

Shahne Berznitskiy And His Brother Isroel Berznitskiy



Two brothers - soldiers: Isroel and I on our leave from the army. The photograph was taken in Veisiejai in 1937.

Since my adolescence I was a member of the Zionist organization Maccabi. I decided to get ready for repatriation in Palestine. Back in that time many young Jewish people left for Palestine to build the Israeli state. My brother Isroel shared my beliefs. He and I joined Hashomer Hatzair, which prepared young people for repatriation. My brother and I went to a small town called Ionava. A Jewish kibbutz was founded there. We stayed there for a year and a half. We learnt how to till the land and grow different grains, work on the farm and other practical work. I liked the way of life in the kibbutz. It was a commune. We received no money, but we lived together and had similar clothes and felt like a stalwart team. In 1936 my training was over and I was ready to repatriate to Palestine. I didn't manage to leave, as I was drafted into the Lithuanian army that year.

My service in the army was rather quiet. Anti-Semitism didn't reign in the army at that time, though it was gradually emerging under the influence of fascist organizations in Lithuania. In the army I joined an underground communist organization. Like many people I was attracted by the ideas of all-in-all equality, brotherhood, liberty and welfare, preached by the communists. We were involved in propaganda, told about life in the USSR, building socialism, wherein all nations were equal. At that time I knew nothing of repressions, arrests and politics in the Soviet Union.

In 1938 I was demobilized. I lived with my mother for a couple of weeks. Then I decided to move to a larger town. Jewish life in my native town seemed too insignificant for me. I went to work as a baker in Prienai.