Chasia Spanerflig

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Chasia Spanerflig is a very beautiful and smiley woman. This gray-haired, elegant woman, with nice lipstick and eye makeup, fashionable jewelry, and well-groomed hands, doesn't appear to be a woman who had to go through the ordeals that I heard in her story. I first met Chasia in the Jewish community of Vilnius. She goes there almost every day, being an active volunteer. She devotes much of her time to the social Jewish life. Chasia suggested that we should meet at her place. She lives with her adult son in a small one-room apartment in a house constructed in the 1980s. We met in her kitchen. It looked neat and well-furnished. When the interview was over, Chasia brought out a bottle of sweet wine and asked me to drink it with her to commemorate her deceased relatives.

My family background

I was born in the small town of Zdzisciot, which until 1939 belonged to the Polish province Grodnensk, before the division of Polish territory by Germany 1. Now it is called Dyatlovoo and belongs to Grodno region, Belarus [170 km west of Minsk]. My maiden name is Langbord. It means 'long beard' in Yiddish. In accordance with the family legend all males in our kin had long beards, which was one of the attributes of religious Jews. There were synagogue gabbaim, interpreters of the Torah and rabbis among my ancestors. In short, they were revered in the Jewish world.

As far as I know my ancestors came from the town of Zdzisciot. My paternal grandfather, Aron Langbord, born in the 1870s had a long thick beard. He was a respectable man, warden in one of the two town synagogues. Besides, he was the chairman of Mela-Hesed. It was a Jewish Mutual Aid Fund. The Jews helped each other, lending money without interest. It was a social task and Grandfather wasn't paid for it. He made money running a small shop, which was typical for Jewish towns, where manufactured goods and fabric were on offer. His customers were mostly peasants. Small batches of goods were purchased in Vilnius and Warsaw.

Grandmother Chaya also worked in the store with Grandfather Aron. She was a petite woman, and always had her head covered in a peculiar way. She was going back and forth from one counter to another, helping Grandfather. Grandfather Aron's house wasn't far from the market. It was a good, well-built stone house, consisting of three small rooms and a kitchen. The toilet was outside. In summer my grandparents dined on the covered veranda, sitting at a wooden table. The house was very modestly furnished. In spite of being rather rich, the family had a very moderate living, I would even say ascetic. I don't know what the reason for that was – either stinginess or the desire of my grandparents to be righteous. During the week they had simple food, roughage-bread, onion, herring and sometimes soup.

They had lavish food only once a week – on Sabbath. On Friday evening and on Saturday the table was abundant in all kinds of treats and delicious dishes: gefilte fish, garlic-seasoned tongues, marinated herring, fatty chicken stew, all kinds of tsimes 2, for desert there was strudel with homemade cherry or blackcurrant jam and nuts. I still remember the taste of it. I have never eaten more scrumptious strudel.

Aron and Chaya were very friendly. Grandfather seemed to me more intellectual or at least more educated than Grandmother Chaya. She was simpler. I don't know for sure what education they got. Both of them were very religious. Grandfather went to the craftsmen synagogue every day. He was a warden there. He prayed, read the Torah and Talmud. He kept praying also in 1942 when he, Grandmother Chaya and other religious Jews of the town were taken to the synagogue square during one of the Fascist actions. All of them were shot on that square.

Aron and Chaya had an only child, my father Abram Langbord. He was born in 1895. I think she couldn't have more children, as usually religious Jews give birth to as many children as God sends them. Apart from cheder my father got a good education, but I don't know which institution he finished. He was fluent in Hebrew. He taught the history of Jewish religion at the Tarbut seven-year school 3.

In contrast to my father, Mother grew up in a large family of thirteen children, eleven of whom survived. My maternal grandparents, born in Zdzisciot in the 1860s, were also honorable and respectable religious Jews, but they weren't as religious as Grandfather Aron. Grandfather Velvl Israelit was a very handsome and stately man. He had a small beard, which was customary for his contemporaries. Velvl was a merchant and a wholesale trader. There was a large storage facility behind his house, where he kept the goods. He purchased chicken eggs from the peasants from nearby villages. Then he sold those eggs wholesale to England. Besides, Grandfather sold grain and oakum. He probably was involved in more work.

His wife, my grandmother Leya was well-suited to my grandfather. She was a beauty, a real lady. She neither cooked nor did any work about the house. They always had a housekeeper. Children were raised by baby-sitters and governesses. Though Grandfather Velvl was well-off perhaps he had less money than Grandfather Aron. It must have been difficult to support such a large family. Nonetheless, the house, where my mother grew up, was generous and open to people unlike that of my paternal grandparents.

Both Grandfather Velvl and Grandmother Leya had seats in a large synagogue; it was not the synagogue for craftsmen, where Grandfather Aron was the warden. Grandfather had an honorable seat to the right: it was a separate arm chair with a high carved back and magen David.

Grandmother also had such a beautiful chair on the top, where women used to pray. Grandfather went to the synagogue every day. When he grew old and weak, he started only attending synagogue on Fridays, Saturdays and on holidays. Grandmother didn't go there daily, but she did a lot for the synagogue. For holidays she ordered beautiful religious embroideries for the synagogue, as well as silverware and silver goblets. All holidays were celebrated in Grandfather's house, and Sabbath was observed. Almost always poor local Jews, who didn't have money to celebrate Sabbath, were invited by my grandfather to sit at his Sabbath table. They weren't treated any differently.

I don't remember all of my mother's brothers and sisters. Grandfather Velvl gave all of them a good education. The eldest, Bluma, was born in the 1880s. When she was young, she studied in Russia. Then she happened to be in Georgia. She married a local Georgian Jew. I think his last name was Saakian, I don't remember his first name. She lived with him in Tbilisi. She was a teacher. During the Great Patriotic War Bluma, her husband and children, their daughter Nina and their son, stayed in Tbilisi. Bluma died in 1960. I kept in touch with her children for a while. I went to visit them in Tbilisi for a couple of times. Recently I haven't heard from them.

After Bluma, Mother's brother Jeshua was born. At home he was called by the Russian name Ovsei 4. When he was young and single he left home for the USA. He didn't write letters to Grandfather, Grandmother or my mother, who really loved him. She was happy to receive skimpy news coming from her distant relatives and acquaintances. I don't know what happened to Jeshua.

My mother, Pesya Israelit, born in 1890, was the third child in the family. Her younger brother Solomon followed her. He was born in 1891. Solomon lived in Latvia. First he worked as a salesman in a large store. When he married a rich Latvian Jew with a good dowry, he became the owner of a large department store. I remember neither his wife's name nor his children's names. He had twins: a boy and a girl. All of them died during the occupation of Riga.

The next one, Miriam, born in 1893, was called Mikhle at home. She lived in Warsaw. She was married to a journalist of some Jewish paper, a Jew named Yanovskiy. Both of them perished in the Warsaw ghetto 5 and their son, who managed to survive, lives somewhere in America. I don't keep in touch with him. I don't even know his name.

Mother's sister Maria – she was called Manya at home – left for Vilnius upon graduation from a lyceum. She worked. Later she married an accountant, Rehes, who worked in a large-scale tea business. High-grade tea was brought from the East, weighed, packed and sold by the enterprise. Manya's husband died at a young age and in the 1930s she remained with her sons, Israel and Joseph. The latter stuck to Zionist beliefs and left for France before the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War 6. Then he went to Palestine and died there in the postwar period. Aunt Manya and Israel happened to be in Vilnius ghetto 7 – Israel perished during one of the actions. Aunt Maria was taken to Auschwitz by the Fascists. Luckily she survived and lived a couple of years in Poland after the war. Then she immigrated to Israel. There she got married for the second time and gave birth to two sons. She lived a long and happy life there.

Mother's brother Mulya, born in 1898, also lived in Vilnius. Later he was involved in timber trade and was rather well-heeled. He married a Jew, Maria. During the Great Patriotic War Mulya, his wife Maria and daughter Aesya were in Vilnius ghetto. They survived the Great Patriotic War and left for the USA. There Mulya regained his business and came to big money. Mulya and Maria died in the

1980s and Aesya is still alive.

Mother's youngest sister Eiga was born in 1900. She also left for Vilnius and stayed with Uncle Mulya. Then she had a prearranged marriage with Chaim Kopelevich, a wealthy man, who owned a book store on Gelio Street. Chaim was a Zionist [Revisionist Zionism] 8, very socially active, and was always with Israel in his thoughts. In 1936 he, Eiga and two of his sons immigrated to Israel. It saved his family from the catastrophe. Eiga and Chaim died in the post-war period and one of their sons, Isroel Kopelevich, became a professor, the other one, whose name I don't remember, also was successful in science and lived in California.

My mother's siblings were all very friendly. There was no place to work in Zdzisciot, so all of them went to big cities and having found a place there, helped the younger ones find a job and get settled. It was decided by the family council that Mother should stay in Zdzisciot with her elderly parents and she wasn't against it. The main reason for such a decision was my mother's medical education. Having finished lyceum she went to a school for medical assistants somewhere in Russia. Mother was a very skillful expert and she stood in for a doctor in many cases, so her siblings decided that she should look after the parents until they die. Before getting married, my mother worked in the hospital. All patients knew her and often asked her for help. There were times when she had to get up at night to render assistance to somebody. My mother never turned anybody down.

I don't know how my parents met and got married. I think it was a prearranged marriage. In spite of the age difference – Mother was five-six years older than Dad – they fell in love with each other. Father's parents must have been against their marriage either because of the age difference or for some other reasons. Anyway, neither my mother, nor her parents attended the house of the Langbords, even on holidays or birthdays. These were vastly different families – asceticism, aridness and miserliness of the Langbords versus generosity and open-heartedness of the Israelits.

My parents got married in 1920. I think the wedding was in accordance with Jewish rites – under a chuppah, with the relatives from both sides. I was born in 1921, and my brother in 1926. He was called after my mother's brother Jeshua – he was called Ovsei at home – who moved to America and didn't keep in touch. When I was a toddler we lived in rented apartments and I don't remember them. Then our family moved in with my mother's parents. Grandmother was afflicted with diabetes and Grandfather with asthma, so they often needed help.

Growing up

We lived in a wonderful town. It was a Jewish town in the best sense of this word: with great Yiddish culture, different Jewish institutions, magnificent cultured people, great personalities. There was a beautiful park in the center of the town. I used to walk there with my school friends. There was a Polish school in the park and a very beautiful small Orthodox church. There was a small meandering river, the Pomaraika, with scenic banks. The center of the town was mostly inhabited by Jews, and Poles, Belarusians lived on the outskirts and in adjacent villages. I remember a large pharmacy in the center of the town. It was owned by a Jew. I don't recall his last name. There were cobbler's, tailor's and hatter's shops, stores where beautiful patterned lady's kerchiefs and shawls were sold. All craftsmen were Jews. There were shops in a small passage. I enjoyed strolling in that passage. It looked so small to me when I came to my native town after the war, when so much time had elapsed.

There were great market days on Tuesdays. I was so happy when the housekeeper took me there. Then my brother and some friends joined us and we enjoyed walking between the bogies and carts, tasting and buying scrumptious and succulent fruits, thick and fatty milk, choosing chicken and geese. Pork, pig's fat and spicy smoked meat was also sold there, but we couldn't taste that as the kashrut was strictly observed [in our family]. Somebody played harmonica or hurdy-gurdy. Jews who owned small restaurants sold wine. There was an air of mirth and inebriation. There was Grandfather Aron's shop not far from the market, in a lane. I liked to drop by there and watch my grandparents at the counter unrolling huge rolls of fabric. Calico, flannel and other simple fabric were sold at the store and mostly peasants bought them.

There were two synagogues in the center: a large two-storied one that Grandfather Velvl and Grandmother Leya used to attend, and another small one, where Aron Langbord was the warden. A Catholic cathedral was to the side from the central square. Here Poles from villages came in their carts. The local Polish intelligentsia – police, some doctors and lawyers – used to come here as well.

The town's industry consisted of timbering plants, cheese processing plant and others controlled by the Jews. All Jews were involved in social and cultural life. There was a great amateur society – the amateur drama theater, where my father used to play, a choir for adults and a wonderful children's choir, all kind of literary circles, a dancing circle and a Jewish library. The Jews of our town were literate, well-read. They bought or subscribed to both Jewish and Polish papers.

Grandfather Velvl's house was in the center of the town. The house was well-built, but not very large. The housekeeper always used to cook something in the kitchen. She was Belarusian. She taught my brother and me a couple of phrases in her mother tongue. My parents spoke Yiddish with us and between themselves, though Father was fluent in Hebrew. My grandparents' house was always teeming with people as they were involved in social work. My brother and I were on our own or with our housekeeper. My parents were constantly busy.

I remember how my brother and I were walking along the street and watching the windows of our house – the windows of two rooms occupied by our family were lit until late. One of the rooms was used for meetings of my father's friends and comrades: Zionists. All of them were followers of the resolute ideas of Jabotinsky 9, but they stuck to the democratic approach – buying out Palestinian lands. They collected money for that purpose and my father was in charge of that.

Mother's friends got together in another room. Even though my mother didn't belong to the Communist or any other party, she adhered to 'leftist' views. Mother was a very kind woman and she thought that her duty was charity – to help. She collected money to help marry off poor brides, took care of the orphans, made sure that poor children were given breakfast at school.

Our family wasn't rich – just an ordinary cultured middle-class family. Father didn't make much money and Mother tried to have odd jobs. She gave injections and went to see patients. Once she even worked as a doctor at the Jewish school Tarbut, where Father used to work. Mother organized free recreation for Jewish children, afflicted with tuberculosis, in the spa town of Novoyelnya, located not far from Dyatlovo. There were a lot of women around my mother – lonely and widowed ones. They helped her with work. Father also went for treatment in Novoyelnya. The only son in his family was very valetudinarian and took good care of his health. Sometimes I went with him to Novoyelnya during my summer holidays.

My parents often quarreled. Mother was well-groomed. She was a gorgeous, slender woman with a thick plait. She was one of the first women in the town who started having manicure done in the newly-opened salon. She was reserved and calm, but Father was a creative person, easily carried away. He often communicated with some people, who were fishy in my mother's opinion. He invited them home, treated them and asked them to stay overnight. I think that Mother even suspected him of adultery. Besides, as it often happens in Jewish families and not only in Jewish ones, Grandmother Chaya added fuel to the fire in my parents' tiffs as she couldn't get over their marriage, which to her was an unequal one. I was very scared of the squabbles which might break out any minute and that was the only thing that poisoned my childhood.

Now I understand that my parents truly loved each other, without leaving a trace of indifference in their relationship. They often spent time in the company of their mutual friends. A doctor and his wife, a veterinarian, a judge, who was Jewish, often called on us. My parents had other friends. Unfortunately, I can't recall their names. I remember that there was no alcohol on the table. Guests were treated to tea, freshly-cooked jam and freshly-baked pies. In such cases we, the children, sat at the table as well. Grandmother Leya also paid attention to us. I often went to the synagogue with my grandmother. She loved me very much. She took me to see her children in Vilnius. I remember that my mother's brothers and sisters weren't pleased with that and nagged my grandmother for that. Maybe it was mere jealousy on the part of the other grandchildren, as I was Grandmother's favorite.

Our house was a traditional Jewish one. Each Thursday my parents went to mikveh. I can't say that the kashrut was very strictly observed, but its main principles were kept. Meat was bought in special kosher stores. We had separate dishes for meat and dairy dishes, starting from the cutting boards and up to the silverware. Each Friday we would prepare for Sabbath. The house was thoroughly cleaned, the table was covered with a white cloth. Silver candlesticks were put on the table. As far as I remember there were three candles. Mother was in charge of the cooking of most of the dishes and the most important ones were cooked by her.

On the eve of Sabbath Mother put on dressy attire and told us to change as well. The table was laid by the time Father and Grandfather came back from synagogue. The eldest man said a blessing and the evening started. There were freshly baked challot on the table, kosher wine, gefilte fish, tsimes, meat and chicken dishes. Usually Mother baked a very nice and tasty strudel with nuts. As for Saturday, such food was cooked that doesn't have to be warmed – different casseroles from noodles and raisins, tsimes and of course chulent – the traditional Sabbath dish. It was cooked from meat, potatoes, onions and beans. On Friday chulent was taken to the bakery and put in the oven, still warm from baking. There was other neighbor's chulent in the oven. There were cases when chulent was swapped or confused with someone else's. After the Sabbath meal, I, with my father or by myself, went to my Langbord grandparents . I didn't stay there long. Grandmother treated me to cookies and lollipops and Grandfather gave me money for ice-cream.

On the major Jewish holidays Grandfather Aron came to see us. I remember he always came to us on Rosh Hashanah. They blew the shofar on that day in the synagogues. A festive table was laid in our house. There were a lot of sweets – Mother's strudel, apple pies with honey. My parents spent Yom Kippur in synagogue. The children didn't fast, but parents always did on that day. I liked the next fall holiday of Sukkot. A sukkah was installed in the yard and our entire family dined there for eight days. Grandfather Aron came on the first day of the holiday with branches of estrog and lulav

and shook them in four directions, and I had to pronounce some words after him, being the eldest child in the family. On the mirthful holiday of Simchat Torah songs were sung in synagogues, choirs sang in Jewish schools. Jovial processions left the synagogue carrying the Torah scroll. On this holiday and on Purim women baked all kinds of sweets. They also made artificial flowers and buttonholes and rich Jews thought that it was their duty to buy some of the knick-knacks for charity.

The winter holiday Chanukkah was also very beautiful. I remember that the menorah consisting of eight candles was lit and put on the table in our house as well as in other Jewish houses, in accordance with the local tradition. It seemed that the whole town was twinkling with merry lights – menorahs on the window sills in Jewish houses. Potato fritters, doughnuts and patties were fried in oil. In kindergarten and in school we were told stories about the origin of Chanukkah. I remember a song about Chanukkah: ‘Oh, Chanukkah, a wonderful holiday, we are having fun, eating potato fritters and playing!’

Pesach was my favorite holiday. The house was prepared for the holiday like a bride for her wedding. On the last Thursday before the holiday all of us went to the river and bathed. We took everything out of our pockets as there might have been old breadcrumbs – chametz. All the family members were given new clothes for the holiday. While Grandfather was alive, seder was held beautifully. He sat at the head of the table between two pillows, where the afikoman was hidden. My brother and I were supposed to find that afikoman and snitch it so that grandfather wouldn’t notice.

Apart from the festive delicious food there were mandatory Paschal dishes: eggs, bitter herbs, matzah and dishes made from matzah. There was always a guest in our house, a poor Jew as a rule. Grandfather had a habit: each person sitting at the table had to read a Paschal prayer in turn and all of us sang songs. I remember one of them: ‘There is only one God in the universe!’ Such words were repeated for seven-eight times during seder. I, being the eldest of the children, asked Grandfather the four traditional questions about the origin of the holiday. Before seder was over, a goblet with wine was placed for Elijah the Prophet. The seated people would look at the goblet and if the wine swung a little bit, it meant that Elijah had come over and sipped from the goblet.

I got my first Jewish education in a Jewish kindergarten. There we, the little kids, were told about Israel. Zionist ideas were inoculated in a simplified form. Thus, I have been a Zionist since childhood. We used to dance and sing different songs like in any kindergarten.

There were three schools in the town – a Polish school, a Yiddish school and the Tarbut. I entered the latter when I was six. The school was secular, but it had its own traditions. We were taught the main rules of our religion. My father taught that subject. The classes were held in Hebrew. We studied Jewish literature, mostly Bialiks’s poetry 10. We also had a subject of Polish language and literature. I was involved in social life: I sang in the school choir, took part in the performances of the drama studio. In general, my school years were wonderful. I remember how we used to go to school on a sleigh drawn by three horses. It was a sleigh’s race and we, robust and red-hot, were singing Polish and Jewish songs.

In 1932 I finished the Tarbut school. The same year an event occurred that changed the life of our family. One July night there was a strong gust of wind and the sparks from the timber plant touched the thatched roof of a Belarusian house, wherefrom they moved to the town. All of us – my parents,

grandparents, I – being sick at that time – and my brother ran out of the house. All of us were in our night gowns. Father told us to move to a safe distance wherefrom we were watching our house burning. That night half of the town burnt. Grandfather Aron's house also burnt, but the synagogue wasn't touched by the fire. Somehow it was spared from the flames. In a moment our family turned indigent. We spent that night in the house of some Jews, whose house didn't burn down. In the morning the town took measures to save those who had been affected by the fire. All those who'd suffered from it were given rooms in the houses which weren't burnt. People gave them the best rooms and shared some things. Money was collected for the victims to start construction of new houses.

In a couple of hours Uncle Mulya came over from Vilnius. He brought money collected from our relatives and suggested that I should go with him, as I had to continue my education in a large town anyway, for there was no educational institution for me in our town. Thus, in the summer of 1933 I came to Vilnius and entered the Hebrew lyceum Tarbut named after its first headmaster, founder and sponsor Doctor Epstein. It was located on Pilimo Street, 4. It was the most prestigious Jewish educational institution in Vilnius. Here children of rich merchants, manufacturers, lawyers and doctors studied. The tuition was rather high for that time: 15 zloty per month. Our family couldn't afford that after the fire. My uncle Solomon covered my tuition. He sent money to Aunt Miriam and she brought it to us.

I didn't have a place to stay. My aunts and uncle lived in Vilnius but they didn't have a room for me. One of them had only two rooms; the other one had five, but there was a study, bedroom, drawing room and they could put me only in the hall. Until now I am astounded by the kindness of strangers and callousness of my kin. My mother came to Vilnius and rented a room for me from some strangers. At first, I was crying a lot, feeling homesick and missing my parents. Then I was immersed in my studies, made friends and got used to it somehow. Usually in October I went home on Jewish holidays, then came back to Vilnius and in December I was home again for Chanukkah.

The year of 1933 brought about another tribulation – on one of the Chanukkah days Grandmother Leya died. She had a Jewish funeral, attended by many people from Vilnius, Warsaw and Riga. I remember Grandmother was on the floor in a shroud. People were sitting around her in clothes with torn collars. It was the shivah, observed by parents and relatives. My brother and I also observed the mourning, but not so strictly. Then Grandmother's body, covered in the shroud, was carried through the town to the Jewish cemetery. The procession was accompanied by weeping women. Each of them had a jar in her hand for Zeddakah.

Mother's siblings collected money to construct a new house. Mother also went to work and now after the fire many inhabitants of the town turned to insurance companies and Mother became an insurance agent. After Grandmother's death Grandfather Velvl felt unwell. He was asthmatic and all his children together bought him a dacha 11 in Novoyelnya and Mother hired a lady to look after him.

My life in Vilnius was rather hard. I dined with one Jewish lady for 30 kopecks a day. As a rule I couldn't get along with landladies. Decent and kind women were rare. Mother often sent me parcels with provisions: butter and cheese, freshly-baked bread, chicken, meat, about 60 eggs. Once I lived at the place of a Jewish lady called Molchanskaya, who deliberately ate all my products with her daughter and then she said that I had nothing to eat. Then I, choking with tears, went to

the bakery, where people knew me, felt sympathetic and gave me bread for free. I was undernourished, I went to bed hungry.

Generally, children of wealthy people went to my lyceum and I took a split roll with me to conceal my poverty and to show that there was something in it, thought at times there wasn't even butter inside the roll. Children who knew about my poverty treated me very well. When the class was going on an excursion which wasn't free of charge, one of the rich children paid for me so I could go with everybody. They didn't do it to show off, but stealthily, for me even not to know about it.

I had friends. My bosom friend was Mikhail Brantsovskiy. He was my classmate. His parents were wealthy people – Mikhail's father was involved in manufacturing. I was friends with Mikhail's cousin, Chaya Kushnir, who came from the province and lived in Brantsovskiy's house. Mikhail's mother, Dina Brantsovskaya, was a very kind woman. Her house was always open for her son's friends. There were times when a large company of friends came to Mikhail's and stayed in the house until late. I often went there by myself. Aunt Dina always made sure that I was fed. She understood that I was undernourished. Sometimes I stayed overnight, not to walk around in the street at a late hour.

Masha Nemze was also my friend. Her parents owned a large fur store in the heart of the city. They had a dacha and they invited me to come over there for a couple of weeks during vacation. On Jewish holidays, the lyceum was closed and I went to my home town. I spent summer holidays at home as well. I didn't want to go home as I was afraid of my parents' tiffs, which became more frequent with the years. But still, I loved my town, my school friends and I enjoyed spending time with them. Mother took good care of me to make up for the time of my being alone in a big city. She bought fabric on credit and ordered me new dresses, for me not to look worse than my rich classmates. In summer I was sometimes sent to Grandfather in Novoyelnya. Grandfather Velvl was very sick. Now he lived on the money sent by his children. They treated him really well and sent him all kinds of sweets, honey and dried fruits apart from money. He enjoyed all that very much. When I came over, Grandfather opened up his cherished chest and treated me to sweet things.

In 1937 my parents and brother moved to a newly-built house. My life in Vilnius got better. Though I wasn't the best student, getting mostly good marks and at times satisfactory marks, my teachers, aware of the fact that I was needy, recommended me to the rich houses for tutoring. I gave two classes a day and finally I started making some money. In that period of time Aunt Manya's husband died and my relatives decided that I should live with her. I moved to her place in 1939.

In the penultimate grade we were to choose between two directions: technical and humanitarian. I chose the humanitarian one. Now I felt more confident in our company. I was loved in any company as I was never in a hurry to go home because I didn't have one. Besides, I was merry and appreciative. After classes we went out to a café, ate ice-cream, called on somebody to have a cup of tea, or sometimes went to the cinema. There were a lot of Zionist organizations in Vilnius, including youth organizations. Boys started wooing me. Usually I went to these organizations with my boyfriend. It was either Betar 12 or Maccabi 13. They were different in their approaches, but all of them were purely Zionist. So, the years of my adolescence were full of Zionist ideas. During the meetings we often were told about Palestine, about life in a kibbutz. Youth was called upon to go to Palestine to build the Jewish state.

In winter 1939 during one of the winter holidays, when I was at home, somebody knocked on the door and informed us that Grandfather Velvl had died in Novoyelnya. He was brought to our town and buried the same way as Grandmother, with all traditions observed. In 1939 I finished the lyceum. I didn't yearn for home. I loved my home town, but I wasn't willing to live there. I decided to earn a little bit more money in order to continue my education at the Institute of Foreign Languages. I was employed by the parents of one of my fellow students, who owned a large fur store. I started to work as the accountant's assistant. The chief accountant, who trained me, found a cashier job for me at a store, where all kinds of sewing goods, threads, buttons and lining material were sold. The store belonged to two merchants. One of them, Friedman, was a very rich man.

In August 1939 Friedman's son Boris came to Vilnius from France, where he studied at the Textile College. Though Boris was 13 years older than me, he at once took an interested in me, a modest girl. He started calling on our shop and invited me out to eat ice-cream or watch a movie. Boris was a Zionist, member of Betar, the most active Zionist organization. He was a follower of Jabotinsky and told me a lot about his ideas. Then in August 1939 Jabotinsky came to Vilnius and Boris invited me to attend his lecture, which took place in philharmonic society. We stood there agape! He was a brilliant orator. I had never heard a more ardent speech in my life. It was the beginning of the affection between Boris and me.

During the War

On 1st September 1939 Poland was occupied by the Fascists. World War II broke out. Soviet troops entered the eastern part of Poland, where my native town was located 14. Now it became Soviet Belarus. I felt homesick and in September 1939 I went to Zdzisciot practically without saying good-bye to Boris. Our town had changed a lot. People were really despondent. Repressions against Zionists commenced and my father was expecting to get arrested. I didn't stay home for longer than a week. One day a young man, dressed to kill, got off the bus from Novoyelnya. He started asking how to get to our house. It was Boris Friedman. He said that his mother had sent him to bring me to Vilnius to live in their house. My parents decided that it was better for me to be Vilnius, in the house of a well-heeled family. I said good-bye to my parents and left for Vilnius with Boris.

I settled in a posh apartment in downtown Vilnius, in a gorgeous white house. It wasn't safe in Vilnius. The city was given to Lithuania 15 and it became the capital once again. All political changes often ended up with a pogrom for the Jews. There was a small pogrom in Vilnius. Nobody died, just windows were broken and Jewish stores were plundered. Up to 20th October 1939 the borders were open. On 13th October Mother came, and Boris and I had a modest wedding under a chuppah in the Vilnius rabbi's office as the synagogue was closed down at that time. Mother left at once and I never saw her again.

Boris and I got along very well. We were rich. There were a lot of goods in the store. In winter 1940 Boris brought a batch of wonderful sheepskins from the Polish town of Zakopane. The sales were very good. Boris often appeared in public. We went to the theater, attended meetings of Zionists. I didn't feel bored with my husband. It is difficult to say whether I loved him or not. He was much older than me and I felt respect for him rather than love. Besides, I was a girl and I wanted to go out with my pals, but Mikhail Brantsovskiy and the rest of the guys treated me like a married woman and went out with other girls. School teachers who met me, disapproved of my early

marriage. Soon I got pregnant. When I was in the third month, I fell from a cart. I had a miscarriage and stayed in hospital for a long time.

Our calm, rich and serene life ended in June 1940, when the Soviet army came to Lithuania 16. I know that many, especially poor Jews, hoped for and gladly welcomed the Soviet Army. The Soviet regime didn't bring about anything good. Soon goods vanished from the stores. Bread was only of the lowest grade. Our family had products in stock and didn't feel the need of them. Soon our store was nationalized. Repressions, arrests and deportation 17 commenced and my husband's parents moved to a smaller apartment, hoping to escape exile. They weren't disturbed, but Boris, a famous Zionist, had to go into hiding. First he lived with one of his friends. He changed places, but it wasn't safe as all of them belonged to Zionist circles. I was pregnant again and on 20th April 1941 I gave birth to a boy. I gave birth in a private maternity hospital, in a separate ward. The parturition was normal. I named the boy after my favorite Grandfather Velvl.

After parturition Boris took my son and me to the dacha settlement on the outskirts of Vilnius, where we rented a small dacha. The three of us lived there. Sometimes Boris went to the city to his parents and brought food. He tried not to walk around in the streets fearing arrest. We didn't know what was ahead of us. We were awaiting a possible arrest or exile. I had very severe mastitis. Boris took me to the Jewish hospital, which was still functioning, where I was operated on. After that I had to go there every other day to change bandages. I couldn't breastfeed my son and we started buying cow milk for our boy.

It was the second half of June. There was a military airport not far from our settlement. Early Sunday morning I walked out on the balcony and saw the smoke coming from both sides of the airport. It was on fire. The Great Patriotic War had started. My husband went to the city. There was panic. Many people, mostly Komsomol members 18 and Communists were trying to leave the city. On 22nd June in the evening the last train left the Vilnius train station. My husband and I didn't bring up the issue of escaping from the town. First, we weren't connected with the Soviet regime, and secondly, at that time I didn't know that Fascists exterminated Jews. Besides, our small baby and my illness made it impossible for us to leave.

On 23rd June Fascist troops entered Vilnius. In a couple of hours they appeared in our settlement. First, things were calm. We got cards allowing us to get some products: grain and bread. Boris went to the city to get the products by cards. I went with him as well, when my bandages were to be changed in the hospital. There were rumors among the Lithuanian and Polish population that Jews were killed by the Germans. I even heard our landlady discussing it with her friends. She still sold me milk and vegetables for the baby, but she looked at me with suspicion.

Actions had already commenced in the city. Each day Fascists hung up posters with rules restricting the rights and life of the population of the city. Jews had even less rights than anybody else. There was an order stating that everybody ought to give away their radios. There was a curfew. Jews were more restricted in their movements. They were allowed to walk only on the roadway. Jews weren't allowed to step on the pavement. We weren't allowed to go to restaurants and cafes. There were two or three special small stores for the Jews. Now we had signs, yellow stars, the forms of those differential signs was frequently changed and we were supposed to do it in time. If any rule was violated, people were shot.

There were policemen 19 in the street, they were grabbing people, mostly men, and taking them to prison. Then they sent them to Paneriai [Ponary] 20, a suburb of Vilnius at that time. First, the inhabitants of Vilnius thought that there was a kind of camp. Then it became known that some unwanted people were shot there such as Communists, Komsomol members, and Jews in the first place. I was really worried when Boris went to the city to see his parents and exchange things for products on the market. It was calmer in our settlement. I can say that until mid-September I didn't truly feel the horror of Fascism.

In late August Lithuanians and Poles, who lived in the central streets of the city: Strashuna, Rudnitskaya and Mesino were forced out of their apartments and told to move to other houses. The ghetto was established here in the downtown area. In early September Vilnius Jews were taken here. In a couple of days policemen came to our settlement in several carts and told us to leave with them. There were five or six Jewish families in the settlement. All of us were loaded on the carts. We weren't allowed to take any things. I held my son in one hand, and a bottle of milk in the other – it was the only thing I could take with me. We were brought to the ghetto. We were lucky, as many Jews were sent straight to Paneriai. Besides, we were taken to the large, and not to the small ghetto, [two ghettos were established in Vilnius – a big and a small one, with the center in Sticle Street], as the small ghetto existed for no longer than two months – in late October 1941 all dwellers of this ghetto were sent to Paneriai.

In the ghetto I stayed with my friend who used to live on Rudnitskaya Street, 13. Unfortunately I don't remember her last name. The Brantsovskiy family lived close by. I wanted to call on them, but they had too many people. Nobody asked for permission of the owners. People just came in, if there was room in the apartment, and stayed there. My friend was very happy to see me. We settled in the room. There were 25 people beside us. All of us slept on the floor, using our clothes instead of pillows. My boy was crying. He was dirty and hungry. At night German policemen came in the room with torches and looked at the faces of the sleeping people. If they didn't like somebody, they took them to Paneriai. Once such an action took place at daytime. My son and I had managed to hide in some larder and were waiting while the Fascists were taking children. I was covering my baby's mouth for him not to burst out crying. Those who didn't manage to hide on that day were shot. Gradually there were less people in the room. Some of them were taken to Paneriai; others found a calmer and more comfortable lodging.

Boris's parents, his elder brother with his wife and two-year-old daughter lived on Strashuna Street in the ghetto. We moved in with them. The house wasn't heated and children got a cold right away. Velvl had pneumonia. Then Boris and his father made an oven, with a chimney through the window. The child got better. I still can't comprehend how. Soon Boris's brother and his wife decided to leave the ghetto and get to the Belarusian town Ashmyany. Their pals lived there. They left their girl Sofochka with us, hoping to take her with them after they had settled. They were caught in the middle of a horrible pogrom in Ashmyany and perished. Their girl stayed with us. Now I had two children.

Boris went to work. First, he worked with the railroad, then at some construction site. His father also worked at some plant. They tied up some little bags to their clothes and brought some food home: a piece of bread, a couple of potatoes, a carrot for the baby. The hardest thing was to feed the children. We got some bread and grain by food cards. We cooked porridge for the kids. There was no fat, not a single piece of meat or butter. Children were feeble and apathetic. My baby was

crying. His tummy hurt because of the unusual food and hunger.

There was a Judenrat 21 in the ghetto, consisting of respectable and rich Jews. There were several departments in the Judenrat: one of them allocated work, another one, communal, provided lodging and healthcare – there was even a small hospital in the ghetto – there was a provision department and even a culture department. We knew that it was better not to go to the hospital as its patients were sent to Paneriai right away. In 1942 there was an action, during which all patients and personnel of the hospital were shot.

I knew hardly anything about the things taking place in the ghetto. I was constantly staying in with my kids. Only once a week I went to the workshop to take work to be done at home: darn socks, mittens, mend clothes. My husband treated me like a child and didn't tell me about things so as not to upset me. Boris got a working certificate, a yellow-colored paper. He wrote in his relatives on it: his mother, father, me and both children. At that time we took my aunt Manya to our place. She was by herself. Her son Israel had died during one of the first actions. Boris said that Aunt Manya was also his close relative. A couple of months later Manya didn't return after one of the actions. It turned out that she was taken to Auschwitz.

Once, an order was announced, saying that it was necessary for people to appear at the Judenrat with IDs. It was one of the most horrible days in the ghetto. It was raining cats and dogs. People were outside in the yard of the Judenrat. There were two small parks there. People with yellow certificates were sent in one park and those with white ones, issued for elderly and non-working were sent to another park. People were lamenting and sobbing. Those who had white certificates were sent to Paneriai. Hitler soldiers and policemen broke up families: senile people and children were sent to face death. I stood holding my baby all day long. We were lucky: we were still young and could serve as working force for the Reich. The cry of those wretched is still in my heart. Then in a while Boris told me that he would serve in the police. He didn't explain anything to me, just told me this phrase: 'I have to do what I have to do'. It was in 1942.

It is difficult to describe our life in the ghetto, to speak of the atrocities committed by the Fascists, and our constant daunting fear of imminent execution. A human being can get used to anything and it seemed to me then that we couldn't have a different life. People tried to make their lives better. Two surreptitious schools were opened in the ghetto, where children were taught. There was a Jewish library with a pretty good selection of books. Even an amateur theater was organized. Here wonderful unforgettable plays by Sholem Aleichem 22 and other playwrights were staged. The strangest thing was that even Hitler's soldiers attended those performances at leisure. They sympathized with the characters and even cried, watching the suffering. It seemed that humanity was not alien to them, but they forgot human feelings when they had to fulfill the orders of their commander.

There was an amateur choir in the ghetto and sometimes I attended its rehearsals. Some of the ghetto youth thought it to be indecent to attend such amusements as theater and choir. They hung flyers with slogans such as 'People do not sing at the cemetery' etc. I was optimistic. I thought that all means were justified for people to feel whole and get at least some sort of pleasure out of life.

My husband was an active member of an underground organization, founded in ghetto. He kept it secret from me and I got to know that much later. In January 1942 a partisan organization was founded and led by Itskhak Vitenberg. It consisted of Communists, Zionists, Bundists 23 and people

who used to be apolitical before war –all of them having been united to face one common enemy: Fascism. Boris and his friend Beitar Glazman also joined the organization. From the very beginning, the members of the underground had a discussion initiated by Vitenberg, who thought it necessary to organize a struggle against the occupants in the ghetto, but some people including Boris were against it. They reckoned that some people should be taken to the forest and organized into a partisan squad there to struggle for the liberation of the people in the ghetto.

Boris became the founder of his own underground organization, whose main task was to take youth to the forest, teach them how to use weapons and only after that start fighting the Fascists. He even enlisted people who served in the police, and an underground unit was founded there as well. The first thing to do was to get weapons. The members of the organization bought them from corrupt Lithuanian policemen and they somehow managed to bring them into the ghetto. The group, led by Boris, was involved in making connections out of the bounds of the ghetto and they found messengers who promised to take people to the forest. The rumors were spread in the ghetto regarding groups of people heading to the forest. Then the chief ghetto police officer Gensas issued an order, stating that family members of those who left the ghetto for partisans in the forest would be taken to Paneriai and shot the next day. I knew about that order, but I thought it didn't refer to me as I wasn't aware of my husband's activity yet.

On 6th April 1943 Boris came home from work in the evening and said that he would go to the forest early in the morning. He told me no details, just said that he didn't have any other way out. He hoped that being in the forest he would be able to rescue everybody: me, the children and parents. Boris said that his people would come to me and give me further instructions. My husband didn't even say good-bye to the parents, just kissed me and the children – my niece Sofochka was like a daughter to us – in the morning and left. Twelve people left with him. They headed towards Belarus. Some people joined them on their way.

Somebody knocked on the door in the morning and took our entire family. We were taken to the ghetto prison on Strashuna Street. We were thrown in one cell and told that by the evening we would be taken to Paneriai and done away with. I knew that every day at 11.30pm the unwanted were taken there. I will never forget that dreadful day in jail. There were a lot of people apart from us: those who brought products to the ghetto, tried to get there over the fence or deliberately sabotaged work. But the case of our family was unique. Boris's parents took some food from home, a bottle with porridge for the children. The children were crying. There was a terrible stench in the cell. We weren't taken to the toilet and we had to do everything in the cell. My thoughts were focused only on the coming night and coming death, which would mean an end to our ordeal.

The evening was even more difficult. The children were sleepy, but we decided not to let them sleep, as they would be told to leave soon. I was oblivious for a moment. I had a dream that I was standing on the brink of a trench for the executed people. Suddenly the door opened: 'Friedmans, step out!' We went outside. It was a cold April and I tried to swathe children in my jacket. We weren't taken to the exit, wherefrom people were sent to Paneriai, but pushed along the street. We came to the yard at Strashuna, 1, were taken to the basement and told to sit still.

In the morning policemen came. They were members of the underground cell, my husband's brothers-in-arms, who saved us. I think and I always say openly that Gensas had something to do with that. His role was terrible and tragic. Yes, he fulfilled the orders of the Fascists. If somebody

had been in his place, he wouldn't have acted differently. I don't know how, but Gensas knew that his policemen hadn't taken us to the execution place, but rescued us. I don't think he had rescued only our family. We stayed in that basement for about ten days. Guys regularly brought us food, water and some things for the kids. When they forgot about Boris's escape and new problems emerged in the ghetto, we were taken back home. Nobody asked us anything and we started living without Boris.

No news was coming from Boris. The relatives of twelve other people who left with him didn't know anything either. I had no idea what to do and whom to address, without knowing who was a friend and who was an enemy. Boris's father went to work again. His mother and I stayed with the children. We lived like that for three months. Vitenberg died in July. It was proof that Boris was right. The struggle in the ghetto was doomed. As a result they failed. Fascists found out about the underground. Vitenberg was in hiding. He surrendered as Fascists threatened to exterminate the ghetto.

In early September the guys came to get me. They took me to Oshmyanskaya Street, where the ghetto headquarters were located on small premises. They were brothers-in-arms and friends of Boris, who being on the free side, kept on getting people out of the ghetto. That time he asked to take me and I was supposed to give my consent. The first question I asked was whether I could take my children with me. I was told that I couldn't, moreover I wouldn't even have a chance to say good-bye to them or to Boris' parents – I had to leave at once. I was told that the underground people were informed that ghettoes would be exterminated in a couple of days and being on the free side I might be able to liberate my children. If I was to remain in the ghetto, I would die with them for sure.

I had to face a dreadful dilemma: to die with the children or to leave and try to rescue them. I gave my consent to leave the ghetto. It got dark in a couple of hours. Within that time I managed to get in touch with Mikhail Brantsovskiy and his fellows. They were also offered to leave with me. In the evening we left the ghetto. We were easily let out the gate: the policemen who were on duty by the entrance of the ghetto were bribed. We headed to Vilnius, picturing ourselves as carefree company on the spree. We spoke Polish, laughed and even made cow eyes at the policemen, who guarded the bridge across the Neman River. I walked with the guys, feeling void and despondent. It was dark when we left the city. We had been walking for a couple of hours and were caught in an ambush on our way. The guys were shooting and I was slightly wounded in the leg. They bandaged me and we moved on. We were in the forest by the morning.

Here we met two people, who had left earlier. From them I found out about my husband's death. The group he left the ghetto with was sent to Western Ukraine. They had an unequal fight and perished. I felt terrible. I don't remember how my first days in the forest went by. Within a day I lost everybody: my husband, whom I hoped to see, my children – my own son and my niece, my parents-in-law. I was on the verge of dystrophy. Being rather tall I weighed only 45 kilograms. In a couple of days people came from the ghetto and said that all its dwellers were taken to Paneriai in trucks. I understood that my children were dead.

Soon Lithuanians and Poles joined us. They were Komsomol members, who ran away from adjacent villages and loitered in the woods. Mikhail Brantsovskiy and his comrades decided to go further to look for Jews in order to form a Jewish partisan squad with joint efforts. I was too emaciated to go

anywhere, both from the moral and physical standpoint. My wounded leg was still hurting.

A partisan squad was being formed from our group as well. It was not Jewish, but international. I and another Jew, Chuzhaya, were left in the squad. We started doing all kind of accommodation work: cooking, laundry and other necessary things. Soon a large squad, consisting of 150 people was formed from our group. It was called ‘For the Motherland.’ Ushakov was the commander of the squad and the team leader was Afonin. Communication with unoccupied territory was arranged. Planes came to us dropping weapons, food products, medicine. Doctors and surgeons were sent to the squad. The guys left for the rail track fight. I didn’t take part in that, I was to take care of the kitchen. Then a hospital was organized in the squad and I started working there, assisting nurses and doctors. They mostly treated me very well.

Of course, anti-Semites were everywhere, even in the squad. There were times when I was insulted for being a Jew. The commander always stood up for me. He treated me like his own daughter. He always made sure that I was fed better. If he got a chicken or meat, he personally went to the kitchen and told them to feed Chasia. I was young, so being out in the fresh air and eating the squad’s food, I put on weight.

In early spring 1944 thirteen guys came to the squad. They were students of the Leningrad Institute of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. They had been captured and taken to Germany as POWs. On the way via Lithuanian territory the guys managed to escape. They were lucky to meet good people who told them how to get to our squad. I was sympathetic with them – hungry and gaunt – resembling me, when I had first come to the forest. In the evening, when we were sitting by the fire, the guys told us about themselves. One of them, tall and stately, looked at me and said, ‘That lady will be my wife!’ His name was Mikhail Spanerflig, he was two or three years older than me. He was from Vinnitsa [today Ukraine]. We were making jests, remembering prewar life, singing Soviet songs, which I knew by heart, as I could hardly speak Russian. Within a couple of months I started speaking pretty good Russian. The next day the guys were sent to another squad, where a group of shot-firers was formed.

In summer 1944 the Soviet Army was approaching Lithuania. We were looking forward to the liberation. Though I didn’t take part in battles, I empathized with the guys who were leaving for military operations. Not all of them came back. I was especially sorry for those whom I saw on the eve of their death. On the night of 12th July loudspeakers were turned on all of a sudden and we heard the address of the commander to the squads of Lithuania – all partisan squads were to get access to roads to Vilnius. We couldn’t believe that we met that day.

Early in the morning on 12th July we took off and on the 13th we stood near Vilnius. There we met all the partisan squads, acting on the territory of Lithuania. I saw Mikhail Brantsovskiy. He introduced me to his fiancée Fanya. It turned out that Misha had been looking for me for two days. In a moment I saw Mikhail Spanerflig. We chatted and left. Then all partisan squads followed the Soviet Army to my favorite city: Vilnius. How dilapidated and ramshackle it was! We marched along Pilimo Street and reached Chernyakhovskiy Square. In the evening there were fireworks in honor of the liberation of the capital of Lithuania. I can’t put in words what I felt at that moment: it was happiness, joy along with the bitterness of loss.

After the War

Our squad was disbanded. Lithuanians and Poles headed to their villages and some guys were sent to the front. A couple of people, who had no place to go, including me, took one of the unoccupied houses. In about three days I bumped into my uncle Mulya in the street. I was so happy to meet someone from my kin. Uncle said that he and his family were in a separate camp, located on Subbot Street in Vilnius, not far from the ghetto. Uncle was lucky to meet a German, who was not a Fascist in his heart. He warned Uncle about the liquidation of the camp and ghetto, so Mulya and his family were helped by his Polish friend and managed to leave the city. The Pole sheltered Uncle Mulya's family and they lived to see the liberation. Uncle Mulya took me in and I moved to the apartment, taken by his family. Aunt Zhenya and Aesya were happy to see me. I told them what I had to go through, how Boris perished.

I still had a forlorn hope that my children were rescued and I started asking people, who were living not far from the ghetto, but nobody saw my Velvl and Sofia. I didn't lose hope and decided that I would go from one village to another and look for people, who survived the ghetto – maybe they would know something about my kids. I also didn't know anything about my parents and brother, and I hoped to find out about them as well.

In ten days or so I bumped into Mikhail Spanerflig in the street. We were glad to see each other. One word after another and we remembered the moments when he came to the squad and how we met. Mikhail said that he and the other guys with higher education were allocated to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. He lived at his pal's place with friends. He also added that he used a dinner table instead of a bed. Then the bombing started and we went down to the air raid shelter.

Then I invited Mikhail to our place. On that day we had a wonderful lunch: Uncle got potatoes somewhere. We were sitting at the table and Mikhail was telling us about himself. He was from Vinnitsa. His parents and younger brother stayed there and Mikhail had no idea what happened to them. My relatives liked him a lot. He stayed late. The curfew began at 10pm and Mikhail couldn't go home. Uncle talked him into staying and Mikhail spent the night in a dark unoccupied room. In the morning Mikhail left and we didn't see each other for a while. In about two weeks Mikhail came to us with presents. He got a food ration 24. We started seeing each other and soon fell in love. It was true love, which I hadn't known before.

In winter 1945 my brother Jeshua found us in Vilnius. He told me about Father's dreadful death during one of the first actions in Dyatlovo – the Fascists shot the Jewish intelligentsia of the town. In 1942 my mother died from typhus in the ghetto. Grandfather Aron and Grandmother Chaya were shot on Synagogue Square in 1942. My brother managed to leave the ghetto and escape to the forest. He was in one of the partisan squads. All of us celebrated Victory Day, rejoicing for the survivors and commemorating our perished relatives and friends.

At that time the campaign on immigration of former Polish citizens to Poland commenced. Any citizen of Lithuania, who had lived on the territory of Poland before the war, was entitled to immigrate to Poland, no matter what nationality he had. There were trains at the railway station. The trip was free of charge. My relatives – Uncle Mulya, his family and my brother decided to leave. They hoped to get to either Israel or USA via Poland. My relatives were convincing me to leave with them, but I couldn't make such a decision. On the one hand, I was attracted by the idea of going to Israel. I had dreamt of Palestine all my life. On the other hand I hoped to find out about my son.

Besides, I loved Mikhail Spanerflig. And Mikhail decided to live in Vilnius. In the quest for his parents he got to know that they had died in Vinnitsa ghetto, and his brother either was killed in action or reported missing. Mikhail and I weren't that close, but I couldn't envisage my life without him. In August 1945, when my relatives decided to leave, Mikhail was in Moscow. At that time he was an excellent athlete and took part in the parade of athletes in Moscow. I saw off my family and remained by myself in Vilnius.

A couple of days later Mikhail came back from Moscow. He came to our apartment at once. It was left to me by Uncle Mulya. In a couple of days we were evicted. It turned out that we, the first who came to the liberated city abundant in empty apartments and houses, were left without lodging. One of my husband's colleagues was transferred to Siauliai [a town 230 km north-west of Vilnius] and Mikhail bought his apartment with a liter of vodka. It was a cold and damp two-room apartment in the downtown area. We were so happy there.

In November 1945 we registered our marriage in the marriage registration office of our district. We were practically indigent. I had a skirt, a jacket and an old coat. My husband had one pair of uniform pants. Once Mikhail lent them to his friend who was going dancing, and he squandered them on drink. Then Mikhail didn't have anything to put on in the morning. I don't remember how we tackled that problem. One thing really darkened our happiness: I understood that my little son had died. I had to start a new life, bear children and live with the man I loved. For some time my periods stopped, which was common for most women in the ghetto. It happened in 1942. Only in late 1946 I gave birth to a son. I called him Velvl after my deceased son.

Sorrow was on my doorway all the time. When my son was ten months, he was afflicted with meningitis. Almost all children died in the hospital where he was treated. Only Velvl and one other boy survived. Our son became really ill. He couldn't walk for a long time and started talking at the age of four. My son couldn't study either; he could hardly finish elementary school. We understood that he had to bear that cross. We decided to take a risk, and in 1954 I gave birth to a girl. We named her Sofia after my adopted little daughter, who perished in the ghetto. The girl was normal and made us happy. She was healthy and developed.

Our life was getting better. My husband was promoted at work. In spite of the fact that my husband had a rather high position – head of the district militia department – he wasn't touched by all that trouble 25, which Jews had in the late 1940s, early 1950s. Many friends of my husband, Jews, who were partisans, were fired and even arrested. My husband survived this ordeal. He didn't even want to join the Party, though he was insistently recommended. Nevertheless he was promoted to a rather high rank: lieutenant colonel. In the early 1960s he got a good two-room apartment. Both of us were worried when Israel was at war: the Six-Day-War 26. We didn't even think of immigration as my husband was a true Soviet man, though he wasn't a member of the Communist Party.

Right after the war I worked as an accountant in the communications department. Then Mikhail Brantsovskiy, who was a chief engineer at a shoe factory, offered me a job. First, I was a rate setter, then I worked for the planning department. Later I finished courses, while working at the factory. I was promoted to chief of the Human Resources and salary department. I was very actively involved in trade-union work, amateur performances, singing in the choir, no matter what position I had.

Mikhail was a wonderful sportsman. He was among the five best swimmers and often went on competition. He was so handsome. He looked so good in his uniform. When we were strolling, or went to the theater or cinema, people were looking back, admiring us. Our life was pretty good. A housekeeper took care of the housework. I didn't have to do the chores. We didn't live from check to check. My husband and I made pretty good money. In the summer we went on vacation to the seaside in the Crimea and the Caucasus. We had a lot of friends, but the most loyal were our bosom friends: Mikhail and Fanya Brantsovskiy. We often spent time together on the weekends, went for a picnic or to the beach.

September 1967 was really warm. On Sunday the 10th, we agreed to go to the beach with our friends. Mikhail kept saying that his leg was hurting, but being naturally healthy he didn't want to see a doctor. Early in the morning my husband went to get the paper and when he came back he said that it was difficult for him to breathe. I was even angry with him, as I wanted to sleep a little bit. He lay down and asked me to call a doctor. I called the ambulance and ran to my neighbor, a military doctor. I also called our friend, a medicine professor. The ambulance came and the doctors gave him some injections and left. Mikhail fell asleep. When the professor examined him, he took me to the drawing-room and said: 'Chasia, Misha is dead!' He started explaining to me something about thrombus and thrombosis of the pulmonary artery. I didn't understand how people could die like that. I started hugging him and kissing his open and alive-looking eyes. I couldn't believe that he was dead – death couldn't be like that – it couldn't and had no right to interfere in and ruin my life. I don't remember how I spent the first days after his death. The Brantsovskiys were constantly by me, and Mikhail Brantovskiy stayed with me at nights. Mikhail was buried with honors, at a military cemetery.

I remained on my own with two children and 800 rubles in the saving bank – it was the only thing we had. We had neither a car nor a dacha. For about a month I was beside myself. My friends came over and told me something, even fed the children. So…life is life. I was to be a mother and a father to my children. I devoted my entire life to them. We were rather well-off. I got benefits for the children. I was a very young and beautiful woman, but I didn't want to look at men. I didn't want to take care of my life and I had no time for it. I didn't go to the theater or cinema. My friends were my joy. I can say from the bottom of my heart that the Brantsovskiys were like kin, sharing my joys and troubles. Mikhail helped my daughter enter the institute. My son studied in the evening department for a while, then did all kinds of odd jobs.

Sofia graduated from the Economics Department of the university. My children simultaneously grew up and found partners. I had to exchange my apartment. Mikhail helped out. So, my children got their own apartments, and I stayed in my one-room apartment. My children weren't lucky in their private life. Velvl married a Jewish girl, Evgenia. She was from Moldova. First, things were pretty good. They had a daughter, Marina. But…only a mother needs a sick man. Evgenia divorced Velvl and left for Israel with her daughter. It turned out that my son was deprived of his apartment. Now he lives with me in a one-room apartment and sleeps on the folding bed in the kitchen. His family keeps in touch with us. My daughter-in-law and granddaughter often write letters to us.

Sofia married a guy named Katz. They had a son, named Mikhail after his grandfather, and Sofia tried to save a family like any other woman would do. So, when her husband talked her into leaving for the USA, she left with him in 1980, hoping that common problems would make the family stronger. Only good and friendly families grow stronger. Sofia divorced her husband and stayed in

America with her son. My relatives helped her a lot at first. By that time Uncle Mulya had become rather rich, even according to American standards, and my cousin Aesya was also married to a rather well-off guy. Sofia found a job and proved herself to be a gifted person. The director of the department Sofia worked for made Sofia her successor when she retired. Now Sofia is the director of the department. She earns good money and even has her own house. I visited my daughter only once in 1989, when Sofia wasn't rich. Now she helps me a little bit. Almost every year she comes to Vilnius. My grandson Mikhail is married. His wife is Greek. My great-grandson's name is Teile.

In the mid-1960s Aunt Maria looked for me. Luckily she survived Auschwitz. She had lived in Poland for a couple of years. Then she moved to Israel. There she got married for the second time and gave birth to two sons. Aunt Manya died in the late 1980s. I didn't manage come to her for a visit and I didn't know her sons.

In 1945 my brother Jeshua reached Cyprus, where he was in a replacement depot. Then he served in the Israeli army, took part in the Six-Day-War. When his military service was over, he started his business. He is involved in procurement of aerodromes. My brother lived a long life with his wife. She passed away a couple of years ago. Jeshua has two children: son Abi and daughter Doris. My brother helped me with money. He still sometimes sends me money with people who come here for a visit. When I visited him in Israel, he gave me a cold shoulder. I still can't comprehend why he was so cold with me. Maybe he didn't have time to care for me. I left home rather early, when he was only seven.

Now I live with my sick son. I don't want to move to my daughter in the USA as I am independent. I want to live in my country. I could have lived in Israel and I even dreamt of it in my childhood, but nobody invites me there. My husband and I were truly Soviet people, but still I understood all the negative things brought by the Soviet regime to Lithuania. That is why I gladly accepted all those events, which lead to the independence of Lithuania 27, as I remembered the prewar life in independent Lithuania. I hope our country would grow stronger and become a flourishing state, where everybody would feel themselves as a personality.

In the early 1990s Mikhail Brantsovskiy died, and Fanya became a widow as well. When the Jewish community was founded, Fanya and I were some of the first who came there. We suggested working there as volunteers. I wanted to work for the department of the veterans of war, and Fanya for the department of ghetto prisoners. Both of us are former ghetto prisoners and veterans of war. I have a medal for participation in the partisan squad 28. Fanya and I worked a lot, went from house to house, arranged get-togethers for veterans, published their stories for everybody to find out that Jews had struggled as well as other people of other nationalities.

And now the community means a lot to me. I go to work every other a day and I feel an incentive. I take care of my looks and try not to give in to illnesses. I also brought my son to the community: he takes lunches to those old people who can't come and get lunch. Fanya and I are very much respected. We are honored members of the community. We are often invited to take the floor on the occasion of holidays and anniversary events. Fanya and I are bosom friends. We had a lot in common when we were young: ghetto, partisan squad and also the post-war life. Now we see our calling in the Jewish community. I am not a religious person and I am not going to change, but I am happy to go back to Jewish traditions: celebrate Sabbath and Jewish holidays in the community, fast on Yom Kippur. It brings me closer to my Jewish roots.

Glossary:

1 Invasion of Poland

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2 Tsimes

Stew made usually of carrots, parsnips, or plums with potatoes.

3 Tarbut schools

Elementary, secondary and technical schools maintained by the Hebrew educational and cultural organization called Tarbut. Most Eastern European countries had such schools between the two world wars but there were especially many in Poland. The language of instruction was Hebrew and the education was Zionist oriented.

4 Common name

Russified or Russian first names used by Jews in everyday life and adopted in official documents. The Russification of first names was one of the manifestations of the assimilation of Russian Jews at the turn of the 19th and 20th century. In some cases only the spelling and pronunciation of Jewish names was russified (e.g. Isaac instead of Yitskhak; Boris instead of Borukh), while in other cases traditional Jewish names were replaced by similarly sounding Russian names (e.g. Eugenia instead of Ghita; Yury instead of Yuda). When state anti-Semitism intensified in the USSR at the end of the 1940s, most Jewish parents stopped giving their children traditional Jewish names to avoid discrimination.

5 Warsaw Ghetto

A separate residential district for Jews in Warsaw created over several months in 1940. On 16th November 1940 138,000 people were enclosed behind its walls. Over the following months the population of the ghetto increased as more people were relocated from the small towns surrounding the city. By March 1941 445,000 people were living in the ghetto. Subsequently, the number of the ghetto's inhabitants began to fall sharply as a result of disease, hunger, deportation, persecution and liquidation. The ghetto was also systematically reduced in size. The internal

administrative body was the Jewish Council (Judenrat). The Warsaw ghetto ceased to exist on 15th May 1943, when the Germans pronounced the failure of the uprising, staged by the Jewish soldiers, and razed the area to the ground.

6 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.

7 Vilnius Ghetto

95 percent of the estimated 265,000 Lithuanian Jews (254,000 people) were murdered during the Nazi occupation; no other communities were so comprehensively destroyed during WWII. Vilnius was occupied by the Germans on 26th June 1941 and two ghettos were built in the city afterwards, separated by Niemiecka Street, which lay outside both of them. On 6th September all Jews were taken to the ghettoes, at first randomly to either Ghetto 1 or Ghetto 2. During September they were continuously slaughtered by Einsatzkommando units. Later craftsmen were moved to Ghetto 1 with their families and all others to Ghetto 2. During the 'Yom Kippur Action' on 1st October 3,000 Jews were killed. In three additional actions in October the entire Ghetto 2 was liquidated and later another 9,000 of the survivors were killed. In late 1941 the official population of the ghetto was 12,000 people and it rose to 20,000 by 1943 as a result of further transports. In August 1943 over 7,000 people were sent to various labor camps in Lithuania and Estonia. The Vilnius ghetto was liquidated under the supervision of Bruno Kittel on 23rd and 24th September 1943. On Rossa Square a selection took place: those able to work were sent to labor camps in Latvia and Estonia and the rest to different death camps in Poland. By 25th September 1943 only 2,000 Jews officially remained in Vilnius in small labor camps and more than 1,000 were hiding outside and were gradually hunted down. Those permitted to live continued to work at the Kailis and HKP factories until 2nd June 1944 when 1,800 of them were shot and less than 200 remained in hiding until the Red Army liberated Vilnius on 13th July 1944.

8 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 goals 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.

9 Jabotinsky, Vladimir (1880-1940)

Founder and leader of the Revisionist Zionist movement; soldier, orator and a prolific author writing in Hebrew, Russian, and English. During World War I he established and served as an officer in the Jewish Legion, which fought in the British army for the liberation of the Land of Israel from Turkish rule. He was a member of the Board of Directors of the Keren Hayesod, the financial arm of the World Zionist Organization, founded in London in 1920, and was later elected to the Zionist Executive. He resigned in 1923 in protest over CChaim Weizmann's pro-British policy and founded the Revisionist Zionist movement and the Betar youth movement two years later. Jabotinsky also founded the ETZEL (National Military Organization) during the 1936-39 Arab rebellion in Palestine.

10 Bialik, CChaim Nachman

(1873-1934): One of the greatest Hebrew poets. He was also an essayist, writer, translator and editor. Born in Rady, Volhynia, Ukraine, he received a traditional education in cheder and yeshivah. His first collection of poetry appeared in 1901 in Warsaw. He established a Hebrew publishing house in Odessa, where he lived but after the Revolution of 1917 Bialik's activity for Hebrew culture was viewed by the communist authorities with suspicion and the publishing house was closed. In 1921 Bialik emigrated to Germany and in 1924 to Palestine where he became a celebrated literary figure. Bialik's poems occupy an important place in modern Israeli culture and education.

11 Dacha

country house, consisting of small huts and little plots of lands. The Soviet authorities came to the decision to allow this activity to the Soviet people to support themselves. The majority of urban citizens grow vegetables and fruit in their small gardens to make preserves for winter.

12 Betar

Brith Trumpledor (Hebrew) meaning Trumpledor Society; right-wing Revisionist Jewish youth movement. It was founded in 1923 in Riga by Vladimir Jabotinsky, in memory of J. Trumpledor, one of the first fighters to be killed in Palestine, and the fortress Betar, which was heroically defended for many months during the Bar Kohba uprising. Its aim was to propagate the program of the revisionists and prepare young people to fight and live in Palestine. It organized emigration through both legal and illegal channels. It was a paramilitary organization; its members wore uniforms. They supported the idea to create a Jewish legion in order to liberate Palestine. From 1936-39 the popularity of Betar diminished. During WWII many of its members formed guerrilla groups.

13 Maccabi World Union

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

Africa, etc.

14 Invasion of Poland

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15 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 secrete 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). While most of the occupied 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 with the return of Vilnius, regarded as an integral part of the country by most Lithuanians.

16 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.

17 Deportations from the Baltics (1940-1953)

After the Soviet Union occupied the three Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) in June 1940 as a part of establishing the Soviet system, mass deportation of the local population begun. The victims of these were mainly but not exclusively those unwanted by the regime: the local bourgeousie and the previously politically active strata. Deportations to remote parts of the Soviet Union were going on countinously 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 Sovet 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.

18 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.

19 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.

20 Ponary

Forest near Vilnius that became the killing field of most Vilnius Jews. The victims were shot to death by the SS and the German police assisted by Lithuanian collaborators. Just in September-October 1941 over 12,000 Jews from Vilnius and the vicinity were killed there. In total 70,000 to 100,000 people, the majority of them Jews, fall victim of Ponary.

21 Judenrat

Jewish councils appointed by German occupying authorities to carry out Nazi orders in the Jewish communities of occupied Europe. After the establishment of the ghettos they were responsible for everything that happened within them. They controlled all institutions operating in the ghettos, the police, the employment agency, food supplies, housing, health, social work, education, religion, etc. Germans also made them responsible for selecting people for the work camps, and, in the end, choosing those to be sent to camps that were in reality death camps. It is hard to judge their actions due to the abnormal circumstances. Some believe they betrayed Jews by obeying orders, and others think they were trying to gain time and save as many people as possible.

22 Sholem Aleichem (pen name of Shalom Rabinovich (1859-1916)

Yiddish author and humorist, a prolific writer of novels, stories, feuilletons, critical reviews, and poem in Yiddish, Hebrew and Russian. He also contributed regularly to Yiddish dailies and weeklies. In his writings he described the life of Jews in Russia, creating a gallery of bright characters. His creative work is an alloy of humor and lyricism, accurate psychological and details of everyday life. He founded a literary Yiddish annual called Di Yidishe Folksbibliotek (The Popular Jewish Library), with which he wanted to raise the despised Yiddish literature from its mean status and at the same time to fight authors of trash literature, who dragged Yiddish literature to the lowest popular level. The first volume was a turning point in the history of modern Yiddish literature. Sholem Aleichem died in New York in 1916. His popularity increased beyond the Yiddish-speaking public after his death. Some of his writings have been translated into most European languages and his plays and dramatic versions of his stories have been performed in many countries. The dramatic version of Tevye the milkman became an international hit as a musical (Fiddler on the Roof) in the 1960s.

23 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 Menshevist position. After the Revolution of 1917 the organization split: one part was anti-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.

24 Card system

The food card system regulating the distribution of food and industrial products was introduced in the USSR in 1929 due to extreme deficit of consumer goods and food. The system was cancelled in 1931. In 1941, food cards were reintroduced to keep records, distribute and regulate food supplies to the population. The card system covered main food products such as bread, meat, oil, sugar, salt, cereals, etc. The rations varied depending on which social group one belonged to, and what kind of work one did. Workers in the heavy industry and defense enterprises received a daily ration of 800 g (miners - 1 kg) of bread per person; workers in other industries 600 g. Non-manual workers received 400 or 500 g based on the significance of their enterprise, and children 400 g. However, the card system only covered industrial workers and residents of towns while villagers never had any provisions of this kind. The card system was abolished in 1947.

25 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’.

26 Six-Day-War

The first strikes of the Six-Day-War happened on 5th June 1967 by the Israeli Air Force. The entire war only lasted 132 hours and 30 minutes. The fighting on the Egyptian side only lasted four days, while fighting on the Jordanian side lasted three. Despite the short length of the war, this was one of the most dramatic and devastating wars ever fought between Israel and all of the Arab nations. This war resulted in a depression that lasted for many years after it ended. The Six-Day-War increased tension between the Arab nations and the Western World because of the change in mentalities and political orientations of the Arab nations.

27 Reestablishment of the Lithuanian Republic

On 11th March 1990 the Lithuanian State Assembly declared Lithuania an independent republic. The Soviet leadership in Moscow refused to acknowledge the independence of Lithuania and initiated an economic blockade on the country. At the referendum held in February 1991, over 90 percent of the participants (turn out was 84 percent) voted for independence. The western world finally recognized Lithuanian independence and so did the USSR on 6th September 1991. On 17th September 1991 Lithuania joined the United Nations.

28 Medal ‘To Partisan of the Great Patriotic War’

Established on 2nd February 1943, the first class was awarded to partisans, commanders of partisan detachments, and partisan movement organizers for personal feats of courage and valor. Approximately 57,000 were issued. 2nd Class was awarded to partisans, commanders of partisan detachments, and partisan movement organizers for distinction in carrying out orders and assignments for higher echelons during the Great Patriotic War. Approximately 71,000 were issued. The medal was awarded to over 100 foreigners fighting in Soviet partisan units.