. I could not imagine how high the moral and level of responsibility could be for the state not to be afraid to give weapons to the youth.

Once I was on a bus and a soldier on his way home was sitting next to me. There were a rucksack and a gun next to him and a pistol in the holster. The guy was sleeping and none of the passengers was paying attention to him, or to his weapon. If an armed soldier was trying to thumb a lift, any

vehicle would stop for him. If an armed soldier was trying to ask for a lift on our roads, all drivers would be speeding up. It characterizes the state.

I was very happy for Israel, and for the people who are living there. It is their country. I have been to Israel three times. I am a patriot of Israel, but I am going to live here in Estonia. Young people should go to Israel. The ones who can do something for their country.

My mother died in 1984 at the age of 71, a couple of days after her birthday. Mother survived all her brothers. German died in 1967, when he was 60. Isaac died in 1971, and Pavel, the youngest brother, in 1979. All of them were buried in the Jewish cemetery in Tallinn. My grandmother's grave was also there. It was natural for us that Jews should be buried in the Jewish cemetery. This was still in Soviet times as well.

In 1991, upon the breakup of the Soviet Union, Estonia got independent. I think it's wonderful. Of course, not everything could be done at once and a lot should have been done for this country, but the most important thing is that we are living in a free country, our own country. I feel at home in Estonia.

My classmate is a vice speaker of the Estonian parliament. I know about ten people from the Estonian parliament, and five of them are my close friends. Politics is not my cup of tea and I tell all the Jews that they have no place in Estonian politics. If you want to be a politician, go to Israel and do politics there. Luckily, there are no Jews in our politics. A clever Jew wouldn't be involved in politics. In the general meeting of the Jews of our Estonian Jewish community I also say that we wouldn't be loved anywhere and by anybody. We should behave in such a way that we would be respected, and that's it. I act like that. People treat me very well. As far as I know I don't have enemies.

I have always identified myself as Jew. Sometimes I go to the synagogue. I used to be there more often, but now I live out of town and don't always get a chance to get there. I go to the synagogue, without knowing and understanding things. Our rabbi Shmuel said that the fact that I go there is also pleasant for God. So I go to the synagogue. We are lucky to have such a rabbi. He is very prudent and patient; in spite of being so young he understands that too much pressure and compulsion can take away people from God and traditional Jewish values.

Since 1992 I have been a board member of the community. I've been reelected three or four times. I am an oppositionist, always openly and frankly saying what I think. Many people thought that I wanted to be a leader of our community, but I'm not seeking that. I know that I am unfit for that as I don't have the rights skills to be a chairman.

I am involved in construction and the history of Estonian Jews. We are creating our own museum. I am collecting quite a lot of material and will be active helping out. I recorded about 30 audio interviews with Estonian Jews. We would like to publish a book with the title 'Jews in the history of Estonia' in collaboration with Elhon Saks, who is a member of our community. I prepared materials about Jewish sportsmen and I am currently compiling data on lawyers and economists. Elhon Saks is collecting materials on culture, medicine etc. We are planning to create something like an encyclopedia. This is my last job, and I hope I'll be able to cope with that.

Of course, we are also looking for material connected with the Holocaust in Estonia. We've compiled a lot of data. Together with a former prisoner of Klooga, Benjamin Anolik, we accidentally revealed some information about the Holocaust in Estonia. By chance we found a place where 600 Jews were executed. It was like a blank spot for us and we couldn't explain it. The fascists took 887 male Jews from France to Kaunas: half of them were executed in Kaunas, and the other half in Tallinn. It is proved by documents. There is a monument in Tallinn that the state built on the spot where 1000 people were executed, and we found out that 400 of them were French Jews. The relatives of those who were shot in early May come here every year.

Since my wife teaches French at the university, we receive French people every year. We didn't know about the other 600 people that were executed in that place. The execution took place on 18th September 1944, and on the 19th, Hitler's people destroyed the Klooga concentration camp, and as it turned out those prisoners of Lagedi camp had been executed prior to that.

Benjamin Anolik was in a car, which was on the way to the execution place, as it was found out from a conversation with him. Several trucks with 600 people left there before him, and two trucks with 80 people – 40 women and 40 men – did not reach the place. One truck broke down and the driver of another one stopped on the road to help the other. When the truck was fixed and the prisoners reached the destination, one SS-guy came out from the forest and said, 'The work is finished for today.' The prisoners didn't understand what work he was talking about. Only later on they found out that other people had been shot.

We started pondering about where that place could have been. After a conversation with Anolik I knew which place he was talking about. They had taken a half hour drive from the camp and since the SS guy said that the work had been finished, the prisoners were taken to Tallinn prison. It means that they were in Tallinn, and in the morning they were taken to Klooga. This is how that unclear episode can be explained.

I could not quite get who was executed there as prisoners from Tallinn prison were taken to Stutthof 52 on ships. I was told about it by a Latvian Jew, Izidor Levin. He was rescued by an Estonian professor. The tree devoted to his rescue was planted in Yad Vashem 53.

It means that those were not the Tallinn prisoners who had been executed there. There were no Jews in Estonia, all of them had been executed. Who were they? We had an idea that apart from French Jews, political activists were also executed there. It turned out that those 600, taken from Klooga, had been executed. I cannot assert that 100 percent, but I give it a 95 percent likelihood. It means that it was also the place of execution of the Jews.

Now it should be marked on the monument, there were Jews. This is a very beautiful monument at the cemetery. In 1944 the cemetery was much smaller and there was a forest in its place. This is the way we are restoring history – inch by inch. I am currently working on that. I have a list of the camps in Estonia and I know exactly in which of them there were Jews. There were eight different camps in Estonia: for militaries, repatriates, penal settlements, prisons etc.

One of my family acquaintances worked in the KGB, and before he died he gave me a couple of his files. He told me I could make use of them. He collected the documents, processed by the Estonian KGB. He compiled so much interesting data that it is hard to embrace it. The documents there are about the camps. There are also lists in his files – Jews, non-Jews, gypsies – and for each camp

there were list for certain dates. I am going to hand over that material to our museum.

I also have an alphabetic catalogue of Klooga. It is archived on small index cards; I copied the information by hand. It took me four months. I didn't know what I was writing it down for, but still decided to proceed with it. When I met Anolik I gave him the copy of that list. When the book about Klooga was published in collaboration with Anolik, that list was included in the book, in the way it was – in my handwriting.

The list is complete, containing 2186 names. There are even names of 18 people, who were executed in the forest on 18th September for their attempt to escape. There was the following information about each person: date of birth, what he was doing in the camp, and his number. One man, who is living in Israel, saw that list in the book and found the names of his relatives there. He came to Tallinn from Israel to visit their grave. So, this is my job.

I am also involved in construction; I have a couple of small sites. There are people who are doing the physical work, and I am organizing it all and superintend them. I also do technical inspections. I am working on construction and historical projects simultaneously. I am doing two important jobs. It is not hard for me as I am willing to do that. Each person should do what he can and what he wants to do and what he finds necessary. I find my job necessary.

Glossary

1 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.

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 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 ('Sotsialrevolyutsionyery', Socialist Revolutionaries) delegates who controlled the Soviets (councils). When Lenin returned from emigration (16th April) they proclaimed his program of action (the April theses) and under the slogan 'All power to the Soviets' began to Bolshevize the Soviets and prepare for a proletariat revolution. Agitation proceeded on a vast scale, especially in the army. The Bolsheviks set about creating their own armed forces, the Red Guard. Having overthrown the Provisional Government, they created a government with the support of the II Congress of Soviets (the October Revolution), to which they admitted some left-wing SRs in order to gain the support of the peasantry. In 1952 the Bolshevik party was renamed the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

4 Nansen Passport

Named after the scholar, statesman, diplomat and winner of the Nobel Prize for Peace, the Norwegian Fridtjof Nansen (1861 - 1930). After the end of World War I and until 1921 he worked as chairman of the World League of Nations. All his efforts were directed to protect the interests of the minorities and small nations. He contributed to the organization of the repatriation of 450,000 prisoners of war from 26 countries. He also worked to settle the legal status and economic independence of refugees. The first legal document on the legal protection of refugees was adopted in July 1922 and later endorsed by 52 countries worldwide. That was the so-called 'Nansen Passport,' which established the status of the refugee. All his life the humanist Fridtjof Nansen worked for the establishment of a common international status of the refugees, for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace. In 1954 the League of Nations established an award in his name.

5 Guild I

In tsarist Russia merchants belonged to Guild I, II or III. Merchants of Guild I were allowed to trade with foreign merchants, while the others were allowed to trade only within Russia.

6 Maccabi World Union

International Jewish sports organization whose origins go back to the end of the 19th century. A growing number of young Eastern European Jews involved in Zionism felt that one essential prerequisite of the establishment of a national home in Palestine was the improvement of the physical condition and training of ghetto youth. In order to achieve this, gymnastics clubs were founded in many Eastern and Central European countries, which later came to be called Maccabi. The movement soon spread to more countries in Europe and to Palestine. The World Maccabi Union was formed in 1921. In less than two decades its membership was estimated at 200,000 with branches located in most countries of Europe and in Palestine, Australia, South America, South Africa, etc.

7 Sparta

The Sparta Praha club was founded on 16th November 1893. A memorial of the first very famous era of the club's history are first and foremost two victories in the Central European Cup, which in the 1920s and 1930s had the same significance as today's Champions League. Sparta, usually with Slavia, always formed the foundation of the national team and therefore its players were present during the greatest successes of the Czechoslovak and Czech teams.

8 Old Believers

As their name suggests, all of them rejected the reformed service books, which Patriarch Nikon introduced in the 1650s and preserved pre-Nikonian liturgical practices in as complete a form as canonical regulations permitted. For some Old Believers, the defense of the old liturgy and traditional culture was a matter of primary importance; for all, the old ritual was at least a badge of identification and a unifying slogan. The Old Believers were united in their hostility toward the Russian state, which supported the Nikonian reforms and persecuted those who, under the banner of the old faith, opposed the new order in the church and the secular administration. To be sure, the intensity of their hostility and the language and gestures with which they expressed it varied as widely as their social background and their devotional practices. Nevertheless, when the government applied pressure to one section of the movement, all of its adherents instinctively drew together and extended to their beleaguered brethren whatever help they could.

9 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.

[10 Tallinn Synagogue: Built in 1883 and designed by architect Nikolai Tamm; burnt down completely in 1944.

11 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.

12 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.

13 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.

14 Estonia in 1939-1940

On 24th September 1939, Moscow demanded that Estonia make available military bases for the Red Army units. On 16th June, Moscow issued an ultimatum insisting on the change of government and the right of occupation of Estonia. On 17th June, Estonia accepted the provisions and ceased to exist de facto, becoming Estonian Soviet Republic within the USSR.

15 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.

16 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.

17 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.

18 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.

19 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.

20 German ASSR

Established as Labour Commune of Volga Germans or Volga German AO within the Russian SFSR on 19th October 1918. Transformed into Volga German ASSR on 19th December 1924, abolished on 28th August 1941. The official state name was Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic of the Volga-Germans. The city of Engels is the former capital of the Volga-German Republic.

21 Kulaks

In the Soviet Union the majority of wealthy peasants that refused to join collective farms and give their grain and property to Soviet power were called kulaks, declared enemies of the people and exterminated in the 1930s.

22 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.

23 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.

24 Estonian legion

a military unit within the Combat Support Forces of the Waffen-SS Verfügungstruppe during WWII. The formation was announced on 28th August 1942 by the German occupying powers in Estonia and formally established on 1st October 1942. Oberführer Franz Augsberger was nominated to be the commander of the legion and the later 3 Estonian SS Volunteer Brigade. 500 volunteers had appeared and signed up for the Legion by October 13, 1942. In Spring 1943 additional men were drafted from the police forces and the number rose to 1280. 90% of the volunteers had lost a relative in the Red Terror during 1940-1941. Battalion Narwa was formed from the first 800 men of the Legion who had finished their training at Dębica (Heidelager in 1943), and were sent in April 1943 to join the Division Wiking in Ukraine. They replaced the Finnish Volunteer Battalion, recalled to Finland for political reasons. The Battalion Narva was in the focus of the Red Army's attack near Izjum, Ukraine. The unit entered the battle with 800 men, and only one third were left able to fight. The Red Army, however, suffered heavier losses as they lost over 7,000 men killed and wounded, over 100 tanks were lost. Battalion Narwa participated in the battle of the Korsun-Cherkassy Pocket. Retreating through the escape route called The Hell's Gate, the battalion came under heavy Soviet fire with little cover. The battalion lost almost all of its equipment during the carnage while most of the troops escaped encirclement. In order to recruit more men for the legion, the German Occupying powers turned to forced mobilization in March 1943 by calling up all Estonian men born between 1919 and 1924. As a result 5,300 men were conscripted into the Estonian Legion and 6,800 for the support service of the Wehrmacht. Out of the conscripts was formed the second Estonian Regiment and the Estonian SS Volunteer Brigade was established on 5th May 1943. Another conscription call was announced in October 1943 for men born in 1925-1926. As a result, in order to avoid the draft, about 5,000 men escaped to Finland. Over half of these men volunteered for service in the Finnish Defense Forces and formed the Finnish Infantry Regiment 200. The conscripts were included with the Estonian SS Volunteer Brigade that was renamed the 3 Estonian SS Volunteer Brigade on 22nd October 1944. By January 1944 the German military situation on the Eastern front had worsened so much that a general conscription call was announced in Estonia on 1st February 1944. In the hopes of restoring the independence of Estonia the last prime minister of Republic of Estonia Jüri Uluots gave his support to the draft. As the result about 38,000 men were conscripted, the units of Estonian Legion, the Finnish Infantry Regiment 200 were returned to Estonia and were reformed into the 20th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS (1st Estonian). (Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Estonian_Legion)

25 Riga ghetto

Established on 23rd 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 31st November and 8th December 1941 most inmates were killed in the Rumbula

forest. On 31st October 15,000 inmates were shot, on 8th 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 2nd 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.

26 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.

27 School #

Schools had numbers and not names. It was part of the policy of the state. They were all state schools and were all supposed to be identical.

28 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.

29 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.

30 Babi Yar

Babi Yar is the site of the first mass shooting of Jews that was carried out openly by fascists. On 29th and 30th September 1941 33,771 Jews were shot there by a special SS unit and Ukrainian militia men. During the Nazi occupation of Kiev between 1941 and 1943 over a 100,000 people were killed in Babi Yar, most of whom were Jewish. The Germans tried in vain to efface the traces of the mass grave in August 1943 and the Soviet public learnt about mass murder after World War II.

31 Klooga

Subcamp of the Vaivara camp in Estonia, set up in 1943 and one of the largest camps in the country. Most of the prisoners came from the Vilnius ghetto; they worked under extreme conditions. There were 3,000 to 5,000 inmates kept in the Klooga camp. It was eliminated together with all of its inmates in spring 1944, before the advance by the Soviet army.

32 Yad Vashem

This museum, founded in 1953 in Jerusalem, honors both Holocaust martyrs and 'the Righteous Among the Nations', non-Jewish rescuers who have been recognized for their 'compassion, courage and morality'.

33 Buchenwald

This museum, founded in 1953 in Jerusalem, honors both Holocaust martyrs and 'the Righteous Among the Nations', non-Jewish rescuers who have been recognized for their 'compassion, courage and morality'.

34 Erenburg, Ilya Grigorievich (1891-1967)

Famous Russian Jewish novelist, poet and journalist who spent his early years in France. His first important novel, The Extraordinary Adventures of Julio Jurento (1922) is a satire on modern European civilization. His other novels include The Thaw (1955), a forthright piece about Stalin's régime which gave its name to the period of relaxation of censorship after Stalin's death.

35 Aba Gomer (?-1941)

Born in Belostok, Poland, and graduated from the Department of Philosophy of Bonn University. He lived in Tallinn from 1927 and was the chief rabbi of Estonia. In 1941, he was determined not to go into Soviet back areas and remained on the German-occupied territory. He was killed by Nazis in the fall of 1941.

36 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.

37 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.

38 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.

39 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.'

40 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.

41 Lenin (1870-1924)

Pseudonym of Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, the Russian Communist leader. A profound student of Marxism, and a revolutionary in the 1890s. He became the leader of the Bolshevik faction of the Social Democratic Party, whom he led to power in the coup d'état of 25th October 1917. Lenin became head of the Soviet state and retained this post until his death.

42 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.

43 Lotman, Yuri (1922-1993)

One of the greatest semioticians and literary scholars. In 1950 he received his degree from the Philology Department of Leningrad University but was unable to continue with his post-graduate studies as a result of the campaign against 'cosmopolitans' and the wave of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union. Lotman managed to find a job in Tartu, Estonia. Starting in 1950, he taught Russian literature at Tartu University, and from 1960-77 he was the head of the Department of Russian Literature. He did active research work and is the author of over 800 books and academic articles on the history of Russian literature and public thought, on literary theory, on the history of Russian culture, and on semiotics. He was an elected member of the British Royal Society, Norwegian Royal Academy, and many other academic societies.

44 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.

45 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.

46 Six-Day-War

(Hebrew: Milhemet Sheshet Hayamim), also known as the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Six Days War, or June War, was fought between Israel and its Arab neighbors Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. It began when Israel launched a preemptive war on its Arab neighbors; by its end Israel controlled the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights. The results of the war affect the

geopolitics of the region to this day.

47 Severing the diplomatic ties between the Eastern Block and Israel
After the 1967 Six-Day-War, the Soviet Union cut all diplomatic ties with Israel, under the pretext of Israel being the aggressor and the neighboring Arab states the victims of Israeli imperialism. The Soviet-occupied Eastern European countries (Eastern Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria) conformed to the verdict of the Kremlin and followed the Soviet example. Diplomatic relations between Israel and the ex-Communist countries resumed after the fall of communism.

48 KGB
The KGB or Committee for State Security was the main Soviet external security and intelligence agency, as well as the main secret police agency from 1954 to 1991.

49 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.

50 Sovkhoz
State-run agricultural enterprise. The first sovkhoz yards were created in the USSR in 1918. According to the law the sovkhoz property was owned by the state, but it was assigned to the sovkhoz which handled it based on the right of business maintenance.

51 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.

52 Stutthof (Pol
Sztutowo): German concentration camp 36 km east of Gdansk. The Germans also created a series of satellite camps in the vicinity: Stolp, Heiligenbeil, Gerdauen, Jesau, Schippenbeil, Seerappen, Praust, Burggraben, Thorn and Elbing. The Stutthof camp operated from 2nd September 1939 until 9th May 1945. The first group of prisoners (several hundred people) were Jews from Gdansk. Until

1943 small groups of Jews from Warsaw, Bialystok and other places were sent there. In early 1944 some 20,000 Auschwitz survivors were relocated to Stutthof. In spring 1944 the camp was extended significantly and was made into a death camp; subsequent transports comprised groups of Jews from Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary and Lodz in Poland. Towards the end of 1944 around 12,000 prisoners were taken from Stutthof to camps in Germany - Dachau, Buchenwald, Neuengamme and Flossenburg. In January 1945 the evacuation of Stutthof and its satellite camps began. In that period some 29,000 prisoners passed through the camp (including 26,000 women), 26,000 of whom died during the evacuation. Of the 52,000 or so people who were taken to Stutthof and its satellites, around 3,000 survived.

53 Righteous Among the Nations

A medal and honorary title awarded to people who during the Holocaust selflessly and for humanitarian reasons helped Jews. It was instituted in 1953. Awarded by a special commission headed by a justice of the Israeli Supreme Court, which works in the Yad Vashem National Remembrance Institute in Jerusalem. During the ceremony the persons recognized receive a diploma and a medal with the inscription "Whoever saves one life, saves the entire world" and plant a tree in the Avenue of the Righteous on the Remembrance Hill in Jerusalem, which is marked with plaques bearing their names. Since 1985 the Righteous receive honorary citizenship of Israel. So far over 20,000 people have been distinguished with the title, including almost 6,000 Poles.