

Morris Schiff



This is I at home. One of my pals dropped by and took my picture. The picture was made in Tallinn in 2006.

I did not want to study when I was in the 6th grade. I told mother that I wanted to learn some profession. In 1947 I became apprentice of clock mender. It became my profession for the lifetime.

In 1991 I retired before the breakup of USSR. I felt as if my life was only beginning. I had my own lodging, pension, bank account. My aunt Ida, mother's younger sister was childless and demised me about 20 000 rubles, which was huge for that time. Monthly interest was like the second pension to me. I was foretasting calm and happy life, thinking that I could do what I wished- read and communicate with my friends. I was hardly interested in politics. I could not even picture breakup of USSR. I hoped that it would happen one day, but not in my lifetime. It happened. I was born in independent Estonia, and was lucky to live in independent Estonia in my old age. I cannot say that my life was unbearable for that time. I just lived. There were things that upset me. I disapproved of dictatorship of the Soviet Union, political persecution of the people who had their own option, persecution of writers, artists, whose works were not in line with the party course. I did not like the idea of peasants being forced to join kolkhoz. All those things did not affect me personally.

Probably it was good for USSR to collapse, but I personally do not care. I have no reasons for being a Russian patriot. I am not an Estonian patriot either. I cannot identify myself as Jewish patriot either, though I am ready to give my life for my peoples. If I knew that if I had to explode a car with myself and it would be good for my peoples, I could do that.

Our Jewish community was founded during perestroika, in 1988. We did not have a rabbi, and those people who knew Jewish traditions were supplying for him. My mother died in 1993. She was buried Jewish cemetery in accordance with the traditions thanks to the community They made minian like it was supposed. Now we have a true rabbi. I am unreligious. I cannot understand how people can believe in God after holocaust. I cannot deceive myself, I take interest in religion and traditions as without that religion Jewish people would stop existing. Jewish customs and traditions are interlaced with the belief and cannot be classified. I cannot believe in the deity. Recently we were given torah in the community. I started reading it and was so absorbed that I could not notice that I spent half a night reading it. I liked it so much!

Jewish community of Estonia means a lot to me. Of course, they do a lot of kind deeds- provide food, medicine, care etc., but still it is not the most important for me. Jewish community helps preserve the remaining representatives of Jewish peoples and this is the most essential for me. I want the Jewish peoples to exist and I am ready to do my best in that.