

Zalman Kaplanas

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Vilnius

Lithuania

Interviewer: Zhanna Litinskaya

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Zalman Kaplanas is an athletic, good-looking elderly man. He refused to be interviewed at home. He accounted for this by the fact that his wife was bed-ridden because of a severe illness. So, she didn't welcome any visits by strangers. She didn't approve of my interview either. She refused to show her pictures, even those where she was young, and the pictures of her children. Zalman looks young for his age. He is dressed in an elegant vest suit. We met on the premises of the Jewish community of Lithuania. Here Zalman feels very confident. He takes an active part in the life of the community, being a member of the Committee of the Veterans of War. The way he tells his story speaks for his reclusive character. He hardly answers my questions regarding his personal life, while he dwells on the things he is interested in.

My name is Zalman Kaplanas. The ending 'as' is added to all last names in Lithuania. [The 'as' ending is characteristic for masculine Lithuanian surnames. After the country gained its independence in 1991, in line with the national idea, people without this ending were encouraged to use it and make their name sound Lithuanian] My original surname is truly Jewish: Kaplan. I was named Zalman after my maternal great-grandfather. I was born in the small town of Jurbarkas, 200 kilometers away from Vilnius. The town had existed for 400 years by the beginning of the 20th century. Jurbarkas was built on the river Neman in the western part of Lithuania, 86 kilometers to the west of Kaunas. Back in the Middle Ages fortifications were built for the defense of cities. Thus the frontier town of Jurbarkas, bordering on Germany was built. [Lithuania was bordering with Germany until the end of WWII, when Eastern Prussia was divided up between Poland and the Soviet Union. The previous Lithuanian-German border today separates Lithuania from the Kaliningrad territory, a part of the Russian Federation].

An ancient citadel was preserved in the vicinity of Jurbarkas. There was a very beautiful park in the town. There was a palace of the Russian Prince Vasilchikov [Prince Ilarion Sergeyevich Vasilchikov (1881-1969) was a state activist, economist and publicist. He left Russia after the Communist take-over and lived in Berlin, Paris and after 1932 in Kaunas, the capital of Lithuania at the time, and was involved in social life and economy there. He started his career as a provincial governmental leader of Russian gentry. When Soviet troops occupied Lithuania in 1940, he immigrated to Germany]. A small park not far from the Jewish lyceum was called Tel Aviv by local people, as it was the place where Jewish youth got together. There was a large Catholic cathedral in the center of the town, though half of the population of Jurbarkas consisted of Jews – the total population of the town was five thousand. There were several synagogues, two elementary Jewish schools – in one of them subjects were taught in Hebrew, in the other one in Yiddish – and an amateur Jewish theater. In the early 1920s a private Yiddish lyceum was founded, where the children of rich local and out-of-town people studied.

Jurbarkas Jews were involved in craftsmanship and commerce. They were cobblers, tailors, hatters, glazers, cabinetmakers etc. The only photography studio in Jurbarkas was owned by a Jew called Levinas. There were brilliant dedicated doctors among the town's Jewish intelligentsia. Doctor Karlinskiy was the one who stood out. He treated both the rich and the poor. He gave medicine to the indigent. He went through the villages and assisted everybody who needed help no matter what nationality they were or what social strata they belonged to. In the first day of the Great Patriotic War [1](#), the Lithuanian Polizei [2](#), who served the Germans, came to us. The doctor was on the round in the town hospital, which was the only one in our town. His Lithuanian colleague reproached the police and tried to stand up for the Jewish doctor. He said that Karlinskiy had recently rescued his little son. The Polizei just sneered and pushed the doctor aside. Doctor Karlinskiy was doomed like his patients. He was shot during the first action against Jews in Jurbarkas.

There were rich Jews in Jurbarkas. They were merchants and manufacturers. The Jews Lemberg and Vodopian were the owners of the steam-boats. These steam-boats navigated the Neman River. Automobile transport was underdeveloped at that time, and river transport connected Jurbarkas with other cities. My maternal grandpa, Morduchai Grinberg, was among the rich Jews of Jurbarkas. There's hardly anything I know about my great-grandpa, Zalman Grinberg, whom I was named after. All I know is that the second time he was married to a lady who was much younger than he was. His son Leibl was born in 1895. Thus, Grandpa Morduchai had a stepbrother, who was younger than some of his children. Zalman died in the early 1900s.

Morduchai Grinberg was born in Jurbarkas in 1864. Morduchai was involved in commerce. He was neither rich nor poor. His wife, Grunya, was also born in Jurbarkas. She died at a rather young age from some sort of a disease in 1905. She died and six children became orphans. Grandpa didn't remarry, though he was a rather young man. He didn't want his children to be brought up by a stepmother. During World War I the tsarist government exiled Jews to clean up the frontier territories as they considered Jews to be potential spies. In 1915 Morduchai was exiled to Siberia. Morduchai wasn't only smart, but also an energetic man. In Siberia, an almost pristine business area, he started his own business and came into money. When Lithuania gained its independence in 1919 [3](#), he came back to Jurbarkas a really wealthy man. Grandpa purchased a large house and opened one of the largest agricultural stores in town. There was a wide range of products on offer, starting from the most primitive nails to common agricultural gadgets and machines.

Morduchai's family kept Jewish traditions and celebrated holidays. Grandfather wasn't a very religious man as business was the pivot of his life. God and prayers were in the second place. In the course of time Grandpa got married for the second time. His children had their own families, even the youngest child, my mother, was married. His second wife's name was Emma. Before the Soviet regime came to power Grandpa had a pretty calm living. He gradually passed his business to one of his sons. When in 1940 the Soviets nationalized Grandfather's property, he and his wife had to rent a dark apartment in a village not far from Jurbarkas. They didn't live there for a long time. By the vicissitude of fortune Grandfather was exiled to Siberia again [4](#). It happened a couple of days before the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War, in June 1941. The 76-year-old Morduchai couldn't stand the hunger, cold and the humiliation. Soon his wife and he passed away. They were buried somewhere in Siberia.

Morduchai and Grunya had three sons and three daughters. The eldest son, Meyer, born in 1885, left for the USA in his adolescence. It happened at the beginning of the 20th century, before Grandmother Grunya had died. In America Meyer married a wealthy Jew. He developed her father's pharmaceutical business and made a brilliant career and became a millionaire in the 1920s. In 1930 Meyer and his daughter Mariam, who was my age, came to Jurbarkas. We had a family reunion on that occasion. There was a joyful get-together, which lasted a couple of days, with incessant laughter and chatter. Then Meyer left and didn't keep in touch. Meyer was a miser. He never helped neither his parents nor his siblings. He died in the mid-1960s having bequeathed the lion's share of his fortune to his daughter and the rest to charity funds. I didn't keep in touch with Mariam. I don't know anything about her life.

Mother's brother Emmanuel also immigrated to the USA. He was one year older than my mother. Since they were of the same age group they got along very well. Emmanuel immigrated to the USA in the mid-1920s. We didn't hear from him for two years. His Aunt Beila, Grandmother Grunya's sister, was looking for him. She went to the USA to see her brothers: one of them was called Gersh, Gary in English; I don't know the name of the other. She didn't find Emmanuel there. She turned things upside down and finally found out that her nephew was working in Canada as a security guard. After that they found a job for Emmanuel and took him to the USA. He worked for the company of Grandmother's brothers. Unfortunately, I don't know the names or the fate of my Grandmother's siblings. Emmanuel had a wife and two children, whose names I don't remember. He had a modest living, but in spite of that he helped out his siblings, our family in particular. During the Soviet times we didn't keep in touch with my uncle's family as we feared persecution and exile [5](#). All I know is that Uncle died in 1965.

My mother's middle brother Joseph, born in 1890, worked in the store with Grandpa Morduchai. He had an accident and became disabled: one of Joseph's legs was shorter than the other. In 1920 Joseph got married. His wife, Zhenya, was from Riga. In the 1930s Granddad was ill, and Joseph managed the business. He ran the store. Joseph, his wife and their small child were exiled with Grandpa Morduchai on 14th June 1941. Joseph was the only one of the family who survived. Zhenya and Robert died on their way to exile. Joseph was sentenced to eight years in camps for having been a member of the Shaulist Council [6](#). It was a kind of a military and sports organization. Joseph was charged with counterrevolutionary Fascist activity because he regularly paid a membership fee to the organization. Having gone through this ordeal Joseph came back to Lithuania in the post-war period, then he immigrated to Israel, where he died in the 1970s.

My mother's sisters were married to well-off people and had a comfortable living. The eldest, Polina, born in 1893, was married to the venereal disease doctor Volgart. They lived in Riga. They had two children. Polina, her husband, and their two children perished in 1941 during Fascists actions [military execution] in Riga. The family of my mother's sister Dina, born in 1895, was also doomed. She was married to a pharmacist, Shabashevich, who owned a large apothecary in Kaunas [the capital of Lithuania during its independence (1920-1939)] Dina had a small daughter. In 1941 they were put in Kaunas ghetto [7](#) and shot on 28th October during one of the Fascist actions.

My mother, Etl, was born in 1900 and became motherless at the age of six. Her elder sisters finished lyceum in Kaunas. My mother, who lived with her father, had to go to the Jewish school. In 1915 she finished school and Grandpa was exiled to Siberia. There was no way she could go on

with her studies. Mother did house chores and helped her brothers Joseph and Emmanuel, who didn't have their own families yet and worked to support their sisters. In 1919 when Grandfather Morduchai came back, my mother fell in love with my future father.

My father was also born in Jurbarkas, but into a very poor family. My Grandpa, Abba Kaplan, was a butcher. I don't know whom he worked for. As far as I remember from my childhood, Abba spent most of his time in synagogue. He started his morning with a prayer in a synagogue and finished his day with a prayer. He studied the Torah and Talmud almost all day long. But the knowledge of the Torah was not income-bearing, so Grandpa earned very little. From my own observations I can say that religion is meant for the poor, as the rich spend time on business.

Abba had his little ramshackle house made of darkened wood. The house consisted of two rooms and a kitchen, where Grandmother cooked. I don't remember Grandmother's name. She died before I was born. There were eight children in the family. I don't know what to tell about them. Almost all my aunts and uncles and their children died in World War II. My father's brothers were Yankel-Berl, Dovid, Meyer. Etl and Shove were my father's sisters. All of them died in Jurbarkas. My father's other two sisters, Klara and Riva, left for Belgium in the 1920s. They were sheltered by the Belgians during the [Nazi] occupation. Riva and her husband were found out by the Fascists. She and her son were put in the [train] cars heading for concentration camps in Poland. Riva's son managed to escape through a hole in the train car. So, he remained alive. Riva perished in the crematorium in Auschwitz.

Klara's fate was more auspicious. Her husband, the owner of a haberdashery factory, was killed in action during World War II. Klara survived the war. She stayed with a Belgian family. She raised two sons. One of them became the managing director of one of the rolled steel mills in Belgium. Unfortunately I've never met them, and this is all I can say about them. In 1961 Klara got hold of me on the phone and was even going to visit me. She didn't manage to come over. She died in the 1970s.

My father, Moshe Kaplan, was born in 1893. He was even less educated than my mother. He merely finished cheder. Father was on odd jobs before he married my mother. He was willing to do any job. My parents fell in love with each other. Grandpa Morduchai was categorically against their marriage. He thought it to be humiliating for my mother to be married to a poor man. Then Moshe and Etl crossed the river in a boat and settled in a neighboring hamlet. They had made preliminary arrangements with the rabbi who made a chuppah for my parents. When Mother's brothers found out about the runaways, they took the boats to chase them, but they were a couple of hours late. It was too late, the rabbi announced: 'Amen', so Etl and Moshe became husband and wife. First, Grandpa Morduchai didn't recognize their marriage, and was hard on my parents. Mother was practically cut off the shilling. If she had made another choice, she would have relied on her father's assistance.

After the wedding the newly-weds rented the apartment in Jurbarkas. It was the place where I was born on 28th May 1921 and spent my adolescence. My mother gave birth to my younger brother Mendel there in 1926. This old well-built wooden house is still there. Two stories of the house were residential and the third storey was a garret. The house was adorned with a carving. The house was owned by a Jew, who leased the apartments. There were two large apartments on the first floor, and three smaller ones on the second floor. Our apartment, consisting of two small rooms,

was on the second floor. The rooms were modestly furnished. There were a table and a beautiful, carved cupboard in the largest room, the so-called drawing-room. There was a large, carved bed with a laced cover in my parents' bedroom. The smallest room was the children's.

Our family lived modestly. We didn't starve, but we couldn't even think of luxury. As far as I remember, Grandpa Morduchai tempered justice with mercy and accepted our family. I became his favorite grandson. However he gave my father a cold shoulder in a way. At any rate, he didn't help us financially, and didn't involve my father in his business. Father dealt with catering and retail sales of essential commodities. He purchased goods from the peasants at a wholesale price and resold them at a higher price. There were the following things in my father's storage: a barrel with kerosene, a sack of flour, matches, soap. Father also sold herring, brought from hamlets in big barrels by shore-line fisherman. One barrel of herring cost a certain amount of money. Father sold herring by weight and it was profitable. Father's earnings were enough for our modest living: food, a festive meal on Sabbath and Jewish holidays and decent clothes. Besides, Mother's brother Emmanuel was assisting us. When he settled in America and got a job there, he sent us money sometimes.

Mother was a housewife like almost all Jewish women in our town. In such cities as Vilnius and Kaunas, where enlightened Jews resided, women tried to find a job as they learned about emancipation. But our town didn't keep abreast with the times and had a conservative mode of life like the rest of the smaller towns. Our family couldn't afford a maid. Mother had to do all the chores. Our family kept Jewish traditions. Mother thoroughly observed the kashrut. She took meat and poultry to the shochet. Sometimes she took me there, when I was small. When I went to school she thought it wasn't becoming of a schoolboy to go to the shochet with her. We had separate dishes for dairy and meat products at home, as well as kitchen utensils such as silverware, pots and pans. Mother cooked food in the kitchen oven, sometimes she used a primus. [Primus stove: a small portable stove with a container for about 1 liter of kerosene that was pumped into burners.]

Mother cleaned the house thoroughly and baked challah before Sabbath. Mother always cooked gefilte fish for Sabbath. Fresh fish was sold in our town at a fair price, and Father was able to purchase it dirt cheap. In our vicinity fish wasn't a delicacy but pretty affordable food. Father went to the synagogue on Friday. When he came back we, dressed to the nines, were waiting for him at the table. Mother lit the candles and Father said the prayer. After that we began our meal. Father was more religious than my mother. He had never worked on Sabbath. All Jewish stores and shops were closed on Sabbath.

Sometimes on Sabbath I went to my Grandpa Abba. On those days I carried his prayer book to the synagogue. Grandpa went to a large stone synagogue, located in the center of the town. It was a two-storied building. Women prayed on the second floor. I was mostly attracted to the old wooden synagogue – the place of interest in Jurbarkas. It was a synagogue, built in 1700, without any nails. It was a nice three-storied building adorned with carving and stained glass windows [This 250-year-old wooden synagogue, burned down in June 1941.] This synagogue was open only on Saturdays. Apart from those big synagogues there were rather small ones, meant for two-three families. Grandpa Morduchai went to such a tiny synagogue on Sabbath and holidays. Women weren't permitted to go there; they had a separate small synagogue premise.

Pesach was the biggest Jewish holiday for us and for the entire town. There was a matzah bakery in Jurbarkas. Long before the holiday Father brought matzah in a big basket covered with white clean cloth. Mother cleaned the house thoroughly, laid fresh tablecloths, hung dressy curtains, cooked festive dishes. The first seder was carried out in the house of Grandfather Abba. He was a widower and wasn't able to cook a good dinner. So, Mother brought gefilte fish, broth, chicken and laid a festive table. She made tasty dishes from matzah and even baked a cake from matzah flour. Grandpa was reclining at the head of the table. I was the one to look for the afikoman. Having found it I usually got some kind of present. Usually it was a cheap toy. I asked Grandpa the four traditional questions. Later on, when I was a lyceum student, my younger brother Mendel was supposed to do that.

I wasn't interested in Jewish holidays. I have vague recollections of the holidays, as we celebrated them only when grandfather Abba was alive. Mother baked hamantashen with poppy seed on Purim. We played with rattlers. There was a tradition on those days to bring presents, the so-called shelakhmones. Mother put the tasty things on a tray and took them to her friends. Our neighbors also brought shelakhmones. On Purim there was a joyful pageant procession. Students of the Jewish school, the private lyceum, clad in pageant costumes, were walking along the thoroughfare with music and rattlers.

On Yom Kippur my parents fasted, but they didn't make me or my brother fast. I don't remember the fall holidays very well. There was no sukkah in the yard of our house. We also went to our Grandpa Abba, who made a sukkah in the yard of his modest house. On the holiday of Simchat Torah all religious Jews had fun. They took the Torah scroll from the synagogue and were dancing around it. I liked Chanukkah most of all. I enjoyed playing with a spinning top, and the tasty potato fritters. But what I liked the most was that both grandpas gave me Chanukkah money. Grandpa Abba could give me only a couple of coins, but Morduchai was very generous. That money was enough for my mother to buy me the clothes I needed and later on textbooks and books. Grandpa Abba died in 1936. He was buried in accordance with the Jewish tradition. We mourned [sat shivah] for seven days. My parents were sitting on the floor dressed in torn clothes. Father's sisters came, they were also mourning. I wasn't present at Grandpa's funeral, but I know he was buried at the Jewish cemetery with all Jewish rites observed.

In 1927 I went to the Jewish elementary school. All subjects were taught in Hebrew there, and I was well up in that language. Yiddish was spoken at home as well as in the household of both grandfathers, I learnt Hebrew very quickly at school. Thus, I was fluent in both languages in my childhood. I studied for three years in the elementary school. I was a good student. It was easy for me to study. Here I met my first friends and my bosom friend Joseph, Josele, as we called him tenderly. We spent time together after school, wandering through the beautiful park Tel Aviv. When we finished school, my parents decided that I should go on with my studies. Unfortunately the Jewish private school wasn't affordable for my parents, so I entered the state Lithuanian lyceum, having passed entrance exams rather easily.

There were different nationalities in the lyceum. There were a lot of Lithuanians and Jews. Teachers treated us very well. Back in that time Jews were protected as there were Jewish senators in Lithuania [8](#). There was even a department on Jewish issues in parliament. All subjects were taught in Lithuanian. The only subject we were exempt from was the Bible studies [Christian religion class]. Saturday was a school day and Jews as well as other students were supposed to attend

classes. Nobody was exempt from studies [in the Lithuanian lyceum] on Sabbath. Some Jewish children weren't allowed [by their parents] to attend classes on Sabbath. But acquiring knowledge was a priority for our family. Paying tribute to traditions was in the second place. I was truly prepared for my bar mitzvah. Grandpa Abba took me to a melamed, who taught me prayers, putting on teffilin. At the age of 13 I went through the rite of bar mitzvah in the synagogue. Mother made a festive dinner in accordance with the traditions. Mother invited our relatives and my friend Josele. My bar mitzvah was the last time I paid tribute to the Jewish tradition.

At that time a lot of political parties and groups were emerging in Lithuania. There were underground Communists. There were only five of them in the town, and everybody knew who they were. There were several Zionist organizations such as Betar [9](#), Maccabi [10](#), representatives of the Revisionist Zionism movement [11](#) etc. Our family was apolitical. Both my mother and father were politically dispassionate.

I was an excellent student, displaying more and more interest in history and philosophy. One of the teachers in our lyceum, a Catholic priest, who taught Lithuanian language, differed from others by his extreme left, even Communist views. He had to conceal his beliefs as at that time Lithuania was reined by an extreme nationalist party. The teacher trusted me for some reason and asked me to buy daily newspapers for him. There were three daily newspapers in Lithuania at that time, the pro-government 'Echo Lithuania,' the Catholic 'The Twentieth Century' and the social democratic 'Izvestiya' [Editor's note: It is unlikely that a Lithuanian newspaper had a Russian name (Izvestiya was a major Soviet paper). Since the interview was conducted in Russian it is possible that the interviewee drew an analogy with the Soviet paper.] I bought all of them for the priest and managed to read them from cover to cover. That is why I was aware of what was happening in Germany, France and the USSR. I knew all the French prime ministers. I knew about the policies of Fascists and Hitler's attitude toward the Jews. True things about the USSR were published in the papers, news of repression and arrests of the innocent people [12](#). Apart from reading papers every day I listened to the radio at home.

Europe was contaminated with Fascism. Fascist organizations appeared in Lithuania, even in Jurbarkas and in our lyceum. On 23rd March 1939 the German army captured the Klaipeda district, the so-called Lithuanian coastland [13](#). Hitler came to Klaipeda. It was a big shock for Lithuania, and young Fascist guys were happy that they finally were free to do as they pleased. There was one event that I would never be able to forget. Two weeks later, on 4th April Joseph came to the lyceum. He and I were the only Jews in our graduation class. There were 18 boys and three girls. I was friends with one of them, a Lithuanian, Elena Taimati. Joseph and I usually sat at the second desk. On that day it was taken by two friends, members of the Fascist party. They pointed to the last desk for us to sit there. Joseph and I kept on standing. When our history teacher came in – a pious Catholic spinster – she understood what was going on. She took the register and rushed out of the room.

She came back with the director of the lyceum, Bronis Lesas. He was an elderly man, a Lithuanian nationalist, who during tsarist times had fought for recognition of the written Lithuanian language, banned in Russia since 1864. [In 1863 Tsar Nicholas I began to carry out the policy of Russification in the Russian Empire. As a part of that, the written Lithuanian language was banned. Lithuanian children were taught to read at home by their parents.] At the end of the 19th century he was arrested and was sentenced to eight years of penal servitude. He was pardoned in 1904. At that

time the director was a member of the leading nationalist party. That elderly Lithuanian, the nationalist, stood by the first desk, where my friend Elena was sitting, slammed his fist on the table, and cried out that Fascist escapades and Hitler's ideas wouldn't have a place here while he was headmaster. He had those boys leave our desk and told us to sit there. The whole class sat still. Elena was looking at me with her eyes full of tears.

There were no cases like that in my life. But I still remember those creeps and the humiliation I felt at that moment, and will remember it till the end of my days. I regret to say that when the Soviets came [14](#) Bronis was arrested and most likely shot as an outstanding nationalist, allegedly a Fascist sympathizer. I tried to stand up for him. I went to the district committee of the Party and told them about the case when he had stood up for me, but they didn't care...

That very year, 1939, I finished lyceum and went to Kaunas University. Elena left with me, too. There our paths diverged. Soon she married one of the leaders of the governing party – a Lithuanian with the last name Gashke. I entered the Economics Faculty of the university. I lived with Mother's sister Dina Shabashevich. In November 1939, upon the signing of Molotov-Ribbentrop pact [15](#) and the annexation of Polish lands [16](#), Vilnius became the capital of Lithuania again [17](#), and the university was transferred there. On 15th December my mother and I, her favorite eldest son, came to Vilnius. My mother rented me a room from an elderly Jewish lady and paid for bed and breakfast. My landlady was rather poor like most of the Jews in Vilnius.

It was the happiest period in my life – my student's years in Vilnius. Soon I met the Vilnius Jewish elite. Shailik Kaplanskiy, my fellow student, the son of one of the leaders of the Bund [18](#) in Vilnius, introduced me to his family. Their house was like a real salon, where the most enlightened Jews of the city got together. Vilnius was a true Jewish city, the center of Jewish culture. Shailik's mother received me like her son. The entire Jewish intelligentsia got together in Shailik's house: the Jewish theater, writers, scientists – the employees of the Institute of Yiddish Language and Culture. There was a large table abundant in hors-d'oeuvres, meat dishes. The simmering samovar was in the middle of the table. Having tea there, at that very table, must have been the best times of my life.

The start of my studies went by in a glimpse. In June 1940 I came back to Jurbarkas on holidays. The town hadn't changed during my absence. On Saturday, 15th June, Joseph and other Jewish guys went to the forest for a picnic on the occasion of our reunion. There we saw two large trucks filled with chattels and trunks. Women and men were in the car and we showed them the way to the border, which was 10 kilometers away. When we came to the city, we saw the Soviet frontier squad. Thus, in accordance with the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, Lithuania was annexed to the Soviet Union.

In a couple of days we understood that things were getting worse. First, many products and goods that used to be in abundance, vanished from the stores. Soviet soldiers and officers bought out practically everything in large quantities: toilet soap, stockings, cosmetics, underwear, footwear, clothes, not to mention the food! Butter, sausage, usually sold in ten different kinds, ham, cheese, canned products, smoked fish, alcohol practically vanished from the stores. We couldn't have imagined at that time that there was such an acute deficit of food and goods in the USSR. Nationalization commenced. They confiscated my Grandfather Morduchai's house and store. He and his family had to move to the village. The wives of Soviet officers were walking around in the confiscated dresses and lingerie with fur boas. Outstanding religious and Zionist activists, members

of the Lithuanian governing party were arrested. It was the time when the director of our lyceum was arrested. Our family wasn't affected by the changes as Father was considered to be poor.

In two months, when I came back to Vilnius I was shocked that my friend Shailik, his parents and other members of our circle were arrested and exiled. I don't know the details. It was perilous to try finding out anything as there was a chance that I might be imprisoned, too. On 1st September 1940 the academic year started. I was given a small, but rather cozy room in the hostel. Now, I had a place to live. A Komsomol [19](#) organization was founded at university. I was spurred on to enter it. I saw what the Soviet regime was doing, using high party ideas as a smoke screen, and decided not to join either the Komsomol or the Communist Party. I devoted the whole year to my studies, passed the summer term exams and decided to stay in Vilnius to work in the library a little bit longer.

Early in the morning on 22nd June 1941 we woke up to the sounds of bombing. The hostel building was shuddering from the blast. We went down to the basement to wait until the air-raid was over. Among the students there were some Fascists. They took out knives and started to threaten the Jewish students. Early in the morning on 23rd June I left the hostel taking basic things with me – linen, some food and a student's card, which was the only document I had. Now it took me about three hours to get to the train station, though before it was only 20 minutes. The city was in flames, buildings were collapsing. The bombing was incessant. One of my acquaintances, Rosa, a student, and a 35-year old Polish Jew were my company on the way to the train station. The Polish Jew told us what the Fascists were doing with Jews in Poland and that was the reason why he had fled in 1939 and come to Vilnius. We were even more discouraged.

It was really hard for us to get to the train station. There was a dreadful panic. People were nudging to squeeze in the car. We were lucky: at the eleventh hour we jumped in the car of the train which was leaving Vilnius. The train started rolling. Before that moment I didn't have a chance to think over the events, remember my kin. Now, I understood that it was most likely that I'd never see neither my parents nor my brother again. Jurbarkas was occupied as it was the town close to the [German-Soviet] frontier. The Fascists entered Vilnius on the day we left.

It took us more than 24 hours to get from Vilnius to Minsk [today Belarus], though the distance wasn't that great. We got off at the goods station. Minsk had already been bombed. The three of us – we decided to stick together – went to the university, hoping that we would join the Belarusian students. It seemed to us that the Fascist attack was a misconception and soon the valiant Soviet army would defeat them. We couldn't imagine that horrible calamity was ahead. We walked around the city. Our appearance was really different from the rest of the people. We were dressed much better than people around us. I was clad in an elegant vest suit and yellow Swiss leather boots, carrying a yellow portfolio. My companions also significantly stood out from the crowd.

Hardly had we walked for 500 meters and we were taken to the police station. During the first days of the war people were afflicted with the spy scare. They saw a spy in any stranger, who looked different. We showed our documents. As the latter were in Lithuanian, the policeman thought us to be foreign. Thus we were immediately considered to be spies. A young officer took us in the yard of the police station, told us to lean against the wall and raise our hands ... My life would have ended right here if not for a lucky chance... A police lieutenant came to the police station and asked who we were. When our documents were shown to him, he started to reprimand his subordinates. As it

turned out he had served in Vilnius for a year and understood Lithuanian. He apologized and asked us to leave as soon as possible.

In the suburbs of the city we stayed in some kitchen garden for about three hours waiting for the bombing to stop. Then we joined the people who were walking in the western direction. It took us a week to reach Mogilev [300 km from Vilnius]. I saw a lot of deaths on my way. The Germans were constantly bombing. Mothers were carrying frightened little kids. Old people were driven in carts. I saw how the columns of convicts were convoyed from Minsk prison. There were mature gray-haired people, the elite of the nation. They could hardly move as their feet were chafed and bleeding. They were guarded by NKVD people [20](#) with dogs on both sides. It was a terrible scene. I remember it as if it was yesterday.

The three of us got on the train and went to Tambov oblast [today Russia], covering a distance of almost 1000 kilometers. Here I was sent to a kolkhoz [21](#). We were given lodging in the houses of farmers. It was a warm summer and we slept on a hay stack. We were mocked at, because we hardly understood Russian. When we were trying to say something our Lithuanian and Jewish accent seemed preposterous. The local people were even more captivated by our bourgeois attire, despite the fact that it was worn out from the emaciating labor and the sun rays.

I worked there for almost three months: July, August and beginning of September. I was despondent by the atmosphere in the village. Almost everyday somebody was drafted into the army, in the action lines and people got together on that occasion. It looked like a funeral and a wedding at the same time. People were dancing, singing, playing accordion and those who were to remain without husbands were crying and moaning. I understood that the locals treated me, a young and strong man, with contempt [because Zalman was not drafted]. I addressed the military enlistment office a couple of times, asking them to send me in the lines. The response was the same: wait for your turn. We didn't know at that time that it was Stalin's order not to draft people from the newly-annexed lands. The Soviet regime didn't trust us.

I left my landlady the miserable money that I earned, my bourgeois clothes. She gave me a simple working jacket, pants and shoes instead of boots, a bottle of milk and rusks. I said good-bye to my fellow travelers and went to the military enlistment office for them to take me to the front. I had been waiting for the decision for a couple of days, lying on my jacket in the yard of the military enlistment office along with the rest of the guys like me. In three days, the 300 of us were aligned in columns and sent somewhere. We had no idea where we were heading.

It was horrible. Every day we had to walk about 30 kilometers, falling from emaciation. We would walk for 50 minutes and then had a 10-minute break. We were fed with herring and bread. Being starved and exhausted we were thirsty as well. So, we reached Atkarsk, Saratov oblast [today Russia], where we stayed at the draftees' point for about three weeks. We went through some quick training here. Then, we were given the uniform, a rifle, and got on the train. I was assigned to the combat engineering separate battalion of the South-Western front. I had to go through another training session: on blasting, grenades and mines. We were in Krasnodar region, far from the front, 2200 kilometers from home.

In about a month I was called by the commander of the squad who appointed me to be signaler of the squad. When I came to the command post of the battalion with the assignment and the commander found out that I was from Lithuania, he got angry with me and cried out that I had no

right to be in the lines. I was kicked out from the squad. They took my uniform and sent me to the penalty squad. In a while I came to the replacement depot. Commanders from different divisions came here to take the soldiers. This time I decided to be more cunning. I didn't have the documents on me. When I was called and asked where I was from, I said I was from Belarus. I remembered the towns we were passing by on our way from Minsk, and recalled the town of Smilovichi. I named Krasnoarmeyskaya [Red Army] Street and a number of the building at random, understanding that streets named Krasnoarmeyskaya were in almost all towns. I also mentioned that all buildings were one-storied. Things went smoothly.

By that time my Russian was pretty good, over two years had passed since the Soviet regime had been established in Lithuania. I had to speak Russian all that time, besides all subjects in the university were taught in Russian in 1940-41. My Jewish accent didn't embarrass anybody because before the war there were a lot of Jewish towns in Belarus, where people spoke with a strong Jewish accent.

Again I was in the training squad. From morning till night we had a marching drill, studies on defense and assault methods. At that time the allies' supplies system lend-lease commenced. [Lend-lease is the system of transfer (loan or lease) of weaponry, ammunition, strategic raw materials, provision etc.; supplies in terms of lend-lease were made by the USA to the ally-countries on anti-Hitler coalition in the period of WWII. The law on lend-lease was adopted by the US Congress in 1941.] Apart from food products, canned meat, ham and egg powders the army also got good uniforms. We were dressed in English things: warm uniform, underwear, fore and aft cap, boots.

We had been trained for three months and on 9th May 1942 we were supposed to be sent to the lines. At night, on 8th May I was woken up and called in the headquarters dug-out. It was dark in the dug-out. The light was coming from the table lamp. The representative of SMERSH [22](#) was sitting at the table. I was interrogated. I was asked questions about who I was and who my parents were. I was telling my 'legend,' but the lieutenant was asking for more and more details. Suddenly I heard the voice coming from the middle of the dug-out: 'Enough fooling around, we know everything about you, who you are and where you come from!' The captain came up to me and told me that in the best case scenario I would be sentenced to ten years in the camps [23](#) or sent to the penalty squad for fraud and deliberate misleading of the army commandment. I began to justify myself saying that I was lying only for one reason: to be in the lines.

I had a sleepless night. Even now I can't comprehend how they could possibly find out about me. Probably they had a hunch. In the morning all transgressors were aligned on the drill square. As it turned out there were 180 of us. This was quite a scenic view. Before aligning us they took our new English military coat, boots and underwear and gave us all written-off uniforms. For instance, the sole of one of my boots was tied with a rope and my military coat was without one lapel. The head of the political department of the division held a speech from the pulpit. He said that we certainly weren't the enemies, but as per order of the Defense Committee we weren't entitled to be in the lines as we didn't manage to command the loyalty of the party and government. We were sent to the city of Engels to be involved in construction works of the aviation plant [24](#).

Engels is a town located on the bank of the Volga River opposite to Saratov. We settled in the barracks close to the construction site. The hardest days of my life started here. Even now I recall

those moments with a shudder. The mode was the same as in the concentration camp. We slept on the bunks without linen using our coats as a blanket. In the morning we got up early, had a bowl of soup made from semi-rotten cabbage, a tiny slice of bread, and off to work we went. Our daily standard was to overhaul four cubic meters of earth. Late in the evening we had the same soup. In a month and a half I weighed less than 50 kg. I started walking with a stick as I was so emaciated that I could hardly move. Once during work I lost consciousness and when I came around I was in the hospital. I stayed there for a couple of weeks. I was well fed and my young organism recouped very quickly. But still, I didn't feel very well. I had another physical examination where it was decided what kinds of work I was capable of doing. I heard two Jewish ladies, the doctors, saying that I would die if I was sent to such hard labor. They were sorry for me. I think those two unknown ladies can take credit for rescuing my life. I was sent to a Lithuanian kolkhoz.

That Lithuanian settlement not far from Engels was founded at the end of the 18th century, when, during the Polish rebellion [25](#) of Kosciuszko [26](#), the tsarist government exiled entire villages here. Having passed thousands of kilometers in Russia I wasn't surprised by the indigence and gloominess of the lives in Soviet kolkhozes. When I came to this Lithuanian village it seemed to me that I was home in my Klaipeda. There were clean well-built stone and wooden houses resembling my parental house in Lithuania, with laced curtains, flowers on the window sills and flower-beds in front of the house.

There were several large Lithuanian families in that village. We, the group of six people – five Lithuanians and one Jew – settled in the house of a Lithuanian landlady. Her name was Gaidite. She was a widow, her husband had been killed in action and her elder son was in the lines. She was very hospitable. She fed us and let us sleep on a large Russian stove [27](#).

One of my companions, an elderly Lithuanian, was wounded in the urine bladder and he suffered from uroclepsia. It was summer time. He put a couple of pants on and in spite of that they were drenched, producing a stench. In a couple of days the other guys left the place as they couldn't stand the smell and left their comrade. The odor was unpleasant for me as well, but I was sorry for the elderly Lithuanian and stayed with him. The landlady was moved by my good attitude towards that Lithuanian. Once she mentioned that I was a Jew but treated the Lithuanian better than his comrades. Since that time Gaidite started treating me better than the rest. She tried to give me more food. She said that I reminded her of her son with my kindness.

We worked in the kolkhoz. It was the beginning of fall. We loaded the grain on camels and took it to the commodity point in Saratov. There was no bridge across the river in Engels. There was a ferry. Once, at the end of October I heard Lithuanian speech on the ferry boat. A man and a woman were having a conversation. I broached the conversation with them and found out that in Balakhna, a town not far from Gorkiy, there was a Lithuanian battalion being reformed. [The battalion was called Lithuanian because it was formed mostly of former Lithuanian citizens, who were volunteers, evacuated or serving in the labor front.] They told me the way. The evacuated Lithuanian government [28](#) was in Saratov, in Bristol hotel, and Lithuanian citizens could address their requests there. I didn't lose hope to be in the lines, especially understanding that my kin had most likely perished. I remained by myself and had nothing to lose.

The next time I was in Saratov, I went to the hotel. At once I recognized the people who were receiving me. These were Kviadaras, the head of the Forestry Department of the Republic and the

Minister of Agriculture, Mitskis. I told them my story and asked to send me to the Lithuanian battalion. Then Kvyadaras told me in Lithuanian: 'You are a child, a boy why are you rushing in the lines? It is pandemonium there ... They are moving to Stalingrad [29](#) now.' I was persistent, explaining that I can't idle around being young and strong, I have to fight the Fascists. Besides, my relatives had perished. I was issued documents, and I went to the military enlistment office. Again I had to go through physical examination and I was recognized fit for the front lines. It was January 1943.

The landlady gave me warm clothes, rusks, pig fat and saw me off like a son. I reached Saratov and from there I squeezed in the overcrowded train, as during evacuation, and went to Gorkiy, then Balakhna, where the Lithuanian squad was located. Again I had to go through an examination. There was a Jewish doctor, Epstein, who didn't want to issue a conclusion that I was fit for the front line service. It was hard to talk him into changing his conclusion, but I managed. The conclusion said that I was fit for the front-line service.

I was sent to the second squad of the Lithuanian division #16, which was getting ready to be sent to the front lines. Again I was given a uniform. The training lasted for two weeks. After that the mandate board considered my case and it was decided that I should go to Podol infantry military school. The duration of studies was four months. In June I was supposed to graduate. At that time there was a turning point in the war. The Soviet Army was attacking and the commandment decided to prolong my studies aiming to preserve officers. We had several extensions: the first time for six months, then for three months. As a result we studied for 15 months at this school, revising the same material.

I graduated from the school in the rank of a junior lieutenant. I was sent to Yartsevo, Smolensk oblast, where the Lithuanian rifle division #50 was being reformed. I was platoon commander for 24 hours. The next day I was called by the regiment commander Churbaneyev and was assigned commander of squad. I was in that position for about a week. Then I was assigned the personal aide of the headquarters commander. I worked for a couple of weeks and then I was supposed to go through the investigation of the board consisting of general and colonels. They wanted to check me. I was asked many questions. In the end they were satisfied with my answers.

The same evening my school comrade, a Lithuanian guy named Markovich, brought me a letter from Jurbarkas [Lithuania had already been liberated]. His relatives wrote me a detailed letter, saying how my relatives perished. On 3rd July 1941 my brother Mendel was shot in the Jurbarkas cemetery together with 350 young Jewish people. Father was shot with the group of Jews in August. He had to dig a grave for himself. My dear mother, whom I loved best of all, was sent to Kaunas ghetto, where she died on 28th September 1941 during a big action. I was grieving. I was in a terrible mood. One thing to deem your loved ones to have perished and quite another thing is to know about that for sure. I was alone in the whole world.

In the morning I was called to the headquarters and told about my assignment to the post of the aide of the headquarters regiment commander. I lost control, burst into tears and said that I didn't want to work or to live. The regiment commander reprimanded me brusquely and told me to leave. I went outside, sat on the steps and started crying. I felt that somebody was giving me a hug. It was the regiment commander. He sat next to me and started comforting me. He told me that in Ukraine his wife and children had been murdered by the Lithuanian Polizei. He said that we should

survive no matter what, for our foes not to gloat over our death. He said that I was capable and would cope with work. He said he would be helping me. So, I became the personal aide of the regiment commander.

Our regiment wasn't involved in battles that much. Our battles were of short duration and not very critical. We fought in Smolensk oblast, liberated a part of Belarus. The Fascists were hardly resisting us. They mostly were retreating. In two months, in September 1944 we were transferred to Lithuania to the prewar military camp of the Lithuanian army Gaizhuna. It was the place of a mass abandonment of post. Lithuanians left for the forests, having taken the weapons. 25-30 people left our regiment with the guns. Every morning the regiment commander asked, 'Kaplan, tell me how many?' and I reported how many people were left with weapons and how many of them were unarmed.

On the anniversary day of the October Revolution [30](#) there was a mess in the barracks. The soldiers were drinking moonshine with the local broads and at dawn many of them headed for the forests with them. It turned out that 180 deserted the regiment. It was a big scandal. The commandment and I were threatened with the camps, but what could we have done? In a couple of days, as per order of the Supreme Commander, our regiment was reformed. Our banner was taken from us, and that was it. I was transferred to Vilnius, where the capital regiment was formed from those who remained in our former regiment. In the lines I was offered to join the Party on multiple occasions. I honestly said that I was raised in bourgeois Lithuania and wouldn't be able to give my life for Lenin and Stalin. A long time ago I made up my mind not to enter the Party.

We settled in Vilnius, where military squads were positioned before the war. The regiment commander gave me and my orderly a separate house. It was a small wooden house on Kostyushkas Street. My lodging was primitively furnished – two iron folding beds, a table and a chair. I used to have no luxury during the war. I celebrated the Victory Day [31](#), 9th May 1945 here, in Vilnius. I had served by the end of the year 1945 and pleaded for demobilization. I was called to the Baltic military circle a couple of times. They offered me to go to military school or academy for me not to leave the army. I didn't want to be in the military. I intended to study at university and made arrangement to resume my studies. Finally, on 26th January 1946 I was demobilized from the army in the same rank I had after having finished military school.

I was in high spirits. I had a place to live. The house that the regiment commander gave me still belonged to me. I was to study at university and have a good job. I was offered the position of deputy head of the municipal Ispolkom [32](#) owing to my fluency in Russian. But things turned out to be quite different. I met my friend, Ivan Zherebtsov, in the military enlistment office where I came to take my documents. He offered me a job in the forestry vocational school as a civil defense teacher. The previous teacher, the Lithuanian Dragunas was a sot, who even drank during the lectures. He was fired and I was offered to teach civil defense instead of him. I resisted for a long time. I didn't want to work at the vocational school as a teacher with a certain schedule. I wanted to have time for my studies. Frankly speaking, the salary was much lower at the vocational school as compared to the one offered by the Ispolkom. In spite of the fact that I didn't give my consent to work at the vocational school, I was forced, because Ivan, without telling me, had an appointment with the head of the Ispolkom and convinced him to assign me as a defense teacher at the vocational school. My task was to establish a rigid discipline as there were bandits in the forests at that time, and students, who mostly came from villages and hamlets, were influenced by them. It was very easy for me. During the war I used to stick to military discipline and require it from my

subordinates. In a couple of weeks there was an apple-pie order in the vocational school and the students didn't only obey me, but also other teachers and the director.

Now my life wasn't that easy. I had to combine work at the vocational school with daily studies at university. Things got even more complicated when I was assigned the monitor of the course, who was supposed to mark the attendance of students and be responsible for the discipline. Soon, I managed everything, asking some of my friends to perform my functions. When the first term was finished I was declared the best monitor. Our course had the best attendance. So I coped both with work and studies.

I didn't know anything about my prewar comrades from Jurbarkas and Vilnius. I assumed that they had perished. In spring 1947 somebody knocked on my door, and when I opened it, I was so surprised to see Elena, my friend from Jurbarkas lyceum. She came in hastily, asked me to lock the door and told me her story. Elena Taimati came to Kaunas with me after having finished lyceum. Soon, she married the Lithuanian lawyer Gashka. He was a member of the nationalist governmental party. [As a result of the military coup in 1926 'Tautininkai' (nationalists) came to power and a dictatorship was introduced.] He came from a large poor Lithuanian family of eight children. They lived in a hamlet. One of Gashka's elder brothers was a Communist. He left for Russia and became an outstanding activist of the Lithuanian Communist Party after the annexation of Lithuania to Russia [the Soviet Union]. In 1940, after the Soviets came to power, Elena's husband was shot right away for being the activist of the nationalist conservative party.

Elena gave birth to a daughter after her husband was arrested. In 1941 she and her child were put in a freight car and exiled to Siberia for being the wife of an enemy of the people [33](#). Elena lumbered wood in the taiga and lived in the hardest conditions. She was young, capable and presentable, so she managed to find a job as an accountant. Then she was offered a position in the central administration of the forestry in Yakutsk. She became the chief accountant of the trust. Once, when she was looking through the payroll, she noticed the last name Grinberg. When she met with that man, it turned out that he was Leibl Grinberg, the younger brother of my Grandpa. He also was repressed and exiled to Siberia with his whole family and had almost the same story as Elena. I didn't keep in touch with Leibl, but he knew from Uncle Joseph [Grinberg], who also lived in Siberia, on the open land, that I lived in Vilnius. He even knew my address. So it was he who told Elena where I lived.

I don't know how Elena managed to escape from Yakutsk as she didn't have documents. Now she was here in my house asking for help. I sheltered Elena in my house and told her not to go out. In a couple of days I found her husband's brother, who was the director of the Central Polygraph Department of Lithuania. Being a crystal clear man he went to the Minister of Internal Affairs of Lithuania and asked him to exonerate Elena. The minister couldn't resolve that issue and asked him to write a letter addressed to Beriys [34](#). Luckily, Elena's relative understood that he shouldn't do that, otherwise not only Elena, but I and he would perish. Then he went to the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Lithuania, Snieckus [35](#). Snieckus was the one who helped. She was exonerated and issued a passport. She left for Moscow in a year and entered the university. In a couple of years she wrote a dissertation on the literary activity of Lev Tolstoy [36](#). We kept in touch. Lena obtained the degree of doctor of science [Soviet/Russian doctorate degrees] [37](#). She remained single. In a couple of months after that story with Elena my uncle Joseph, who lived on open land, came back from Siberia when his exile term was over. He lived with me for a while and at the end of 1947 left for Poland, then for Israel.

In 1949 I wrote a diploma work and graduated from university. I got a mandatory job assignment [38](#) to the Ministry of the Forest Industry of Lithuania and was supposed to start work on 1st August. I resigned from the vocational school and was looking forward to my new job. In the middle of July I was called to the headmaster's office. My job assignment was changed. I was shown the order of the minister wherein I was assigned acting director of the vocational school I was so happy to have resigned from. The previous director, who had practically ruined the work of the vocational school, was promoted to a deputy minister in Moscow. It was normal for the Soviet regime to get rid of negligent directors by promoting them. I was trying to resist the best way I could, but the minister promised that I would be transferred to another position after ensuring order at school. It turned out to be more than one year.

In a year, viz 1950 I was again appointed the acting director of the vocation school at the collegium of the ministry. I couldn't be appointed director as I was a Jew, and besides I didn't belong to the Communist Party. It was the period of state anti-Semitism. Almost every day 'rootless cosmopolites' [39](#) were stigmatized in the papers, which said that they were looking for ways to do harm. At that hard time when Jews were fired no matter what position they had, I became the acting director of the vocational school. Since 1950 the commissions from Moscow came to the vocational school on a frequent basis. Many people couldn't abide by the fact that I was a good director. In reality, the vocational school became one of the best in its field. I moved to the vocational school. I locked my apartment, where I had a relative comfort. I lived in my office, slept on the leather couch. Back at that time such couches were the attributes of the offices. Many people burned the midnight oil trying to copy Stalin.

I followed the behavior of my students. I often went to the hostel. I didn't allow them to drink moonshine and flirt. There was a semi-military discipline in the vocational school. Many people disliked it. My position became shaky. On the one hand I understood that I would be working there until a good Lithuanian director was found, on the other hand I didn't like my job, but nobody allowed me to leave. In the full swing of anti-Semitism, during the Doctors' Plot [40](#), at the beginning of 1953. the auditor came to the vocational school intending to fire or arrest me. But he couldn't find a reason. The most interesting thing was when the Minister of Forestry was trying to find out from our curators in Moscow who initiated the checkup, it turned out that the checkup wasn't coming from our system. They didn't even know the name of the auditor. It means that other important authorities were interested in me, mostly likely it was the KGB [41](#). It was a terrible time. It was impossible to read those loathing articles about Jews being criminals and murderers. All people with common sense understood that it was libel and provocation. But still it affected the public opinion. People became suspicious. The Jews in the street were looking around feeling harassed.

Before the holiday of 23rd February 1953 [Soviet Army Day] [42](#) Elena called me from Moscow. She said that her relative who helped her out with exoneration as per assignment of the municipal committee of the party was to hold a lecture on doctors-poisoners in my vocational school. He was so worried that it made him sick. I said that I understood everything; it didn't matter to me who would say that rubbish – her relative or a stranger. I promised that I wouldn't be offended as it was clear to me what was going on.

On 23rd February all students got together in the assembly hall. The relative was broaching all kinds of subjects in his lecture – his fate, his career in the Party, the difference between the

socialist and capitalist mode of life – and finished his speech with a laudation to the Party and Stalin. He hadn't said a word about doctors-poisoners. Of course, Elena's relative took a risk. If some sort of stooge leaked a word that he hadn't fulfilled the assignment, he could have been turned out from the Party and in the worst case die.

Fortunately – and it's not a slip of the tongue, I mean it – fortunately for me and for other millions of people, the tyrant died on 5th March 1953. I didn't mourn over his death, but I didn't show my joy either. By that time I knew a lot about the true persona of Stalin and repressions. Every morning I listened to Radio Free Europe [43](#) in my office, BBC and other western radio stations. It was impossible to black out these radio stations in Lithuania and the voice of Anatoliy Goldenberg, the BBC announcer became dear to many Lithuanian households. That year, 1953 I was given a car, a 'Moskvich-401' [44](#), for being the director of the best vocational school of the industry. I stayed in that position for another four years. In 1957 they finally found the director who met all requirements of the ministry. He was a Lithuanian and was educated in forestry. By that time I had been given an apartment by the vocational school. They told me to move out of my apartment after my resignation as it was meant for the new director. And again luck was smiling at me. The vocational school was transferred to Kaunas, so the apartment was left to me.

I had a family by that time. A wonderful girl, Sheina Volpe, lived with her mother not far from me in the house of their remote relative, my former front-line comrade, Avrum Volpe. I met her in his house. Sheina was born in 1928 in the small town of Kronis, not far from Kaunas, into the family of a merchant, Moses Volpe. A couple of days before the war the Volpe family came to their relatives in Kaunas. They were caught in the war and became inmates of Kaunas ghetto. Moses, Sheina's father, was shot during one of the first actions. Sheina, her mother, aunt, and cousin were taken to a hamlet by one of their acquaintances, a Lithuanian called Bronis. For two years the three of them stayed in a hole under the shed sized 2.5x1.5 meters. The hamlet where Bronis lived wasn't far from the highway Kaunas-Vilnius. There was a pond where the Fascists washed their horses and watered them. If somebody had checked the shed, where the Jews were hiding in the cellar, not only the Jews would have been killed, but also the whole family of the host.

When the Soviet Army liberated the hamlet, Sheina and her relatives were on the brink of emaciation. Aunt Mery was the one who suffered the most as her toes were frozen and she was severely afflicted with rheumatism so that she wasn't able to walk. First Sheina and her mother Sarah lived in their town. Then their distant relative, my comrade, suggested moving to his house, not far from mine on Kostyuskas. I liked Sheina at once. She was a pretty Jewish lady. We had a lot in common: our childhood and adolescence went by in one little town, our kin perished during the occupation. Besides, I wanted to have a true family: to have our holidays and traditions. In 1955 Sheina and I registered our marriage in the state registration office, but we didn't have any party on the occasion. Sheina moved into my apartment. In 1956 she gave birth to our first-born. I decided to name him after my father, Moshe.

At that time there was the first Israeli-Arab war for independence in Israel [Editor's note: It was the Suez Crisis taking place in 1956, the Israeli Independence War was eight years earlier.] [45](#), and everybody knew the name of Moshe Dayan [46](#), the one-eyed Israeli general, though Soviet propaganda depicted him as a symbol of the 'international belligerent Zionism.' If there was an article devoted to unmasking the 'Israeli aggressors' his picture was always published. When the newsreel of that war was presented, Dayan was always there. He was vituperated at all party

convocations, meetings of the workers and lectures.

When I came to the state registration office to register my son, I was told that such a name didn't exist, but I was persistent and named my son Moshe. However, I had to be persistent in pushing for them to agree to put the name Moshe on the birth certificate of my son. I demanded that they show me the official stamped document where it was written how to name children, and which names were banned. Of course, such a document didn't exist. I said that such names as Stalina [derivative from Stalin], Oktiabrina [derivative from October Revolution] and other similar names weren't listed in any book, nevertheless I personally knew some people with such names. In 1961 Sheina gave birth to our second son, who was named after Emmanuel, one of my mother's brothers, who was helping our family.

First, we lived in my house. It was rather hard. We had to carry water in buckets and warm it to bathe our son. Upon receiving the apartment our life was getting gradually better. By that time Sheina had graduated from the Chemistry Department of Vilnius University and was employed by a military plant. She worked there for quite a few years. After I resigned from vocational school I started working for the Design Bureau of the Light Industry and then for the Light Industry Ministry as an advisor on financial issues. I was well paid. My wife earned pretty good money as well. We had a comfortable life. We could afford good food and beautiful clothes. I still think what suit to put on and pick a tie to match the suit. In the summer time we went to the popular Baltic spas or to the Crimea and the Caucasus.

Sheina and I had arguments. In spite of inconsiderable disparity in years our views differed as she was born later and she grew up in the USSR. So, we were raised in different states: I was raised in bourgeois Lithuania and Sheina in the Soviet Union. She was a zealot of the socialist way of life; she believed the Communist ideals, while I was rather skeptical of them. The situation at the military plant affected my wife's outlook the most. It was a certain realm where people were raised to be devoted to Communism.

In spite of the fact that after the war I didn't keep in touch with the Jewish community, nor mark religious holiday, in my soul I was loyal to the Jews. I've always been a patriot of Israel. I always followed the events in Israel and my wife considered me to be anti-Soviet and that was the reason for our tiffs. When at the end of the 1970s a new immigration wave commenced, she was against our departure. For us to leave anywhere she would have had to resign from her job at the plant and work for several years at an ordinary enterprise as all employees of the defense industry had top-secret status. It was considered that they were aware of state secrets and they were banned from going abroad even as tourists. She didn't want to quit her job. She said she had a wonderful life in the USSR and there was no need to go anywhere.

When after the breakup of the USSR in 1991 we were invited to immigrate to Israel by one of my wife's distant relatives, Yehoshua Rabinovich [former Israeli Minister of Finance and Mayor of Tel Aviv] who was the mayor of Tel Aviv, we couldn't leave as our passport bureau didn't want to accept my wife's documents for a visa. It was such a good chance for us: we were guaranteed a job and an apartment. I was one of the first who came to Israel on invitation. I am fascinated by this country. I would love to live there, but I couldn't leave my family.

My sons were very good students at school. Both of them entered Vilnius University. Here in Lithuania, state anti-Semitism was not at such a level as in other parts of the USSR and almost all

Jewish children entered universities without any problem. Moshe graduated from the Economics Department and Emmanuel from the Faculty of Applied Mathematics. Unfortunately, we have a lot of disagreements with Moshe. He married a Lithuanian and I was against it. Besides, when my wife was seriously ill, he turned his back on us as if we were strangers. I can't forgive him for that. So, we don't keep in touch. I know that he has a good life. He works in a computer center and has a top position.

Emmanuel is quite a different son. He is devoted to his mother. In 1995 Emmanuel immigrated to Israel. He found a very good job there. But in 1997 my Sheina, who had spent her adolescence in a damp basement, got severely ill. She was afflicted with rheumatism since adolescence and now it was recrudescing. She was operated on her knee joint. In 1998 she had to go through a complicated oncological operation. I've always been there for my wife. Emmanuel called from Israel every evening asking how his mother was doing. He also sent money, medicine and came for a visit on holidays.

Three years ago Emmanuel came back to Vilnius. I'm a very elderly man and it is hard for me to look after my sick wife. Now Emmanuel lives not far from us and calls on us every day to spend time with his mother. When she is in hospital, he spends most of his time with her, changes her nappies and takes her to the bathroom. That is why my son's personal life wasn't happy. However, I know that he has a girlfriend, but he finds it impossible to get married. My Sheina is weak not only physically, but also suffers morally. Sheina doesn't want to see people, especially those who have known her young and beautiful. She has destroyed all her photos. I've loved Sheina all my life and would never leave her.

I've always been biased against the Soviet regime. That's why I approved of the breakup of the Soviet Union and the foundation of the independent state of Lithuania [47](#). My wife and I are currently members of the revived Jewish community of Lithuania. We celebrate all Jewish holidays. I am a member of the military community of Jewish War Veterans [48](#). I often go to Jurbarkas, to the place where my kin perished. Only five Jews, born in Jurbarkas before World War II, remained in Lithuania. We founded a club. Now there is a group of the second generation there – children of native Jurbarkas Jews who are currently residing abroad. We also established a charity fund, where donations from Jurbarkas Jews are collected. We put up a monument at the place where Jews from my town were shot by the Fascists.

Glossary:

[1](#) 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.

2 Lithuanian Polizei

In Russian this term refers to the local Lithuanian collaborators with the Nazi regime. Subordinated to the Germans, they were organized as a police force and were responsible for establishing the Nazi control in the country. They played a major role in carrying out the destruction of the Lithuanian Jewry.

3 Lithuanian independence

A part of the Russian Empire since the 18th Century, Lithuania gained independence after WWI, as a result of the collapse of its two powerful neighbors, Russia and Germany, in November 1918. Although resisting the attacks of Soviet-Russia, Lithuania lost to Poland the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural city of Vilna (Wilno, Vilnius) in 1920, claimed by both countries, and as a result they remained at war up until 1927. In 1923 Lithuania succeeded in occupying the previously French-administered (since 1919) Memel Territory and port (today Klaipeda). The Lithuanian Republic remained independent until the Soviet occupation in 1940.

4 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 begun. 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 were going on continuously 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, 52,541 people from Latvia, 118,599 from Lithuania and 32,450 people from Estonia were deported on the charges of 'grossly dodging from labor activity in the agricultural field and lead anti-social and parasitic mode of life'. 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 another about 100,000 were sentenced to 25 years in camps.

5 Keep in touch with relatives abroad

The Soviet authorities could arrest an individual corresponding with his/her relatives abroad and charge him/her with espionage, send them to a labour camp or even sentence them to death.

6 Shaulist Council

Nationalist and militant organization in Lithuania in the 1930s, with about 10,000 members. Later they were fighting both the Soviet and the Nazi occupiers and used partisan methods: blew up

trains, assassinated military leaders and Communists. They were eliminated by the Soviet power after WWII.

7 Kaunas ghetto

On 24th June 1941 the Germans captured Kaunas. Two ghettos were established in the city, a small and a big one, and 48,000 Jews were taken to them. Within two and a half months the small ghetto was eliminated and during the 'Grossaktion' of 28th-29th October thousands of the survivors were murdered, including children. The remaining 17,412 people in the big ghetto were mobilized to work. On 27th-28th March 1944 another 18,000 were killed and 4,000 were taken to different camps in July before the Soviet Army captured the city. The total number of people perished in the Kaunas ghetto was 35,000.

8 Jews in the Lithuanian parliament

After Lithuania gained independence (1918) in the Seim (Parliament) about 30 percent of the representatives were Jewish. After the 1926 coup the Seim was dissolved, authoritarian rule was introduced and there were no longer any Jewish representatives in the government.

9 Betar

Founded in Riga, Latvia, in 1923, Betar was a Zionist youth movement, named after Joseph Trumpeldor. It taught Hebrew culture and self defense in Eastern Europe and formed the core groups of the later settlements in Palestine. Most European branches were lost during the Holocaust.

10 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 for 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.

11 Revisionist Zionism

The movement founded in 1925 and led by Vladimir Jabotinsky advocated the revision of the principles of Political Zionism developed by Theodor Herzl, the father of Zionism. The main goal of the Revisionists was to put pressure on Great Britain for a Jewish statehood on both banks of the Jordan River, a Jewish majority in Palestine, the reestablishment of the Jewish regiments, and military training for the youth. The Revisionist Zionists formed the core of what became the Herut (Freedom) Party after the Israeli independence. This party subsequently became the central component of the Likud Party, the largest right-wing Israeli party since the 1970s.

12 Great Terror (1934-1938)

During the Great Terror, or Great Purges, which included the notorious show trials of Stalin's former Bolshevik opponents in 1936-1938 and reached its peak in 1937 and 1938, millions of innocent Soviet citizens were sent off to labor camps or killed in prison. The major targets of the Great Terror were Communists. Over half of the people who were arrested were members of the Party at the time of their arrest. The armed forces, the Communist Party, and the government in general were purged of all allegedly dissident persons; the victims were generally sentenced to death or to long terms of hard labor. Much of the purge was carried out in secret, and only a few cases were tried in public 'show trials'. By the time the terror subsided in 1939, Stalin had managed to bring both the Party and the public to a state of complete submission to his rule. Soviet society was so atomized and the people so fearful of reprisals that mass arrests were no longer necessary. Stalin ruled as absolute dictator of the Soviet Union until his death in March 1953.

13 Memel/Klaipeda

After WWI the previously German (East Prussian) city of Memel with its surrounding area was put under the administration of the Entente. It was separated from Germany and occupied by French troops, despite the fact that the majority of the city was German, with both a Polish and a Lithuanian minority. The Lithuanian army succeeded in occupying the area and the port in 1923. Lithuanian sovereignty over Memel (Lithuanian Klaipeda) was internationally recognized with the signing of the Memel Statute by France, Britain, Italy and Japan in December 1923. Memel was formally incorporated as an autonomous region of Lithuania on 8th March 1924. The National Socialists gained favor and anti-Semitism grew steadily during the 1930s. The Nazis won 26 of 29 seats on the local council in the December 1938 elections and Memel's Jews began a mass exodus. On 22nd March 1939 it was occupied by German forces and attached to the Third Reich. Its civilian population was evacuated to the west in October 1944. The Red Army captured the heavily damaged city on 28th January 1945 and attached it to the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1947 as Klaipeda.

14 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.

15 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact

Non-aggression pact between Germany and the Soviet Union, which became known under the name of Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Engaged in a border war with Japan in the Far East and fearing the German advance in the west, the Soviet government began secret negotiations for a non-aggression pact with Germany in 1939. In August 1939 it suddenly announced the conclusion of a

Soviet-German agreement of friendship and non-aggression. The Pact contained a secret clause providing for the partition of Poland and for Soviet and German spheres of influence in Eastern Europe.

16 Annexation of Eastern Poland

According to a secret clause in the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact defining Soviet and German territorial spheres of influence in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union occupied Eastern Poland in September 1939. In early November the newly annexed lands were divided up between the Ukrainian and the Belarusian Soviet Republics.

17 Annexation of Vilnius to Lithuania

During the interwar period the previously Russian-held multi-ethnic city of Wilno (Vilnius) was a part of Poland and the capital of Lithuania was Kaunas. According to a secret clause in the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (Soviet-German agreement on the division of Eastern Europe, August 1939) the Soviet Army occupied both Eastern Poland (September 1939) and the three Baltic states (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, June 1940) besides other territories (Bessarabia, Bukovina, Karelia). While most of the Eastern Polish territories were divided up between Soviet Ukraine and Belarus, Vilnius was attached to Lithuania and was to be its capital. The loss of the independent Lithuanian statehood, therefore, was accompanied by the return of Vilnius, regarded as an integral part of the country by many Lithuanians.

18 Bund

The short name of the General Jewish Union of Working People in Lithuania, Poland and Russia (Bund means Union in Yiddish). The Bund was a social democratic organization representing Jewish craftsmen from the Western areas of the Russian Empire. It was founded in Vilnius in 1897. In 1906 it joined the autonomous fraction of the Russian Social Democratic Working Party and took up a Menshevik position. After the Revolution of 1917 the organization split: one part was against the Soviet power, while the other remained in the Bolsheviks' Russian Communist Party. In 1921 the Bund dissolved itself in the USSR, but continued to exist in other countries.

19 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 as uninitiated young proletarians, whereas party members had to have at least a minimal political qualification.

20 NKVD

People's Committee of Internal Affairs; it took over from the GPU, the state security agency, in 1934.

21 Collective farm (in Russian 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 percent of farms in kolkhozes, Stalin ordered the confiscation of peasants' land, tools, and animals; the kolkhoz replaced the family farm.

22 SMERSH

Russian abbreviation for 'Smert Shpionam' meaning Death to Spies. It was a counterintelligence department in the Soviet Union formed during World War II, to secure the rear of the active Red Army, on the front to arrest 'traitors, deserters, spies, and criminal elements'. The full name of the entity was USSR People's Commissariat of Defense Chief Counterintelligence Directorate 'SMERSH'. This name for the counterintelligence division of the Red Army was introduced on 19th April 1943, and it worked as a separate entity until 1946. It was headed by Viktor Abakumov. At the same time a SMERSH directorate within the People's Commissariat of the Soviet Navy and a SMERSH department of the NKVD were created. The main opponent of SMERSH in its counterintelligence activity was Abwehr, the German military foreign information and counterintelligence department. SMERSH activities also included 'filtering' the soldiers recovered from captivity and the population of the gained territories. It was also used to punish within the NKVD itself; allowed to investigate, arrest and torture, force to sign fake confessions, put on a show trial, and either send people to the camps or shoot them. SMERSH would also often be sent out to find and kill defectors, double agents, etc.; also used to maintain military discipline in the Red Army by means of barrier forces that were supposed to shoot down the Soviet troops in the cases of retreat. SMERSH was also used to hunt down 'enemies of the people' outside Soviet territory.

23 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.

24 Labor army: it was made up of men of call-up age not trusted to carry firearms by the Soviet authorities. Such people were those living on the territories annexed by the USSR in 1940 (Eastern Poland, the Baltic States, parts of Karelia, Bessarabia and northern Bukovina) as well as ethnic Germans living in the Soviet Union proper. The labor army was employed for carrying out tough work, in the woods or in mines. During the first winter of the war, 30 percent of those drafted into the labor army died of starvation and hard work. The number of people in the labor army decreased sharply when the larger part of its contingent was transferred to the national Estonian,

Latvian, and Lithuanian Corps, created at the beginning of 1942. The remaining labor detachments were maintained up until the end of the war.

25 Polish Uprising as of 1794

In December 1792 Catherine II and the King of Prussia Friedrich William II agreed on division of *Rech Pospolita*. On 9th April 1793 the terms of division were declared: Prussia got Great Poland with the cities of Poznań, Toruń and Gdańsk, Russia – Eastern Belarus and Right-Bank Ukraine. The general uprising of Polish patriots against dictatorship of foreign states commenced on 12th March 1794 under the leadership of Tadeusz Kościuszko, with the motto – to fully restore the sovereignty of Poland. The insurgent army consisted of about 70 thousand people, but they were armed with hacks and scythes. By May 1794 the rebellions gained control over the major part of *Rech Pospolita*. Russia, Prussia and Austria decided to suppress the uprising with armed forces and make Poles recognize division of Poland. Three armies invaded the territory of Poland: Russian, Austrian and Prussian, with the total number of 110 thousand soldiers and officers. After desperate fight the insurrection was put down. The defeat of the mutiny predetermined division of Poland in 1795 and complete liquidation of Polish state system.

26 Kościuszko Tadeusz (full name Tadeusz Andrzej Bonawentura Kościuszko) (4th February 1746, the village of Merechewschisna, Volyn' – 15th October 1817, Solothurn, Switzerland)

National Hero of Poland. In 1769 finished Chivalry Academy with and stayed there to teach. Kościuszko was an ardent stickler of the ideas of social reorganization. His ideals were the liberty of conscience, equality of social strata and democracy of the state. In 1776 Kościuszko left for North America, where he voluntarily joined colonisers, who fought for independence from Great Britain. He stood out there as a genius military commander. Knowledge and capabilities of Kościuszko were noticed by George Washington, who assigned him his personal aide. When the war was over in 1784, Kościuszko returned to his motherland. In 1792 he was known as one of the bravest and worthiest Polish commanders. King Stanisław II August made Kościuszko general-lieutenant and the government of France granted him the right of an honorable citizen of France. In 1794 general Kościuszko became one of the leaders of Polish patriotic movement, heading Polish national and liberation uprising against division of Poland by Russia and Prussia. On 24th March 1794 he was declared *generalissimo* — commander of the armed forces of the patriots being authorized for dictatorship. On the 10th of October 1794 Kościuszko's troops were shattered by Russian troops. Kościuszko himself was severely wounded in action and captured. In 1796 he and other 12 thousand Polish captives were liberated by new Russian emperor Pavel I. Kościuszko devoted the rest of his life to the struggle for gaining independence of Poland. In 1815 Kościuszko moved to Switzerland, where he died in two years, at the age of 71. The ashes of Tadeusz Kościuszko were taken to Poland and in 1819 buried in Kraków Vavel, next to the graves of Polish kings.

27 Russian stove

Big stone stove stoked with wood. They were usually built in a corner of the kitchen and served to heat the house and cook food. It had a bench that made a comfortable bed for children and adults in wintertime.

28 Lithuanian Government in Evacuation

Both the Government of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party were created in 1940 and were evacuated to Moscow as the war started. Their task was to provide for Lithuanian residents who had been evacuated or drafted into the labor army. They succeeded in restoring life and work conditions of many evacuees. Former leaders of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic took active part in the formation of the Lithuanian Rifle Corps assisting the transfer of former Lithuanian citizens from the labor army into the Corps. At the beginning of 1942, top authority institutions of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic were moved to Saratov, and the permanent Lithuanian representation office remained in Moscow. In September 1944, Lithuania was re-established as part of the USSR and the Lithuanian government moved to Vilnius.

29 Stalingrad Battle (17th July 1942- 2nd February 1943) The Stalingrad, South-Western and Donskoy Fronts stopped the advance of German armies in the vicinity of Stalingrad

On 19-20th November 1942 the Soviet troops undertook an offensive and encircled 22 German divisions (330 thousand people) in the vicinity of Stalingrad. The Soviet troops eliminated this German grouping. On 31st January 1943 the remains of the 6th German army headed by General Field Marshal Paulus surrendered (91 thousand people). The victory in the Stalingrad battle was of huge political, strategic and international significance.

30 October Revolution Day

25th October (according to the old calendar), 1917 went down in history as victory day for the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia. This day is the most significant date in the history of the USSR. Today the anniversary is celebrated as 'Day of Accord and Reconciliation' on 7th November.

31 Victory Day in Russia (9th May)

National holiday to commemorate the defeat of Nazi Germany and the end of World War II and honor the Soviets who died in the war.

32 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.

33 Enemy of the people

Soviet official term; euphemism used for real or assumed political opposition.

34 Beriya, Lavrentiy Pavlovich (1899-1953)

Communist politician, one of the main organizers of the mass arrests and political persecution between the 1930s and the early 1950s. Minister of Internal Affairs, 1938-1953. In 1953 he was expelled from the Communist Party and sentenced to death by the Supreme Court of the USSR.

35 Snieckus, Antanas (1903-1974)

Lithuanian Soviet political leader. He was active in the Communist movement before WWII and was the commander of the headquarters of partisan movement in Lithuania during the Nazi occupation. He was First Secretary of the the Lithuanian Communist Party from 1940 until his death. He has been a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in Moscow since 1952.

36 Tolstoy, Lev Nikolayevich (1828-1910)

Russian novelist and moral philosopher, who holds an important place in his country's cultural history as an ethical philosopher and religious reformer. Tolstoy, alongside Dostoyevsky, made the realistic novel a literary genre, ranking in importance with classical Greek tragedy and Elizabethan drama. He is best known for his novels, including War and Peace, Anna Karenina and The Death of Ivan Ilyich, but also wrote short stories and essays and plays. Tolstoy took part in the Crimean War and his stories based on the defense of Sevastopol, known as Sevastopol Sketches, made him famous and opened St. Petersburg's literary circles to him. His main interest lay in working out his religious and philosophical ideas. He condemned capitalism and private property and was a fearless critic, which finally resulted in his excommunication from the Russian Orthodox Church in 1901. His views regarding the evil of private property gradually estranged him from his wife, Yasnaya Polyana, and children, except for his daughter Alexandra, and he finally left them in 1910. He died on his way to a monastery at the railway junction of Astapovo.

37 Soviet/Russian doctorate degrees

Graduate school in the Soviet Union (aspirantura, or ordinatura for medical students), which usually took about three years and resulted in a dissertation. Students who passed were awarded a 'kandidat nauk' (lit. candidate of sciences) degree. If a person wanted to proceed with his or her research, the next step would be to apply for a doctorate degree (doktarontura). To be awarded a doctorate degree, the person had to be involved in the academia, publish consistently, and write an original dissertation. In the end he/she would be awarded a 'doctor nauk' (lit. doctor of sciences) degree.

38 Mandatory job assignment in the USSR

Graduates of higher educational institutions had to complete a mandatory two-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.

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 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.

42 Soviet Army Day

The Russian imperial army and navy disintegrated after the outbreak of the Revolution of 1917, so the Council of the People's Commissars created the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army on a voluntary basis. The first units distinguished themselves against the Germans on 23rd February 1918. This day became the 'Day of the Soviet Army' and is nowadays celebrated as 'Army Day'.

43 Radio Free Europe

Radio station launched in 1949 at the instigation of the US government with headquarters in West Germany. The radio broadcast uncensored news and features, produced by Central and Eastern European émigrés, from Munich to countries of the Soviet block. The radio station was jammed behind the Iron Curtain, team members were constantly harassed and several people were killed in terrorist attacks by the KGB. Radio Free Europe played a role in supporting dissident groups, inner resistance and will of freedom in the Eastern and Central European communist countries and thus it contributed to the downfall of the totalitarian regimes of the Soviet block. The headquarters of the radio have been in Prague since 1994.

44 Moskvitch

Meaning 'a man from Moscow,' Moskvitch was a Soviet-made car, popular in the entire post-war communist world. As reparation the Soviet Union received the complete manufacturing line of Opel Kadett after WWII and it was taken to Moscow from Russelheim (American Zone) in 1946. The new Soviet plant MZMA (Moskovsky Zavod Malolitrazhnykh Avtomobiley), meaning 'Midge Car Works of Moscow' started producing the Moskvitch 400 based on Opel Kadett in 1947. Further models were developed by Soviet engineers later on. The plant in 1969 changed its name to AZLK (Avtomobilny Zavod imeni Leninskogo Komsomola), meaning 'The Lenin Komsomol Auto Works.' Moskvitch cars were always somewhat sturdy but reliable on substandard roads; they were offered at an affordable price. A modernized line of Moskvitch models started in 1988. But the markets failed during the 1990s, and in 2002, AZLK went into bankruptcy. Plans to restart the factory have so far not succeeded.

45 Suez Crisis: In 1956 Egyptian President Nasser nationalized the strategically crucial and since its construction international Suez Canal. This was followed by a joint British, French and Israeli military action. On 29th October Israel attacked Egypt and within a few days occupied the Gaza strip and most of the Sinai Peninsula, while Britain and France invaded the area of the Suez Canal. As a result of the strong American, Soviet and UN pressure they removed from Egyptian territory and UN forces were sent to the Sinai and Gaza to keep peace between Israel and Egypt.

46 Dayan, Moshe (1915-1981): Israeli military leader and diplomat. In the 1930s he fought in the Haganah, an underground Jewish militia defending Israelis from Arab attacks, and he joined the British army in World War II. He was famous as a military strategist in the wars with Egypt, Syria and Jordan. He was minister of agriculture (1959-64) and minister of defense (1967-1974). After the Yom Kippur War in 1973, he resigned. In 1977 he became foreign minister and played a key role in the negotiation with Egypt, which ended with the Camp David Accords in 1978.

47 Reestablishment of the Lithuanian Republic: On 11th March 1990 the State assembly headed by J. Basanavichius, who became the first President of Lithuania, declared Lithuania an independent republic. The Soviet leadership in Moscow refused to acknowledge the independence of Lithuania and initiated its economic blockade. At the referendum in February 1991, over 90% participants (about 84% of the population) voted for independence of Lithuania. The western world finally recognized Lithuanian independence and so too did the USSR on 6th September 1991. On 17th September 1991 Lithuania joined the United Nations.

48 Lithuanian Council of the Jewish War Veterans

It was founded in 1988 by the Vilnius municipal Jewish community. The main purpose of the organization is mutual assistance as well as unification of front-line Jews, collection and publishing of recollections about the war, and arranging meetings with the public and youth.