

# Frieda Shteinene

Frieda Shteinene

Siauliai

Lithuania

Interviewer: Zhanna Litinskaya

Date of interview: June 2006

*I met Frieda Shteinene in Siauliai Jewish community. Frieda is married to the chairman of the community Boris Shteinas. Before I came she cooked a true Jewish lunch-lavish chicken broth, gefilte fish and imberlakh for desert. She gave me such a warm welcome that I felt as if my grandmother was receiving me. Frieda is not a senile woman. She looks youngish, stylish, has neat cropped hair. She stands out with the combination of the knowledge of Jewish traditions, history and the ability to talk about them in an educated and literary manner. My interview with Frieda was very interesting, especially in part of the Jewish national cuisine.*



[My family background](#)

[Growing up](#)

[The Soviet invasion of the Baltics](#)

[During the war](#)

[After the war](#)

[Glossary](#)

## My family background

I was born in a Lithuanian town Zagare [about 250 km to the North from Vilnius]. It was a small town bordering on Latvia, with the population of about 5 thousand people. In my childhood, half of town's population were Jews. There were rich, middle-class and poor people. I do not remember any indigent among the Jews in prewar Zagare. Probably, one of the wealthiest was Broide- the owner of the store in the downtown and the inn with the stables. Broide's younger son Dovid studied with my uncle Chaim at school. He was a very witty and funny guy. I was always attracted by Broide's house. What I liked the most was the yard and the pump. All of us had wells in our yards, and water pumps looked like a miracle to us. I liked to pump water or just watch other people do that. I remember another well-off Jew Eisenstadt, but he was not as rich as Broide. All Jewish stores were mostly concentrated in the heart of the town. There were aisles of redbrick houses, where the stores were open. I remember agri store, carrying mostly hardware. There were also manufacture stores and bakeries. There was another hotel in front of Broide's inn. It was

owned by a Jew Krits. One of the best apothecaries was in the building of his hotel. Thought, the drugstore was owned by a Lithuanian. There were a lot of photographers in our town. One of the best ones was a Lithuanian. The most famous people of the town were photographed by him. Most of the Jews were workers and craftsmen. There was flax processing factory in town. Some of the craftsmen processed wool there was mill at Svete river. It belonged to the Shruls brothers. They also built a dam, owing to which there was an electricity in town. There two synagogues in Zagare – Nae Zagare («the New») and Alt Zagare («the Old»). Alt Zagare were pretty old buildings. They were not acting and gradually got dilapidated. Nae Zagare also were comprised of two buildings- one a daily one and another nice ceremonious looking two-storied building, where people most went on holidays. There was a rabbi in Zagare. His name was Riv. He was a very respectable man. Not only Jews sought his advice, but Lithuanians as well.

The past of my father's family is veiled in mystery, which was later revealed before war. My grandfather Yankle Nisan was born in Latvia in a rich Jewish family Rot. The family had money to burn and grandpa could count on good heritage and bright future. Grandpa served in tsarist army and committed a disgraceful act. He deserted the army with the military chattels. He actually turned out to be not only a deserter, but also a thief. The family renounced him and even bereft him of his family name somehow. I do not know how it was officially done, but grandfather got the last name of Beitler. He must have been bought. Thus, he could not demise anything. Besides, he left his towns. Grandfather, who was now carrying the last name of Beitler, came in Zagare. Here he met my grandmother Mina Brener, a lady from a large poor Jewish family.

Her family was from small town Vieksniai, not far from Zagare. There were frequent fires in small towns at that time as the houses were wooden, heated by the firewood in the stoves. Vieksniai was burnt to ashes for couple of times. The victims of the fire moved to Zagare. The last name Brener meaning the burnt is probably stemming from those events. According to grandmother Mina and other relatives, my great grandfather, Mina's father Samuel Brener was absolutely blind. He was a very handsome man and earned for a living playing hurdy-gurdy. In the Jewish hierarchy those people belonged to the lowest caste. Samuel's family was very poor and was supported by the Jewish community. Samuel's wife, my great grandmother Nora, bore and raised 8 daughters. Samuel and Nora had no sons. There was no job for a street organ player in such a small town as Vieksniai, but in Zagare the girls learnt some craft. Some of them were seamstresses. One of them was a knitter. I do not remember the names of all grandmother's sisters, but the eldest was Matlia, the second was Yudesh. Both of them were housewives and had lots of children. During the Great Patriotic War [1](#) they came back to Lithuania from evacuation and lived 10 more years. Matla had 9 kids. The eldest sons left for Uruguay long before the outbreak of war. Two Matla's sons Sheine and Chone were killed in actions, and two daughters remained in occupation and were murdered by the fascists. One of the daughters Chaya Gita was in evacuation with mother and died upon her return to Lithuania. Yudesh had a daughter Sheine Basia (married name Yosilovich). She had two daughter and two sons. Elder daughter Yacha was married and her husband was killed in prewar times by Lithuanian anti-Soviets. In late 1950s Yacha left for Israel with her kids and died there in 1990s. The second daughter Chana Mere (married name Miller) lived with her family in Siaulia and died there in 2000. Younger daughter Rochel ( married name Kerbelene) got widowed recently. She is currently living in Siaulia. She is a volunteer at the Jewish community. Both of Shene Basua's sons are alive. One of them is living in Vilnius and the other one in Siaulia.

My grandmother Mina, born in 1888 was the most beautiful. She must have inherited the genes of her blind handsome father. My grandpa Yankle Nison fell in love with her and asked his parents blessing for the marriage. His being infatuated with a poor lady even added more fuel to the fire and the family conflict got way worse. Their marriage was disapproved by the family, but they got married nevertheless and had lived together for many years. Yankle Nison was physically very strong and he worked as a butcher in the kosher Jewish store. Mina gave birth to 11 children, out of whom 9 grew up and two died in infancy. Children were born almost every year. When grandpa was alive the family scraped through somehow. When he died in 1930, grandma had to earn for a living. She started selling fish. She and her sons Rubim and my father Leibl went to Klaipeda, Latvia to buy fish and sell it afterwards on our market. When she ran out of money, she borrowed it from people and paid back after her next trip.

My father Leibl Beitler was the eldest in the family. He was born in 1909. Then in 1910 Channa was born. She was as beautiful as grandmother Mina. Channa married a worker from Siaulia Zoiberblat and lived with him in Siaulia. Her husband was an underground communist. He was imprisoned for several times due to his communistic activity before the Soviets came in the Baltic countries [2](#). Channa had three kids- Yankle and Ester were my age and the youngest boy was born shortly before the outbreak of Great Patriotic War. During the first day of the War Channa and her husband left Siaulia and her husband was a Jew and a communist, so he had to run away from fascists. They reached Latvian border in Joniskis. There were first Lithuanian nationalists, who shut the border and did not let them pass. They were executed on the first day of occupation in Joniskis together with other Jews and activists.

Father's second sister Tsilya, born in 1912, got married at the age of 16 and left for Birobijan [3](#) with her husband. He worked at the construction site, got sick and died. Tsilya and her daughters Anna and Nina came back in Lithuania. During the war they were in evacuation in Russia. When they came back, she met a German Jew Walter. He happened to be in Zagare after concentration camp. Tsilya married Walter and in a while they left for Germany with Nina. Tsilya had a long life. She died recently, in 2004. Nina lives in Germany with her family. Anna, who had stayed in Lithuania all her life, is no longer alive. She died several years before her mother.

After Tsilya, Ruvim was born in 1914. He was a simple man, always doing the jobs that other people were not willing to. He was a stevedore, a janitor, a cobbler etc. During Great Patriotic War he was in evacuation with grandmother's family. When he came back in Lithuania, he married Jewish Pole Lyuba, who came back from Dachau [4](#). Ruvim and Lyuba had a son Isaac. He is currently living in Israel with his family [7](#). He died six years ago, several months before his wife's death.

Father's sister Liba, born in 1915, was actually the homemaker. Grandmother was trying to earn money to provide for the family and Liba did all the work about the house, looked after younger kids, cooked food, did the laundry and other things the homemaker was supposed to do. In 1938 she married a barber Abramovich and gave birth to son Yankle. She was in evacuation with him, and her husband was killed in action. After war Liba got married again. She bore two more sons from her second husband Leibovich. Liba died in late 1990s and her son Yankle is living in Vilnius. One of her younger sons left for Israel in the 1990s.

Father's next brother Moishe, born in early 1920s, perished during the war. He was in the 16th Lithuanian division [5](#), and did not come back from reconnoitering assignment. He was single.

Father's sister Rochel, who turned 16, when the war started, was enrolled in soviet army [6](#) as a volunteer. She was a nursing aide, went through entire war and got Red Star Order [7](#). After war she lived with grandmother Mina, then married a tinsmith Joachim. She did not have her own children, so she and her husband fostered a boy Itschik. They left for Israel in late 1970s. unfortunately, Rochel died rather young, when she was only 53.

In 1927 grandmother gave birth to son Chaim. He was 5 years older than me. We was my friend and protector when I was a child and I grew up. Chaim and grandmother were in evacuation in Kirov. He worked in kolkhoz [8](#), then he was drafted in the army at the age of 17. He was assigned to the 16th Lithuanian division. When the Great Patriotic War was over, he had served for three more years and came back in Siaulia in 1948. Here he met a wonderful girl Dina Levina and married her. Her fate is amazing. She was born in a Polish town Vilnius [9](#) in 1933. She came of a very rich family. Her parents were musicians. When the Soviets came to power, Dina's father was exiled in Siberia [Deportations from the Baltics] [10](#), and at the very beginning of the war she, her mother and elder brother happened to be in Vilnius ghetto [11](#). During one of the first actions Dina was sent in Ponary [12](#) and one of those who managed to climb out from the pit with the executed people. Dina said that there were about 10 wounded people, sprinkled with the lime, but they were getting out of the pit- being having no clothes and covered with blood stains, they were walking along night Vilnius. It was the autumn, cold and people were not letting them in, some of them even told to return in the pit. On the outskirts of the town some Polish lady sheltered the runaways. She gave food, clothes and bed linen. Somehow ghetto was informed of their escape and ghetto underground organization assisted them. Some of the people came back in ghetto, others were sheltered by somebody. In real, I do not know the fates of other survivors.

Dina's mother, who was staying in ghetto, told her not to come back. She and Dina's elder brother perished in ghetto. Dina was rescued by a teacher, either Russian or Polish. She gave her the documents of the deceased teacher and Dina had survived the war with the help of those documents serving for different people. When Vilnius was liberated, Dina was feeble that she turned out to be in a military hospital. A Russian lady, a doctor, wanted to adopt her, but she had to leave with the army. Dina was in an orphanage, after which she got some vocational education and was given a mandatory job assignment (trade) [13](#) in Siaulia. Here she met Chaim and they got married. In couple of years Dina was told that her father was alive. During Great Patriotic War he survive by miracle and moved to Israel via Asian countries. Father started inviting Dina to Israel. At that time former Polish citizens could leave for Poland. Dina and her husband left there in 1956, wherefrom they moved to Israel. Chaim died in 2004. Dina is currently living in Jerusalem with her children- son Aron and daughter Sophia. Dina has many grandchildren. I can say that her postwar life was a reward for the horrors and atrocities she suffered from the war.

The youngest grandmother's child Joseph was born in 1930, practically before grandfather's death. They said that sick grandfather was still able to hold him. Joseph was very handsome and resembled grandmother more than any other kids. Joseph had a good voice. Everybody loved him, especially the girls. When he was 15, he was working he was in evacuation in Kirov. He and grandmother worked at the selection station. It was spring, and Joseph took the muck to the field. On his way back when his sledge was empty, he was singing. The sledge was turned aside, and he

was run over by a tractor. Joseph died instantly being young, handsome and healthy. After his death grandmother could not recoup. Mother and I took strong efforts to bring her back to life. Grandmother lived a long life and died in Siauliai in early 1960s.

My father Leibl, the eldest, was the most apt as grandmother used to say. He was tall, strong, meek and kind, the protector of the weak. Grandmother once told a story. When father was 19 he saw a gang of drunk Lithuanians teasing a Jew. He removed a shaft and had the gang leave the place. Father's family was very poor, so he finished only 4 classes of Jewish public school. Then he was apprenticed by a cobbler. Before he turned 22, he helped grandmother and went with her to buy fish. When he got married, she started working as a cobbler.

I had never seen my maternal grandfather. I know that he, Velvl Kantor, was much older than grandmother Chaya. Velvl was a very religious man. He sang in the synagogue, when he was young. And his last name was consonant with his activity. When he turned old and stopped singing, he was either a gabai, or acolyte. Velv's first wife died having left 7 sons. My grandmother Chaya became his second wife. She was born in 1860s in a small town Pashvetinis, not far from Siaulia. Her family was very religious. I remember grandmother Mina used to call Chaya - rabbi's daughter. I do not know if my great grandfather was a rabbi indeed, but he was very religious and very close to the synagogue. Chaya was very petite, a blond with blue eyes and probably was not considered a beauty according to the Jewish standards. Probably my grandmother's parents wanted her to marry only a very religious Jew, but she married Velvl Kantor for some reason no matter that he was a widower with seven kids, who was not very old, but still sick. He was afflicted with TB apart from other ailments particular of his age.

After getting married Chaya gave birth to two daughters- my mother in 1909 and her sister Basya in couple of years. Besides, she took up the responsibility to raise Velv's sons and was like a mother for them. She must have been a good stepmother. I did not know her stepsons name. three of them died from TB, the rest left for South Africa. They sent letters and money to grandmother. They practically provided for her until the rest of her days. Chaya was very religious. She always wore a wig. I had never seen her with her head uncovered. She was the keeper of Jewish traditions in our house. When she was alive, traditions were observed, and parents went to the synagogue out of respect to grandmother Chaya. She was well up in Ivrit and read prayers. She taught girls from Jewish families it was like a cheder.

Grandmother lived in a poky house with her daughter Basya. Grandmother had a palsy and was bed-ridden, therefore Basya had to quit her work and look after her. The life of my aunt Basya is perfect example of the daughter serving her mother with the sacrifice. Basya was a pretty woman and had suitors. In 1939 one young man wooed to her, but she turned him down as she understood if marrying him, she would not be able to look after her mother the way she should. She stayed in town during the war as grandmother Chaya could not be transported, when the war became. Basya remained with mother. Both of them died. My relatives told me about it.

Grandmother's sister, whose married name was Binn (I cannot recall her first name), lived in grandmother's native town. She had a daughter Merele. She and her mother were not able to get evacuation either, and stayed in Pashvetinis. In October 1941 a large anti-Jewish action was planned in Zagare and Jews from adjacent towns were brought in here. Merele, her mother and brother were also brought in Zagare. The Jews were executed on the central square and in the

park. Merele saw Basya on the square. My dear and favorite grandma was taken by a Lithuanian in a big basket. She was so emaciated and light that it was not hard to carry her. Grandmother and Basya were killed straight on the square. They did not had to be put through ordeal for a long time.

Merele's mother saw one of her acquaintances among the Lithuanians who were involved in the execution, and besought him to save her kids. She could not leave as her leg was wounded. The Lithuanian took Merele and her brother from the square and found them a shelter at his neighbor's place. Merele and her brother started doing the hardest work for the Lithuanians. Merele was 16 and her brother was 18 years old. It was the second when he was to face execution and his nerves could not stand it. Merele's brother got sick and could not work any more. Then the Lithuanians merely killed him as he could not work. Merele found out about it by chance from other work hands and she escaped immediately. She was roaming for a while, and then she asked the padre Kunigas for help. They padre knew Merele's family very well and found a Lithuanian lady who agreed to make up a story that Merele was her daughter out of wedlock. Her name was changed into Lithuanian Marite and married to elderly Latvian guy Tennessee. The fiancé knew her story, but he fell in love with her indeed. She was a true beauty. Thus, Merele was rescued. After war she found our family and told us a story how her mother Basya and grandmother Chaya perished. Merele had four kids from her husband. She lived in a village and worked as hard as a peasant woman. After war the relatives suggested that she should leave her husband and come back to the Jewish kin, but she decided to stay with the person who saved her life. She remained faithful to her husband, who died long before she did. Merele died two years ago [2005]. Shortly before her death she told me that she did not want to be buried in the Jewish cemetery, but next to her husband, the Lett. She was buried in the Latvian cemetery not far from Zagare.

My mother Etl Kantor went to lyceum after she finished elementary Jewish school. There was no Jewish lyceum in Zagare and she finished four classes of Lithuanian lyceum. Mother was very gifted, especially in sciences. She could not go on with her education, as grandfather Velvl died and there was no money for tuition. She was apprenticed by the famous milliner for about two years, and worked for that lady. That was her chance to pay back the period she managed to study.

## **Growing up**

My parents got married in 1931, when they were 22. they were wed in chuppah. They rented a small apartment after wedding. On 29 November 1932 I was born.

I vividly remember the house, where I spent my childhood. It was a small house for two apartments- the smaller one was occupied by two disabled people Meer and Golda. Meer was deaf and Golda was blind. Parents worked hard and had a pretty good living. There were three rooms in the apartment. Mother's workshop was in the largest room. It was a corner room where three sewing machines were places, one for mother and the other two for her apprentices. Mother always apprenticed two people the way she was in Kaunas and they did simple work. There was a large wooden table, used for ironing and two large pig iron presses. They were heated with coals. They took them to the river as we did not want any sparkle get on a fabric. It was fun at home. Mother joked and sang. I liked to spend time with her apprentices. I remembered two sisters- Itele and Etele Spits best of all. They were beauties with long eye lashes and huge eyes. Both of them were killed during a big action in October 1941 in Zagare when grandmother and Basya also died. Apart from the workshop. There were two more rooms- a small room with the door with the exit outside

and parents' bedroom with a large bed and a small cot for me. The kitchen door was opening to the garden. Both apartments were heated with the Russian stove, which was stoked by our neighbors. There was an oven in the kitchen for cooking. Our yard was neighboring with the baker Oliferiy Mitrofanov. He was a baker at the bakery of the Jew Narta. The pretzels he made were the best and we bought them. Oliferiy was an old believer [14](#), a kind person and my parents were friends with him. I played with his daughter Valya. She was 'handed over' the fence to play with me. We had been playing for hours and started speaking good Yiddish like me. When I was to go to the Jewish kindergarten, Valya went with me as there was other place for her.

In 1937 my younger sister Nina was born. When she was born, my grandmother Chaya took me in her place (at that time she could still walk). She and Basya lived not far from us on the bank of the river. It was a tiny house with a weak floor. I remember when I was a baby, I put my feet between the boards. Basya bathed, combed me. Later she took me to school. In general, she was like a mother to me. Basya was a very good cook and grandmother was also a coryphaeus of the Jewish cuisine. My mother merely did not have chance to cook complicated dishes, which were time consuming, because she was busy with work. Fortunately, she was a high-class milliner and she had many orders. Often grandmother Chaya came to us to cook dinner, then I lived with her, so it is hard for me to say what dishes my mother cooked. At any rate, it was a true Jewish cuisine. I am still using their recipes. We observed kashrut - bought meat in special stores and took poultry to shochet. When I grew up, it became my duty. I remember the house where shochet lived. It was a two-storied redbrick house in downtown. Shochet lived on the first floor. He cut the fowl there. There was a so-called counter to the left, with two hollows. He cut fowl's neck over one of the hollows, having cut couple of the plume and read a special prayer. Then he put the fowl in another hollow and waited for it to stop moving. After that he gave it to me and I went home.

There were a lot of dishes in our big kitchen- two sets or various dishes and utensils for meat and milk dishes. We marked Sabbath together. Usually grandmother Chaya and Basya came to us on Friday. Grandma closed her eyes and lit candles saying a prayer. The next day we went to the synagogue together- father, grandmother and I. Mother went there only on big holidays.

We came to us from synagogue and enjoyed Sabbath dishes. There was a Sabbath challah in the middle of the table, Mother or grandma baked it in our oven. Sabbath choln, which was prepared on Friday, was taken in a pot to Oliferiy. All neighbors signed their pots and he put it in the oven which was still warm after baked pretzels. Gefilte fish was another Sabbath dish, which we loved. Grandmother and father sold fish, so there was plenty of fish at home and we enjoyed it. Sometimes we ate chicken soup with noodles or chicken pelmeni. We often made minced herring. We had a special big cutting board and a knife to chop it. We cut the herring and added onion, apple, eggs and white bread and dressed it with sugar and vinegar. We made liver pate the same way. We loved teiglakh. It was a desert made from honey and sugar. There are several recipes. First they make the dough, whisk 6 eggs with one spoon of sugar, then add a little bit of ginger and oil and flour enough for neither soft nor hard dough. They make small forms (like dates) and boil them in the syrup mixing cautiously as the dough is very capricious (it can burn or fall off). They also made imberlakh. Two kilos of grated carrots are put in aluminum pot for boiling. In a while, 2 kilos of sugar, one table spoon of ginger, orange skin are added and boiled on low fire for a long time. It should be stirred from time to time. By the end it should be mixed intensely until the mass would not come off the walls of the pot. Then the cutting board is watered and hot mixture is put

there, rolled and cut in rhombuses. Those things are to be dried for 4 days. Mother often made imberlakh, especially in wintertime for preventive purposes.

On usual days we often ate fish and herring in all kinds of forms. Mother made her own herring and sweet and sour fish. The herring was preliminarily soaked. Carrot, onion are put in the bottom of the pot and put fish on the top, pour a little water to cover the pot and add salt. Sweet and sour fish was cooked as follows- when the water boils, they put a little bit of raisons, spices –sweet, black pepper, bay leaf and add lemon at the end. Such dish was a cold appetizer.

Every day we ate soup obligatorily. In winter it was a milk soup and in summer vegetable of milk and vegetable soup, the latter was the tastiest. Chanterelles (type of mushrooms) were boiled in milk, then potatoes, carrots, cabbage and some herbs were added. The soups were dressed with noodles. In winter barley or oat soups were also made. Grandmother often made tsimes. She boiled noodles in large pot, then added cinnamon, chicken fat, whisked eggs and roasted. That dish was mostly served with chicken broth.

Good lavish dishes were cooked in our family as parents made enough money for that. There were hard times, and we just ate fried potatoes and made soup from cheap herring, potatoes and carrots. There were times when we ate only rye bread with chicken cracklings or with vegetable oil.

Of course, we got ready for the holidays beforehand and saved money to mark the Jewish holidays the way we were supposed to. Usually holidays were marked in our place. Grandmother came to us with Basya, Mina, father's friends with their wives and children. Jewish year starts with Rosh Hashanah. I remember that before the holiday, all of us went to river Shvete, cleaned our pockets and bathed there. Mother gave me a hen for kaporez rite. As far as I remember, my grandmothers Chaya carried out that. Everybody went to the festive synagogue on holidays, where rabbi Riv read torah. On Yom Kippur parents and grandmother fasted.

On fall holiday Sukkoth, sukkhah was set up in our garden. All our relatives, who did not have a place to set it up, came to us. the most joyful holiday Simchat Torah was also celebrated in the synagogue. Torah was taken out, people walked with that around the synagogue singing and dancing. Then I remember chanukkah, we also went to the synagogue. At home we lit channukia. There was a large channukiah in the synagogue and every day another candle was added. We played with a whipping top in the kindergarten I used to go. Valya, daughter of Oliferiy Mitrofanov, played with me and took part in all Jewish holidays. We marked Purim mirthfully in kindergarten. They arranged Purimspiel for us and we staged Purim story. Once, I even was the tsarina Esther.

The biggest holiday was Pesach. We got ready for it straight after Purim. It was a long and serious preparation. The whole house cleaned, furbished, dusted and stove was scrubbed and painted. Clean starched table cloths were taken out. The same happened in the house of grandmother and Basya. Pascal dishes were kept in the special chest. Then it was taken out before the holiday began. Father bought matzah. There was matzhah bakery in Zagare, where local poor Jews worked trying to make money before the holiday. We had the tastiest dishes of them all.

Grandmother Chaya made the best tsimes. The most scrumptious was from plums. It is cooked from fatty meat, usually breast, boiled for a long time until it softens. Then potato and dried plums are added there. All those things are roasted in oven for an hour and then add burnt sugar, which makes the dish look brown. They also make carrot tsimes. Though, there was another sequence for



that dish. First carrots were boiled, then pieces of meat of fatty hen, onion and spices were added. Flour or kneydles (from flour or from potato) could be added in tsimes. Very often stuffed chicken poultry neck was added in tsimes. They took either chicken or goose neck and stuffed it with flour, fat and cracklings, fried or raw onion, spices and boiled it in the broth for a while. When the neck was cooked half way through, it was put in carrot tsimes with potato kneydles. It was a real treat. On Pesach aunt Basya cooked her specialty dish- cabbage rolls. They were special. They were brown with tasty spicy sauce. Of course, there all mandatory dishes for Pesach on the table- matzah, eggs, bitter herbs etc. according to hagad. The first seder was carried out by father. By the way he read the four traditional questions and he answered them himself as we did not have boys in our family

Religiousness and loyalty to Jewish traditions was only thanks to my grandmother Chaya. She and father went to the synagogue, though dad was not a truly religious Jew. When grandma kept to bed, we still stuck to traditions, but it was a mere habit, not the belief. Being palsied, grandmother Chaya lit Sabbath candles by her door. During that time grandmother and Basya moved to another house, as dilapidated and poor as their first one.

When grandmother got ill, there was an issue what to do with me as I could not stay with grandma any more, and parents were very busy, So, I went to school at 6, one year earlier. It was a Jewish public school. it was in the old building not far from two synagogues Alt Zagare. Our school was on the first floor. Our class was huge and noisy. We got the noisiest during religious classes. An old Jew with a long beard held these lessons. Nobody listened to him and one boy even dared to pinch his beard. The worst imp was red-haired boy Shita Kikler. He always got in the neck from teachers, and almost all the time he was constantly standing in the corner. I do not even remember what I learnt in that school for a year. I went to another school in the second grade. The school was open due to rabbi Riva for sponsors' money, collected from rich Jews of the town. The sponsors were Broide and Strul, my distant relative Vayner, the owner of the store Peretsman. The spouses Lechmen donated the most. They were the manufacturers. There were wonderful teacher Shleiman, Tangu, teacher Geringer. They were wonderful experts and kind people. Unfortunately, all of them died during the occupation of Zagare. I did well at school, especially with the arts. The teaching was in Yiddish, and we spoke it at home as well. That is why I learnt it. At any rate. I still can speak, read and write in Yiddish owing to my classes at that school.

My parents were sociable, modern and advanced people. I remember how I took lunch to my father's work. He worked as a cobbler at the shop owned by a Jew, then by a Lithuanian. Cobblers were sitting on the stools covered with leather and having leather aprons on bare skin in sultry summer weather. Father was very strong and I remembered his sinews when he was working. Father's best friend Pina Zhukov was also working there. Pina and his came to us on Saturday at times, they were always present at seder. Pina had three sons, which were my age and I liked to communicate with those boys.

At that times Jews were politically classified into Zionists and [15](#) communists. Usually, well-bred and rich people belonged to Zionists. My father and his friend Pina were underground communists. It is hard for me to say what exactly my dad did. One of the most important tasks of their organization was to make the social library for the workers. It was established by my father and it was located in our house. There were several shelves full of books in our large room. Every day a librarian Daniel Kravets came to us and handed the books to the workers. I do not know what

literature it was as I was not interested in those things at that time. I think those were banned books written by proletarian writers. Kravets was not a communist, but he was one of those who approved of this regime. After war he lived in Kaunas and became the member of the communist party.

### **The Soviet invasion of the Baltics**

In late July 1940 Red Army units came in Lithuania and the Soviets came to power. Jews, mostly poor, were happy for it, as they had a hope for a better life. Not only Jews welcomed Russians, but also poor Lithuanians. There were constant meetings with the soviets, their movies were on. My parents were happy to see the soviets at power. Mother kept working. Father was assigned the chairman of the cooperative society. I do not know what that company was involved in, but father stopped being a cobbler. We started having a better life. I even remember that we bought two pairs of new shoes. My parents could not afford that before. As far as I can say, there was nationalization, but there were no repressions or arrests in the city. Father got along with former owners of the stores and enterprises, especially with Strul. At any rate, before war, all of them were in town. I do not remember any of them having been exiled. I think our small town had not been affected by deportation yet.

In 1939 a young man, fugitive either from Germany or Poland, appeared in our town. He lived in our place for a while, as he had nowhere to go. My parents sheltered him. He was a good-looking man with grey hair. His name was Max. He told us what Germans were doing on the occupied territories. He crossed the border and was by the hairbreadth of death. Jews started thinking of evacuation if the war began. Max often sang sad song in German about soldiers dying at war. There was an air of general alert. There was a propaganda that Lithuanians should buy goods. Scouts marched in the streets singing German songs. I even remember them fight with Jewish boys. It was before the Soviets came.

### **During the war**

There was a radio at home and on 22 June 1941 we found out by radio that the war began. The second day the bomb was released in town garden. it was like a bolt from the blue. Just imagine: a small cozy town, Sunday, summer, people are strolling with their families, children are playing, amusements are open, people are eating ice cream... and within this bliss the bomb hits! People started stampeding. They packed and left the town, which bordered on Latvia. In couple of days there appeared retreating troops with the heavily wounded being on the carts. Father was constantly busy. He evacuated women and children. On the third day, mother was sitting by the window and sewing, while I watched retreating army pass by our window. Then I asked mother what the war was. Mother explained it to me and said that we would be leaving soon, but still I could not get why I could not go outside, to see my friends Shmulik and Chone, who were leaving across the street. They also did not visit me on that day. I never saw them again. Both boys perished in occupation. Mother had been sewing and packing all night long. She put all necessary clothes and linen in large mattress cover. Nina was very little, besides she had measles. Our neighbors- Lithuanians Yordi- brought us freshly baked bread and a bucket of honey.

On the forth day a large truck was sent from district ispolkom. My mother, Nina, I, the family of a communist Etis, who was working in ispolkom, wife and children of a Russian lieutenant, were in that truck. Father and other men stayed. they were responsible for evacuation. Shortly before our

departure a group of children came up to us. They were from pioneer camp in Palanga, which took the first hit from fascists. Those, who were older - 14-15, went on foot. The smaller ones, were put in the truck. Father took off some of our things from the truck. Aldona and Sergey -pioneer leaders-the members of komsomol, also went with us. The truck was driven by our distant relative, husband of my father's cousin Ioffe. We left our native town without having an idea for how long. Of course, we hoped that Red Army would swiftly and ultimately rebuff fascists. When we were going along Vilnius street I saw grandmother Chaya looking out in the window. She also recognized me and even stretched her hand towards me. It was the last time I saw her. Grandmother and aunt Basya had to stay as it was impossible to transport a palsied old lady.

Hardly had we reached the border, we were met by Lithuanian national patriots, who were not willing to let the truck in. Somehow, we managed to cross the border and we headed for Riga. We were fired at on our way, fascist aircrafts were whirling over us. We were stopped by soldiers and told to mask ourselves as our bright clothes and striped mattress attracted attention. I remember I was helped to get off the truck at the moment when the shooting started. The soldier who was standing by me, was wounded in the leg. He started limping and I was put in the car and we moved on 'under bullets'. Mother was very worried. She cried hard. We reached Riga. We were not allowed to proceed and were taken to a large house. I was surprised to see that there were toilets in the house. There was no sewage in Zagare and there were only outhouses. We spent a night in Riga and headed in the morning. Some children also joined us in the truck and their parents walked. They wanted their kids to be saved at any cost.

Thus we reached Pskov [Russia, about 80 km from Lithuanian border, about 650 km to the west from Moscow]. Mother and Nina stayed in Pskov, because mother wanted to find out anything about father. Besides, she was afraid that I would catch measles from Nina. So, she wanted to separate us. I went farther with other passengers. Our truck was sent to the orphanages, which incumbents had already been evacuated. We spent a night at good beds and in the morning we started waiting for the truck. Somehow, the truck did not reach us as it was requested by the militaries for the front. We had been waiting for a while and Alexey arranged for another truck, which took us to the train station. There was an echelon with the fugitives and we got on that. Alexei and I had been running along the platform, looking for mom, but we could not find her, and I had to get on the train with sobs and snivel.

We were on the road for several days, and I vaguely remember our trip as I was crying all the time. We reached Perevosk district of Gorky oblast [now Nizhegorodskiy oblast, about 300 km to the east from Moscow]. At first, we stayed at school for couple of days. Then we were bathed, shaved. Our clothes were washed. All I had was my underwear and dress. Then either 11 or 12 people were taken to the village Goryshkinio of Gorky oblast. Aldona went with us. We were given a separate house. The four guys slept on Russian stove [16](#), and the girls were on the floor covered with the mattresses stuffed with grass. The rural girl Nadya was always with us. She gave us food and took care of us. We were fed in the canteen. We had pottage from wooden plates. Usually it was a pea soup with rye bread. In 1941 there was a want of bread, and they mixed bread with grass. It was a poor village, but they shared all they had with the fugitives. Every day kolkhoz gave us a bucket of milk and potatoes. Nadya pared it, boiled and added milk and eggs there. She made it so that there would be enough for everybody. Besides, it was pretty tasty. Before going to sleep, we were given a glass of milk and bread. The summer was almost over. My dress was torn, and it had to through

away my panties. When I was going outside, I pinned my dress at the bottom for the guys not to see.

There was an orphanage not far from old church in that village Goryshkino, located on two large hills. The church building was covered with plywood and boards to make warmer. We stayed there and were given quilts. There was fall, then winter. In spite of the fact that church was made warmer, it was really chilly. We slept by four, lying close to each other and covered ourselves with four blankets one on the top of the other. We slept on the side by turns. We went outside to the toilet having put a blanket and shoes on. At first, we all missed our parents and cried at night. Then we somehow got acclimatized and had a certain routine. On New Year they made a holiday for us. There was a large adorned New Year tree. Girls were given tutus from gauze and we played the snowflakes. we were so happy. It was also the first time when we were given lavish food

In fall 1942 I got a letter from mother. I was so happy. It turned out that she had been looking for me all this time. She went to Kazan, where the representative office of Lithuania was, and finally she was given the address in Goryshkino. When I was reading the letter out loud, all girls and boys were sobbing, and I had the tears of happiness. Mother wrote that she and sister were living in Yaroslavsk oblast. Father was drafted in 16 Lithuanian division. Mother and Nina were supposed to move in Balakhna, where the division was based, to stay closer to father. Afterwards they wanted to come and get me. Mother asked me to stay in the orphanage as there was some nutrition there, while they had a very poor living. Now I was happy. I could stay here as long as I needed knowing that my family was waiting for me.

In early 1942 our orphanage was relocated in Ichalki. It was a rich village with fertile lands. There was a river nearby. Ichalki villagers were much more well-off here, so we had much better living conditions. We settled on the first floor of the wooden school premises. It was well heated. We slept on the cots, on the mattresses stuffed with grass. Unfortunately, that building burnt down together with our food ration in the basement, mostly potatoes. After fire, we crept in the basement, took out burnt potatoes and gnawed it. After fire boys were transferred to some wooden building and girls were housed in a brick building near Piarna river. by that time we had our own husbandry- chickens, cow, pigs. I usually pastured pigs along Piarnu river and plunged there all day long. I became a good swimmer there. Once, I was pasturing a cow with a Lithuanian girl Stepha. The cow led us far away and we got lost. They hardly could find us. Once I saw a wolf. I thought it was a dog and started even calling it smacking my lips. Fortunately, peasant ladies were going towards me. they scared the wolf off and took me home. By that time according to lendlease [17](#) there was a humanitarian assistance from the USA - canned meat, egg powder and scrumptious marmalade. Life was getting better.

Here in Ichalki I finally went to school. All evacuees studied in a separate class. Our classes were in Lithuanian and learnt that language. We also had Russian classes. Here I made friends with classmates. My best friend was a Lithuanian Valya Volnayte. She was a strange girl- not like anybody else. She had six fingers on one hand. She was very sublime, an introspective and deep. My other friends were Misha Dordik, a 16- year old Jewish boy from Minsk, Lithuanian Jew Spekmen, Jewish twins Baron- a brother and a sister. I had many friends and pals.

Thus, it was hard for me to part with my friends, when in 1943 my father came to get me. Those who were staying burst into tears. Either they did not know if they would see their parents again.

The parents of most kids stayed in occupied Lithuania and were sure to die. At that moment none of close friends knew anything about their kin. The director of our orphanage gave me winter coat and valenki [warm Russian felt boots]. Father and I were so happy to see each other ! we got on goods train, father put his military coat on the floor and we fell asleep. We came in Balakhna, where mother and Nina were living. It turned out that we were robbed on our way. Father backpack was cut and leather and boots were taken out. Father planned to give it to mother. At that time those things were very precious. The rusks were untouched, the thieves had pity on us. Soon father went to the front. He was a cabman. He took support staff- tailors, hairdressers, launderers, to the front. He was often on the leading edge and he had to take part in the battles and to smell the powder.

It was hard to describe our meeting with mom. Sister Nina forgot me completely and even took me with children's hostility and jealousy. Since my hair was still very short, she tease me 'shaved god from broken pot'. Gradually we started getting along. We moved to Kirov [about 400 km from Moscow], where my grandmother Mina, her son Iosif were living. Grandmother worked as a warden at selection station, and Iosif was a worker. We settled in the hostel of the glove-making factory, where mother was offered a job. The factory was evacuated from Poltava. Here a lot of Jews- evacuees from Ukraine and Byelorussia, were working. Grandma and we lived in different ends of the town, our hostel was on the bank of Viatka river. There was a grief- Iosif died and grandmother got sick from that hard sorrow. She had lobar pneumonia, requiring hospitalization. We had to look after her. Mother got the cuttings from the gloves and made children's clothes from them. We took them to the market, sold and bought butter, honey and wheat bread with that money. Then we walked along the rails across the city to grandmother's hospital. No matter how hard it was, but grandmother Mina recouped. She moved in with us, when she came back.

I helped mom the best way I could as I was the eldest and had to go through the school of survival in the orphanage. We were given a land plot for gardening. It was clay, but within a week we dug it and planted potatoes there. As soon as the snow melted in spring, I went to the forest to pick up the sorrel, meadow onion. Then there were berries and mushrooms. We lived in one room with 6 more people. There were Jews among the workers. The people were interesting.

I went to school in a large village Skopino. It was very hard at first as could hardly speak any Russian. I had poor marks in the third grade, but gradually I became one of the best students. Though I was very good at the arts. I did not like math, and I was not very good at it. I swam as good as the villagers, but I could not ski at all. I envied the local kids, who skied easily. I started learning that as well. Owing to my perseverance I also learned how to ski. It was handy in winter.

### **After the war**

Father was in the lines. We were looking forward to his letters. With 16 division he liberated Vilnius, Siauliai, and Latvia. We started dreaming to come back to the motherland. We marked the victory day- 9 May 1945- in Kirov. I do remember vividly how we celebrated it. There was an evening party at the club with food and dances. Finally, we got the invitation to come back home. We could go without it. Finally, we came back in Siauliai in fall 1945. Father was working in Zagare at that time. It was alarming time. There were a lot of nationalists in the forests. Father said that he slept with the gun under his pillow. That is why we had to stay in Siaulia. In early 1946 mother and Nina went to Zagare, and I stayed in Siaulia as I had to study. There was only an elementary Russian school in

Zagare. Father became the chairman of the cooperative society in Zagare and it was a rather high position.

I lived at Pakaynis street with grandmother Mina and aunt Rochel. upon my arrival I was enrolled in the 5th grade. In 1946 mother gave birth to a girl Anna, her Jewish name was Chaya (in honor of my perished grandmother). I did not communicate much with my sister. I do not know how she grew up. as she was with mother in Zagare, and I was in Siauliai. When Nina finished the fourth grade, she also came to Siaulia to continue her education. Now we all lived together. There were children of different nationalities in our class, mostly Jews and Russians as it was a Russian school. I do not recall any cases of anti-semitism, or insults against Jews. There was a boy from a mixed family- his mother was a Ukrainian and his father Jew Nikilberg. He called me kike, but one Russian guy stood up for me and even beat the offender. I do not remember any insulting cases against me. I joined komsomol [18](#), I was very active, I even was the editor of the school paper.

In 1952 I successfully finished school and entered the philological department of Vilnius university. There were Jews among the freshers. Some of our teachers were also Jews. I was the first year student in full swing of state anti-Semitism, doctors' plot [19](#). My room mate of the hostel Lida was a daughter of a military man. Every time when she entered the room, she took the paper and read out loud about the Jewish doctors, who poisoned people. I could not stand it any more and told her that she did not stop, I would not control myself. I do not know what I would do, but still she left me in peace. There was a large komsomol meeting, attended by the representatives of the course. the delegates for that meeting were elected. My relative Rochel, the daughter of Sheina Basya, was one of the delegates. The Jews from our course Lazar Greyer, Mikhail Levin, Sergey Rapoport and I talked to Rochel for her to stand up for the Jews and protect them against fabricated charges. She must have been afraid to do that and her speech was not material. Father did not discuss the events of that time, though he knew and he understood what was going on. We were mourning, when Stalin died in March 1953. the whole university was up for a meeting, people were crying, it seemed to us that the whole world was upturned and the sun was hidden from us. It was the time, when the propaganda was very strong and we believed in bright communistic future.

I graduated from the university in 1956. I got a mandatory job assignment in town nearby Kaunas. I changed it for a backwater village not far from home to be closer to my parents. I taught at junior classes there. I lived in a rustic house without electricity and any conveniences, but I could go home every week. Despite father being a communist, they tried observing Jewish traditions mostly likely to pay a tribute to grandmother Chaya. Of course, it was impossible to observe Sabbath at that time as Saturday was a working day, but big holidays like Rosh Hashanah and Pesach were marked at home. We always had matzah, even if we did not know where to buy it, we always made it ourselves. We had hamantahsen on Purim, and fasted on Yom Kippur. I was pleased to come home once a week and feel the spirit of Jewish home, known to me since childhood. I lived among Lithuanians in a village. Students loved me and their parents treated me dearly and tried to help me. I still keep in touch with my first students. They still call me minder.

Having worked for two years under assignment, I came back in Zagare, where I started teaching Russian. I did it for several years. Father often told me that he saw my former classmate at work and found him very pleasant. Once he invited him for a holiday.. it was Boris Steinas, a guy from our prewar class. I did not pay attention to him at school as he was lean and tall, with protruding Adam's apple. He behaved improperly and cut classes. I did not like guys like that. Now I saw a

good-looking, confident young man. We had lunch and then we started looking at school pictures. In couple of days Boris came to us once again. We had similar fates, families, we enjoyed spending time together and then we fell in love with each other. On 31 December 1959 Boris and I registered our marriage. We had wedding rings. Mother made a fashionable navy blue dress. We had a festive dinner at home, attended by our relatives throughout Lithuania.

After wedding I went to Boris in Siauliai. At first we lived in a small two-room apartment, in couple of years we moved to a new apartment from the Consumer Council, which was built by Boris's office, when he was in charge of Siauliai branch. Then we got a four-room apartment. I worked at school as a Russian language and literature teacher. I was always respected by my colleagues and students. I was offered to join the party for several times, but I was not willing to. Any way I had no choice- the soviet teacher was supposed to be the member of the party and I had to. Though, I was not an active communist, and did not take any leading positions there.

Boris and I had a very good living. We had polar characters "ice and fire", but our principles were alike. In businesslike issues husband was the leader, in other day-to-day things I was the head. In 1960 our daughter Rita was born and in 1963 - Lana. Unfortunately my father did not live to see his granddaughters. He died in 1961. The town leaders, communists, were at his funeral, so we could not make them Jewish. Though, we put him in a shroud and a suit on the top. When nobody was around we read a Jewish prayer over him. He was buried in Siauliai as it was decided that mother would also live here closer to us Boris helped her with a small apartment. In 1962 grandmother Mina passed away.

Mother helped me raise my daughters. We had a good living. Husband made pretty good money and I also had an income. Every years daughters went to pioneer camps in Palanga, we went to sanatoriums using trade union vouchers. We also did not forget about cultural life. We read all novelties, went to the theaters, cinemas. later husband was given a garden. Then he bought a car and we started traveling all over Lithuania. We also went to Russia.

In 1970s when Jewish immigration was streamlined, my best friend left. I also started thinking of that. My only motif was that my close people were leaving, those friends, we had been keeping in touch with. We often discussed that issue with my husband and understood that we would not be able to leave without having affected the lives of our loved ones. Mother was not willing to go because father's grave was here. Mother-in-law could not leave either. Besides, my sisters Nina and Anna were single and we were responsible for them. We gradually gave up an idea to leave.

My mother died in 1985. I left job straight after that as I had to raise my grandson. My sister Nina also helped me. She also became a teacher. She was a headmaster at school. She remained single. She adores my grandson Gedeon. My younger sister Anna also remained single. She graduated from Vilnius university. She had worked in commerce for many years. Then she worked in private companies. Now Anna is retired. She is living in Vilnius. I am bonded with sisters. We talk over the phone every day and see each other often.

We had a pretty good living during the soviet regime. That is why when Lithuania gained independence [20](#) and Soviet Union broke up [1991], it was a shock for us. It seemed to us that our life collapsed. There appeared anti-Semitists meetings, where communists and the Jews were blamed for all the bad things. It was both in day-to-day life and in press. With time, it eased, and now we find positive things in our independence. Now Jewish community, which was established

before the soviet regime, can be revived. My husband Boris became the chairman of Siaulia community. I help him with everything, edit his speeches, reports, make arrangements for the holidays, assists in negotiations with the sponsors. Nina is also with us. Almost every day she comes in the community. I often cook Jewish dishes using my grandmother's recipes. We keep traditions, truly celebrate holidays and try to make a better life for Siaulia Jews in such uneasy times.

## **GLOSSARY:**

### **1 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.

### **2 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.

### **3 Birobidzhan**

Formed in 1928 to give Soviet Jews a home territory and to increase settlement along the vulnerable borders of the Soviet Far East, the area was raised to the status of an autonomous region in 1934. Influenced by an effective propaganda campaign, and starvation in the east, 41,000 Soviet Jews relocated to the area between the late 1920s and early 1930s. But, by 1938 28,000 of them had fled the regions harsh conditions, There were Jewish schools and synagogues up until the 1940s, when there was a resurgence of religious repression after World War II. The Soviet government wanted the forced deportation of all Jews to Birobidzhan to be completed by the middle of the 1950s. But in 1953 Stalin died and the deportation was cancelled. Despite some remaining Yiddish influences - including a Yiddish newspaper - Jewish cultural activity in the region has declined enormously since Stalin's anti-cosmopolitanism campaigns and since the liberalization of Jewish emigration in the 1970s. Jews now make up less than 2% of the region's population.

### **4 Dachau**

was the first German concentration camp. It was constructed in 17 kilometers from Munich and was officially open on the 22nd of March 1933. Dachau became the first 'testing area; where the



system of punishment and other forms of physical and psychological tortures were worked on prisoners. During World War Two Dachau was notorious for being as one of the most horrifying concentration camps, where medical tests were made on the prisoners. About 1100 people went through the tests. Preliminary 'anti-social elements' were imprisoned in Dachau. It was a preventive imprisonment of the opponents of national socialistic regime. Dachau was considered a political camp before opening, though after Krystallnacht about 10 thousands Jews were sent there. After 1939 Jews were sent from Dachau to execution camps. Hundreds thousand of people were starved to death or murdered. Dachau prisoners worked as free work power at the adjacent industrial enterprises. On the 29th of April 1945 concentration camp Dachau was liquidated by the units of the 7th American Army. The camp had 123 affiliates and exterior teams. The square of the territory equaled 235 hectares. About 250 thousand people from 24 countries were incarcerated in concentration camp Dachau during its existence. 70 thousand perished, and 12 thousand out of them were soviet military captives. There were 30 thousand prisoners, when the camp was being liberated. When the 2nd World War was over commandant of the camp and the security were indicted by International martial tribunal in Nuremberg. In accordance with the ruling of the tribunal as of the 18th of January 1947 commandant of the camp Piorkovskiy was sentenced to death and the 116 SS officers were sentenced to different terms in prison. At present there is a memorial complex on the territory of Dachau camp.

## **5 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.

## **6 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 Committy 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).

## **7 Order of the Red Star**

Established in 1930, it was awarded for achievements in the defense of the motherland, the promotion of military science and the development of military equipments, and for courage in battle. The Order of the Red Star has been awarded over 4,000,000 times.

## **8 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.

## **9 Annexation of Vilnius to Lithuania**

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

## **10 Deportations from the Baltics (1940-1953)**

After the Soviet Union occupied the three Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) in June 1940 as a part of establishing the Soviet system, mass deportation of the local population began. The victims of these were mainly but not exclusively those unwanted by the regime: the local bourgeoisie and the previously politically active strata. Deportations to remote parts of the Soviet Union continued up until the death of Stalin. The first major wave of deportation took place between 11th and 14th June 1941, when 36,000, mostly politically active people were deported.

Deportations were reintroduced after the Soviet Army recaptured the three countries from Nazi Germany in 1944. Partisan fights against the Soviet occupiers were going on all up to 1956, when the last squad was eliminated. Between June 1948 and January 1950, in accordance with a Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR under the pretext of 'grossly dodged from labor activity in the agricultural field and led anti-social and parasitic mode of life' from Latvia 52,541, from Lithuania 118,599 and from Estonai 32,450 people were deported. The total number of deportees from the three republics amounted to 203,590. Among them were entire Lithuanian families of different social strata (peasants, workers, intelligentsia), everybody who was able to reject or deemed capable to reject the regime. Most of the exiled died in the foreign land. Besides, about 100,000 people were killed in action and in fusillade for being members of partisan squads and some other 100,000 were sentenced to 25 years in camps.

### **11 Vilnius Ghetto**

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

### **12 Ponary**

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

### **13 Mandatory job assignment in the USSR**

Graduates of higher educational institutions had to complete a mandatory 2-year job assignment issued by the institution from which they graduated. After finishing this assignment young people were allowed to get employment at their discretion in any town or organization.

## **14 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.

## **15 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.

## **16 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.

## **17 Lend-lease is the system of transfer (loan or lease) of weaponry, ammunition, strategic raw materials, provision etc**

; supplies in terms of lend-lease were made by USA to the ally-countries on anti-Hitler coalition in the period of the second world war. The law on lend-lease was adopted by USA Congress in 1941.

## **18 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.

## **19 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.

## **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.