

Eta Gurvichuyte

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Vilnius

Lithuania

Interviewer: Zhanna Litinskaya

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I met Eta Gurvichuyte during my first stay in Lithuania. She helped me look for people who wanted to share their reminiscences with me. She did not agree to be interviewed for the most likely reason of her modesty by nature. Eta daily works as a volunteer under medical program in the community. Meeting Eta in the community every day I gradually was winning her favor. The interview took place in Eta's office. Our discussion was interrupted when the visitors came in to get the medicine. Eta is a rather slim lady for her age. She has dark hair with the streaks of gray. Modestly, but stylishly dressed Eta was ill at ease as she was not used to talk about herself, she was always more worried about adversities and sorrows of other people. Eta's image, her manner of conversing and listening show that she came of intelligentsia and got a good upbringing in her childhood.



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My family background

My name is Eta Gurvich. In Lithuanian my last name sounds Gurvichuyte and this name is written in my passport. It is my maiden name. In my relatives' words, my paternal great grandfather was a chimney sweep. I do not know his first name, just surname -Gurvich. Great grandfather was from Lithuanian town Rumsiskes [80 km from Vilnius]. At that time, prior to Lithuanian independence [1](#) from Russian empire, great grandfather, a simple chimney-sweep, dreamt of getting rich. His dream came true. It was like a fairy-tale. A poor chimney-sweep, who bought all kinds of lotteries, won an all-Russian lottery prize. I do not know exactly how much money he got, but at that time it was a real fortune. My great grandfather bought a large house in Kaunas. He lived with his family there and raised his children. I have no idea how many children great grandfather had. One of them was my grandfather Jacob Gurvich, a rabbi of one of the many Kaunas synagogues. I did not know grandfather. He died in 1911. He was not senile; he died at the age of 60. During First World

War the whole family- grandmother, her children and their families along with many others Jews were exiled from frontier Territory of Russian Empire to more remote districts of the country. They happened to be in Volga region, the town of Kineshma, Ivanovo oblast [400 km from Moscow], where they had spent couple of years. Upon return to Lithuania grandmother started living with the family of elder daughter Bluma. She survived grandfather by many years. She was a true Jewish woman, who observed all Jewish traditions. I do not remember her with her head uncovered. There was always a neat head kerchief, tied in a special way. It looked like a cap. Grandmother loved her grandchildren very much. She was a sweet and kind woman. In spite of being rabbi's wife, Ester's views were rather democratic. She had a keen interest in modern life, politics. She enjoyed watching movies and had her opinion in things. Grandmother helped daughter about the house and with raising children. Until the end of her days, she had been strictly observing Kashrut, fasting. She lit Sabbath candles, marked Jewish holidays. In a word- she kept Jewish spirit in the house. My grandmother died in the 1930s. She was buried in accordance with the Jewish rite.

Ester and Jacob had five children- two daughters and three sons. All grown-up children with their families lived in a large house, demised by a great grandfather. That two-storied square-shaped house had a yard and adjacent premises as well as twenty apartments. There were enough apartments for all children. The remainder was leased. The house pertained to grandmother Ester. After her death in accordance with the Jewish law the property was devolved by the eldest son, i.e. my father. Father, in his turn, divided the property among his relatives. Bluma, born in 1870s, was the eldest in the family. Her husband's name was Burstein. I had never seen her husband. He left for America long before I was born. Bluma's husband was supposed to invite her and children to the USA as soon as he had settled in. After his departure Bluma received no letters from her husband. He vanished into a thin air and Bluma did not manage to hear from him again. She had to make a living somehow, so she opened up a small grocery store in one of the rooms of our house. All our neighboring people - Jews and Lithuanians purchased products on credit. The information on all purchases and debts was entered in a large logbook. Then the buyers paid for the goods they way the could. Bluma took no interest from them and common people, who were Bluma's customers, loved her. My father helped out Bluma both materially and morally as Bluma raised children without husband. Bluma's son, whose name I do not remember, died of tuberculosis at a young age. I vaguely remember my cousin who was about 15 years older than me. Bluma's daughter Anna (Jewish name Hana), born in the 1910s, married a musician and composer Klinitskiy before war. Bluma died in late 1930s. Anna and her husband were lucky to run away from Germans in June 1941 [Great Patriotic War] [2](#) and stayed in evacuation. There they organized a Lithuanian music band, where Anna's husband was a leader. After war they came back to Lithuania and settled in Vilnius. Klinitskiy became a rather popular compose and their family was rather well-to-do. Anna did not have children. She died in Vilnius in 1995.

Father's second sister Rohl, who was couple of years younger than Bluma, was happier. Her husband Sholom Gefin was involved in timber trading. He did not have his own business. He worked for his rich relatives, the owners of timber mill. They had a strange last name Intellegator. They were very rich and Sholom was paid very well. Rohl was a housewife. She took care of children. She died before war. Her husband Sholom perished in Kaunas ghetto [3](#). Rohl and Sholom had three children. The fate of their daughters Dveire and Haya is tragic. Both of them, born in the 1910s, became communists. They married their cousins- Lithuanian Jews, who were also ardent underground communists. Sisters and their husbands had lived in Germany for couple of years.

They left for the USSR, when Hitler came to power. I remember that their train was via Kaunas and all of us came to see them. It did not last long. Adults managed to say couple of words at the platform of the train station. It was in late 1930s, when repressions were in full swing [Great Terror] [4](#) in USSR. There my cousins' husbands were arrested and cousins with children were exiled. Dveire's husband was shot at once. Haya's husband had stayed in Soviet concentration camp for couple of years. He went through ordeal and died there. Unfortunately I do not remember their husbands' last names. In the 1950s Dveira and Haya were rehabilitated [5](#), and came back from exile to Moscow, where they had spent the last years. They died in middle 1970s. Each of them had one daughter. They live somewhere in Russia. I do not remember their names. Rohl's son Jacob, born in early 1920s served in Lithuanian division [6](#) during war. Afterwards he came back to Vilnius and was assigned to a high position in the military ministry. He died in 2003. He remained single.

I do not remember my father's brothers. One of them, whose name I forgot, died of typhus fever in early 1920s. His widow Polya and son Berl, born in 1918, lived in one of the apartments of our house. Polya died in early 1930s. Berl, who was afflicted with tuberculosis since childhood, died shortly after mother. Father's second brother Haim died of some disease when I was a baby.

My father Leizer Gurchik was born in 1879. I cannot say exactly where he studied. I think he graduated from lyceum and went on with his education. Father was a modern educated man. When he was young he worked for his relatives at match production factory. Then he acquired a printing house jointly with his brothers. It was a large enterprise, where newspapers and magazines were printed in Lithuanian as well as in Yiddish. Father stuck to Bund views [7](#). I do not know if father was a member of any Jewish organization. There were a lot of them at that time in Lithuania. Father had no time for social life. He was not a religious Jew. He went to the synagogue on the holidays, mostly when mother asked him.

Father got married in 1909 at the age of thirty. They say, he met my mother with the help of Jewish match-makers- shadchans. My mother was from Lithuanian town Taurage [200 km from Vilnius]. My maternal grandparents Benjamin and Sarah Goldsmidt were truly religious people. Grandfather was born in the 1860s. He was a respectable man in Jewish community of Taurage. He was a gabai of the local synagogue. It was his only social work. He made lemonade for a living. He had a tiny shop, where he and one hired worker made lemonade. Grandparents had their own honorary seats in the synagogue. Grandfather was a tall handsome man with a beard. He always wore either kippah or a hat. Grandmother Sarah always wore a kerchief on her head. Grandfather had his own house in Taurage. It was not as big as ours. It was a one-storied log house for two apartments. That house was also income bearing. One of the apartments was occupied by grandparents and another one was leased. The Goldsmidts strictly observed kashrut. Later on, when grandfather and grandmother came in Kaunas, they never stayed in the house of their own daughter, my mother reckoning our house and mode of life not to be enough kosher. Sarah and Benjamin always stayed in the house of their remote relatives, who were as religious as they.

My mother Ella Goldsmidt was an only daughter of her parents. She was a little bit younger than father. She was born in 1890. At that time one child in the family, especially in such a religious one, was very rare. And mother's parents gave her all love and tenderness they could possibly give. Mother was educated like father. She spoke Russian Lithuanian and German. She was well-read and had good writing skills. She married my father, when she was an adolescent. They were in love with each other in spite of the fact that their marriage was prearranged by shadchans. The wedding

took place in Taurage in accordance with the Jewish rites in the synagogue, where grandfather was a gabai. The newly-weds went to Kaunas, where they settled in the house of grandfather Jacob.

Growing up

In 1910 my elder sister Anna was born and in 1913 – brother Jacob, named after grandfather Jacob Gurvich. I, the youngest, was born on the 20th of April 1920. I was named Eta. I barely remember my early childhood, by the age of seven. These were years of happiness, when my parents were with me. I remember happy times, when father came home from work, hugged mother and played with me. I was the little one as elder siblings went to lyceum at that time. Mother ran the house. There was a lady Teresa to help mother with the chores. Polish Teresa was a grown-up woman, a widow. Her husband died shortly before she came to work for us. Teresa, who occupied a small room partitioned from the kitchen, became a kind angel for our house. She spoke Yiddish fluently, cooked Jewish dishes under mother's supervision and soon became a good cook. There was also laundress, who came twice a week to do the laundry. Our four-room apartment was immaculately clean. As in most Lithuanian houses, one room was after another- kitchen, then dining-room, then parents' bedroom and children's room. The furniture was rich- made mahogany and ebony and the floors were parquet. The curtains were velvet with golden strings. On Friday mother ran the process of cleaning. The furniture was polished, the floors were cleaned even more thoroughly. Friday evening mother lit candles and we marked Sabbath. No matter that father was unreligious, he did not work on Saturdays. Sometimes he went to the synagogue, when his wife asked him to. There was always a roasted goose with apples on Sabbath table in accordance with the family tradition. Sometimes we went to Taurage to mother's parents, when mother was with us. Usually grandpa took us to synagogue. I remember the building looked beautiful. I recall bar mitzvah rite of my brother Jacob. There were a lot of guests- mostly relatives and brother's pals from lyceum. The table was lavish with dishes and deserts. Children and adults danced. When mother was with us, Jewish holidays were marked, especially Pesach. We had special Paschal dishes- posh silverware and the best porcelain sets, crystal goblets and cups.

Mother always thoroughly got ready for Pesach. Before the holiday in spring 1927 she went outside to beat a carpet wearing a thin gown. Mother who was a rather plump lady, quickly perspired and caught cold. First nobody paid attention to her cold, but then it was too late. She had a pneumonia. There were no antibiotics at that time. So, mommy passed away in 10 days. My relatives took me to them right away and brought me home on the day of the funeral so I could 'say good-bye' to my mother. It was not clear for me what was going on. I did not really understand what death was about. I just kissed mother on her forehead and they took me away. In accordance with Jewish tradition children were not supposed to be present at the funeral of the parents. Grandpa Benjamin insisted on having mother buried in accordance with the Jewish rite. She was taken to the cemetery on the boards and buried even without a shroud- she was put straight in the earth.

After mother's death father did his best to maintain things at home the way they were. He was yearning, though he never showed it. Then father became more reserved. He hardly had any free time. Usually I saw him only at breakfast or late in the evening with the paper in his hands as if trying to shelter from us and from life. I remember a funny story taken place shortly after mother's death. In accordance with the Jewish law, a widower father was supposed to marry Polyá, a widowed wife of his deceased brother. Father was not going to marry, especially Polyá, whom he did not like at all. In order to declare that he was against it, in accordance with the Jewish tradition

he had to go to the rabbi in synagogue, take off his boot and through it over the threshold. That way he was supposed to say no in marrying his sister-in-law. I remember father before doing that. He took off his boot and studied his socks closely making sure that there were no holes in them. It would be bad for him, an outstanding printer, to appear in front of rabbi in ragged socks.

Now sister Anna was in charge of the household. She turned 17, when mother died. She finished Yiddish lyceum. Sister only formally ran the household. Our loyal Teresa practically ran everything. Of course, she did not manage to do everything the way mother did. We could feel that there was no feminine warmth in the house, but Teresa exerted her every effort. She cooked Jewish dishes the way mother did. She even tried keeping Jewish traditions in the house. She processed non-kosher meat like mother- put on a special board so that the blood could trickle down. On Sabbath there was a goose cooked in accordance with mother's recipe. Teresa strove to be a mother for us children, especially for me. She pampered me, baked scrumptious cookies the way my mother did. The dining room remained the same. Jacob moved to father's bedroom so that sister and I could have separate rooms.

Once or twice after mother's death we went to Taurage to see our grandparents. When seeing us, grandmother Sarah tried to pull herself together not to show how bad she felt. The tribulation - the loss of her only daughter broke her down and in about a year or a year and a half grandmother Sarah followed her daughter. Grandfather Benjamin devoted all his time to praying as he remained by himself. We tried not to forget him and come oftener - either on Jewish holidays or during summer break. Grandfather was happy to see us. He took me to the synagogue. When grandfather came in Kaunas he did not stay with us because our house was orphaned, not for the reason of being non-kosher. Everything reminded him of his daughter here. Grandfather was not willing to get married. He died in solitude in Taurage in 1936.

After mother's death sometimes we went to aunt Rohl or Bluma on Sabbath. On Friday grandmother Ester prepared cholnt. The pot was taken to the bakery, where all neighbors kept their Sabbath meal warm. When grandmother passed away, aunt Bluma took care of those things. Jewish holidays were usually marked in aunt's Rohl's apartment. The whole family got together there- Bluma and her children, our family, aunt Polya and Berl as well as some distant relatives. There were Paschal dishes, which I had known since childhood- gefilte fish, matzah pies and all kinds of deserts. Matzah was in our house as well. Father brought it from the synagogue beforehand. Sholom, Rohl's husband was a very religious man. He carried out seder with all rules strictly being observed, Brothers asked questions about the holidays. They and I looked for afikoman. When the night came, all of us with bated breath were listening in prophet Ilia. For some reason I remembered only Pesach. The other holidays, marked at Rohls' place, most likely were collected together in my head- Chanukah, Purim, Rosh Hashanah.

Both my sister and brother graduated from Jewish lyceum. When I turned six, I went to that lyceum. Mother was still alive. I think it was mother's wish for her children to study in Hebrew lyceum. I finished two or three junior grades. Then father transferred me to a newly opened Yiddish lyceum. First that lyceum was named after Sholom-Aleichem [8](#). It was an amazing school. My studies at lyceum were probably the brightest years in my life. The studies were not free of charge. Usually children of well-off parents studied here, but there were children of poor Jews as well. Their tuition was paid by a special fund, where donations were made by wealthy people. All subjects were taught in Yiddish. Jewish holidays were marked in lyceum. The most hilarious was Purim,

when the pageant was organized and everybody treated each other to shelakmones. Teresa made a pageant costume for me. She was the one who cooked shelakmones as well. There was a democratic air in lyceum. We were taught Tanach like one of the religious subjects, but it was rather formal. Nobody demanded profound knowledge of religion from children. Modern sciences were taught at a very serious level. We had wonderful teachers, real devotees, carried away by their work. Most of all we liked the teacher of Lithuanian language Zimanis. He was the youngest teacher, only 10 years older than we. Apart from teaching Lithuanian, Zimanis also taught biology, arranged hiking trips in the closest vicinity, told us amazing stories. We also loved geography teacher Itsikson and many others. Liberal arts appealed to me more. I liked literature, music and dancing. We also had extra-curriculum classes- we were taught how to play the piano. Father bought me the piano. I was fond of dancing, so I attended choreography studio. I dreamt to become a ballet-dancer. I had a lot of friends among boys and girls. We sauntered along Kaunas broad way, had tea and coffee, bought tidbits- in many cafes and confectionaries. I took an interest in theatre. There were two Jewish theatres in Kaunas. I liked to attend musical and drama performances.

We were not children any more and many of us had our own political views. My sister Anna was absolutely apolitical; my brother Jacob however joined a Zionist [8](#) organization Beitar [9](#) and dreamt of Israel. I was interested in communistic ideas. In that period of my life I made friends with Evsey Yatsovskiy. He was an underground komsomol member [10](#). His mother, wife of prominent moviemaker, was a communist. These were the years of adolescent romanticism, when the communistic ideas of all-in-all equality and brotherhood seemed the most appealing. I also started attending meetings of underground komsomol. There we studied the works written by classics of Marxism and Leninism, read newspapers and magazines from Soviet Union, dreamt of bright communistic future. We had no idea of repressions, arrests, and all that horror of Stalin's regime. We sincerely admired Stalin. Sometimes our meetings took place in our house. Father often showed up at home in wee hours of the morning. He barely paid attentions to my surroundings. Teresa was the one who cared the most. She understood nothing from what we were talking about. She was worried that the authorities would find out about our secretive meetings. At times during komsomol meetings where the ideas of the triumph of communistic ideas were expressed, Teresa knelt and started praying. I do not know what for she was asking God. One of her requests was to protect me from adversities and calamities.

The adversities were at the threshold. One of the tasks of our organization was anti-military propaganda as all of us knew about Hitler from papers, about crystal night [11](#) and we assumed what kinds of plans fascists might have regarding our counties and enslavement of peoples. My friend Zelda Ushpitz and I spread fliers. They contained propaganda against war and Hitler. There was nothing bad there. Nonetheless, somebody informed on us. Zelda and I were arrested. It happened in 1935. We had been kept in custody for the whole night and then sent to the prison in the morning. There was a special cell for political convicts in Kaunas prison. There were over 30 women and all of them were arrested for participation in underground communist organizations. Many of them had been incarcerated for a number of times, but all of them were ardent sticklers. Huduskayte, a Lithuanian lady, was the one who stood out from the rest. It seemed interesting for me and I was not scared at all. I think I had no fear because I was young. It was interesting because we were constantly chatting and learning much. The older comrades did not leave anybody in peace even in prison and kept on their propaganda. They held classes, lectures, told about Lenin

12 and other political activists. The linen was changed daily in the cells. We were substantially fed. Besides, father found some of the acquaintance doctor in prison and managed to send me something through him. I shared everything I got with my cellmates. Sometimes I was called by an investigator. He was friendly with me. He mildly tried to edify me how could I, the daughter of a well-off man, was fond of the ideas of the rabble. Neither I nor Zelda confessed that we were the members of underground organization. I had stayed in the prison for two months. Father had been trying to find a way to free me. The amount of bail was very large- about 100 thousand litas. Father hypothecated our house, borrowed money from all his pals and kin and also hocked the house of one of our relatives. The bail was paid off and I was released from prison. Father had never reproached me. He was happy to see me at home. Soon the trial took place, where Zelda and I were sentenced to eight years. Luckily it was a suspended sentence as both of use did not come of age. After that the bail was returned .

The only serious consequence of my unaccomplished political career was my expulsion from the lyceum. I had studied at home for the last year and passed exams pre-term. Now, I was not involved in komsomol activity. It was not safe to meet in my place. They also did not want to give any assignments to me either, as they thought that I was spied on. I was gradually digressing from my komsomol unit. That year my father and I had become really bonded. I felt how much he loved me when I got seriously sick. I had a dithery, and as a complication my ears began hurting. I was sick all winter long and father had been looking after for me. At that time I did not think of father's solitude. Probably he had some women, but he was not committed to any of them. Once, father wanted to marry a sweet, cultured teacher of elementary Jewish school and my elder sister Anna was strongly against it. It is hard to say what it was- her selfishness or jealousy. She behaved herself indecently practically forbidding father to get married. My dad, so handsome and clever, was a bachelor. Father's hobby was chess. He was a very gifted chess player, the member of Kaunas chess club. Once famous Lasker [Lasker Emanuil (1868 - 1941) is a German chess player, theoretician and literati, the second world champion (1894 - 1921), the author of many books, including "Common sense in Chess " (1895), "Manual on Game of Chess " (1926). In 1902 he defended PHD thesis in mathematics in Geidelberg University.] had a session of simultaneous game in our city. That session lead to father's success. The game between father and Lasker ended in a tie.

Several years had past. In January 1939 father took a bath and caught cold. Like mother he died of pneumonia. I remember father's funeral very well. In spite of his being unreligious, he was buried in accordance with the formal Jewish rite- he laid on the floor. He was buried without a coffin. We observed the mourning period - shivah.

At the age of 18 I became a full orphan. Anna went to work. Jacob was studying at engineering department of Kaunas University. After father's death he took over his printing business. They lived pretty comfortably. Jacob got married in a year after father's death. His fiancée Sonya was from a very religious rich family. Her parents lived in a small Lithuanian town. Mother of Jacob's bosom friend Gefel took care of the organization of the wedding party. All members of Sonya's family were Zionists and their mother was the most active out of them. She was a wonderful woman, very vivacious. The wedding party took place in her posh house. She was like a mother to my brother. Brother and his bride were wed under chuppah and after than they had a mirthful wedding party.

I was at home when father was alive. Then I had to think of getting a job. I always wanted to be a doctor. So, I entered the courses for nurses. The latter were Jewish courses by the Jewish Health Care Society. The lectures were held in the evening, and in the afternoon we had practice in all departments of the Jewish hospital. It was unpleasant to take care of people afflicted with typhus fever in the infectious department, but I got over that understanding that doctors had to deal with all kinds of patients.

The Soviet invasion of the Baltics

The prewar period, i.e. the year 1940 was the happiest in my life. My dream came true. The Soviet regime [13](#) was established in Lithuania. People met Soviet army with flowers. My friend and I also went to welcome the soldiers. It seemed to me that life would turn into a continual holiday of liberty and equality. The printing premises and our house were nationalized, though they left us our apartment. I thought that act of the Soviet regime to be absolutely just. Fortunately, nobody from our family was arrested. Some of my acquaintances were exiled in Siberia [14](#). The family of my friend Leya Girshon was exiled. It was strange, to put it mildly, but I still believed in Soviet regime. Another odd thing was that almost all products vanished from the stores. Out of numerous sorts of bread, only two remained- bran and rye. All tasty sausages and other delicacies merely vanished. At that time my friend Eva Mirskaya came back from Kaunas. In 1936 her father, underground communist, made arrangements for his family to leave Russia. As soon as Eva's father arrived, he was arrested and there was no trace of him. Her mother died. Eva was employed by some sort of a factory. She lived in a hostel in some small town in Russia. She made sure that nobody knew that her father was 'peoples' enemy' [15](#). I was struck by her tales what was going on in the USSR and mostly I was surprised to see her avarice to delicious food and attire. Eva explained that she was deprived of all that in Russia. The arrival of my friend shattered my admiration for Soviet regime.

We had to work. My brother was in charge of a workshop at a textile factory. I was in the courses for a while, then I found a job. My sister Anna had worked in the state archive by that time. I also was employed there. In early 1940s I met one young man. We went to the cinema for couple of times, had coffee in a café and then we could not live without each other. My friend Haim Leikovich was couple of years older than me. He fell in love with me. Haim was a very heedful and careful man so I loved him back. We had one common interest- theatre. Haim and I went to ballet performances. At that time famous ballet-dancers often came to Kaunas from Moscow. Haim took part in amateur performances in the theater. His dream was to become a producer.

During the war

At 4 a.m. on the 22nd of June 1941 I woke up hearing unknown motor noise. There was a military plane in Kaunas sky. It had some unfamiliar signs on it. First I thought that it was training as for the past month there had been a lot of those. Soon I heard the noises of blasted bombs. Thus, we found out that Great Patriotic War was unleashed.

Sister Anna had worked in Vilnius for couple of months. It became part of Lithuania [Annexation of Vilnius to Lithuania] [16](#), so I did not know anything about her. Brother and his pregnant wife Sonya, going on the seventh month, left with evacuated textile factory literally without anything. They both were in evacuation. They even had no time to take money, documents or some of their things.

Haim and I together with the Kaunas group left the town. I did not have a new Soviet passport, so I took only an ID, some money and things. We could not carry a lot. Besides, we believed Soviet propaganda and thought that the fascists would be banished in a couple of days. For a couple of days we had been walking along a highway towards Latvia. There were a lot of people on the road-walking, going in a cart or by car. We went several tens of kilometers in a truck and then again we had to walk. On the third day of our trip fascist planes appeared and started bombing the columns of people- peaceful people. Finally we reached Latvia. There we managed to get on the train. We went for a couple of kilometers and stopped. We saw bombed cars and cadavers of people in front of us. We heard the moans of the wounded. The train, the saw, was destroyed by bombing. We helped remove the shambles. It was scary. We had been on the road for about three weeks. They gave boiled water at the stations. Sometimes they gave bread and warm food- porridge and cabbage soup.

We came in Russian town Kirov [800 km from Moscow]. We had spent two or three nights at the train station. I went to the evacuation point and found out that the archive office I worked for had been evacuated to town Chkalovsk, Nizhny Novgorod oblast, Russia [550 km from Moscow]. Haim and I went to Chkalovsk. It was a long way to go. First we took a ship along Volga to Kuibyshev, wherefrom we again took a train. I was lucky. On the first day of my arrival I met my friend from Kaunas. She and her husband, a theatre artist lived in a small room. Soon friend and her husband went to another town and left us their poky room. Haim also did not stay in Chkalov for a long time. Haim was mobilized in the labor front [17](#), but he had not served there for a long time. His talent was noticed and Haim entered producer department of theatre school. He wrote me warm letters hoping that he would see me again after war and thinking that we would be together.

Shortly after my arrival I started working for my organization- state archive of Lithuania. Soon I found my sister Anna. My friend met her by chance in Ufa. Anna even had no hope to see me alive. Some of her pals told her that I perished in the train that had been destroyed by bombing. Anna came to me in Chkalovsk. She also was employed by state archive. My brother Jacob, his wife Sonya, their daughter, born in August 1941 stayed in Ufa. Life was very hard on them. They were starving. When 16th Lithuanian was founded, Jacob went to the military enlistment office and went to Balakhna, where it was being reformed. Sonya and her baby came to us. The girl, was born very feeble, so she got unwell on their way. Straight upon arrival Sonya took the girl to the hospital and she died there. Sonya as if ran amuck. She did not understand a thing. Sister and I took a small coffin, made from boards, to the cemetery. Local sots dug the grave in a frozen earth (it was February) for a bottle vodka and we buried a baby. Our living was hard. Both Anna and I received food cards [18](#), but the food we got on them was scarce- we were constantly being hungry. Sonya was sick for the whole winter. Then she started working as well. When brother found out about baby's death, he had a tiff with his wife, they did not get along very well from the very beginning. He wrote Sonya that she could feel free to get a divorce from him, if he came back from the front. In a while Sonya met a man. She was close with him, so she left us. Anna, who treated me like a small child before war, became a very close person to me. Together we got over starvation and cold. We were there for each other. With bated heart we followed the rounds-up of Soviet information bureau. Each victory of the Soviet army made our return home Lithuania closer. At the beginning of 1943, when it was declared that women were drafted in Lithuanian division, Anna was drafted. She became a radio operator. She had served with the Lithuanian division until the end of war. The biggest joy for me was liberation of Lithuania in summer 1944. We celebrated that day

with my friends, whom I met in evacuation.

After the war

I had lived in Chkalovsk until May 1945. Our organization was on the point of departure to Lithuania. On our way back I went to Moscow. My distant relatives lived there, so I stopped by in their place. I stayed there for a week. Haim and I met every day, wandered along the streets of that wonderful city. On the 9th of May 1945 we came to Red Square with him. It was the holiday of the all-in-all exultation and joy. People were crying and laughing at a time. Those people who were not acquainted, were hugging each other. There were fireworks in the even. I was deeply impressed by that. I had never seen anything of the kind. The next day Haim insisted that our marriage should be registered state marriage register. Our marriage could not be registered as I did not have a Soviet passport. Probably it was my fate. I had warm relationship with Haim, but I had no love in my heart. I understood that we were way too different. I was happy to any even of life, I did not repine of the bygones. I was not focused on temporary hardships. I was more attracted by higher goals. Haim was always gloomy, remembered material losses. It poisoned our communication. I said good-bye to my fiancé, promising to wait for him in Vilnius, and left home.

I came in postwar Vilnius and decided to stay here. Nobody was waiting for me in Kaunas. Our house was nationalized, our apartment did not belong to us any more, and I understood that other people had been living there for a long time. It was easier to find a job and a lodging in Vilnius. Sister Anna lived in Riga. She stayed there after demobilization. Brother was still serving in the army. There were no free apartments in town, and I was not good at going from one institution to another to push things. I had to rent a poky room. I found a job in the ministry of culture. There was a wonderful team there. A lot of Jews worked there, and I made friends with some of them. The most important thing was that I found love, the true and overwhelming love.

I met a Lithuanian lad Augustinas Savitskas. He was an artist. His fate is worth attention. His father, a Lithuanian, was an artist and a diplomat. He fell in love with a Jewish girl Ida from Shauliai. When he proposed to her, her parents flatly objected to their marriage. They did not want their daughter to marry a Lithuanian. Young people got married in spite of the parents' will, who practically cut them off a shilling. The weds lived in full harmony and love. They had two children- the elder Algerdas, born in 1918 and Augustinas, who was my age. Augustinas's father worked on a diplomatic mission in France. When the Soviets came in Lithuania, he decided not to come back to his motherland fearing that he might be arrested. I do not know what happened to him. Ida hung herself in Vilnius ghetto as she could not get over the adversities and ordeal. Elder brother Algerdas went through giyur in order to marry a Jew. He turned out to be in ghetto with his wife. He was free , but he decided to share the fate of his beloved. Both of them perished.

Augustinas and I started living like husband and wife without having our marriage registered. We lived in a poky room without paying attention to postwar hardships. We often went to bed hungry, but our love was the only thing that mattered. In 1946 I got pregnant, and our relationship was not affected by it. Augustinas took to bottle. He often came home drunk and reproached Jews. He was not an anti-Semist, he just found Jews to be wretched and leading to trouble. He was convinced in that because of his mother's and brother's fate. We often had arguments and it make our lives bitter. At the beginning of 1947 I gave birth to a son, whom I named Edvardas like Augustinas

asked in honor of some of his relative. Augustinas, who promised to come and get me and a child, was procrastinating. He did not come to get us. My last name was written in my son's birth certificate. I am very proud by nature. I wrote Augustinas that I would raise son by myself. Sister Anna, who remained single, loved my boy and helped me with everything. I had lived with her for two years.

I came back to Vilnius in 1949. I was offered a job in the economy department of one of suppliers. Soon we were given a room and our life was getting better. There were difficulties, but I did not complain of anything to anybody. My sister helped me out. Jacob also lived in Vilnius. He got married for the second time. His wife's name was Golda. He also was there for my son and me. My son was a wonderful, clever and obedient boy. He went to the kindergarten. He was loved by everybody. My cousin Anna and her husband Klinitskiy loved my sonny very much. They did not have kids, so they helped me as well. My son's father often came and asked to forgive him. But his addiction to alcohol was the strongest. I was afraid that my son would be like him and often did not let father see him. When Haim proposed to me when he came back to Vilnius. But I refused him as well as other men having decided that it would be better for me to raise son by myself than with step father.

I worked in a wonderful team and made many good friends there. We marked Jewish holidays. A lot of people got together on Chanukkah, Purim and Pesach. We open spoke Yiddish at work, which was common in Lithuania. I was not affected by anti-Semitism campaigns of the beginning of the 1950s, [Campaign against 'cosmopolitans'] [20](#), even doctors' plot [21](#). Of course, we were very worried thinking that Jews were dissolved, even arrested, but it went past my friends and I. I was crying along with many other people, when Stalin died in 1953. I wore a mourning band and was on the sentry by his portrait. With time I learnt more and more about Stalin, so the resolutions of XX Communist Party Congress [22](#) were not unexpected for me, on the contrary it seemed to me that the justice prevailed.

There was a great computer center in our company I was employed by. I was a computer operator. The computer machine I was working on in the early 1960s covered half of my office. I understood that it was necessary to have a higher education and I entered extramural Economic Department of Vilnius University. Of course, it was hard for me to study. In the daytime I was at work. Besides, I had to find time to buy some products, cook food, do the cleaning, look after my son. I did pretty well at the university and passed my exams. I was fond of reading. It was hard to get books. Usually people gave people to one another and they became dog-eared. We were subscribed to magazines, got some novices. Later on independent publishes appeared, where we could read the books censored by Soviet regime and information about Israel. I started retyping the books illegitimately brought from abroad. I made one copy for me and for my friends. I was mostly interested in the objective information about Israel as it was the period of six-day war [23](#), and Soviet mass media stigmatized Israel. Besides, I collected quotations of great people about Jews. It was the period when I had to take my final exams in the University and write my diploma paper. I took a vacation for students and got ready for the exams with my Lithuanian friend. Suddenly, somebody ran on the door and I saw two men on the threshold who showed me their KGB IDs [24](#). They rather politely invited me to come with them. My friend was shocked. I had been interrogated for couple of hours. It turned out that there was a stooge from one the arrested readers. Since adolescence I had known the word 'no'. I persistently denied that I was not involved in

dissemination of anti-Soviet literature. I confirmed that I collected the quotations of famous people about Jews as I being a true Jew was interested in everything connected with my nature. I was lucky that there was no search at home. I stored a lot of banned literature. If it was found, neither I nor my son would be spared. I was taken home in the morning. Then I had no wish to study and take final exams. Thus, five years of studies were futile – I had not defended my thesis.

People still treated me good at work making it look like they had no idea about my detainment. I was always good to people and they were reciprocal. Almost every year I got a trip vouchers to the spa Druskeninkai or Palanga, which was paid by the trade union, son always went on vacation to the pioneer camps at the cost of trade-union. I had worked there until retirement.

My son made me happy with his good marks. There were a lot of mixed marriages at Russian school, where he went to, so children felt not anti-Semitism. He chose my nationality when he turned sixteen and came to get a passport. His choice was to be a Jew, though he knew his father and saw him rather often. Eldargas entered Vilnius affiliate of Kaunas Polytechnic institute, Television and Radio Department. Upon graduation he was drafted in the army and served in radiolocation as an officer. It incurred some negative consequences for our family. When I was anxious to leave for Israel, we understood that he would not get a permit as he had an access to secretive military information, which life term would last for thirty years. He had never wanted to emigrate from Lithuania.

My brother Jacob had lived happily with his wife Golda. He graduated from Economy Department of Kaunas University. He was assigned to rather important positions. Jacob and Golda have a daughter, whom they named Ella after their perished daughter. In 1972 the whole family left for Israel. There brother found a job immediately as he finished Hebrew lyceum and was fluent in Ivrit. I went to seem my brother in the 1990s, after breakup of USSR [1991] when it became possible to go openly to any country. I had stayed in Israel for three months and I loved it. Brother fully covered my expenses. My second trip to Israel was with my son. He liked it, but he was unfalteringly against to leave Lithuania. Brother was a widower. He survived his wife for just couple of years. Jacob died in 2000. I took my elder sister in Vilnius. She was single, so I had been looking after her for five years. I also looked after my cousin Anna Klinitskaya, who got severely ill when being a widow, Both of them died in my presence. It happened in 1995.

Now I am living by myself. My son recently got married. His wife, a Lithuanian lady Lima, is a very good woman. She came of a family of former underground. She has a very good attitude towards the Jews. My son has two children. The eldest Thomas is 21. Having finished school he went to Dublin. There Thomas found a job. He is trying to succeed on is own. Younger Julia was born in 1987. Julia has arts talent of her grandfather Augustinas. She is finishing school this year and going to enter Arts Academy. I helped my son raise grandchildren. They love me very much. Though Lithuanian nationality is written in their records, all of them, especially Julia is interested in the past and often asks me about prewar history of our family.

When my sister was alive, I found out about acting Jewish community. I came here with her. Here we were helped in many things, especially with medicine, when Anna was sick. Now, when I am living by myself and my grandchildren do not need close attention, I work as a volunteer in medical center of the community. I work for couple of hours every day. It gives me the feeling of being needed to people. I enjoy communicating with the Jews, who come over here. My friends are

working in the community as well. We see Sabbath and mark Jewish holidays together. Recently we got together on Shavuot and cooked traditional dishes from milk and curds.

My life was not easy. I raised my son alone. It was hard from material standpoint. I am not needy now. I get pension. Besides, in accordance with the law on restitution I received remuneration for our house in Kaunas. I shared money with my siblings and helped out my grandchildren. I knew love in my life. I kept friends with both men of my life in spite of the fact that we parted. Haim left for Israel and died couple of years ago. Augustinas is currently living in Vilnius. He is a very sick man and I am helping him. I have always had many friends, who made my life better. We feel ourselves free in independent Lithuania [Reestablishment of the Lithuanian Republic] [25](#), which is positive for everybody. I hope, Lithuanian being a part of Europe will enjoy European standards and rules regarding Jews and other nations.

GLOSSARY

1 Lithuanian independence

A part of the Russian Empire since the 18th Century Lithuania gained independence after WWI, as a result of the collapse of its two powerful neighbors, Russia and Germany, in November 1918. Although resisting the attacks of Soviet-Russia, Lithuania lost to Poland the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural city of Vilna (Wilno, Vilnius) in 1920, claimed by both countries, and as a result they remained 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.

2 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.

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 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.

5 Rehabilitation in the Soviet Union

Many people who had been arrested, disappeared or killed during the Stalinist era were rehabilitated after the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956, where Khrushchev publicly debunked the cult of Stalin and lifted the veil of secrecy from what had happened in the USSR during Stalin's leadership. It was only after the official rehabilitation that people learnt for the first time what had happened to their relatives as information on arrested people had not been disclosed before.

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 Bund

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

8 Revisionist Zionism

The movement founded in 1925 and led by Vladimir Jabotinsky advocated the revision of the principles of Political Zionism developed by Theodor Herzl, the father of Zionism. The main goals of

the Revisionists was to put pressure on Great Britain for a Jewish statehood on both banks of the Jordan River, a Jewish majority in Palestine, the reestablishment of the Jewish regiments, and military training for the youth. The Revisionist Zionists formed the core of what became the Herut (Freedom) Party after the Israeli independence. This party subsequently became the central component of the Likud Party, the largest right-wing Israeli party since the 1970s.

9 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.

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 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.

12 Lenin (1870-1924)

Pseudonym of Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, the Russian Communist leader. A profound student of Marxism, and a revolutionary in the 1890s. He became the leader of the Bolshevik faction of the Social Democratic Party, whom he led to power in the coup d'état of 25th October 1917. Lenin became head of the Soviet state and retained this post until his death.

13 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.

14 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.

15 Enemy of the people

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

16 Annexation of Vilnius to Lithuania

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

17 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.

18 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.

19 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).

20 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'.

21 Doctors' Plot

The Doctors' Plot was an alleged conspiracy of a group of Moscow doctors to murder leading government and party officials. In January 1953, the Soviet press reported that nine doctors, six of whom were Jewish, had been arrested and confessed their guilt. As Stalin died in March 1953, the trial never took place. The official paper of the Party, the Pravda, later announced that the charges against the doctors were false and their confessions obtained by torture. This case was one of the worst anti-Semitic incidents during Stalin's reign. In his secret speech at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956 Khrushchev stated that Stalin wanted to use the Plot to purge the top Soviet leadership.

22 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.

23 Six-Day-War

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

increased tension between the Arab nations and the Western World because of the change in mentalities and political orientations of the Arab nations.

24 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.

25 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.