

# Iosif Yudelevichus

Iosif Yudelevichus

Kaunas

Lithuania

Interviewer: Zhanna Litinskaya

Date of interview: October 2005

[My family background](#)

[Growing up](#)

[During the war](#)

[After the war](#)

[Glossary](#)

Iosif Yudelevichus lives in a beautiful antique house in the downtown Kaunas. I was met at the threshold by a handsome elderly man in house outfit and a bandana on his neck instead of a tie. The apartment was in chime with the looks of the host. It reflected his inner world. The apartment was spacious. There were high ceilings with stucco moulding. The furniture looked antique. It was likely to look better in the past. There was a lot of dust everywhere- it was palpable that there was no hostess. There were pictures, purchased by the host's father. Most of the pictures were landscapes painted by the host as he was fond of art. There were a lot of bells all over apartment- in the cupboard, on the bookshelves. They ranged from the tiniest and up to the big ones. The host had collected the bells for many years. There was a gorgeous curio set of dishes in the cupboard. It was felt that it had not been used for quite a long time as it was covered with dust. The host served tea in cups of different size and style. The host got ready for my visit. There were pictures and a drawn lineage tree on the table. Iosif is a good story-teller. He had a connate romanticism and the sense of humor. But still, I could feel that Iosif 'guarded' his life and inner world cautiously so that there would be no intrusion from the outside. At any rate, he delicately dodged from discussing his private life, letting me understand that I should not broach the subject.

## My family background

One of my distant relatives, who lives in Israel, had a goal to make our family tree. It took him many years and efforts. The maternal lineage made by him and sent to me does not say much. I knew just my grandparents, so many of the names mentioned in the lineage are not known to me. My paternal and maternal ancestors are from Latvian Jonava [about 80 km from Vilnius]. In late 19th century Jonava was a picturesque town being on the junction of two rivers-Nevis and Villia. It was a small town, inhabited mostly by Jews. My maternal grandfather Aba (he was called Avel in the family, so I used to hear that name oftener) Pagirskiy was born in 1866. Judging by the family tree, grandfather had a lot of siblings. But all of them most likely had died long before I was born. At any rate there is nothing I know about them.

Grandpa Avel owned a rather large house on one of the central Jonava streets. It was a solid log house, which could stand for centuries. Avel was a well-to-do merchant. He owned a large hardware store as hardware goods were in demand. Nails, horseshoes, fastenings, buckets and

other inventory were mostly purchased by peasants. The store was in a five-minute walk from the river. There was a warehouse in the yard of the store as well as big scales, on which peasants used to weigh cattle. It was also income-bearing for grandfather. Elderly Jew Avrumke worked with the scales. He also was slightly mistaken saying that the weight was less than the scales showed. Then perturbed peasants went to complain of him to grandpa and he tried to find out, who was right. Avrumke used to say that the cow had much to eat, so there was a lot of food in its stomach. The food would be released soon, therefore he considered that factor in the weighting. No matter how grandpa scolded Avrumke, he always did what he wanted. Apart from Avrumke other people worked for my father-some in the store and several in the warehouse.

Avel's wife, my grandmother Sarah Pagirskaya, nee Krasko was born in 1865. Sarah had sisters. I just know their names from family tree. I had not known them. Sarah was a rather educated woman. She could read and write in Yiddish and Russian. She spoke Polish. Her Lithuanian was not good though. Sarah ran the house as grandparents had servants. Grandmother was a tall, buxom, stately woman- a true beauty. She and grandfather had their own honored seats in the synagogue. Avel and Sarah were rather religious, trying to keep Jewish traditions. Neither grandmother nor grandpa covered their heads all the time. When they went to the synagogue, grandpa put a kippah on and grandmother wore a hat or a nicely tied kerchief. Grandpa had a modern beard- short and neat. Avel and Sarah often went abroad on vacation. As a rule they went to Karlovy Vary (at that time that resort was called Karlsbad) [1](#). Grandpa had problems with stomach. He was recommended by doctors to drink healing water every year. In 1935 Avel was operated on in Königsberg [2](#) -he had a carcinoma behind his ear, which looked like a big plum. It was a malignant tumor, so grandpa lived only for a year after operation. In 1936 he passed away.

After grandpa's death grandmother Sarah did not live in Jonava for a long time. She moved to Kaunas with her daughter's family. Here she bought a house for lease and lived on the rent fee paid by the tenants. She helped children and pampered her grandchildren. In 1941 grandmother did not manage to get evacuated and was imprisoned in Kaunas ghetto [3](#). During assortment within a big action in September 1941 she happened to be among the Jews, whose lives were spared. She probably was not willing to go through ordeal having anticipated inevitable death or for the reason of being very proud, she just waved her hand and went to the group of the people to be executed. She was taken to the forest along with other people and shot there. The house of Sarah and Avel and their store burnt down during the bombing in Jonava. It was a huge fire, after which only a cathedral and dilapidated synagogue were spared by miracle.

Sarah and Avel Pagirskiys had ten children. All of them got an excellent for those times education in lyceum. They were literate and cultured people. When children grew up, they were not religious, like their parents merely sticking to the traditions and marking Jewish holidays. I did not know two daughters -Hava and another one, whose name was unknown to me. They died infants. There were five daughters out of the eight who reached adulthood. The eldest was Masha, born in 1887. Masha married a Jew Reuben Leib Granevich. I do not know what he did for a living, but he was rather well-off. Reuben Leib died several years before the outbreak of Great Patriotic War [4](#). Masha, being single by that time, remained in the occupation. She had lived in Kaunas ghetto for three years and only in 1944 she was sent to Nazi concentration camp Stutthof [5](#) along with the group of Jewish women. My aunt died there not having lived for only couple of weeks to see the liberation. Masha had three daughters. The eldest Ester, born in 1908 left for Vienna to study. There she married

Italian Jew Gulyemo and had lived with him happily ever after in Paris. They had several children. Ester died several years ago in Paris. She was almost one hundred years old. Masha's younger daughters- Nadya (Jewish name Nehama) and Anna (Hanna) being unmarried left for Palestine in the 1930s. Both of them got married there – Nadya's husband name was Blat, and Anna's – Zimrani. Nadya died in 1978. Her son Ilan, a doctor and a musician, is living in Israel. Anna is still alive. After her husband's death she did not want to be a burden for her children. She is not living in kibbutz on her own.

The next daughter was Frida, born in 1890. Her husband Boris Shlapoberskiy was rather feeble. He had heart trouble, which could not be cured. Boris died in 1935. He was a pretty wealthy man. He owned a house in Kaunas and Tel-Aviv. Frida lived in Kaunas several years before Great Patriotic War. When on the first of September 1939 fascists unleashed war beginning with the occupation of Poland [6](#), she left Lithuania for Palestine that very day. When the war was over, she got married again. Her second husband's name was Eremei Shochat. He was a good friend of the family. His wife perished in occupation. Frida, remaining active and energetic even when being over the hill, was the so-called 'connecting link' in our family. She wrote letter to us and other relatives, dispersed all over the world. Until death she remained kind and good-humored. Frida had lived a long life and died in Tel-Aviv in 1970. Two sons lived in France– Aria, born in 1913 and Eliahu born in 1915. Both of them got an excellent education in Europe. The eldest became a doctor and the younger opened up printing business in New-York. During Great Patriotic War both of them happened to be in the army of the allies- the youngest on the part of the USA and the eldest was enrolled as a volunteer in British army in Palestine, which was a mandated territory of Great Britain. The world is close- the brothers met in Italy during deployment of Soviet troops. Both of them survived war, but none of them had a long life. Brothers, like father, suffered from heart trouble. Aria died in 1959 and Eliahu in 1963.

Mother's sister Malka was born after Frida in 1891. She married a man from Vilnius- Lipman Maysel and they lived in Vilnius with their children- son Efraim and daughter Miriam (we called her Mika). Mother had not seen her sister for a long time, when Vilnius belonged to Poland [7](#). We went to see Malka as soon as Vilnius again became the capital of Lithuania in 1939. The most vivid memories I had from that time was our trip on the small diesel train, consisting of one or two cars. I made friends with Miriam, who was my age. We saw each other rather often before war. Unfortunately aunt Malka, her husband and Miriam did not manage to get evacuated. Malka and Lipman perished during one of the first actions. Miriam lived in Vilnius ghetto and perished in 1943 before liquidation of ghetto. The only survivor from their family- Efraim - left for Palestine in 1936 at the age of 20. He lived in Tel-Aviv and died there in 1973.

My mother was the last-but-one daughter, and the youngest was Bluma. She was born in 1904. Bluma's husband Jacob Epstein was an expert electrician engineer. He had lived and worked in France for couple of years with his family. He was involved in lineup of high-voltage power lines. When grandfather died, grandmother insisted that Bluma came to Jonava. By that time Bluma had daughter Anna, born in 1930. She and her family came back to Jonava. In 1937 their younger daughter Dalia was born. Jacob was a very gifted man. He was fond of theatre. He had the main parts in town Jewish amateur theatre. Jacob sympathized with communists. He had connections in communistic underground. Thus, when the Soviets came in the Baltic countries in 1940 [Occupation of the Baltic Republics] [8](#), he was assigned Jonava's mayor at once. Jacob had not

worked for a long time. [Great Terror] [9](#) commenced in Lithuania as well as all over USSR. He was also getting involved in the process. He was supposed to make the lists of people who were not wanted by new regime, walk from one house to another, taking away people's things and exile people to Siberia [Deportations from the Baltics] [10](#). Jacob, being a truly decent man, quitted his job and focused on theatre. Soon he and his family moved to Kaunas, where he also had a part in amateur troupe. Thus, Jacob was able to save his face. When Great Patriotic War was unleashed, Jacob sent Bluma and younger girl in evacuation, and left shortly after them. Aunt was against it, but still she was finally convinced to leave. The matter was that elder daughter Anna was in summer camp in Palanga. As it turned out later, children left the camp and had been walking along the coast towards Latvia. Many of them died on their way during bombing. Those who survived, were captured by fascists and returned in occupation. Bluma and Dalia lived in Middle Asia. In 1942 Jacob was drafted in the army. When military band was established in Lithuanian division [11](#) he was enrolled there. Thus, he was not involved in military actions, he gave performances with the band. When Vilnius was liberated, he invited Bluma and his daughter there. Bluma had been grieving over her elder daughter all life long. They tried tracing her via Red Cross, also asked those people they knew about her, but it was useless. No information was found about Anna. We assume she perished in June 1941. Bluma died in 1985 in half a year after Jacob had died. Her daughter Dalia is currently living in Vilnius. She is working in Jewish museum.

Mother had three brothers. I did not know the eldest, Benjamin, born in 1892. He left for Palestine with his wife Ella Sagalovskaya in early 1930s. Benjamin died in 1953. His wife survived him by 10 years. Their children – son Efraim and daughter Rahel - live in Israel, but we do not keep in touch.

Middle brother Haim Itshak (he was called Mitya in the family) was born in 1902. He graduated from Vilnius university. Haim served in Lithuanian army, in medical battalion. He married a Jewish lady Haya Feinstein rather late, when he was over 30. In late 1930s Haim and his wife left for Palestine. He settled in there pretty well. He worked under his specialty. Later on he bought orange-tree grove. Haim and Haya had two sons- Izya, 1935 and Aba, 1937. Before the outbreak of Great Patriotic War Haim came to Lithuania for a visit. I remembered his peculiar looks and Southern tan. Haim took part in Great Patriotic War. He served in the troops of the allies as a military doctor. He perished in Egypt in 1942. His wife had lived a long life. Their children live in Israel, but we do not keep in touch.

My mother's youngest brother David Pagirskiy was born in 1907. David married a Jew Maya Kanber. They lived in Kaunas not far from us. In 1937 daughter Ilan was born and in 1940 – Dalia. When Great Patriotic War was unleashed, David decided to stay in occupation. Like most of the Jews who remembered Germans from the World War One treating Jewish population rather loyally, David's family remained in occupation. David perished during the first action in Kaunas ghetto. His wife Maya perished in concentration camp Stuttgof, when the war was about to end. The girls were rescued. They were taken out from ghetto by turns and sheltered in Lithuanian families. We had been looking for them after war for a long time. It did not take that long to find Ilan. The family of Epsteins adopted and raised one the girls. It was harder to find Dalia as she stayed in orphanage, then in some Lithuanian family, she even did not know where she came from. When the girl was found, mother took her in our family. She was treated like a younger daughter. Being an adolescent, she left for Israel. Dalia died there in 1980s. Ilan married Leo Rozental, they is currently living in Vilnius.

My mother Tauber Pagirskaya was born in 1898. Mother as well as her siblings got a good education at Russian Commercial Lyceum. Upon graduation mother lived with her parents before getting married. She did not work. I do not know exactly where my parents met. I think they knew each other when they were young. I have the picture of my young parents and mother's siblings, taken at the beginning of the 20th century by the boat, traveling to Jonava across river Neris. My parents got married in 1923.

I have never seen any of my paternal ancestors. I know that my grandpa Lazar Yudelevich, was born in the 1860s in Jonava. He was a rabbi. His wife, my grandmother Gitel Chazan was ten years younger than grandpa. She died rather early, in the 1920s or earlier. When she died, grandpa left for Palestine. He got married there for a second time. I do not know his second wife's name. There was grandfather's portrait in the house. I vaguely remember him. He looked stately having a beard, wearing a kippah on a small beautiful grey-haired head. He was as if still in grief, whispering something to himself. This is all I know about my grandparents.

Lazar and Gitel Yudelevich had three children. The eldest was my father Abram Yudelevich. Isaac was the middle son. He was born in 1896. He was a subcontractor before war. He took the orders for construction of the houses. He was in charge of a construction crew, practically having the functions of the foreman. Isaac lived in Kaunas with his wife Raya Melamed and daughter Giten, born in 1929. When Soviet army came to power, he had to be in hiding as he might be deported for being rather rich. He stayed with us for some time, but mother was against it thinking that our house could not serve as a shelter putting our family in danger. I do not know how, but Isaac was able to escape repressions and arrest. During Great Patriotic War all of them, including Raya's elderly mother were in Kaunas ghetto. Being rather active Isaac understood at once that they should get out from ghetto at any cost. He managed to ingratiate with Lithuanians, who were helping out Jews. All of them left ghetto in different time and by different means. Uncle Isaac was in hiding for a long time. He was sheltered by Lithuanians, passing from one reliable person to another. In 1943 he lived on a picturesque island on a farmstead of two Lithuanian brothers. Somebody gave away Isaac and he was found by politsei. Both Isaac, and brothers, who sheltered him, were beaten black and blue and imprisoned. He was sent to Estonian concentration camp from the prison, and then to Dachau [12](#). There he lived to see the liberation. All those years Isaac had known nothing about the fate of his family and he was sure that all of them perished. Uncle was afraid to come back to his motherland understanding that Stalin's camps would be imminent for him instead of the fascists' ones. He left for Palestine upon liberation. Being there he found out that Raya and Gitel were rescued. They lived in Vilnius. The family reunion took place only in 1972 as before that time Raya and Gitel were not issued a permit to depart for Israel. Being tortured by yearning for her husband in long separation, Raya had lived with him for ten years. Uncle Isaac passed away at an old age - 89 or 88.

Father's younger sister Pera, born in 1900, married Emmanuel Katsnelson- a mirthful and witty man. He well-read and possessed encyclopedic knowledge. Pera and her husband lived in France for a while. Emmanuel was involved in revolutionary movement in Russian and was an adherer of communist party, so he talked Pera into leaving for Russia. In 1926 Pera and Emmanuel happened to be in Moscow. They were lucky not to have come in the period of repressions. Emmanuel and Pera had a serene life in Moscow. Emmanuel was acquainted with outstanding activists of Soviet regime and communist party. He knew most of them from the underground. Either somebody gave



him a hint, or Emmanuel himself understood what was going on, he decided 'not to stand out'. Thus, he was assigned to inconsiderable positions and escaped almost inevitable arrest in his position – native of bourgeois Lithuania and resident of France. Emmanuel died at the age of 70. Pera died shortly after him, in 1997. Pera's son Yuri, born in 1930s, is currently living in the USA. Younger daughter Nina, born before war, is currently living in Israel. She was not happy in her marriage. She got divorced. She does not have children. Now Nina is living in kibbutz.

My father was born in Jonava in 1894. He has been an atheist since early childhood, and that strongly displeased grandpa, who was deeply religious. I do not know if father went to cheder. He went to Russian lyceum in the town of Suwalki [Poland, 10 km away from the border of Lithuania and Poland and 170 km from Vilnius]. Upon graduation he decided to enter university. He dreamt to become a lawyer. Grandpa Lazar was very displeased with father's decision. He hoped that his son would follow in his footsteps, but my young father was adamant. That is why grandfather practically cut him off a shilling. Father went to Russia to enter the institute. I do not know how he happened to be in Siberia. He entered Tomsk university [about 3000 km from Moscow]. Father studied there for couple of years and got transferred to Yekaterinburg [Russia, 1500 km from Moscow], where he graduated juridical department. Father came back to the motherland in 1918 right after Lithuania became independent [Lithuanian independence] [13](#) In couple of years, namely in 1923 father proposed to mother. Parents had never told anything about their wedding. I think it was carried out in accordance with Jewish traditions. At any rate before war at home there was parents' wedding certificate issued by the rabbi.

My parents did not stay in Jonava for a long time. They moved to Kaunas shortly after wedding. They rented an apartment in the heart of the city. They barely stayed there for a year. In 1925 my elder brother David was born. The family needed a more spacious apartment, so they had to move. Another apartment was in the house leased by Boris Shlapoberskiy. Father was a private lawyer and made pretty good money. The amount of rent was 800 litas. At that time it was a lot of money. Parents could afford a trip to the spa. It was in style and decent to take a vacation for couple of days or weeks to go seaside in any season. My brother was a feeble and in 1928 my mother expecting a child in couple of weeks, took brother to the seaside. They went to a village not far from Klaipeda [300 km from Vilnius]. Soon father came there as well. I, Iosif Yudelevich, was born in that village on the 25th of December 1928. Before long the family came back in Kaunas.

## Growing up

I remember myself from the age of five. Since early childhood my brother I had been close. We were called – Dodya and Osys, pronouncing our names separately. I remember the apartment, where I spent my childhood. There were five rooms in it- one room was after another. The first two rooms were occupied by father: one room was a reception, where his clients and visitors were waiting for him, and another room was father's office. Father's secretary Kozlovskiy was at the reception desk. Father's customers sat on the leathern couches waiting for my father to receive them. At that time my father was one of the most famous lawyers on civil cases in Kaunas. There was a large desk in father's office with a lamp and ink well, a small adjoining table for negotiations and book shelves containing the works on jurisprudence, books by ancient Greek and Roman philosophers and regulation documents. There were few fiction books. Most of them were written by Russian classics - Tolstoy, Turgenev etc. I do not remember whether there were books by Jewish writers at home. There was a large dining-room behind father's office. There was a large round

dining table, the one we are sitting now, arm- chairs, chairs, beautiful carved cupboard, bedroom furniture and children's furniture used by brother and I . Of course, there was a kitchen, but I cannot recall my being there. There were servants and a cook in the house so there was no need to go in the kitchen, as the food was served in the dining-room. The servants changed with time and the only maid I remember was a cook- Lithuanian lady Elya. She treated us very good and cooked tasty food. Mother only ran the house, giving orders. Sometimes she went in the kitchen to make some corrections. We, children, had the governesses. Our first governess was a Russian girl Irina. She was very kind and tender. I loved her a lot. Even now I cannot get why she was fired by my mother. Maybe she thought that brother and I were grown-up enough to have a nanny and she wanted a governess for us. After Irina German ladies worked for us. The first one was froelein Zina, then Gerta. They also were very kind. They had stayed by 1934 or so. When Hitler's power was strengthened in Germany and Kristallnacht [14](#) came to place, they were fired. In 1937 they left for Germany. By the way, a kind Zina, subsequently joined fascist party and became Gestapo agent. Later on, when brother was a lyceum student, I was taken care of Froebel lady [15](#) Doba, a young Jewish girl. One of her duties was to take strolls with me. Mother requested that we should stay outside as long as possible in the park or in the street. Mother said- «the child should breathe some air». Young Doba was mostly interested in cinema. German, American and even Soviet comedies were demonstrated in Kaunas. She and I watched a lot of movies. We agreed that mother would not know about that. Doba and I went to a café to eat ice-cream. There was Italian ice-cream café in the park. There was delicious ice-cream there, but mother would not approve of it so she thought there was a risk to have a sore throat. So, we did not tell her about that either.

I was growing a good and a robust boy, but mother being frightened by brother's feebleness (he was afflicted with rickets in early childhood and was constantly getting ill), looked into the way we were dressed and fed. In summer our family went on vacation for two months. The first month was spent in Kemery and then we went to Buldury- the spa with salves, baths and all kinds of treatments. At that time it was customary to spend summer on the coast. Many of our relatives came there with children, so we were not bored. Later on we spent summer vacation in Palanga. Parents often had rest and recreation abroad. They went to Karlovy Vary, to the spas in France, Switzerland. Usually they went on vacation separately. There were few times when they went together.

When mother came back from vacation in 1934, she decided that brother and I should be taught music. There was no musical instrument. We went to a lady, who taught us music. We were as if glued to a piano for an hour. Both brother and I were against it. We did not like our music classes. Father, having decided that it was useless, talked mother into giving up our music education.

My parents were not religious. Moreover, they did not observe Jewish traditions. That is there is nothing for me to say on family traditions, or Jewish holidays marked in the family. Only in early childhood, when brother and I went to Jonava with parents, grandpa took us to the synagogue. I enjoyed those times, when we went to the synagogue. I liked carrying his prayer book for him. I took it as a game. We went to Jonava couple of times. At that time the distance of 35 kilometers was considerable. First we had to hire a cabman, then there was a bus traveling between Jonava and Kaunas. The trip was always like a holiday to us as we spent the night in grandparents' place and played with grandpa. If we came on Friday, we met Sabbath. Beautiful grandmother in white laced kerchief lit the candle, grandpa said a prayer and our Sabbath dinner started. There were all

kinds of different dishes on grandmother's table, but I cannot remember what was there since I was pampered with chicken cutlets at home. We did not mark Sabbath at home. There were no candles on Friday. Though, there was a silver candlestick in the drawing-room and judging by that I could say that mother used to light candles. I do not remember if father worked on Saturdays. As a rule, he sat in his office, read and wrote something, if needed as he was an active atheist. He must have continued his inner argument with his father Lazar. I did not know anything about kashrut in my childhood. There were all products at home, including sausages, ham, pork. I just heard from my cousins that chicken was to be cut by shochet in the synagogue, meat was to be eaten separately from milk, but Jewish traditions were alien to me. Sometimes, when uncle Isaac was going to the synagogue, he would take me with him. But it was rare. I think that father was strongly against my going there. Though, when I was a child we celebrated Chanukkah. Mother lit beautiful silver chanukiah, which was placed on special round table. The cook made potato fritters, doughnuts with jam. There was an air of holiday at home. I do not remember if we were given money the way it was with other children. We marked Purim for couple of times. As a rule there was a pageant for us and neighboring children. But it was arranged only in early childhood, in elementary school I should say. Parents did not observe mandatory fast for Jews on Yom-Kippur. They did not mark Rosh-Hashanah. On Pesach we were always invited to uncle Isaac. There was matzah on the table as well as different dishes from matzah, gefilte fish, delicious stew, all kinds of tsimes and deserts. Uncle Isaac reclined at the head of the table carrying out seder. Some of the children asked him questions on the origin of the holiday. We also looked for afikoman and waited for prophet Iliah in accordance with the holiday traditions. Father came to Isaac without kippah. He did it deliberately, empathizing his negative attitude to Jewish traditions. When grandmother Sarah moved to Kaunas, father could not refuse marking holidays and family festivities were moved to her place. Father contributed a lot of money to Jewish mutual aid fund. Both religious Jews and atheists donated money for revival of the Jewish state. Later on, when brother went to Ivrit lyceum, he took an interest in religion. It was easy for David to be carried away. He started talking on Judaism and asking father a lot of questions, which irritated him. Father took a lot of efforts to convince brother in malignancy of the religion. Father tried to persuade us that religion was created by domineering classes in order to subordinate common people. In general, he had his own views, which were in compliance with the ideas of global revolution [16](#).

I was a rather developed child. I often was present at my brother's studies and I had learnt letters before going to school. When parents were to choose where I should study, they chose secular Jewish lyceum Shvabes right away. There were several schools for Jewish children in Kaunas- Ivrit Realschul, commercial lyceum, Lithuanian Jewish lyceum, where children were taught in Lithuanian, religious school Yavne. As for the last one, there was no way I could go there. There used to be German lyceum in town and many Jewish children from privileged families went there. My brother David finished the first grade there. As soon as Hitler came to power in Germany, parents took all Jewish children from lyceum. Brothers Shlapoberskiys and other our friends left that lyceum, and brother was transferred to Shvabes lyceum. I went to Shvabes lyceum in 1934. Our wonderful teachers and headmaster Rutkus made a real team of like-minded people. The ideas of repatriation to Israel were delicately nurtured in the lyceum. Other than that it was an ordinary school, where subjects were taught in Ivrit. We had religion classes taught by Lipskiy. He was not a very educated person. He was only knowledgeable in his subjects, so we boys often were frolicking. For instance, I came to school without a kippah and said that I had left it at home (I followed my father's example). In general, neither I nor my comrades were awed by religion. I was



not a bad student. I liked to spend my spare time running around with my friends in the hallway and play children's games. Here in lyceum I got a better understanding of Jewish holidays and traditions. Chanukkah was marked in lyceum. There was a pageant on Purim. I also knew about Pesach as there was a general seder in lyceum, carried out by director or some of the teachers. Shavuot was marked as well. On the eve of every holiday we were expressly told about the history and origin of the holiday. There was a period of time when I was the member of Jewish Scout organization. We marched, learnt all kinds of sports techniques, went hiking and were explained the rules. There was a strong Zionist spirit [17](#) in lyceum. There were members of Beitar [18](#) organization. They wore brown shirts, without even knowing that brown color would be soon disgraced by fascists. I did join Zionist organizations.

My father did not pertain to any political party-neither to Zionist nor to Communists. Though, he was one of the people who sympathized with communists. He was interested in anything in connection with the Soviet Union, Russia, new socialistic camp. He even donated money to international revolutionary aid organization. Father had no idea what was going on in USSR –mass arrests, repressions. Knowing about actions taken by Hitler followers and about the way they treated Jews, parents had hopes for Russia. They often talked about Russia with each other, made plans, even thought of sending brother and I to Soviet Union. In 1939 mother went to Moscow for a visit. She processed visa in accordance with the rules and went to Pera and Emmanuel. Mother had stayed in Moscow for two weeks. When we met her in Kaunas train station, she leaving the train, sighed and said that there was no way we could leave for Russia, and in general we had to kiss Lithuanian land for living here.

We were subscribed to several news-papers – some Jewish paper, Lithuanian press of the left wing, Russian immigrant paper Echo, published in Riga. Father, brother and I closely followed the events in Spain war [19](#). There was Spain map at home, where we daily marked the course of the battles. Even now I can see that map and remember demarcations on it. I did not have any particular hobbies. Once I was taken to Jewish theater- but I did not enjoy it -either the performance was not for children, or I did not like the actors' play. It was in style to go to the opera in the theatre seasons in late 1930s. Parents took brother and me there for couple of times. I liked opera and in spite of my unwillingness to study music, since childhood I came to liking opera genre.

### **During the war**

In 1939 the war started from captured Poland. Vilnius became the capital of Lithuania again. Parents and I went to see aunt Malka. I enjoyed traveling by train. I met my cousins. Parents were getting more and more concerned. There were vivid fascist and anti-Semitic moods. They had not reflected on us so far. There appeared anti-Semitic slogans, calling upon buying goods from Lithuanians, not to use Jewish stores and enterprises. But not further actions had been taken yet, there were mere slogans. When in June 1940 Soviet Army came in Lithuania, most Jewish people, including intelligentsia, where my parents belonged to, were happy welcome the Soviets. Nothing changed for us. Though, products had vanished from the stores. Wives of Soviet officers appeared in the streets looking dowdy and ill-kempt. Of course I did not like to see Soviet officers to be uncultured people, who often even did not know how to use tableware. There were times when almost all of us considered Soviet people to be ideal. The most amusing thing that lower strata of society, like our servants, were mostly perturbed with the brusqueness and ill manners of Soviet people. Mother often had to comfort Elya, who quite often came across their harshness. Now

almost every day the proletarian meetings were held in the city. Nationalization of property commenced, but people had not been arrested and exiled in Kaunas yet. Later on at the beginning of 1941 the family of mother's cousin Shapiro and his family, who lived in Ukrmerg, were exiled. He had a tiny store, which barely brought any income, but still he was considered a capitalist. Father was not afraid of the exile as he was a lawyer, owning no property and being no Zionist, so he was of no danger to the Soviets. Our tenant's house, where we were living, was sequestered. In 1940 we moved to the apartment in a small wooden house not far from the train station. There were a lot of changes in the life of mine and brother's. All educational institutions had been shuffled. Some of them were closed down and the assignment of the rest of the students was not clear. In fall 1940 we went to school. Most of my classmates went to other institutions, but I met new boys and girls. I was not pleased with the ongoing, as there were a lot of friends among those who left. I had to get used to new friends and teaches and to teaching in Yiddish. When Soviet regime was in power, there was teachers' congress, were some of the teachers took the floor against the innovations in the educational system, introduced by Soviet regime. Many participants of the congress were arrested when it was over. In general, the pre-war year was tense. Then many of my comrades turned 13 in 1941. I was invited for celebration of bar-mitzvah and started thinking what I should do next. Father even did breathe a word of celebration of my bar-mitzvah. Brother's bar-mitzvah had not been marked either. My anxieties were of no importance. My thirteenth's birthday was in December and on the 22nd of June our life took a sharp turn- Hitler attacked Soviet Union.

We found out about the war via German radio from Hitler's speech who was crying that the war would be over in couple of weeks after Soviet Union had been totally ruined. Soon there was Molotov's speech [21](#) and there was no doubt that the war was unleashed. Bluma's husband Jacob Epstein came to us shortly after Molotov's speech. He swiftly talked parents into leaving at once. We packed documents, some precious things- mother's jewelry, father's golden watch and necessary things. We took uncle's Chevrolet and went to the train station which was in a stones' throw. We were not going to leave for a long time as we were convinced in a quick victory of the Soviet troops. There was a passenger train at the station, full of wives and children of the Soviet officers. There were not very many people as they had hopes for the better and did not think that the should run away. We calmly bought the tickets and got in the car. We decided to get to Vilnius and stop by aunt Malka as Vilnius was a little more far away from the border and it would be calmer. When we reached Vilnius train station, we came out to the platform being on the point of going to aunt Malka. There were a lot of panicking people and parents decided to go further. We came back in our car and went on to Minsk. At the frontier station Kena all citizens of bourgeois Lithuania, including us, were taken out of cars and our seats were given to Soviet militaries and their families, who were carrying huge suitcases. Only families of militaries were leaving on that train. We were locked in some shed. We were worried, though we were promised that we would take the next train. Father decided not to wait for anything. He took mother and us, told us to climb in the window. There was a train, crammed with fugitives. Lithuanian Jews from pioneer camp Druskeninkae were on that train. We could hardly find the seats. Many people, including our neighbor from Kaunas George and his parents had to stand in tambour all way through to Minsk. When we got to Minsk, we still were doubting whether to leave further or not. There were a lot of fugitives from Poland and Lithuania. People were gossiping , so we were scared to stay and moved on. As it turned out, shortly after our departure Minsk was fiercely bombed. Several trains were crushed. There were a lot of wounded and killed. Thus, I can say that we left at the right moment.

It was a long trip. Fortunately, my parents had enough money, which was not devaluated yet, for father to buy food for us at the stations. Sometimes the fugitives were given soup or gruel. I quickly got used to eat anything I was given, without picking and choosing. Thus, we reached the town of Sarapul in Udmurtia [about 1300 km from Moscow]. We had stayed in Sarapul evacuation point for couple of days. Father decided to head to Sverdlovsk – first of all his distant relative Chazan lived there, and secondly there were some of father's friends from student times. We came to Chazan's wife in Sverdlovsk. Chazan was dead. His wife Maria Genrikhovna accommodated us and parents looked into other arrangements. Father found his old fellow student, who was working as a doctor, and he helped us go to regional center Rehta. It was an industrial town, having several plants and factories. The first thing mother did was going to the market. It was empty. We could not even get potatoes. We understood that the war would not be over soon, and we had to get ready for a long life in evacuation. That is why mama said that we could not stay in the town, where it was problematic to get even potatoes. We came back to Sverdlovsk to Maria Genrikhovna, who hospitably received us again. Father again addressed to his friend, who suggested that we should go to Sukhoy Log, Sverdlovsk Oblast [about 2000 km from Moscow] in couple of days. It was a large settlement in agricultural area and father's friend said that we would have potato there for sure. Sukhoy Log consisted of industrial community and couple of dispersed hamlets. First we were sent to the resort area Kuryii, a scenic place at the bank of the river. Here we stayed for a while. Father was looking for a job. Every day he asked if there was anything for him. He was promised the position of a lawyer, but he had not got the offer. We came back to Sukhoy Log.

There mother took over. Even now I am wondering, how she having been pampered by life in the pre-war period, changed completely and became a tough mother and wife, who knew how to get what she wanted. She went to the officials, made a scene saying that we 'westerners' hardly escaped fascists and had to die by hunger because of some officials. Her demarche brought results. Father was almost immediately offered a job as a lawyer. He started getting food cards [22](#), including dependent's cards for us. It was getting a little easier for us. By that time we almost ran out of money and started exchanging precious things for food. Luckily, mother had enough jewelry so we were not starving. I was not picky, and had to eat anything they were able to get. In a while father got another job at fish factory and the situation with products became much better as the employees of the factory got much better rations. Besides, father was on some odd jobs- making applications, filing claims etc. and people were paying him with products.

We were not lodged in the settlement, but in an adjacent village. I do not remember the name of our hostess. We were given one through-room and the hostess had to walk across our room to get to hers. She was a grumbler, constantly complaining that we were making her hut cold. I cannot say that she treated Jews in a bad way. I think she did not care what nationality we were. Like many other dwellers of that area she associated her aggravated material position and the lack of products and food with the arrival of crowds of evacuees. They maltreated fugitives of all nationalities. It was strange, to put it mildly, and it spoke for the shallowness of people. The war was on and their husbands and sons were dying in the lines, and they, at any rate, did not see the true reason- the war, but thought that our arrival was to blame. Though, our neighbor Anna Stepanovna Berseneva, who lived next door, was marvelously kind. In my soul I have always pictured her as a true image of a real kind Russian peasant woman. Anna Stepanovna always tried helping mother. First, mother did not know how to cook on stove or do gardening. She gave us a small plot of land where we planted potatoes and other vegetables. Having followed her tips we

had a good yield. Sometimes Anna Stepanovna asked brother and I to come over and treated us to pies, pancakes and other food she cooked.

Brother and I went to local school. We did well. It was easy for us to study Russian and our level of education and development was much higher as compared to local guys. We became adults quite fast. Our childish anxieties and pranks vanished we had to think of daily bread and help mother. The second year of my stay at Sukhoy Log I found a job of the assistant of the secretary of the cement plant committee, where father was working. I also was a bread-winner of the family. Within that time father was drafted in the army on a number of occasions. There was one and the same scenario. He got a notification from military enlistment office, we saw father off and in a day or two he would come back as people from the territories annexed to the USSR in late 1930s were not admitted in the lines as they were not trusted by Soviet regime. In late 1942 David was drafted in the army. He happened to be in Balakhna, in Lithuanian division, which was positioned there. Soon brother got seriously ill, he had tuberculosis. David was demobilized and he came back to Sukhoy Log. Brother was really unwell, on the brink of death and again mother used her mettle. She wrote a letter to her sister Frida Shlapoberskaya in Palestine asking her for help. Frida started sending us parcels with products, fats, canned fish and meat – everything which was needed by David. She also sent medicine. Brother had stayed in the hospital for almost a year and fortunately tuberculosis process stopped and brother got better. We had stayed in evacuation until summer 1945. By that time mother had known about death of grandmother Sarah and her relatives.

In summer 1945 we came back to Lithuania. We decided to come back to native town Kaunas. The Epsteins family had been there already. Jacob was deputy director of cooperative society, and that position was very important. Uncle and his family lived in a posh 4-room apartment in a beautiful two-storied mansion in the downtown area. We also moved in there. We did not have to leave with another family for a long time. In half a year uncle was transferred to Vilnius, their family moved out and we started equal owners of the apartment. I lived in that apartment after war and I am still living here by myself.

### After the war

First postwar years were hard. Our family did pretty well, father worked as a lawyer and made pretty good money. Brother was given the certificate of secondary education in evacuation. He finished school pre-term. I had studied for a year in Kaunas and finished school. That year I joined Komsomol [23](#), I was not eager to be involved in social work, but I had to do it for me to enter institute. I was not attracted by communistic ideology. I was always fond of art and could draw pretty well, so I entered Kaunas construction institute, the architecture department. Later on the institute was reformed into polytechnic one. I got the specialty of the architect. I worked with layouts. During my first years after graduations I made designs for agricultural arrears in Lithuania. I traveled a lot and communicated with people.

We had a calm life trying not to get attention. Father worked a lot and met with his colleagues after work to play poker and preference. Very often the company of lawyers kept late hours in our place, well past midnight. In 1950 father got into trouble. I do not know if it is connected with anti-Semitic campaign [24](#) [Campaign against 'cosmopolitans'], launched in USSR at that time. There was information against my father sent by Jew from Jonava, party activist. I do not want to mention her name. She sent a letter to KGB saying that father owned shares of foreign capitalistic companies.

He was called by KGB and interrogated. Father explained that before war he really owned shares of German Sanitary Engineering Company, which representative he was. Father was called in KGB again. He was called by the investigator who told him that his defense was done in a wrong way and that he did not choose the right clients. Besides, in early 1950s father submitted document for getting a permit to see his brother Isaac in Israel. The response was negative. So, father was getting nervous. In 1950 he had a first heart attack as father was affected by that story. In 1955 father died. His death was easy and sudden, but too early- he was only 60. He was buried in Jewish cemetery in Kaunas without any rites.

I had lived with mother since that time. In 1957 my mother managed to get a permit for guest visit in Israel. Of course, she had to use connections. Mother's pal Kaganene, who was in charge of protocol department in Ispolkom [25](#), knew somebody in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She convinced him that mother would be coming back and said that she would be her guarantee. Mother was issued a visa 1957 and she spent two months in Israel. She saw Isaac, father's brother and all her relatives. Upon return from Israel, mother started marking some Jewish holidays. We bought matzah on Pesach, lit candles on Chanukkah the way it was before war.

My brother graduated from institute, drama department and became an outstanding drama critic. He married Lithuanian lady Laima. They have two children – son Leon and daughter Irma. My brother is a famous man in literature and theater circles of Lithuania, the member of the council of Lithuanian writers, the author of several books. Brother lives in Vilnius. His son is an entrepreneur. He has his own house out of town and spends half of the year there with his wife. His children have their own families. Both of them are successful both in private and professional life.

I always got along with my brother, but mother had always been an only true friend. Maybe that was the reason why I had always compared her to women, who came across in my life. I remained a bachelor. I do not regret it. I do not like answering question regarding my private life in the sense that I do not have it. Believe me, my private life was rather boisterous, but I had not met a woman with whom I wanted to live together. I was not interested in social life. Moreover mandatory komsomol meeting, I had to attend, made me sick and giddy with their slogans and phrases on the bright future. From the very beginning I took Soviet power with irony. Unlike most Soviet people I did not grieve over Stalin's death in 1953. I understood who he was, judging by hundreds of repressed and unjustly convicted people. Though, the truth of his activity was revealed only after XX party congress [26](#), where Stalin's cult of personality was divulged. When I turned 28, I withdrew from komsomol organization and never tried to become party member. Of course, it was not absolutely possible to be absolutely free in the social life in Soviet society. I had to attend general and trade-union meetings, events, dedicated to the anniversary of October revolution [27](#), 1st of May. We also went to demonstration. We were compelled to do that. Instead of carrying flags and crying out slogans, my friends and I had fun watching people who were gradually getting drunk. Usually workers of plants and factories went to demonstrations and by the end of the day they had been pretty drunk and their behavior was invariable. In the 1970s my friends immigrated to Israel, USA. I understood that my negative attitude to the Soviet regime required some actions from me. Israel always appealed to me. But I am a conservative man and it is hard for me to imagine that I have to break things conventional for me, get used to new town, country, language, friends. Besides, my mother had been rather sick in the last years of her life and I had to take care of her. Mother died in 1976. She was buried next to father. I have lived by myself since then.



I always had different interests. Being adult I learnt how to play accordion and I played classic repertoire pretty well. Music was my passion. I attended all opera performances. Another passion of mine is art. Having some penchant for that I have always painted some pieces, mostly landscapes of my native Kaunas. I have always traveled a lot. I was in many cities of former Soviet Union. I liked old cities most of all, where I enjoyed architectural masterpieces. Gradually I came to liking bells and I started collecting big, small and diminutive ones. Collectors are crazy with their hobby. I remember one story about it. I went on a tourist trip to Czechoslovakia in order to meet my friend collector who lived in Austria and give him some of my exhibits. In Soviet times KGB [28](#) agents were in every tourist group being on vigil to follow the morale of Soviet tourists. I had to exert my every effort to slip out from the group and to meet with the guy. Fortunately, the meeting with my friend was not noticed.

I am currently living in bourgeois Lithuania and I am happy with that. I also treated Soviet regime as something negative and temporary, so I took the independence regained by my country in 1991 as long-awaited and wishful. I think, when being the member of European Union my country will become a true European country with European ethic standards. Recently I became the member of Jewish community not because I started being religious, but out of solidarity. There are few Jews, and there are getting less of them in Kaunas, and in Lithuania in general. That is why we have to stick to each other, learn Jewish culture and history. I make my contribution the way I can. The first thing I decided to do was to find people, who saved my relatives - uncle Isaac, his wife and daughter. I met uncle Isaac in the 1960s in Leningrad. He came there from Israel and was still scared to come to Kaunas. Uncle invited me in Leningrad and we met couple of times. He was constantly saying how grateful he was the people, who rescued him. Uncle asked me to do my best to find them. It was impossible in Soviet times. In the 1990s I found two brothers, who saved him on the island and other people who saved our family. I plead for them to be recognized as righteous among the nations. [29](#), some of them posthumously. Then I enjoyed doing that. I spend a lot of time in the archives, meet people, help them find those, who saved Jews in Lithuania. Owing to my modest work, many people became famous and got recognition and gratitude from the state of Israel. It is my last hobby. I think this is the most important thing in my life. Besides, I help out community members with some legal issues. I was raised in the lawyer's family and was taught how to make applications and claims. I also do it voluntarily.

## Glossary

### [1](#) Karlovy Vary (German name

Karlsbad): The most famous Bohemian spa, named after Bohemian King Charles (Karel) IV, who allegedly found the springs during a hunting expedition in 1358. It was one of the most popular resorts among the royalty and aristocracy in Europe for centuries.

### [2](#) Königsberg offensive

It started on 6th April 1945 and involved the 2nd and the 3rd Belarussian and some forces of the 1st Baltic front. It was conducted as part of the decisive Eastern Prussian operation, the purpose of which was the crushing defeat of the largest grouping of German forces in Eastern Prussia and the northern part of Poland. The battles were crucial and desperate. On 9th April 1945 the forces of the 3rd Belarussian front stormed and seized the town and the fortress of Königsberg. The battle for

Eastern Prussia was the most blood-shedding campaign in 1945. The losses of the Soviet Army exceeded 580,000 people (127,000 of them were casualties). The Germans lost about 500,000 people (about 300,000 of them were casualties). After WWII, based on the decision of the Potsdam Conference (1945) the northern part of Eastern Prussia including Königsberg was annexed to the USSR and the city was renamed as Kaliningrad.

### **3 Kaunas ghetto**

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

### **4 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.

### **5 Stutthof**

German concentration camp 36 km east of Gdansk. The Germans also created a series of satellite camps in the vicinity: Stolz, Heiligenbeil, Gerdauen, Jesau, Schippenbeil, Seerappen, Praust, Burggraben, Thorn and Elbing. The Stutthof camp operated from 2nd September 1939 until 9th May 1945. The first group of prisoners (several hundred people) were Jews from Gdansk. Until 1943 small groups of Jews from Warsaw, Białystok and other places were sent there. In early 1944 some 20,000 Auschwitz survivors were relocated to Stutthof. In spring 1944 the camp was extended significantly and was made into a death camp; subsequent transports comprised groups of Jews from Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary and Łódź in Poland. Towards the end of 1944 around 12,000 prisoners were taken from Stutthof to camps in Germany – Dachau, Buchenwald, Neuengamme and Flossenbürg. In January 1945 the evacuation of Stutthof and its satellite camps began. In that period some 29,000 prisoners passed through the camp (including 26,000 women), 26,000 of whom died during the evacuation. Of the 52,000 or so people who were taken to Stutthof and its satellites, around 3,000 survived.

### **6 Invasion of Poland**

The German attack of Poland on 1st September 1939 is widely considered the date in the West for the start of World War II. After having gained both Austria and the Bohemian and Moravian parts of Czechoslovakia, Hitler was confident that he could acquire Poland without having to fight Britain

and France. (To eliminate the possibility of the Soviet Union fighting if Poland were attacked, Hitler made a pact with the Soviet Union, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.) On the morning of 1st September 1939, German troops entered Poland. The German air attack hit so quickly that most of Poland's air force was destroyed while still on the ground. To hinder Polish mobilization, the Germans bombed bridges and roads. Groups of marching soldiers were machine-gunned from the air, and they also aimed at civilians. On 1st September, the beginning of the attack, Great Britain and France sent Hitler an ultimatum - withdraw German forces from Poland or Great Britain and France would go to war against Germany. On 3rd September, with Germany's forces penetrating deeper into Poland, Great Britain and France both declared war on Germany.

## **7 Annexation of Vilnius to Lithuania**

During the interwar period the previously Russian-held multi-ethnic city of Wilno (Vilnius) was a part of Poland and the capital of Lithuania was Kaunas. According to a secret clause in the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (Soviet-German agreement on the division of Eastern Europe, August 1939) the Soviet Army occupied both Eastern Poland (September 1939) and the three Baltic states (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, June 1940). 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.

## **8 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.

## **9 Great Terror (1934-1938)**

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

## **10 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 began. The victims of these were mainly but not exclusively those unwanted by the regime: the local bourgeoisie and the previously politically active strata. Deportations to remote parts of the Soviet Union continued up until the death of Stalin. The first major wave of deportation took place between 11th and 14th June 1941, when 36,000, mostly politically active people were deported. Deportations were reintroduced after the Soviet Army recaptured the three countries from Nazi Germany in 1944. Partisan fights against the Soviet occupiers were going on all up to 1956, when the last squad was eliminated. Between June 1948 and January 1950, in accordance with a Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR under the pretext of 'grossly dodged from labor activity in the agricultural field and led anti-social and parasitic mode of life' from Latvia 52,541, from Lithuania 118,599 and from Estonai 32,450 people were deported. 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 some other 100,000 were sentenced to 25 years in camps.

## **11 16th Lithuanian division**

It was formed according to a Soviet resolution on 18th December 1941 and consisted of residents of the annexed former Lithuanian Republic. The Lithuanian division consisted of 10.000 people (34,2 percent of whom were Jewish), it was well equipped and was completed by 7th July 1942. In 1943 it took part in the Kursk battle, fought in Belarus and was a part of the Kalinin front. All together it liberated over 600 towns and villages and took 12.000 German soldiers as captives. In summer 1944 it took part in the liberation of Vilnius joining the 3rd Belarusian Front, fought in the Kurland and exterminated the besieged German troops in Memel (Klaipeda). After the victory its headquarters were relocated in Vilnius, in 1945-46 most veterans were demobilized but some officers stayed in the Soviet Army.

## **12 Dachau**

was the first German concentration camp. It was constructed in 17 kilometers from Munich and was officially open on the 22nd of March 1933. Dachau became the first 'testing area; where the system of punishment and other forms of physical and psychological tortures were worked on prisoners. During World War Two Dachau was notorious for being as one of the most horrifying concentration camps, where medical tests were made on the prisoners. About 1100 people went through the tests. Preliminary 'anti-social elements' were imprisoned in Dachau. It was a preventive imprisonment of the opponents of national socialistic regime. Dachau was considered a political camp before opening, though after Krystallnacht about 10 thousands Jews were sent there. After 1939 Jews were sent from Dachau to execution camps. Hundreds thousand of people were starved to death or murdered. Dachau prisoners worked as free work power at the adjacent industrial enterprises. On the 29th of April 1945 concentration camp Dachau was liquidated by the units of the 7th American Army. The camp had 123 affiliates and exterior teams. The square of the territory equaled 235 hectares. About 250 thousand people from 24 countries were incarcerated in concentration camp Dachau during its existence. 70 thousand perished, and 12 thousand out of them were Soviet military captives. There were 30 thousand prisoners, when the camp was being

liberated. When the 2nd World War was over commandant of the camp and the security were indicted by International martial tribunal in Nuremberg. In accordance with the ruling of the tribunal as of the 18th of January 1947 commandant of the camp Piorkovskiy was sentenced to death and the 116 SS officers were sentenced to different terms in prison. At present there is a memorial complex on the territory of Dachau camp.

### **13 Lithuanian independence**

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

### **14 Kristallnacht**

Nazi anti-Jewish outrage on the night of 10th November 1938. It was officially provoked by the assassination of Ernst vom Rath, third secretary of the German embassy in Paris two days earlier by a Polish Jew named Herschel Grynszpan. Following the Germans' engineered atmosphere of tension, widespread attacks on Jews, Jewish property and synagogues took place throughout Germany and Austria. Shops were destroyed, warehouses, dwellings and synagogues were set on fire or otherwise destroyed. Many windows were broken and the action therefore became known as Kristallnacht (crystal night). At least 30,000 Jews were arrested and sent to concentration camps in Sachsenhausen, Buchenwald and Dachau. Though the German government attempted to present it as a spontaneous protest and punishment on the part of the Aryan, i.e. non-Jewish population, it was, in fact, carried out by order of the Nazi leaders.

### **15 Froebel Institute**

F. W. A. Froebel (1783-1852), German educational theorist, developed the idea of raising children in kindergartens. In Russia the Froebel training institutions functioned from 1872-1917 The three-year training was intended for tutors of children in families and kindergartens.

### **16 World Revolution**

Marxist concept and an integral part of Soviet state-ideology. The idea of World Revolution was used to explain Soviet imperialist politics in Eastern Europe as well as worldwide. It was after WWI that the world was closest to the idea: the 1917 October Revolution in Russia was followed by the German (1918-19) and the Hungarian Revolutions (1919), that were eventually both put down as a result of counter-revolutionary efforts, and Soviet Russia remained the only communist state. The Communist International (Comintern) in the interwar period (1919-1943) acted as a Soviet-sponsored agency responsible for coordinating the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism worldwide. Aiding the local and previously (during the capitalist regimes) persecuted revolutionary forces was also a pretext of the military occupation of the Central and Eastern European countries during WWII ('Liberation') and keeping them within the Soviet Block until 1989. (Source:



[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World\\_revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_revolution))

## **17 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.

## **18 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.

## **19 Spanish Civil War (1936-39)**

A civil war in Spain, which lasted from July 1936 to April 1939, between rebels known as Nacionales and the Spanish Republican government and its supporters. The leftist government of the Spanish Republic was besieged by nationalist forces headed by General Franco, who was backed by Nazi Germany and fascist Italy. Though it had Spanish nationalist ideals as the central cause, the war was closely watched around the world mainly as the first major military contest between left-wing forces and the increasingly powerful and heavily armed fascists. The number of people killed in the war has been long disputed ranging between 500,000 and a million.

## **20 Soviet Army**

The armed forces of the Soviet Union, originally called Red Army and renamed Soviet Army in February 1946. After the Bolsheviks came to power, in November 1917, they commenced to organize the squads of worker's army, called Red Guards, where workers and peasants were recruited on voluntary bases. The commanders were either selected from among the former tsarist officers and soldiers or appointed directly by the Military and Revolutionary Committee of the Communist Party. In early 1918 the Bolshevik government issued a decree on the establishment of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army and mandatory drafting was introduced for men between 18 and 40. In 1918 the total number of draftees was 100 thousand officers and 1.2 million soldiers. Military schools and academies training the officers were restored. In 1925 the law on compulsory military service was adopted and annual drafting was established. The term of service was established as follows: for the Red Guards- 2 years, for junior officers of aviation and fleet- 3 years, for medium and senior officers- 25 years. People of exploiter classes (former noblemen, merchants,

officers of the tsarist army, priest, factory owner, etc. and their children) as well as kulaks (rich peasants) and cossacks were not drafted in the army. The law as of 1939 cancelled restriction on drafting of men belonging to certain classes, students were not drafted but went through military training in their educational institutions. On the 22nd June 1941 Great Patriotic War was unleashed and the drafting in the army became exclusively compulsory. First, in June-July 1941 general and complete mobilization of men was carried out as well as partial mobilization of women. Then annual drafting of men, who turned 18, was commenced. When WWII was over, the Red Army amounted to over 11 million people and the demobilization process commenced. By the beginning of 1948 the Soviet Army had been downsized to 2 million 874 thousand people. The youth of drafting age were sent to the restoration works in mines, heavy industrial enterprises, and construction sites. In 1949 a new law on general military duty was adopted, according to which service term in ground troops and aviation was 3 years and in navy- 4 years. Young people with secondary education, both civilian and military, with the age range of 17-23 were admitted in military schools for officers. In 1968 the term of the army service was contracted to 2 years in ground troops and in the navy to 3 years. That system of army recruitment has remained without considerable changes until the breakup of the Soviet Army (1991-93).

## **21 Molotov, V**

P. (1890-1986): Statesman and member of the Communist Party leadership. From 1939, Minister of Foreign Affairs. On June 22, 1941 he announced the German attack on the USSR on the radio. He and Eden also worked out the percentages agreement after the war, about Soviet and western spheres of influence in the new Europe.

## **22 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 cancelled in 1947.

## **23 Komsomol**

Communist youth political organization created in 1918. The task of the Komsomol was to spread of 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 uninitiated young proletarians, whereas party members had to have at least a minimal political qualification.

## **24 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'.

## **25 Ispolkom**

After the tsar's abdication (March, 1917), power passed to a Provisional Government appointed by a temporary committee of the Duma, which proposed to share power to some extent with councils of workers and soldiers known as 'Soviets'. Following a brief and chaotic period of fairly democratic procedures, a mixed body of socialist intellectuals known as the Ispolkom secured the right to 'represent' the Soviets. The democratic credentials of the Soviets were highly imperfect to begin with: peasants - the overwhelming majority of the Russian population - had virtually no say, and soldiers were grossly over-represented. The Ispolkom's assumption of power turned this highly imperfect democracy into an intellectuals' oligarchy.

## **26 Twentieth Party Congress**

At the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956 Khrushchev publicly debunked the cult of Stalin and lifted the veil of secrecy from what had happened in the USSR during Stalin's leadership.

## **27 October Revolution Day**

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

## **28 KGB**

The KGB or Committee for State Security was the main Soviet external security and intelligence agency, as well as the main secret police agency from 1954 to 1991.

## **29 The Righteous Among the Nations**

Non-Jews who rescued Jews during the Holocaust.