

Yankl Dovid Dudakas

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Kaunas

Lithuania

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Yankl Dudakas, a short, rather svelte and strong man, looks quite young for his age. He has gray wavy hair and black, bright and young eyes. Yankl and his wife, a sweet black-haired and large-eyed lady, live in a nice two-room apartment in a new residential development dating from the 1980s. Their apartment is nicely furnished. There is a new Japanese TV set and stereo equipment in their apartment. One can tell they are quite well-off. Yankl gives me a hospitable reception. When telling his story, he often addresses his wife. One can tell she is his good friend and that they've lived their life together in love and harmony.

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My family background

I was born in the small Lithuanian town of Jonava [80 km from Vilnius]. There were only three parallel streets and lanes mostly inhabited by Jews in this town on the banks of the Neris and Vilija Rivers. Most Jews were poor, as a rule, and in their majority they were craftsmen. They were shoemakers, glass cutters, coopers making huge barrels, copper craftsmen making bowls for jam and nice lamps, and blacksmiths. There was even a Kuznechnyi Lane in the town, the name of which in Russian means 'lane of blacksmiths.' The Jewish intelligentsia was represented by a few doctors, a notary and an attorney. However, the most important business in Jonava, which made its residents well known all over Lithuania, was furniture production. There were highly skilled cabinet makers and joiners in Jonava. They made solid and beautiful furniture. They worked in private shops scattered all over the town. There was a small furniture factory in Jonava, too. By the mid-1930s it expanded its production capacities to become a rather solid enterprise. There were Jewish, Russian and Lithuanian workers in the factory.

Jonava was surrounded by a number of villages where Russian Old Believers [1](#) resided. There were considerably fewer Lithuanians in our surrounding. There was a Catholic cathedral where they came to pray. I can't remember whether there was an Orthodox church in the town, while there were a few synagogues. Actually, there were two or three smaller synagogues in each street. There was also a large two-story wooden synagogue with the women's quarters on the second floor. This

synagogue looked huge and extremely beautiful to me. Nowadays, when I visit Jonava, all I see is a small wooden building. The second floor of the synagogue was removed after the war.

The furniture manufactured in Jonava was to be delivered to clients in the town, its suburbs and sometimes, all over Lithuania. Therefore, this service required a number of horse-drawn cabs and wagons. Later better-off cabmen managed to acquire trucks to serve this purpose of furniture delivery. Their services were highly competitive, and their trucks delivered furniture to Kaunas, Siauliai and Klaipeda. This company competed with similar carriers from Kaunas where the business was owned by Lithuanians. Jonava carriers reduced their delivery prices and won their clients. Gradually other carrier companies went bankrupt and Jonava truck owners gained a monopoly in their industry. Following capitalist practices they raised the price of their services. My ancestors and close relatives, both on the maternal and paternal side, were directly involved in this business. They were mainly cabmen, and those, who were doing better, managed to learn the furniture making skills.

Older people were saying that all Jews in Jonava were distantly related to one another due to marriages between relatives. At least, my family can serve as proof of this. My great-grandfathers, my paternal grandmother's father and my maternal grandfather's father were brothers. Their name was Kloz. My paternal great-grandfather Yankl Dovid was a cabman. He had passed away before I was born and I was named after him. His daughter, my grandmother Etah, born in the 1860s, married Meir Dudak, my grandfather, who was a few years older. Meir's brother's name was Simon. He had passed away before I was born. I only knew his children: Shmuel and Feiga. Shmuel was married to my mother's friend Rasa. Meir was engaged in cobbler's craft, which didn't bring expected profits.

Though Grandfather Meir came from a rather poor family and his only education was cheder, he had a commercial streak, which was quite common in my people. My grandfather became a cabman and then took to the horse trading business. Meir purchased horses in villages to sell them. He sold stronger horses to cabmen, and old horses were sold to slaughter houses: from their skin leather was made, and their meat was used for sausage production. This was a more profitable business allowing Meir to support a rather large family. They were not so well-off, but they always had sufficient food. Meir and Etah had a house of their own. It was a small wooden house like many other in Jonava. This house was in the neighboring street and as a child I often went to see my grandfather. Grandmother Etah died in 1938, and Grandfather Meir's course of life ended in Nizhniy Novgorod during evacuation in 1942.

When I was a child, Meir and Etah were left empty-nested. Their children had scattered around the world. Their older children moved to the US at the beginning of the 20th century. They either were looking for a better life, or, according to the family legend, they had 'got involved in politics.' Young Jewish people sympathized either with Communists or Zionists, and they happened to be involved. To avoid exile or prison my father's older brothers Osher and Efraim, who were about 20 years old when my father was born, and their sister Esther left their motherland.

In the US, Osher married a young girl from Jonava. I don't remember her name. Osher didn't correspond with us, but his wife's sister Martha and my mother were friends since they were young, and she wrote us letters telling my parents about our relatives. From her letters we knew that a few years after he came to America Efraim fell ill with tuberculosis and died. He never

married. Osher had several children. One of them was Milia.

Martha continued corresponding with us during the Soviet period. My mother was very concerned about this. In those years corresponding with people from capitalist countries could have caused trouble [2](#). Once Martha sent us one dollar in her letter. My mother was horrified. She never touched the foreign banknote and she never responded to Martha's letter. So this correspondence died out. We don't know, when Osher died, but I believe this might have happened in the 1960s. My father's sister Esther, who was about 15 or 16 by the time she left the country, married well and had seven daughters. After World War II Esther, her husband and children moved to Israel where she passed away in the 1970s.

During World War I, when the Tsarist government took to relocating Jews from border regions to the rear areas in Russia, Meir, Etah and their younger children happened to move to Nizhniy Novgorod where they stayed for a few years before moving back to Jonava. My father's younger sister Doba was born in 1904. Doba got married late, when she was to turn 30 years old. Her husband, Genah Barel, a huge guy, was known for being very strong. He was a cabman. After their wedding, Doba and her husband moved to Kaunas where they settled in a small house. In 1935 their son Shmerl was born. He took after his father and looked old for his age.

When the Great Patriotic War [3](#) began, Genah, his wife and their son left Kaunas on the first day of the war. Fascists caught up with them on the way. They put Genah behind bars and let Doba and her son go. Genah managed to whisper to his wife, which road back home she should take. At night Genah pulled the bars apart and managed to escape. He caught up with his family, and they got back home. When the ghetto [4](#) was established in Kaunas, they didn't have to move anywhere since their house happened to be located within the boundaries of the ghetto.

Doba and Genah survived the occupation and all the horrors of the ghetto, but their son Shmerl was killed during one of the actions against children in 1942. Actually he was killed almost by accident. Genah made a shelter for their child in the yard. It was a pit with a camouflaged lid. When the action began, their neighbor came with her baby begging to hide her in the pit. She threatened Genah that she would disclose the existence of the shelter to the Fascists, if he refused to let her hide in the pit. The bunker was only fit to hide a young boy, and the woman's child was beginning to be short of breath. The woman shifted the lid just a little to let some air in. This happened at the very instant, when the Fascists and Polizei [5](#) were standing just by the pit. Doba's son and the woman with her child were executed in a gas chamber on that same day.

After the war Doba and Genah lived in Kaunas. In the late 1950s they moved to Israel. They had no more children, and for the rest of their life they were blaming themselves for having lost their boy. Genah died in the 1970s, and Doba lived till she became very old, and had to spend several years in a wheelchair. She was eager to see me, but she passed away in 1989 before I visited the country [Israel].

My father, Itzhak Dudak, was born in 1902. I don't know whether Grandfather Meir managed to give his older children higher education. My father actually had no education. He attended cheder, as a child, where he learned an everyday prayer, but he didn't know the Saturday prayer. My father couldn't read or write. Since his early age he was helping his father. He was used to handling horses, and became a cabman, when he grew old enough.

My father had a horse. It wasn't big, but it was strong and sturdy. When trucks and buses appeared in Jonava, my father sold his horse and became a co-owner of this company. However, the company owners were smart and educated people. Some time later they paid my father his share and expelled him from the list of co-owners in order not to have to share the profits with him. My father bought a horse and took to his own business. In the late 1930s he obtained a driver's license and went to work as a driver in that same company. My father drove all across Lithuania. He was familiar with all roads, farms and villages, as well as he was with his own home.

My mother was my father's second cousin. When my father was 15, and my mother was 12 to 13 they had already developed a warm and far from cousinly feeling toward one another. Their parents didn't discourage them since marriages between relatives were a common thing in the Jewish environment.

My maternal great-grandfather, Mende Kloz, was about 15 years younger than Yankl Dovid. Mende was also a cabman, but in the 1920s he quit his business due to his old age. I remember my great-grandfather very well. I have early memories of my childhood. My great-grandfather and my mother's parents lived nearby, and my cousins and second cousin brothers and I came to their house to tease our great-grandfather. This was children's unconscious cruelty. We were jumping around the old man, laughing at his long gray beard and his stick. Mende used to threaten us with his stick and yell at us. However, when Mende died in 1933, I felt real grief and repentance for the first time in my life. I was standing by his head. His body was on the floor. There were candles around his body. My feelings of compassion and fear were overwhelming. I didn't understand what death was about, but I already knew that fear and still, my great-grandfather would never chase after me again yelling at me for my monkey tricks. I felt very sorry for him, and this compassion was no childish feeling. It helped me to mature.

My maternal grandfather, Girsh Kloz, was born in the 1870s. He was also a cabman and dealt with horses since his young age. My grandfather often recalled how he met and fell in love with my grandmother. Her name was Beyle Leya, and her maiden name was Cooper. She lived in a common Jewish family in Panevezys. My grandfather went to Panevezys on business and stayed overnight at the Cooper's. Her parents did not quite like Girsh. They were likely to want their daughter to marry a wealthy and successful Jewish man, and didn't believe a plain cabman to be her match. Girsh decided to kidnap his fiancée. It was a severe winter. He harnessed his horse, put a sheepskin coat onto the wagon, went to Panevezys and kidnapped Beyle Leya. She wasn't opposed to this deal. Girsh and the girl rode back to Jonava, and her parents had nothing else to do, but recognize the fiancé and arrange a truly Jewish wedding.

Beyle Leya's parents bought her a house where my grandmother and grandfather lived their life and raised their children. It was a two-story building, but it wasn't large. There were many children in the family, and there was sufficient room in the house for all of them. All children attended cheder and went to elementary school. This was all the education they got. They were helping their parents. The girls were helping their mother about the house, and the boys were helping their father with his horses. The girls grew up and became housewives, and the boys became common laborers.

My mother Gitah, born in 1905, was the oldest. After her there came another child almost each year. Pesia, my mother's sister, who was next after my mother, married an unreliable man. He had

the nickname of 'Avremele the rascal.' His name was Avrum Begak. His nickname quite explained the kind of man he was. Shortly after his daughter Mina was born in 1932 he left his family. Pesia was left to raise her daughter alone, and my father and mother provided as much support as they could to her. On the day when the war began and our family was about to evacuate, Avrum Begak appeared as if out of nowhere. He evacuated with us, but he disappeared again during the wartime. I have no idea where his life ended. Pesia and Mina returned to Lithuania after the war and lived in Kaunas. Mina got married. In 1972 she, her husband and her mother moved to Israel. Pesia died in the 1980s.

My mother's next sister Malka was born in 1908. She married Shulem Brezin, a timber rafter. He was a young and healthy man, and Malka was happy with him for several years. She had two daughters: Hanna, born in 1933, and Luba, born in 1934. This was all the luck she had in life. In 1937 Shulem caught a cold during timber rafting on the Neris River and died. Malka was to take care of herself alone. Girsh helped her to start a small business: she opened a small food store where Pesia was helping her. Malka and her daughters were in evacuation with us. After the war they moved to Kaunas. Her older daughter Hanna got married, and the younger one never married. In the 1970s Hanna and her family, Malka and Luba moved to Israel. Luba died in the early 1980s. Hanna and her family live in Israel. Malka is 97 years old now, as far as I know.

Joha, who came next after Malka, was born in 1910. She married Meishe Steingoff. Meishe was a cabman. He courted Joha for quite some time. She told him she only wanted to marry a cabinet maker. So, he had to learn this profession, and Joha gave her consent to stand under the chuppah with him. During evacuation they got lost, but shortly after we arrived at our destination my father found Joha, and she moved in with us. Joha was a skilled dressmaker. She worked in the evacuation. Her husband served in the Lithuanian division [6](#), came back from the front and found Joha. After the war they settled down in Vilnius. They had no children. She didn't live a long life and died in the 1970s.

Following her four daughters, Beyle Leya started having sons. In 1911 Yosif Meishe was born, and then Zalman came next. Yosif Meishe was a rather sickly youngster before the war. He studied cabinet making and worked for a businessman. Yosif didn't marry before the war. As for Zalman, who also became a cabinet maker, he married Esther, a Jewish woman, before the war. Their son Fayvel was born in the late 1930s. During the Great Patriotic War Esther, Yosif Meishe and Fayvel were in evacuation with us. Zalman was drafted into the army. He was killed in 1942.

After the war Yosif Meishe did his duty: he decided to raise his brother's son and married Esther. It was a Jewish tradition: when one brother died, the remaining brother was to marry his widow. However, Yosif Meishe fell in love with Esther. They had a son and a daughter in their marriage. Their son's name was Meir, and their daughter's name was Zelda. Yosif Meishe was raising Fayvel no different from his own children, but Fayvel had mental problems. He couldn't get over his father's death. A few years after the Great Patriotic War, he fell off a balcony and died. It never became known whether this was his intention or a mere accident. Yosif Meishe and Esther were grieving about his death for many years.

Their son Meir got married and had two daughters. Zelda married a Jewish man from Vilnius, but her husband died young and she was left with two children. In the 1970s Yosif Meishe, Esther and their family moved to Israel. Yosif Meishe died at the age of 76, and Esther followed him shortly

afterward. Meir, his family and Zelda live in Israel.

My mother's youngest brother Efraim, born in 1913, wasn't married before the war. After the war he married Yida, a Jewish woman. They had two girls: Esther El and Anna. They both live in Israel with their families. Efraim was often ill before the war. He died from heart disease in 1961. His grandson, Anna's son has his grandfather's name. His name is Efraim. This is all I know about this family.

Esther-Rochl, the youngest one in the family, was born in 1914. Her fiancé was a young handsome guy. His name was Efraim Schmidt. Esther-Rochl and Efraim dated for a few years delaying their wedding for an indefinite time. They were modern young people and had many friends. When the Great Patriotic War began, Efraim evacuated with us having the status of Esther-Rochl's fiancé. On the way Esther-Rochl lost Efraim. When they were reunited again, they volunteered to the army. Esther-Rochl and her fiancé joined the front line during the first months of the war. Esther-Rochl was killed in early 1942, and Efraim served in the Lithuanian division. He was killed in 1943.

My mother had some education. I don't know where she studied. I think she studied for a few years in a Jewish school. She knew Russian, could read in Russian and Hebrew and later she also learned Lithuanian. My mother and father grew up in traditional Jewish families, respecting Jewish traditions and religion. My parents were seeing each other for about ten years. They got married in 1929, when my father had firm ground under his feet and could provide for the family. They had a religious wedding and it couldn't have been otherwise. My parents were married under the chuppah in the synagogue in Jonava.

Growing up

After their wedding my parents rented a small apartment. I, Yankl Dovid, was born in this apartment on 30th March 1930. In 1933 my brother, who was given the name of not so long ago deceased great-grandfather Mende, was born. In 1935 our younger brother Simon was born. I still have memories of my early childhood. At home I was called Dodik and I got used to this name. I still respond, when they address me as Dovid, though I have the name Yankl in my passport.

I remember our apartment very well. It was in a small building in Jonava. Most of the population in Jonava lived in such buildings. The apartment owner was Dvoira, an older Jewish woman. She also lived in this house and had a small store. The front door to the owner's quarters was on the side of the street, and we entered our apartment from the backyard. There was one big room and something like a pigeonhole of the bedroom in it. There was a curtain separating this pigeonhole from the rest of the room. We had plain and simple furniture, though it was very robust. My mother's brothers made it a long time before. My parents slept on a huge wooden bed, and Mende and I slept on a special sofa. In Yiddish the word for this sofa meant 'a sleeping bench.' There was a mattress on this bench where my brother and I were sleeping. When Simon grew older, I started sleeping on a little mattress, and my younger brother took my place.

There was a big Russian stove [7](#), which served for heating purposes. Mama also cooked on it since we had no kitchen quarters. Our family led a rather modest life on the verge of poverty. However, we always had sufficient food. We were never hungry. Besides, I was a poor eater in my childhood, and hungry children aren't picky with food. I didn't like eating at home, and Mama was chasing after me with a plate and a spoon in her hands. I used to run to Grandfather Meir and Grandmother

Etah's place where I liked eating sour cream. I liked watching my grandmother Etah pouring sour cream into a saucer and how it rippled in circles. Well, as if sour cream we had at home was different!

When I grew a little older, my father bought me a couple of pigeons. Tumbler pigeons were popular with boys then. He bought these to me for my promise to eat better, but my fondness of pigeons didn't last long, and my father gave them away. Perhaps, my dislike of eating is to blame for my poor memory of the everyday food we had. The only food I liked was chicken, and I shouted to Mother: 'Just give me the white meat!' She was concerned that our neighbors might hear me shouting and think that we, God forbid, might be eating pork, and she asked me to be quieter.

My parents strictly observed the kosher rules. We had separate dishes, boards, casseroles, knives, spoons and forks for meat and dairy products. My mother bought meat in Jewish kosher stores. She took poultry to the shochet. Later she assigned this errand to me, since the shechitah at the synagogue was near where we lived. I watched the shochet cutting up the birds' necks and hanging them on special hooks over the trunk where blood was trickling down. After all blood was gone the meat became kosher and was allowed to be cooked.

I have dim memories of my younger brother Simon's brit milah ritual. Our relatives got together in our room, and Mama made a celebration dinner, but I can't remember the procedure itself.

One of my earliest memories is our family trip to a wedding in Kaunas. Yahne, a former resident of Jonava, lived in a little house in Kaunas, before the bridge across the Neris River. She accommodated all those going to Kaunas on visits, to weddings or on business. It was in Yahne's house that the wedding of a Jewish girl from Jonava was arranged. I remember wearing warm clothing and how I kept falling having all these heavy clothes on. I was trying to see the bride and the groom, but all I could see were other people's backs. I must have attended the ceremony in the synagogue, when the bride and the groom were under the chuppah, but I can't remember the event. Later, in Jonava other boys and I often ran to the synagogue to watch the bride and the groom, glowing red from tension and excitement step under the chuppah. When we were children, we believed this ritual to be some sort of game.

My mother was a very good housewife. We had no vegetable garden or other husbandry, but there was a little vegetable garden in the backyard where Dvoira grew her vegetables. In the summer Mama made salted pickles in barrels, sauerkraut, bought vegetables to last through the winter and stored these in a cellar in a little shed in the yard. There was another shed to store wood and a horse stable. My father treated the horse, our bread winner, well and he fed it well, too. Mama bought bread in the bakery owned by a Jewish man, who was our neighbor.

As for Saturday, I knew it was coming by the smell. Each Friday the smell of the challah loaves my mother was making early in the morning woke me up. I can still remember the smell. Besides challah, she made little rolls with cinnamon and jam, and they decorated our Saturday dinner table. Sabbath was strictly observed in our household. My father liked telling a Jewish fable. He said there lived Mordke Habath, a poor Jewish man. Once, when he had no money to celebrate Saturday, he came to the synagogue crying. He told people that his wife had died and he had no money for the funeral. Compassionate Jews immediately collected some money for Mordke. He went home and gave this money to his wife to make a Saturday dinner. Very soon a funeral team came to Mordke's house. They were to bury the deceased one on that same day. They were shocked seeing their

client well alive standing by the stove. Mordke calmed them down: 'Don't worry, she'll be yours one day. She isn't going to live forever, is she?' My father often told this fable to prove that even the poorest Jew was to celebrate Saturday and it is the law for a Jewish person.

Mama made many delicious things for Saturday. There was to be chicken on the table, she made stew, broth with kneyd lakh, tsimes was a must. Mama made different types of tsimes: potatoes and prunes, beans, carrots, and all food she made was delicious. On Friday evening we went to the bakery where we left chulent, a big pot of stewed meat, potatoes and beans and bought bread. The baker accepted pots with Saturday chulent from his customers, who bought bread from him every day. On the way home from the synagogue my father picked up this pot with chulent and took it home. I liked the Saturday meal very much. I liked the warm, kind and loving atmosphere, which seemed to me to be filling our home on Saturday.

My parents grew up in religious families. Both my grandfathers put on tefillin and tallit to pray in the morning. My father wasn't religious to this extent, but he did his best to observe traditions. Each Saturday he went to the synagogue and took me with him, when I grew older. I used to carry his prayer book. On his way to the synagogue a faithful Jew was supposed to do no work. We celebrated all Jewish holidays at home: this was mandatory. Even though our family had the most modest income, not to say we were poor, there were gifts for children prepared before the biggest holidays: new boots, suits or coats. They were not always new: my little brothers usually wore what I had grown out of. These gifts added to the spirit of the feast, which appeared in our family and across the town.

All I remember about Rosh Hashanah was plenty of delicious food that Mama made. There was gefilte fish with a big head and a bunch of parsley sticking out of its mouth on the table. As a rule, it was to be eaten by the head of the family, so my father ate it. There were lots of pastries, apples and honey on the table. My parents fasted on Yom Kippur, and even the children were not allowed any food before lunch time. Each of us was given a rooster, and the shochet from the synagogue conducted the kapores ritual.

Before Sukkot one of our relatives made a sukkah in my grandfather Meir's yard. Our yard wasn't big enough to have a sukkah. In my grandfather's yard there was a suitable spot for a sukkah. The passage between two houses was roofed with fur-tree branches and there was a table installed on the ground. That was it: the sukkah was ready. My father had lunch and some wine in the tent for eight days in a row, and we were running in and out.

On Chanukkah we played the spinning top like all other children, ate Chanukkah potato dishes: latkes and puddings. I ran from one grandfather to another to get my Chanukkah gelt. My aunts and uncles also gave us some change, and before the end of the week I already had quite some amount for a boy. I can hardly remember Purim. There were numerous shelakhmones that we took to our relatives and we also received some from them. On this holiday Mama made little pies with poppy seeds: hamantashen.

The biggest holiday was Pesach. I always looked forward to it. One week before the holiday my father brought a large basket full of matzah from the synagogue. Mama cleaned the house and each corner, hung the fancy curtains, and covered the table with a starched snow-white tablecloth. We brought in special dishes and tableware from the shed. We had a fancy dinner set and tableware, and as for pots and pans, Mama koshered these in a big bowl in the yard, dropping a

heated stone into the bowl.

We changed into new suits and boots. Mama also put on her fancy dress and changed her everyday dark shawl for a white lace shawl, which looked nice on her dark hair. Father also had a fancy dark suit on. On the first day he had his tallit on and sat at the head of the table. There were all the required dishes and all other delicacies that Mama had made on the table on this day. There was also wine on the table, they call it 'honey' in Lithuania, this was table wine from honey and raisins that my father made himself. We, the children, posed questions regarding the origin of the holiday, looked for and found the afikoman and looked forward to the Prophet Elijah, watching the level of wine left for him in a glass on the table. We did everything that a Jewish family is supposed to do on this holiday.

These holidays of my childhood merged into just one in my memory, but I remember well the Pesach, when we, the boys, having grown older, decided to stand up against ancient Jewish principles. This happened in spring 1941 after the Soviet rule [8](#) was established, when young people grew fond of Communist ideas. We, being quite young boys, bought some fresh white bread with our pocket money to eat it at home, demonstrating our disregard of the holiday. I also bought a roll, but I failed to take it out of my pocket at home, so strong was my respect for my parents, my grandfather and the traditions that they had taught me. So my parents never discovered my protest against religion, but in truth, I had no longer this blind belief in me.

When I turned seven, I was sent to the Jewish school. My parents chose this school for the simple reason that it provided education for free. We studied in Yiddish. Yiddish was my mother tongue. We spoke it at home, and this was the language of our surrounding. Before the end of the first year at school I could read and write some words in Yiddish. However, all of a sudden my grandfathers made a big deal of the fact that I had been sent to this school, as if they hadn't known before. Jews say that the first son is for the God, and my grandfathers decided I had to learn to become a rabbi. I was sent to the Yavne religious school, in which they taught Hebrew and the basics for further religious education. I was doing well at school. Within two years I completed two preparatory and two general courses: the first and second one.

There were Jewish Zionist organizations [9](#) in the town, including ones for young people, and there were also underground Komsomol [10](#) members. We were too young to distinguish between these political inclinations. We followed the older guys, Komsomol members, to where they were secretly meeting in the forest out of town. This was funny and strange: all townsfolk were aware of these undergrounders, the time and the place of their meetings, but somehow the police ignored them.

My parents were far from politics, but being the poorest element of the Jewish society they were looking for changes for the better, and they expected this better to arrive from the East, namely, from the Soviet Union. My father sympathized with Communists and even did some of their errands. By that time he had obtained a driver's license and worked as a truck driver. He drove across Lithuania and every now and then he took parcels with him: they were flyers and forbidden literature most of the time. Therefore, when in late June 1940 the Soviet forces entered Jonava and the Soviet rule was established in Lithuania, this was a desirable and expected event for our family. Many people, primarily the poor ones, were greeting the Soviet army [11](#) in the streets, welcoming it. The children, including myself, asked soldiers and officers for the stars to boast before each other for getting one.

During the war

The overall nationalization began. Larger property and little stores and businesses were taken away from people. Owners of large businesses and activists of the Zionist movement were sent to Siberia. My grandfather's brother's Simon's son Shmuel became a Communist and actively participated in the nationalization and resettlement of people [12](#). His sister Feiga was begging that he stay out of it, but Shmuel didn't listen to her. Feiga stopped talking to her brother and didn't let him come to her house. When the Great Patriotic War began, Shmuel ran away with the Communists leaving his wife Rasa and their children behind. They perished during the occupation, and Shmuel held some important position in Vilnius after the war. Our family didn't have any contact with him.

As for us, the changes were rather positive. There was a transport cooperative established in the town. My father got a job offer from them. He had a stable salary there. Since my father was classified as a member of the proletariat we received a state-provided apartment in a small two-story nationalized house. By the way, this house belonged to the baker from whom we used to buy bread and in whose stove we left our chulent. He and his family were deported, and what happened to them is unknown. We still had one room, but there was a hallway and a little kitchen there, and the WC and water were outside. They installed a large screen in the central square where they showed Soviet comedies and movies glorifying life in the USSR. As for my education, it was my bad luck again. The Yavne school was closed, and I had to go to a Soviet secondary school. We also studied in Yiddish, but the curriculum was different, and I had to go to the first grade again. So, this is how the last prewar year passed.

On 22nd June 1941 my father rode his horse to Kaunas. Kaunas was located to the west of Jonava. There were already bombs being dropped on Kaunas, and this was how my father found out about the war. He dropped the load off the wagon, turned the horse back and returned home. The horse was lathered and couldn't go on walking. My father stirred up the whole family: us and Grandfather Meir, Grandfather Girsh and Grandmother Beyle Leya and all our relatives. Fortunately, my grandfather, who also worked in the cooperative, had a horse, which he kept in his stable. We loaded the wagon with whatever valuables we needed and took off. We walked beside the wagon since it was overloaded and there was no way we could sit on top.

We reached Ukmerge where the horse stopped, unable to move on. The men found an abandoned house and unloaded the baggage there. Everybody had no doubt that we were going to be back two weeks from then, when we could have our belongings back. We went on. I have patchy memories and a sense of horror thinking about this sorrowful trip. We were going along with other refugees, and the valourous and undefeatable Soviet army was surrendering. The road was continuously bombed, and the Fascist pilots seemed to enjoy taking low level flight to shoot at peaceful people. As soon as another bombing started we scattered around to hide in roadside bushes. My grandfather was shouting to us: 'Pray, scream 'Shma, Israel!' I don't know whether our prayers helped or it was the destiny that we all survived. There were many killed and wounded people. I remember a man on the roadside. He had his both legs torn off. He was crying, pulling the skin on the stumps asking somebody to pick him up. People were turning their heads away passing him. Each person was concerned about their family or their own life. We bought two other horses on the way, and it became easier for our horse to move on.

So we reached Bologoye, a large railway junction [350 km west of Moscow], Russia, where my father left the horses with the collective farm [13](#) obtaining a letter of confirmation for getting them back after the war. Unfortunately, this certificate got lost, and now I have no proof that I was in the evacuation. In Bologoye we caught a train to go farther. The adults decided to go to Nizhniy Novgorod where my grandfather had good friends from the times of World War I.

I must note that the process was well organized, and at larger railway stations the refugees were provided with soup or cooked cereals, or at least, we could get some boiling water. We tried to stay together, which made it easier to endure the hardships. We were supporting each other, each of us responsible for one or another thing. Grandfather Meir fell ill. It was the result of having had to walk quite a distance and the nervous tension. When the train stopped at stations, my father got off to bargain things for food.

Some time after we departed Bologoye the train was bombed. We scattered around, and at that moment we all forgot about Grandfather Meir. He stayed in the carriage. It became dark like at nighttime, and there was a lot of smoke in the air. I grabbed my younger brother Simon's hand and was holding his hands, so that he didn't get lost. My father was running toward us and he was bleeding. He said a shell had exploded near him. Another man was killed, and my father was slightly wounded. My father went on looking for the others. I didn't know where to go. The bombing didn't stop and I was scared. My brother and I were standing by the wall of a building.

When the explosions stopped, we went on knowing not where to go. Fortunately we bumped into our uncle Yosif Meishe and Esther's fiancé. We stayed overnight on the bank of a lake and went back to the station in the morning. Yosif Meise spoke good Russian, and we managed to find the way back. Our train was on the track. We were the first to come into the carriage, and my father, mother and Mende joined us almost immediately. We were very happy to reunite. They thought we were dead and didn't hope to see us again. However, our joy was overshadowed by the fact that Grandfather Meir was not there, and we knew nothing about him. The train started and we had to move on.

Our trip lasted ten more days, and our plans of reaching Nizhniy Novgorod were not to become true. The train arrived at Ufimka station, Ochik district, Sverdlovsk region [about 1700 km from Moscow] where all passengers got off. We were served a hot meal and sent to various collective and Soviet farms [14](#). Our family stayed in the Soviet farm at this same station. A few days later our aunt and uncle, who had been lost on the way, arrived and joined us.

People were accommodated either at local houses or in a dormitory. We stayed at a barrack before we were provided with a room in a small house. There was also a collective farm in Ufimka, and it was better to work there. In the collective farm people were paid by working days [15](#) and provided with food products, which was not the case at the Soviet farm where my father was working. At the beginning we were starving. We were given a plot of land of 15 hundred square meters, and we took to developing our farming skills. In summer 1942 we had our first vegetable harvesting experience with some local people helping us.

My mother could hardly do any work. During the last childbirth she had puerperal fever, which affected her psyche. She was quiet and calm most of the time, but at times she suffered from attacks, when she didn't recognize people and was rather restless. She couldn't do any physical work, and Mende and I had to work in our vegetable garden.

My father was worried about our missing grandfather. He kept inquiring about him, and at some time he met someone, who could tell him good news and details of what happened to my grandfather. When we got off the train, my grandfather was on his berth, when two young Jewish girls entered the carriage. They discovered Meir on his berth, and Meir told them that his family was heading to Nizhniy Novgorod. The girls happened to be heading there, too, and they took my grandfather with them. In Nizhniy Novgorod my grandfather was accommodated with a Jewish family. He got well and even took to some commerce, and, as they told us, even managed to get some food products for the family.

My father was planning to go and find Grandfather, when his call-up paper from the military commandant's office was delivered to him. My father was recruited to the labor front [16](#). My father was assigned to a mine in the town of Revda in Sverdlovsk region. It wasn't far from the place where we were. However, my father only visited us occasionally. The discipline in the labor army was as strict as in the army.

Our mother and we, our grandmother, grandfather and Mama's brother Zalman's wife Esther lived on together. In 1942 we were notified that Rochl, my mother's younger sister, had perished at the front. This news of the loss of his younger daughter, his favorite, happened to be very hard on Grandfather Girsh. He no longer went to work. He was lying for hours on his bed staring at the ceiling. He often prayed. My grandfather never came back to normal and never went back to work till the end of his life.

I went to school and since I didn't know Russian, I had to start from scratch and went to the first grade. During vacations my brother and I supplied wood to the glass factory. The logs were very heavy, one of us could not lift a log, and therefore, the effort required us both to cope. In the summer we picked herbs, and Mama made soup with them. There were also mushrooms and berries, but the main product was potato. My father stayed at the labor front till the end of the war. Grandfather Meir died in Nizhniy Novgorod, and we never visited him there. When my father came back, he started making arrangements for us to obtain a permit to return home to Lithuania almost immediately.

Post-war

In summer 1945 we arrived in Kaunas. Grandfather Girsh and Grandmother Beyle Leya were with us. We stayed with our relatives temporarily. Esther, my mother's brother Zalman's widow, who married their older brother Yosif Meishe, had returned from evacuation earlier, and she was living there. We went to Jonava. There were hardly any Jews left in the town. The ones, who had stayed in the town, perished during the occupation, and survivors didn't rush back. We knew we would not be able to live on ashes where even stones seemed to have been saturated with the blood of our close ones. It was not for nothing that they said all Jews were interrelated in Jonava. We found our former room. There was nothing left there. Someone told us of almost a fight between two neighbors arguing about my mother's Singer sewing machine. There was only an old wardrobe with wooden carving left in the room. My father rented a wagon to ship it to Kaunas. It was a memory of our past life.

My father found a vacant room in a damp basement in Kaunas. The water was almost flowing down the walls. We moved in there. My grandmother and grandfather lived nearby in similar conditions. In 1946 the Neris burst the banks and flooded the houses in the central part of Kaunas. However,

our hovel was intact. It was located farther from the center on some elevated spot. So we managed to bargain it for a room in the center of the town. The owner of the room was frightened by the flood and wanted to move into our basement. There was a hairdresser's next door to our new room. It hadn't been used for a while, and my father obtained a permit to have it for us. So, we walled up the door opening, made a window and doors between the rooms, and it was a rather nice apartment that we got in the end. My parents helped our grandfather and grandmother to move in with us and since then we stayed together. Later they moved to Malka's place. Malka was my mother's younger sister. They stayed with her as long as they lived.

My father went to work shortly after we returned from evacuation. It was hard to get a job then, particularly for those who had no education. He was employed as a loader, and later he became a vendor. When he was old he trained in glass cutting, and had this job until he retired. The period of evacuation and postwar hardships affected my father's health condition. He had heart problems. My father died of heart disease in 1963, one year after he retired. He was buried according to Jewish traditions. He was carried to the cemetery on a board across the town, and lowered into the grave. There was no coffin. This was frightful and my mother mentioned she would not wish to lie in damp ground without a coffin.

Mama lived many years longer. She died at the age of 76 in 1980. I remembered what she had said during my father's funeral, and she was buried in a coffin. However, we observed all other Jewish traditions. An old Jewish man recited a prayer for the deceased, and after the funeral we sat shivah. In 1963, a few months after my father died, my grandmother Beyle Leya died. Grandfather Girsh outlived her and my father, he turned one hundred years old and died in 1967.

I went back to school. This time I went to the fifth grade in a Russian school. We didn't have notebooks and had one textbook for five or six students. My friends convinced me to go to a Jewish school, and there I had to go to the third grade. My nine-year-old desk mate used to tease me continuously. I felt overage compared to my classmates, and this feeling didn't add to my feeling comfortable in my class. At some point of time the school was closed. I was about to turn 16 and decided to quit my studies. I had to go to work to help my parents. All that my mother was capable of doing was some housework. So, basically it was because of the war that I failed to get a decent education. If it hadn't been for the war, I would have done better in life.

I got tinsmith's training. At first I started working for a distant relative before I got a job in a shop. There was a good team in this shop. I was given an opportunity to go to an evening school where I managed to finish the seventh grade. I joined the Komsomol and was quite an active Komsomol member. I was sincerely committed to Communist ideals. I remember what a hard blow Stalin's death in 1953 was for me. I was secretary of a Komsomol unit then, and after the death of the leader I admitted almost all the young people in the shop to Komsomol. I myself joined the Communist Party. My father was amazed at my political activities. I remember literally his words in this regard: 'Why are you laying your sound head into a sick bed?' However, I was attracted by the Communist ideas. They are truly attractive and very humane.

In 1953, when I was drafted into the army, I was already a party member. I finished the training course in Vapniarka and served in an Air Force unit in the town of Stanislav [today Ivano-Frankovsk, 550 km from Kyiv]. I was an electric mechanic. I have only good memories of my service. I was surrounded by nice guys and faced no anti-Semitic incidents. I made good friends in the army. We

corresponded and remained friends for many years. In the army I was actively involved in public activities as well. In 1956 the 20th Party Congress [17](#) denounced Stalin and his crimes, and it was a collapse of my ideals. I can say, I lost any interest in further active involvement in public activities, and from then on I was a Communist only nominally.

In 1963, after my father died, I observed the mourning after him for a whole year. I went to the synagogue every day. Once the secretary of my party organization summoned me to his office. By the way, he was a Jew. He said: 'You, Dudakas, are leading a double life!' When I asked what exactly this was about, he replied that 'the party organization was aware of my attending the synagogue.' I replied in a rather sharp manner: 'I am following my father's testament and our ancestors' traditions. If it is incompatible with my party membership certificate, I can leave it right here, on the table!' The secretary calmed me down and never again touched upon this issue.

By the early 1960s our shop developed into a small factory named the 'Metallist.' I had a very good reputation and worked as a shift foreman. Once I was requested to act as a shop superintendent through the period of his absence, and I managed very well. Since then I often filled in for the shop superintendent, when he was on vacation or business trips. Many times through my career I was offered key positions, but during the Soviet period workers and foremen were paid way better than the engineering staff. My position was more profitable and I worked until 1997 without changing my job.

Married life

My private life happened to be very successful. In 1964 I went to visit my distant relatives in Vilnius where I met a Jewish girl. She became my wife some short time later. Her name is Sophia. My wife's maiden name is Gelzina. She was born in Gomel, Belarus, in 1939. When the Great Patriotic War began, my wife's mother and Sophia were in evacuation in Chkalov region in the Ural. Sophia's father, Itzhak Gelzin, was at the front. His wartime service was over in Vilnius. He liked the town and stayed there. He found a job and arranged for his family to join him there.

Sophia finished school in Vilnius and found a job as a storekeeper. We liked each other and got married soon. Our wedding took place in early 1965. We had our marriage registered in a district registry office, and then had a wedding party at our home where my mother and mother-in-law made a fancy dinner. The food was delicious. We had about 30 guests. They were our relatives and friends. They were eating, drinking and having fun almost until dawn.

In 1966 our elder daughter Inna was born. In 1968 Yelena, the younger one, was born. I worked a lot and provided well for the family. We had a good life. We spent vacations in Palanga, a Baltic Sea resort, and went to the Black Sea a few times. We went to the cinema and theaters. Mama lived with us until the last days of her life. She prayed and fasted on Yom Kippur. On Pesach we always had matzah. Well, we didn't follow the kosher rules, and I had to work on Saturday, but we always celebrated Pesach and Rosh Hashanah, the biggest Jewish holidays, at home.

I always wanted to live in Israel, but each time there was something preventing my dream from coming true. When Jews were leaving Lithuania after the war, I was just a boy and was not in the position to make decisions for myself. I've always taken the situation in Israel close to my heart, particularly during the Six-Day-War [18](#) and the Judgment Day War [19](#). It was particularly hard considering the bluntly negative attitude of Soviet authorities and the Party to Israel, and sitting at

meetings I had to listen to the flow of lies about the country that was my dream. My daughters must have taken in this love of Israel and implemented what I've failed to do. They both live in Israel.

Inna, the older one, finished a medical school in Vilnius and became a medical nurse. She got married. Her married name is Furmanovskaya. In 1989 her son Arthur was born. Inna's marriage did not last. She divorced her husband. In 1996 she and her son moved to Israel. Her ex-husband moved to Canada. Inna lives in Beer Sheva where she also works as a medical nurse. She hasn't remarried, but she has a boyfriend. My grandson Arthur goes to school.

Yelena, the younger one, finished a teachers' training school. She worked as a tutor in a kindergarten in Kaunas. Her private life has not been successful either. Yelena's husband Yuriy Kocherginskiy developed a severe disease of joints. He had to take lots of medications, which affected his liver. He died. Yelena moved to Israel in 1999. She also lives in Beer Sheva, not far from her sister. She works as a tutor and also hopes to improve her personal situation.

My family has always been close. I stood on my own feet and supported my brothers. My brother Mende finished a lower secondary school and obtained the specialty of a shoe material cutter. He married Valeriya, a Russian woman. Her life story is also very interesting. She didn't remember her parents. They said her parents were Jewish and perished in the ghetto during an action. Some locals rescued Valeriya and raised her as a Christian. Mende and Valeriya have two children: daughter Yida, born in 1959 [her married name is Batvinski] and son Lev, born in 1967. Lev lived in Israel, but returned to Lithuania. Mende continues working in his field of specialization, and Lev became my apprentice. I trained him to become a tinsmith, and now we work together.

My younger brother Simon also became a tinsmith. He married Anna, a Jewish girl. Their daughter's name is Ella. In 1972 my brother and his family decided to move to Israel. I supported him with some money. In those years one needed quite a lot of money to be able to get rid of the Soviet citizenship. Simon left taking my word that I would follow him some time later. Then the Judgment Day War began, and we delayed our trip. Each time there was something in the way, and I failed to have my dream come true. Simon died in 1986. His daughter lives in Israel. She has three grown up sons.

I've visited Israel three times. I went there to my grandson's bar mitzvah for the first time. My daughter was in a pretty tough situation, and I stayed in Israel for almost a year helping her about the house and looking after her son. I admire Israel, its people, the atmosphere of freedom and independence, its nature, the sea and the sun. Each time, when coming to Israel, I am thinking of staying there for good, but when I come back to Lithuania, I know that this is my motherland, and it's hard to leave it.

After Lithuania gained independence [20](#), my life became easier in the material and moral way. I work for a private company now. I've faced no anti-Semitism. I speak Lithuanian to Lithuanian people and Yiddish to Jewish people. I've become an active member of the Lithuanian Jewish community. I haven't become a religious person, but I feel like supporting the community. There are fewer than 300 Jews left in Kaunas, and soon there will be hardly anybody left to attend the synagogue. I go to the synagogue for the morning prayer, and on Saturday my wife and I go there together. I keep telling my wife that we need to move to Israel and I believe she will give her consent one day, and then my dream to live in the Promised Land will come true.

Glossary

1 Old Believers

As their name suggests, all of them rejected the reformed service books, which Patriarch Nikon introduced in the 1650s and preserved pre-Nikonian liturgical practices in as complete a form as canonical regulations permitted. For some Old Believers, the defense of the old liturgy and traditional culture was a matter of primary importance; for all, the old ritual was at least a badge of identification and a unifying slogan. The Old Believers were united in their hostility toward the Russian state, which supported the Nikonian reforms and persecuted those who, under the banner of the old faith, opposed the new order in the church and the secular administration. To be sure, the intensity of their hostility and the language and gestures with which they expressed it varied as widely as their social background and their devotional practices. Nevertheless, when the government applied pressure to one section of the movement, all of its adherents instinctively drew together and extended to their beleaguered brethren whatever help they could.

2 Keep in touch with relatives abroad

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

3 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.

4 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.

5 Lithuanian Polizei

It refers to the local Lithuanian collaborators of the Nazi regime. Subordinated to the Germans they were organized as a police force and were responsible to establish Nazi control in the country. They played a major role in carrying out the destruction of the Lithuanian Jewry.

6 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.

7 Russian stove

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

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 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.

10 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.

11 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, priests, factory owners, etc. and their children) as well as kulaks (rich peasants) and cossacks were not drafted into 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 22nd June 1941 the Great Patriotic War was unleashed and the drafting into 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 the navy 4 years. Young people with secondary education, both civilian and military, from the age 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 remained without considerable changes until the breakup of the Soviet Army (1991-93).

12 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.

13 Collective farm (in Russian kolkhoz)

In the Soviet Union the policy of gradual and voluntary collectivization of agriculture was adopted in 1927 to encourage food production while freeing labor and capital for industrial development. In 1929, with only 4% of farms in kolkhozes, Stalin ordered the confiscation of peasants' land, tools, and animals; the kolkhoz replaced the family farm.

14 Sovkhoz

State-run agricultural enterprise. The first sovkhoz yards were created in the USSR in 1918. According to the law the sovkhoz property was owned by the state, but it was assigned to the sovkhoz which handled it based on the right of business maintenance.

15 Trudodni

A measure of work used in Soviet collective farms until 1966. Working one day it was possible to earn from 0.5 up to 4 trudodni. In fall when the harvest was gathered the collective farm administration calculated the cost of 1 trudoden in money or food equivalent (based upon the profit).

16 Labor army

It was made up of men of call-up age not trusted to carry firearms by the Soviet authorities. Such people were those living on the territories annexed by the USSR in 1940 (Eastern Poland, the Baltic States, parts of Karelia, Bessarabia and northern Bukovina) as well as ethnic Germans living in the Soviet Union proper. The labor army was employed for carrying out tough work, in the woods or in mines. During the first winter of the war, 30 percent of those drafted into the labor army died of starvation and hard work. The number of people in the labor army decreased sharply when the larger part of its contingent was transferred to the national Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian Corps, created at the beginning of 1942. The remaining labor detachments were maintained up until the end of the war.

17 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.

18 Six-Day-War

(Hebrew: Milhemet Sheshet Hayamim), also known as the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Six Days War, or June War, was fought between Israel and its Arab neighbors Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. It began when Israel launched a preemptive war on its Arab neighbors; by its end Israel controlled the Gaza

Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights. The results of the war affect the geopolitics of the region to this day.

19 Yom Kippur War (1973 Arab-Israeli War)

(Hebrew: Milchemet Yom HaKipurim), also known as the October War, the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, and the Ramadan War, was fought from 6th October (the day of Yom Kippur) to 24th October 1973, between Israel and a coalition of Egypt and Syria. The war began when Egypt and Syria launched a surprise joint attack in the Sinai and Golan Heights, respectively, both of which had been captured by Israel during the Six-Day-War six years earlier. The war had far-reaching implications for many nations. The Arab world, which had been humiliated by the lopsided defeat of the Egyptian-Syrian-Jordanian alliance during the Six-Day-War, felt psychologically vindicated by its string of victories early in the conflict. This vindication, in many ways, cleared the way for the peace process which followed the war. The Camp David Accords, which came soon after, led to normalized relations between Egypt and Israel - the first time any Arab country had recognized the Israeli state. Egypt, which had already been drifting away from the Soviet Union, then left the Soviet sphere of influence almost entirely.

20 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.