

Tobijas Jafetas



This is me during the interview with Centropa, in my office in the Jewish community center in Vilnius in 2005.

My family had very positive feelings about the changes after perestroika, when Lithuania gained independence. Well, this office where I was working happened not to be needed, like many others, and I lost my job in 1992, but my brother supported me all right, and besides, I had my pension. In independent Lithuania I didn't have to explain anything, when I wanted to travel abroad. We became free citizens of a free country. Besides, I've become a rich man. According to the restitution law my parents' house in Kaunas was given back into my ownership. Now I have real

estate, and my family and I go there at weekends. My grandchildren will inherit my house, which was built by my father.

The public Jewish life has progressed in independent Lithuania. In 1994 I was offered to be the Head of the Lithuanian Jewish Union of ghetto and concentration camp prisoners, and that's where I've worked since that time. We started from scratch looking for the former prisoners, because they had kept this fact a secret during the Soviet regime. Now we have a big society. We often get together and talk about our childhood and youth behind bars in the ghetto. The memories still hurt. We've established international relations. We correspond with Jewish communities and unions of former ghetto prisoners from the USA, Israel and other countries. I celebrate Jewish holidays with others in the community. I'm trying to get closer to the Jewish tradition. I haven't become religious, but I respect those who believe in God and pray. I also address the Lord and destiny, whatever there is above us, but I speak to them in my own words, which come deep from my heart.