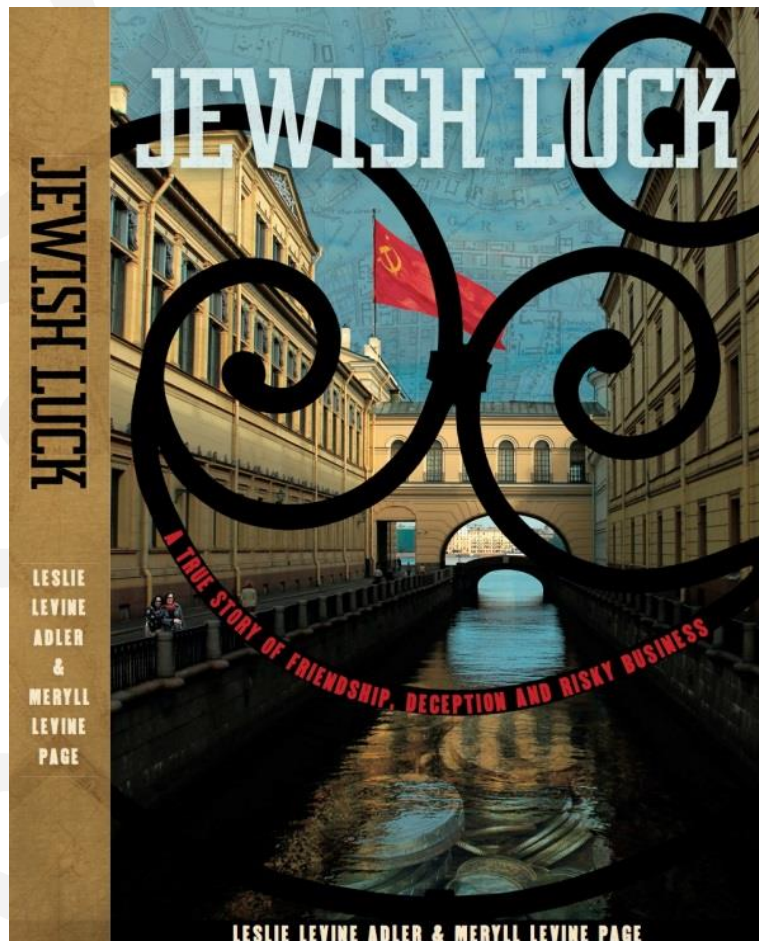


# ***Jewish Luck: A True Story of Friendship, Deception and Risky Business***

**By Leslie Levine Adler and Meryll Levine Page**



*“For seven decades..., the Soviet Union followed the path mapped out by Lenin. It became a military superpower feared by the rest of the world... But it failed to make its people either happy or free.”\**

**This is the story of two women who were determined to be both.**

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\* Dmitri Antonovich Volkogonov, *Autopsy of an Empire: The Seven Leaders Who Built the Soviet Union* (New York: Free Press, 1998) p. xvii.

# Reviews

**“A remarkable memoir”**

- Hal Sachs, [Jewish News of Southeastern Virginia](#).

**“It's [*Jewish Luck*] funny and energetic and quite terrific. Smart and an excellent read.”**

-Mikhail Iossel, Author of *Every Hunter Wants to Know*, Professor of Creative Writing at Concordia College in Montreal.

**“Leslie and Meryll really bring humor, vivid storytelling and their rare experience with deep understanding of Russian history to what I see as a love story.”**

-Patricia Francisco, author of *Telling* Creative Writing Professor at Hamline University and, cited by Julie Pfitzinger in [“Sister-Authors of Jewish Luck”](#), *St. Louis Park Magazine*.

**The twists and turns of these women’s lives defies a reviewer’s description; even their parents had a life worthy of soap opera”.**

-Neal Gendler, [American Jewish World News](#)

**“The title of this book, *Jewish Luck*, traditionally and historically implies lack of luck, but in this case actually conveys good luck for the protagonists in a true tale of imaginary proportions....the book ought to be required reading for students and all those interested in this pivotal period in Jewish history. It is also an enjoyable, delightful reading experience.”**

-Rabbi Israel Zoberman, [The Jewish Post & Opinion](#) - National Edition

## About The Book

*Jewish Luck* recounts the intertwined stories of two women, Vera and Alisa, who--in their struggles against the anti-Semitism and patriarchy of the Soviet regime as well as the rebranded "New" Russia--succeed by creating their own luck.

Friendship is kindled when Vera and Alisa grudgingly line up to register for classes at the institute that produces experts in Marxist-Leninist economics, a field on its way to extinction. For the next three decades, Vera and Alisa fight for self-expression and status. To do so they must deprogram their minds of Soviet theory and learn the language of a free market economy.

Forbidden friendship between one author, Leslie, and Vera begins on a street corner in Leningrad in 1976. Leslie becomes Vera's confidante and link to the West. With help from her Minneapolis connections, Vera builds a successful business in Russia despite the disruption of mafia attacks and a corrupt culture. In contrast, Alisa secretly escapes the Soviet Union to begin anew in Sweden.

*Jewish Luck* invites readers to inhabit the lives of two resilient, and headstrong women as they fight to establish themselves in a time and place where women, Jews, and capitalism were disparaged.

*Jewish Luck* delves deeply into what life would have been like for the children of Russian immigrants had their ancestors not left Russia. *Jewish Luck* is a personal journey of sisterhood for the authors.

## Meet the Authors



*Meryll and Leslie (left to right)*

**Leslie Levine Adler, PhD** became interested in Russia during her language classes at Wellesley College. In order to approach Russia from an interdisciplinary perspective, she transferred to the Center for Russian and Eastern European Studies at University of Michigan.

In the summer of 1976, she attended Leningrad State University but learned far more in the apartment of her friend Vera. To fulfill a promise to her Russian friends, she returned the next summer to Russia.

Leslie received an MA in teaching English as a Second Language and taught in Paris, Scotland, and China in addition to the University of Minnesota. From 1981-1982, she directed the English Language Program for Jewish Children and Family Service of Minneapolis. Pursuing cross-cultural studies led her to a doctorate program in clinical psychology. She developed and taught courses at Hamline University and is currently in private practice as a psychologist and EMDR consultant.

**Meryll Levine Page, MA** recently retired after thirty-nine years of teaching. She has been a history teacher with a special interest in women's history and has taught extensively about the Soviet Union.

Meryll first traveled to Russia in 2010 when researching this book; however, she had previous experience with "tropical communism," leading two student trips to Cuba.

Meryll earned her BA from the University of Minnesota in History and Hebrew Language after a year at Yale and a year at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. She received her masters from the University of St. Thomas. Currently she co-facilitates the Minneapolis Jewish Artists' Lab. She is a member of the Melton Coalition, a consortium of Melton Centers from Ohio State University, the Jewish Theological Society, and Hebrew University. Meryll authors a unique culinary commentary on the weekly Torah portion for Beth El Synagogue.

## What is Jewish Luck?

*“The title is too Jewish.” “It’s insulting.” “Is there such a thing as Jewish Luck?” “Do you want to appeal only to Jewish audiences?”*

The phrase was introduced to the authors by Vera. She would say, “You don’t know what my Jewish Luck brought me next!”

Her best friend Alisa, doesn’t believe in it. “There is no such thing as *Jewish Luck*- only hard work.”

Can we take a term, once derogatory, and turn it on its head to embrace a positive notion of Jewish Luck?

We will let you decide.

## What Makes *Jewish Luck* Unique?

US citizens, in general, are unaware of daily life in the former Soviet Union; yet, for decades, the Iron Curtain cast a huge shadow. With recent events in the Ukraine, Russia is again in the limelight. The authors strive to explain this history through an intimate memoir. Vera and Alisa narrated their history to us over Skype and in person as we accompanied them through the streets of their childhood and adult life. We interviewed relatives and colleagues of the women and then furthered our knowledge through extensive research. The view of life in the opaque bubble of Communism is detailed and personal. Their story continues up to the present time. The thirty-seven year old friendship between a woman from Minneapolis and one from St. Petersburg permitted this deep level of trust. This story is also told by sisters who have very different personalities and experiences. Each sister adds her area of expertise to this work.

## Sample Speaking Topics

*Jewish Luck* weaves multiple themes. The authors, both seasoned teachers and presenters, can tailor their talk to the interests of the group. We can come together or alone.

Topics Include:

- \* Beating the odds: Women Who Won't Compromise
- \* The Dynamic of Friendship in Women's Lives
- \* Competition and Collaboration: Co-authoring as Sisters
- \* Behind the Iron Curtain: Life in Communist Russia
- \* Communist Russia/Modern Russia: What's the Difference?
- \* The Value of Story: Our Alternate Lives
- \* Immigration and Assimilation: Finding a Home
- \* History of Jews in Russia
- \* Jewish Identity and Continuity Issues
- \* Jewish Luck: Truth or Irony?

**For additional topics, you'll find weekly [blogs](#) related to our book content and current events as well as monthly [book reviews](#).**

**For Bookgroups:** Please see our website for a [discussion guide](#).

# Contact Us

The authors are available for interviews, book groups, or speaking engagements. We can come together or separately.

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