

# Rescued Lithuanian Jewish Child Tells About Shoah

This exhibition is dedicated to the memory of Lithuanian Jewish children killed during the Holocaust

## Nazi ideology sentenced every Jewish child to death

When World War II began, Jewish children, confronted with an invincible and devastating power, became the most vulnerable social group. Nazi ideology sentenced every Jewish child to death. Before the war, 1.6 million Jewish children lived in the countries that were occupied by the Wehrmacht and Germany's allies. More than 1 million of these children became victims of the planned genocide of the Nazis.

Thousands of Jewish children were killed together with their parents during the executions that took place in Lithuania in the summer and autumn of 1941. The remaining children were imprisoned together with adults in ghettos established in the cities of Vilnius, Kaunas, Šiauliai and Švenčionys. Only a few were destined to survive the never-ending campaigns of extermination.

In the ghettos, the children and the elderly who could not do forced labour and therefore became "useless" to the Wehrmacht were condemned to annihilation.

The history of the Kaunas Ghetto was marked by the *Great Action*, during which 2,007 Jewish men, 2,920 women and 4,273 children were shot dead in the 9th Fort on 28–29 October 1941.

The first *Children's Action* was carried out in the Šiauliai Ghetto on 5 November 1943. That day, 570 children and 260 elderly persons were taken in boxcars to Auschwitz and killed. The extermination of Jewish children and invalids was supervised by the SS-Hauptsturmführer Förster from Einsatzkommando 3A.

When the liquidation of the Vilnius Ghetto started, about 5,000 women and children were taken to the Majdanek and Auschwitz concentration camps and killed, while several hundred old and sick people were shot in Paneriai.

On 27–28 March 1944, a *Children's Action* was carried out in the Kaunas Ghetto. About 1,700 people were taken away, including 900–1,000 children. The *Children's Action* was supervised by the head of the Lithuanian concentration camps, SS-Obersturmbannführer Wilhelm Göcke.

On 27 March 1944, a *Children's Action* also took place in *Kailis* and HKP 562 Jewish labour camps in Vilnius. Two hundred fifty children and old persons were transported from *Kailis* camp in an unknown direction. Only a few children from the HKP labour camp managed to hide and avoid being taken away.

During the liquidation of the Šiauliai and Kaunas ghettos a few days before liberation in July 1944, the last inhabitants of the ghettos, adults and children, were killed or taken to concentration camps.

With the end of German occupation in Lithuania, some Jewish Lithuanian children were liberated and saved from death. The years of fear, suffering and painful losses were over. Many children had lost their parents, brothers and sisters, but became free.

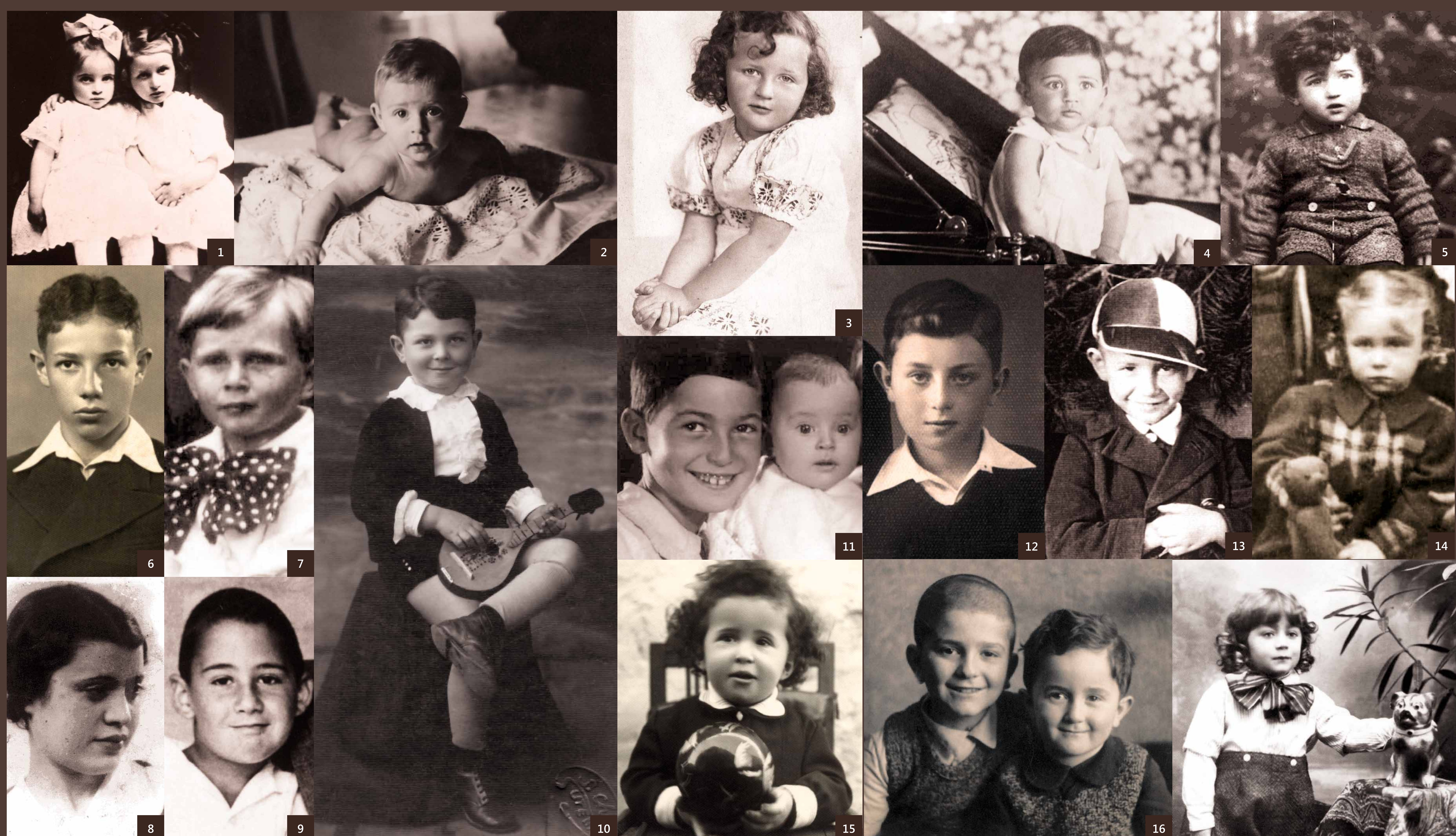
To the children of the Holocaust, the Righteous were beacons of hope in the pitch-black sea of horror and despair. They remained close to them the rest of their lives.

Domicelė Pajojutė with Chaim and Jehoshua Shochoth who she brought up and rescued during the war. Telšiai, 1937

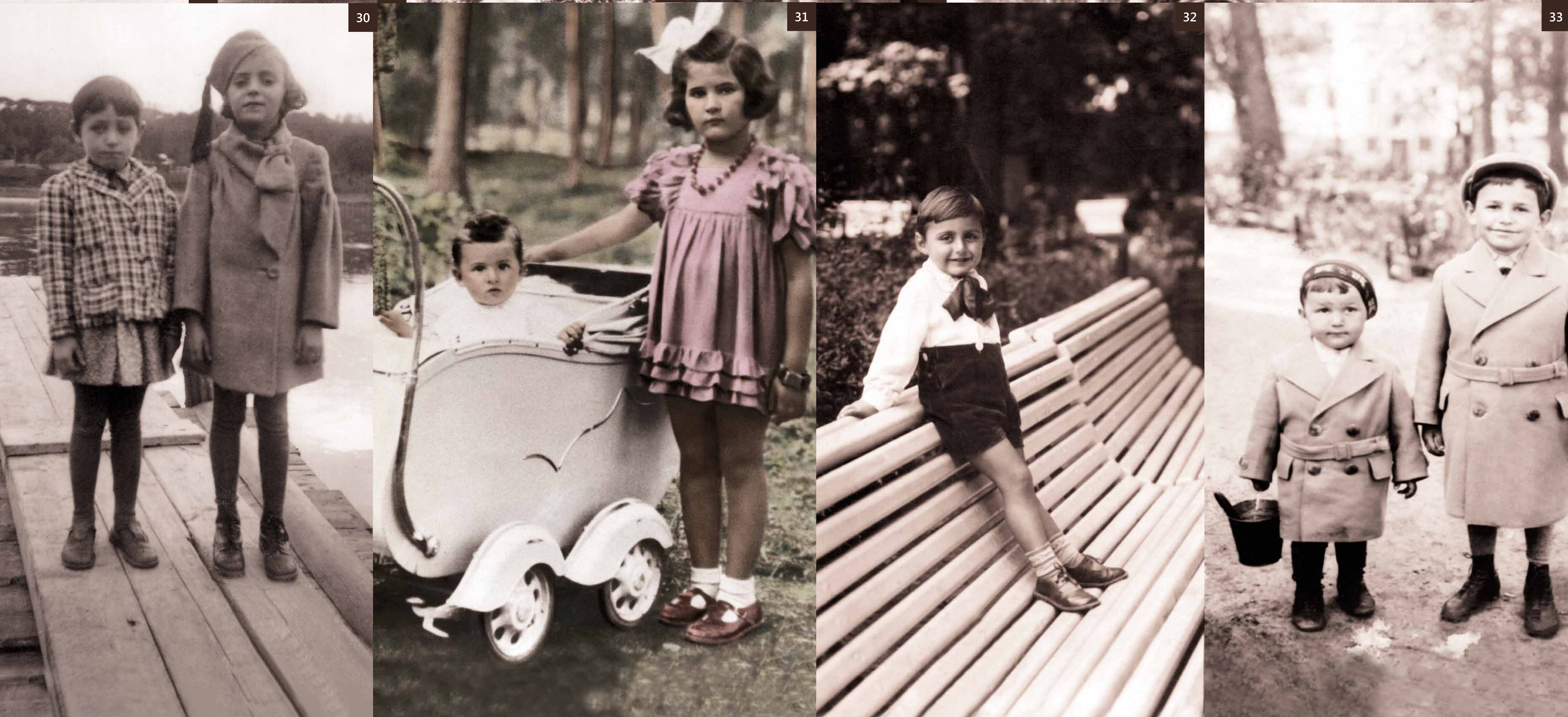
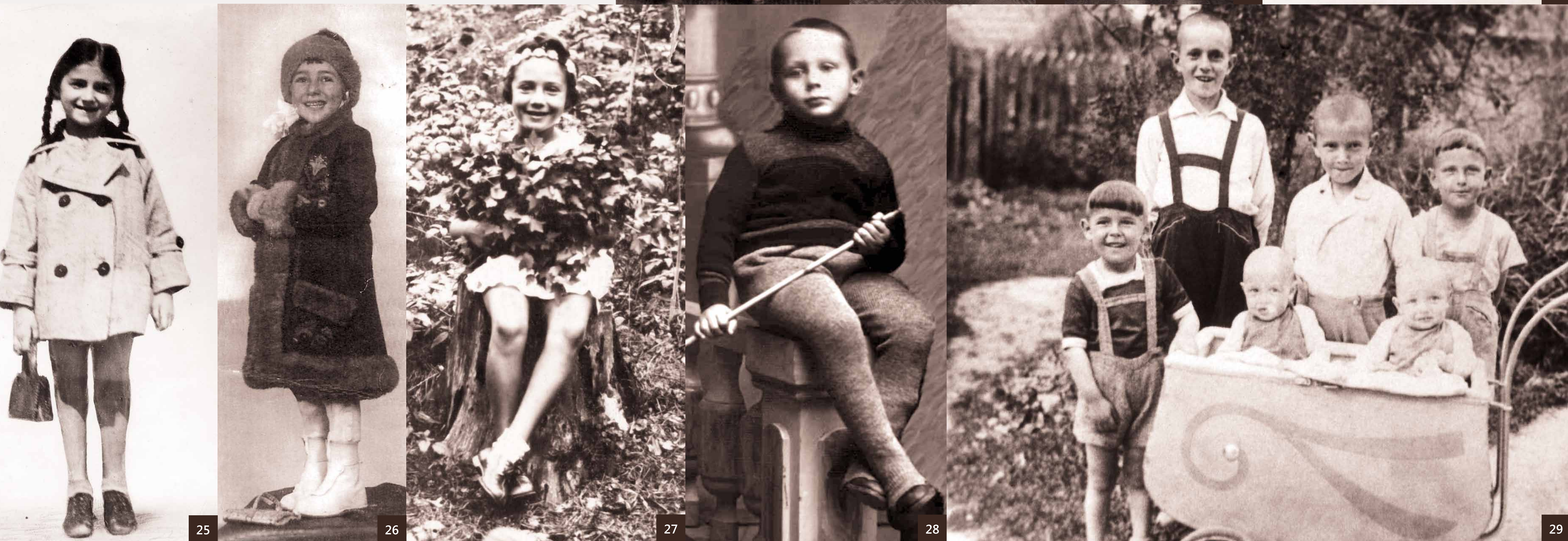




# Killed children whose names and places of killing are known



1. **Tzvia and Gutta Goldberg** were murdered on 9 September 1941 near Butrimonyš
2. **Frida Sabolevich** was murdered in 1941 in Vilkaviškis
3. **Sara Pazherski** was murdered in a forest near Šakiai on 13 September 1941
4. **Shera Brauman** was murdered in the village of Bajorai in Rokiškis District on 15 August 1941
5. **Monia Lisas** was murdered in Merkinė in 1941
6. **Rudolfas Lazersonas** was murdered in the summer of 1941 in the 6th Fort of Kaunas
7. **David Bruker** was murdered in July 1944 during the liquidation of the Kaunas Ghetto
8. **Zlata Mandelyte** was murdered on 26 June 1941 during the pogrom in Kaunas
9. **Liova Frenkel** perished in July 1944 during the liquidation of the Kaunas Ghetto
10. **The elder son of the Kaufman family** was murdered in a forest near Utena
11. **Garik and Tamara Hofmekler** were murdered in Paneriai
12. **Zeev Kleinshtein** was murdered on 28 July 1941 in Vilkaviškis
13. **Josif Margolis** was murdered in Paneriai in July 1944
14. **Henia Chinsky** was murdered in Paneriai in 1941
15. **Miriam Fruman** was murdered in Pivonijos Forest near Ukmergė
16. **Viktoras and Azarijus Lemchen** were deported from Šančiai camp in Kaunas to Auschwitz concentration camp during the *Children's Action* on 27 March 1944 and perished there
17. **Josel Mendel Baron** was murdered in the village of Bajorai in Rokiškis District on 15 August 1941
18. **Adina Tokeryte**, a victim of the *Children's Action* in the Šiauliai Ghetto on 5 November 1943
19. **Josifas Vitkinas** perished in July 1944 during the liquidation of the Kaunas Ghetto
20. **Chone Zakas** from Šiauliai
21. **Yakov Eliezer Baron** was murdered in the village of Bajorai in Rokiškis District on 15 August 1941
22. **Niuta Rainaitė** was murdered in Stutthof concentration camp
23. **Ilya Borovsky** was deported to Klooga concentration camp in Estonia in September 1943
24. **Yitskhok Rudashevski** was murdered in 1943 right after the liquidation of the Vilnius Ghetto
25. **Sara (Sonya) Vidutchinsky** perished in Auschwitz
26. **Liuba Zeltzer** was shot in Germany in 1945, participating in the *Death March*
27. **Anna Epshtein**. After the start of the war, Anna did not return from Palanga Pioneer Camp
28. **David Pazherski** was murdered in a forest near Šakiai on 13 September 1941
29. **Sara Kaganaitė-Galauniene's children**. Six children and their mother were murdered in 1941 in Geruliai
30. **Golda** (on the right), a victim of the *Children's Action* in the Kaunas Ghetto on 27 March 1944
31. **Dora and Miriam Borshtein** were deported to Auschwitz concentration camp during the *Children's Action* in the Kaunas Ghetto on 27 March 1944 and murdered there
32. **Hirsh Bruker** was murdered in July 1944 during the liquidation of the Kaunas Ghetto
33. **The Vinokur brothers** were deported from Kaunas to Auschwitz during the *Children's Action* on 27 March 1944 and perished there





# Children whose names and fate are unknown

We can say nothing about their families, their names or where they lived or died. When the front line passed, in the burnt ruins of the Kaunas and Vilnius ghettos, among charred bodies and personal belongings the pictures of the former ghetto inhabitants and their loved ones had been found...

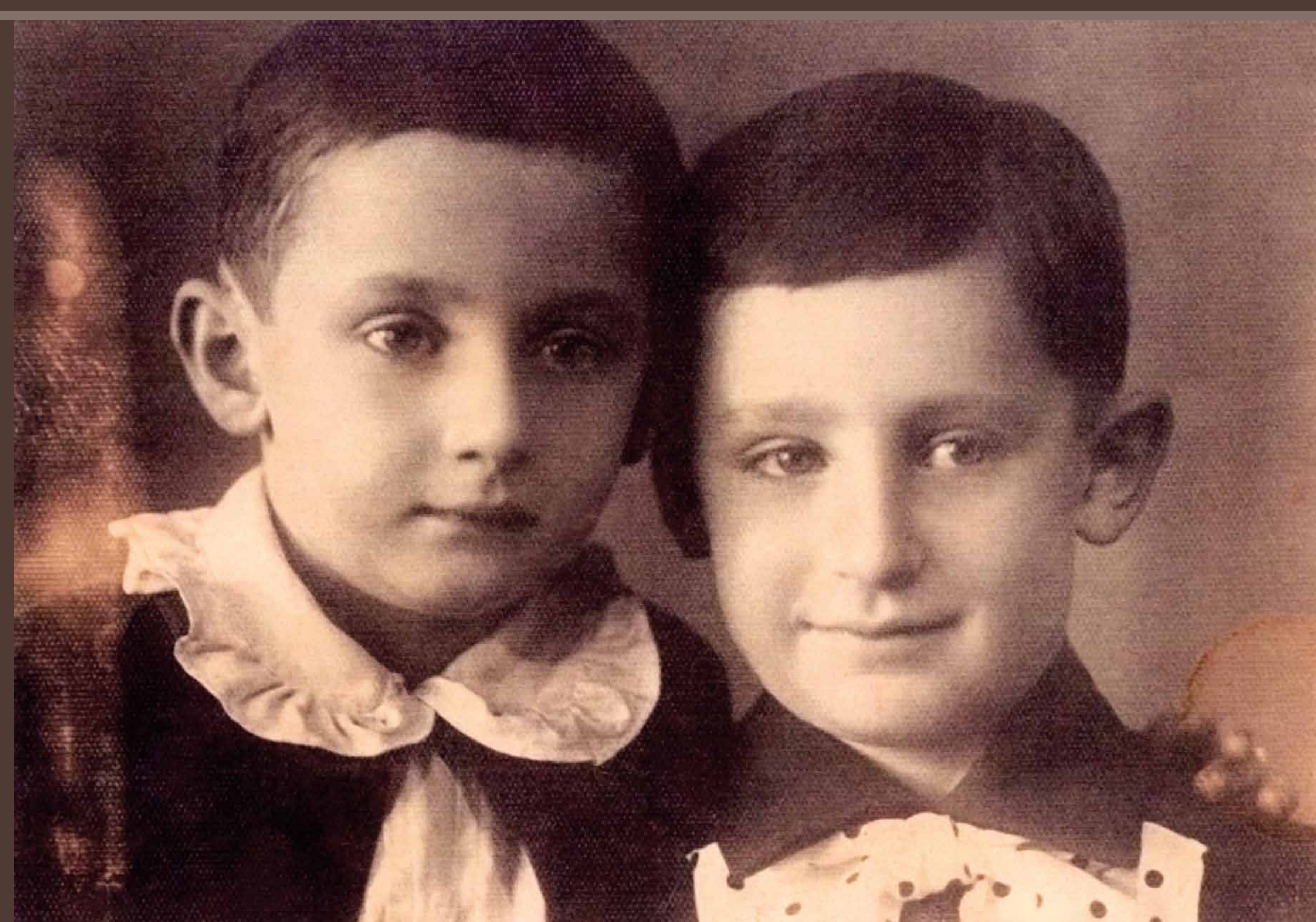




# Jehoshua Shochot, 1933

# Chaim Shochot, 1932

## Telšiai



Jehoshua Shochot and Chaim Shochot. Telšiai, 1936



The fourth generation of graduates from Javne Girls' Gymnasium, a Hebrew school in Telšiai, 1929. Reizl Shif (later Shochot) is second from the right in the front row. Sholom Shochot is third from the left in the second row



A wedding photo of Reizl Shif and Sholom Shochot, Jehoshua Shochot's parents. Photograph taken in 1931 in Zemaites Street in Telšiai next to the house of Jehoshua's grandfather, Shmuel Shif



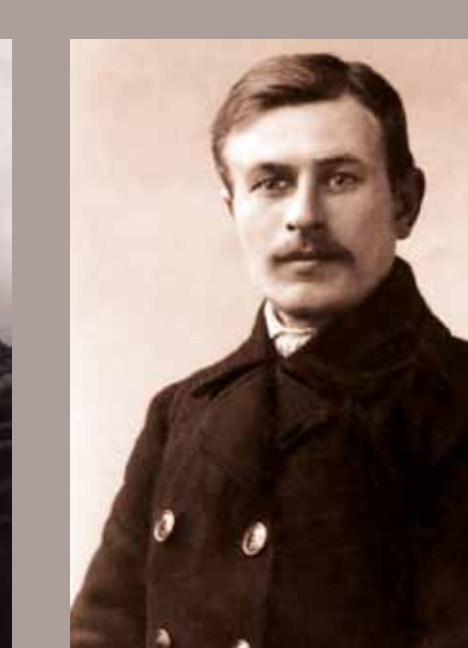
Domicelė Pajojutė with the children she brought up: Jehoshua (in the pram) and Chaim. Kleboniškis, near Kaunas, 1934



For more than 20 years Domicelė Pajojutė worked in the family of Kaplansky, a known photographer in Telšiai. In the picture: in the first row, first from the left: Domicelė Pajojutė. In the second row, second from the left: Feliksė Kaplansky-Taic, the mother of Rachel, who was saved during the war by Domicelė, and other members of the Kaplansky family and their friends. Telšiai, 1920



Baltramiejus Pajojus



Julius Pajojus



Julijona Pajojiene with her son Julius



Sitting: Baltramiejus Pajojus and his sister Domicelė Pajojutė



Domicelė Pajojutė and Benigna Budzinskiene. Pre-war photo

**Jehoshua Shochot:** *Domicelė was a very dear person to me. She gave all her energy, intelligence and love to other people. She rescued those who were condemned to die, the ill and the suffering, she helped make their lives easier and supported everyone as much as she could. I will never forget her.*



Reizl Shochot's house in Telšiai, Kalno Street No.15, where Domicelė Pajojutė lived from 1932 till she died in 1972. In front of the wooden house one may see a two-storey brick building where the Gestapo was established during the war. On the walls there were huge flags with swastikas and no one would have thought then that Domicelė Pajojutė is hiding the Jewish children in this small house near the Gestapo building...



From left to right: Chaim Shochot, Jehoshua Shochot and Reizl Shochot. Telšiai, 1935



Bronislovas Valiusaitis  
Reizl Shochot. This photo was taken during the German occupation. It was glued to the forged passport of Reizl Shochot. Jehoshua Shochot kept this photo as a precious memory of his mother for the rest of his life

Happy childhood. Together with neighbour friends Kęstutis Valiusaitis and Nijolė Valiusaitytė before the war. Chaim Shochot on the left. When the lives of Reizl Shochot and her sons Chaim and Jehoshua were in danger during the Nazi occupation, Bronislovas Valiusaitis, a maths teacher in a Telšiai school, secured official birth certificates for both boys and a forged passport for their mother, Reizl Shochot. Bronislovas Valiusaitis also provided forged documents to Rachel Taic



The Čiuželis' house in the winter



Aniceta Čiuželiėnė on her farm



Feliksas Čiuželis (younger)



Stanislava Vagnoriūtė-Kepalienė

During the award ceremony of the Righteous Among the Nations in Telšiai, on behalf of saviours **Stasė Vagnoriūtė-Kepalienė** uttered these unforgettable words:

*There are a few words that always have to be capitalised: Mother, Motherland, Love, and Life. I would like to remember the mother of Stasiukas Shochot – she has always remained for me the symbol of the Israeli Mother. You should have seen those moments when she would see her children for a short time – how happy she was of that moment which was so fragile and could have ended tragically at any time, how she cared for and loved her boys. She was not the only one like that, however, I have never forgotten her, I have told about her for many times to my relatives and acquaintances.*



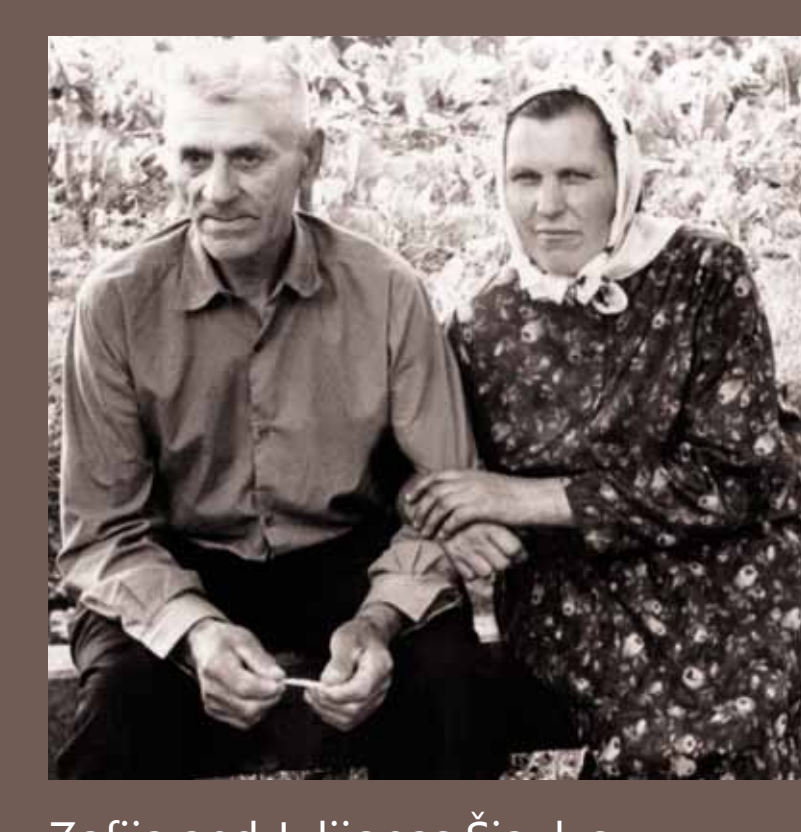
Domicelė and Zenonas Smilgevičius



Zofija Šmitaitė (Kęšminienė)



Marcijona Šaulienė



Zofija and Julijonas Šiaulyš



Napoleonas Šaulys

**Jehoshua Shochot:** I was born and raised in Telšiai. My father died when I was a little boy. Our small family – my mother Reizl, my brother Chaim, and I – lived in a small single-family house on Kalno Street.

When the war broke out between Germany and the Soviet Union, I was just a little boy and had only finished the first class of the Jewish school. But I must have been mature enough to remember what was going on and to perceive the meaning of those events.

I did not have to stand by a pit and wait for a murderer's bullet to take my consciousness and stop my heartbeat. But I clearly heard the gunshots in Rainiai when Jewish men were being shot dead, and I saw a carriage full of wet clothes that had been stripped off the dead bodies and were being distributed among people. I saw the black faces of the men who were returning from the shooting site because of the slashing rainfall that had prevented the murderers from finishing their work. I have heard the laments of women who had lost their husbands

and of children who had lost their parents and grandparents. I heard screams and gunshots when women and children were being shot in Geruliai. I have heard the heart-wrenching laments of the young women imprisoned in the Telšiai Ghetto for their murdered mothers, grandparents, brothers and sisters. All these horrible images and sounds have been etched into my heart and memory for the rest of my life.

Our hiding began with the liquidation of the Telšiai Ghetto and lasted until October 1944, when the region was liberated from the Germans.

From the liquidation of the Telšiai Ghetto at the end of 1941 until our liberation in October 1944, we hid in the district and the city of Telšiai. We survived thanks to the extraordinary help, courageous dedication, and cleverness of Domicelė and many other similar Lithuanian families.

Domicelė Pajojutė was the main rescuer of Rachel Taic-Zinger and Reizl Shochot and her sons Chaim and Jehoshua Shochot.

Domicelė started working for our family in 1932, and before this, for 20 years, she had been working for the family of a famous photographer in Telšiai, Chaim Kaplansky. She had worked for this family as a maid and nanny and brought up almost two generations of children.

The children who were raised by Domicelė got attached to her and loved her very much. The granddaughter of Kaplansky, Rachel Taic, was one of them. The girl would come to visit us quite often; to be more precise, she would visit Domicelė. Rachel loved her very much too. And my brother and I loved her like our mother, sometimes even more. Domicelė never had her own family but she would get attached to the kids she was looking after as if they were her own. When during the German occupation these children were in imminent danger, she did everything she could to rescue them.

During the German occupation, she was a nurse in the ophthalmology clinic situated in our house. She lived in the same flat in a small room, the *suka*.

She would not only hide us in her little room and in the attic, but also convinced her brothers Julijonas and Baltramiejus and other relatives and friends to join in her efforts.

We went to Domicelė when we had nowhere to go, and she would find new hideouts for us and ways out of the most difficult situations. She always knew where we were and would come to visit us as often as she could.

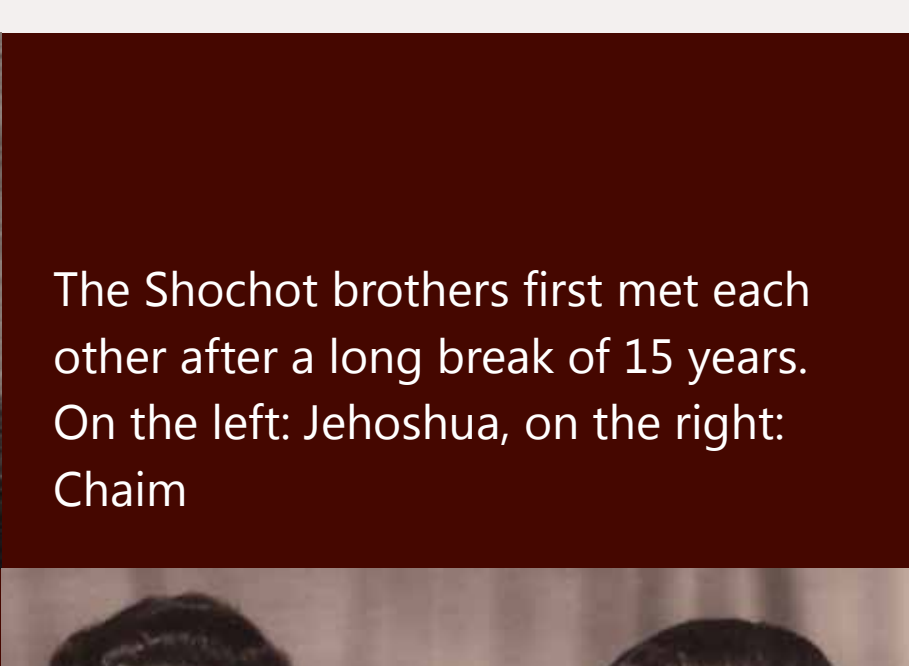
I had to change my hideout 15 times, my brother Chaim a little less, and my mother had to hide in as many as 22 places. My mother's sister Lea hid with the Laurinaitis family in Telšiai throughout the war.

The scope of the tragedy that had befallen us emerged only in 1944 when the German occupation was over. I was the only one to survive of all my classmates with whom I had finished the first class of the Telšiai Jewish school.

When I visit Telšiai, I always go to the building where my first Jewish school was, I take a walk down the streets of the former Telšiai Ghetto, I visit Rainiai and Geruliai, and I spend some time by the pits where our relatives, classmates and neighbours were shot dead. There are four of those pits and two of them were designated for me too.



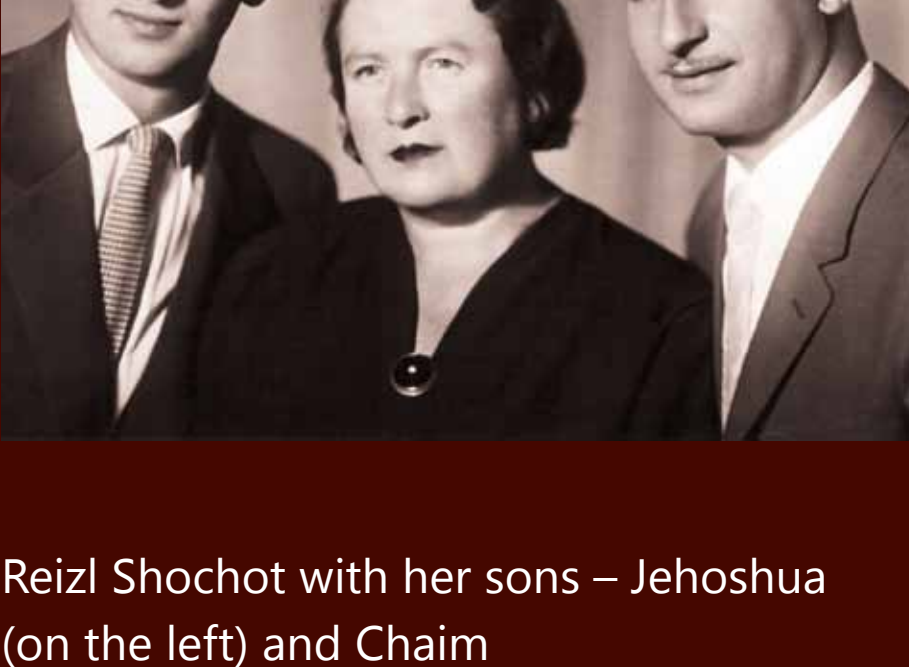
Jehoshua and Reizl Shochot. Telšiai, 1947



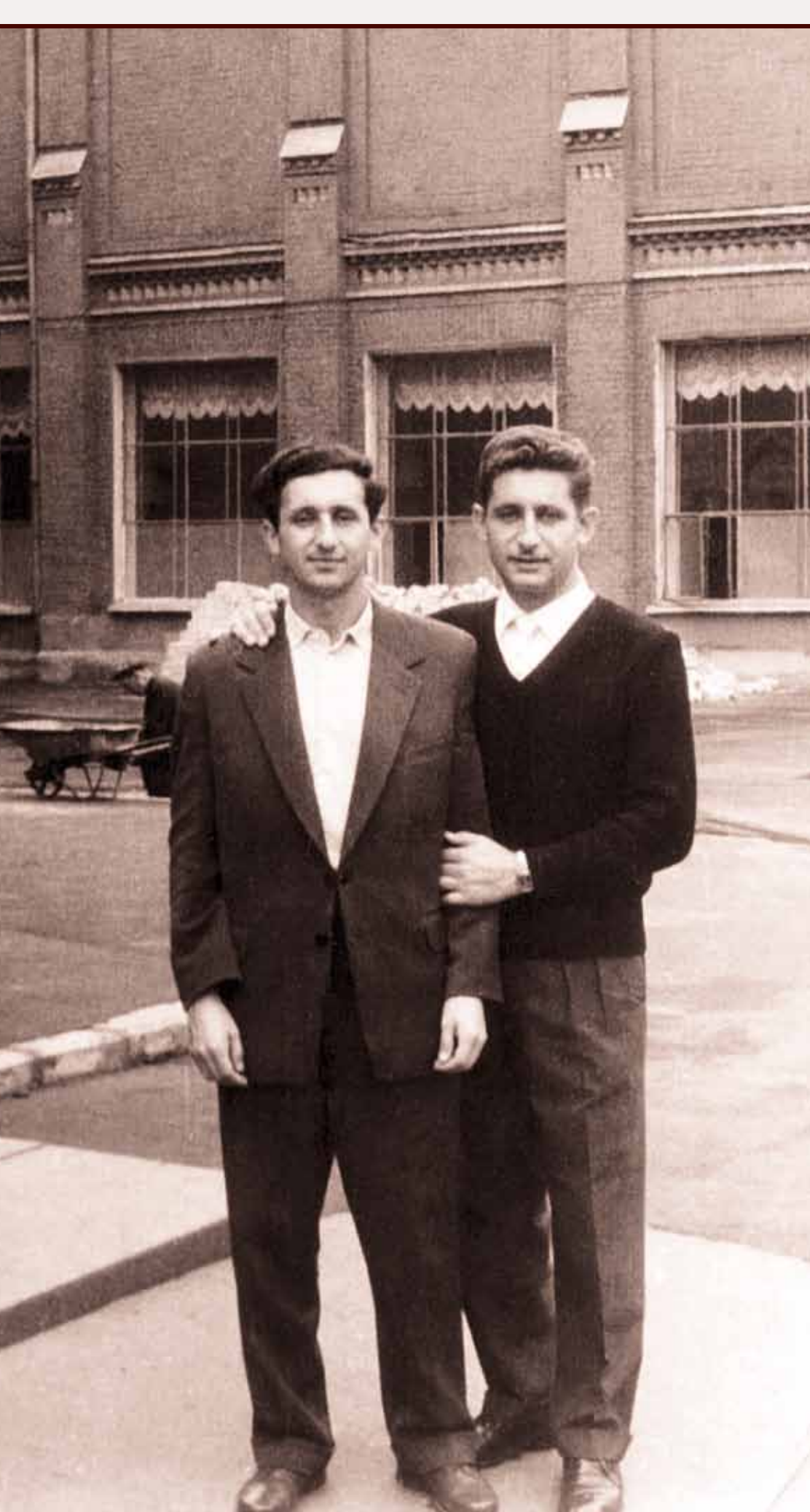
The Shochot brothers first met each other after a long break of 15 years. On the left: Jehoshua, on the right: Chaim



Rachel Taic, saved by Domicelė Pajojutė, in Palestine in 1947. Here she had just married Asher Zinger and had two sons and a daughter. Rachel began every letter to Domicelė with these words: "Dear Domicelė"



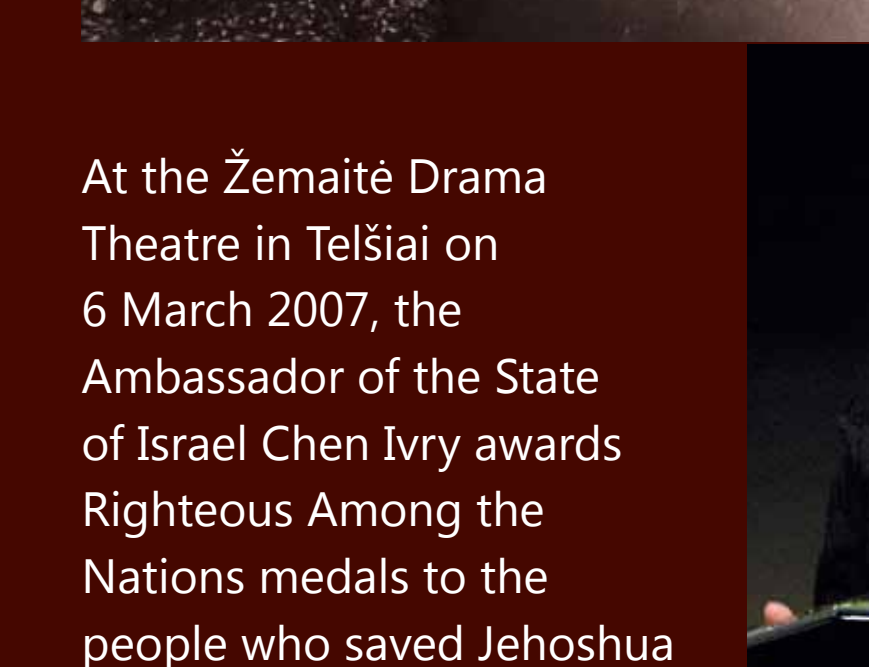
Reizl Shochot with her sons – Jehoshua (on the left) and Chaim (on the right), Moscow, 1960. Chaim Shochot with Leah, the sister of Reizl Shochot left Lithuania for Palestine in 1945. The mother met her elder son and both brothers met one another only 15 years later when Chaim Shochot together with a group of tourists came to Moscow. It was only in 1972 that the family was finally reunited in Israel



Antanas and Benigna Budzinskas with their daughter Genovaitė in Siberia.



The Ambassador of the State of Israel Chen Iry awards Benigna Budzinskaitė a Righteous Among the Nations medal and a Certificate of Honour



Stefanija Budzinskaitė at the Righteous Among the Nations award ceremony in Telšiai, 6 March 2007



Benigna Budzinskaitė and Jehoshua Shochot

Thirty-four persons from Telšiai District who were involved in saving Jehoshua, his brother Chaim, and their mother Reizl Shochot, were awarded the *Life Saviour's Crosses* at Jehoshua Shohot's request.

On 4 January 2006, fourteen rescuers of Reizl Shochot and her children Jehoshua and Chaim were acknowledged as Righteous Among the Nations.

- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Antanas BUDZINSKAS     | Marcijona ŠAULIENĖ    |
| Benigna BUDZINSKIENĖ   | Napoleonas ŠAULYS     |
| Benigna BUDZINSKAITĖ   | Zofija ŠIAULIENĖ      |
| Stefanija BUDZINSKAITĖ | Julijonas ŠIAULYS     |
| Julijona PAGOJENĖ      | Stanislava VAGNORIENĖ |
| Julius PAGOJUS         | Povilas VAGNORIUS     |
| Baltramiejus PAGOJUS   |                       |
| Domicelė PAGOJUTĖ      |                       |

# EVERY RESCUE STORY IS UNIQUE

However, the complexity of the situation led to some common patterns in all those stories

Generally, the efforts of many people were required to save a single Jewish child.

First, reliable people who would agree to risk their lives and the life of their close ones had to be found.

Attempts were made to obtain forged documents and birth certificates for most of the children.

The children had to constantly be kept away from the eyes of strangers. The rescuers had to beware of denunciation.

Sometimes the children had to spend long hours in the hideouts without making a move or a sound.

In case of even the slightest danger, the hideouts had to be changed.

Parting with parents, even though they were living in the ghetto, was often very traumatic.

Children had to forget their real names and get used to new ones.

They had to adapt to a new environment and live in hiding, sometimes without even getting a chance to go outside.

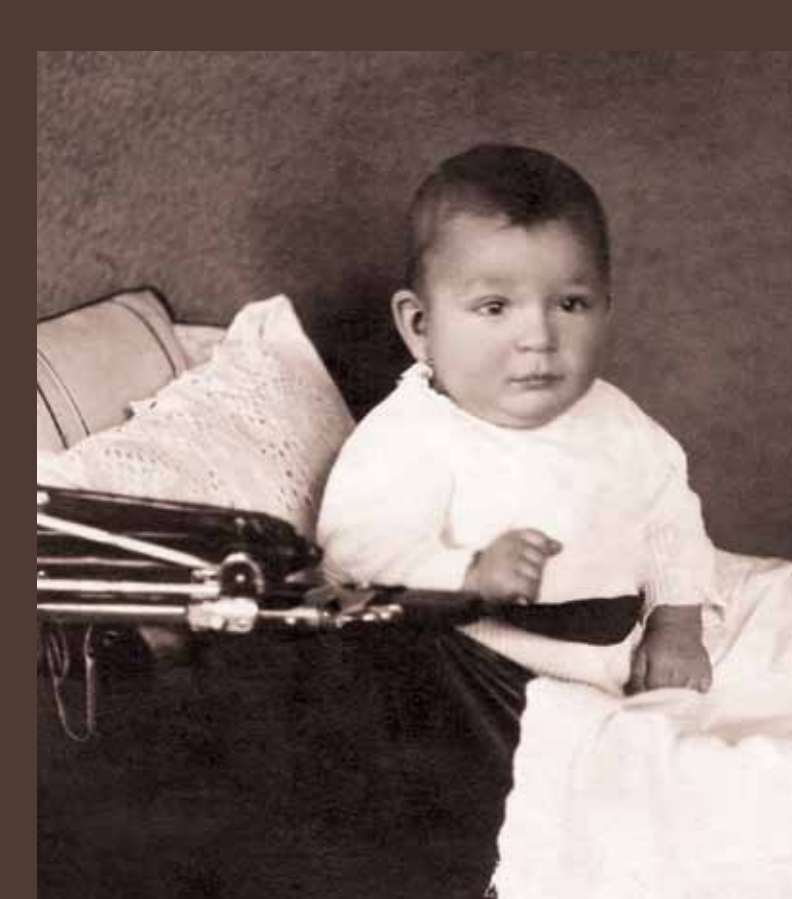


# Jakov Gurvitch, 1927

## Telšiai



**Jakov Gurvitch:** *They were hiding us because of their good heart and compassion. If we offered to help on the farm, they would happily agree. However, this was not the main reason they took us in.*



Jakov Gurvitch, Telšiai, 1928



Roza and Chaim Gurvitch with their children Ruth and Jakov, Telšiai, 1935



Jakov Gurvitch's grandmother, Alida Blum (Blum), was born in Riga in 1870. She was arrested during the *Children's Action* in the Štaliai Ghetto, and along with Jewish children she was taken to Auschwitz and killed there.



From left to right: Jakov Gurvitch is on the lap of his mother Roza, Jakov's father Chaim Gurvitch, his mother's sister Sonia Volpert-Deletickienė, grandmother Alida Blum-Volpert, his sister Ruth Gurvitch, Alida's, Jakov's grandmother's, sister-in-law Jeta Blum, Jakov's aunt Chaya Volpert (the wife of his mother's brother Gershon Volpert), and Gershon Volpert with his daughter Hinda on his lap.

**Jakov Gurvitch:** I was born on 5 June 1927 in Riga. Though my parents and my entire family lived in Telšiai at the time, my mother, who had health problems, decided to give birth in Riga. I remember my childhood from three years of age. It was really very good, I was taken care of, and my parents employed governesses. My parents Chaim and Roza Gurvitch were known and respected people in Telšiai. My family (my mother Roza, my father Chaim, my sister Ruth, her first husband Cemach Ginsburg, and me) and the family of my mother's brother (Gershon Volpert) lived in the same house alongside our beloved and respected grandmother (Alida Volpert).

On 14 June 1941, Roza Gurvitch's brother Gershon Volpert with his family were exiled to Siberia. Only later did it become clear that the deportation had saved them. The rest of family were convinced that they would be exiled as well. However, on 22 June 1941 the war started. The Germans occupied Telšiai on 25 June and on 28 June all the Jews of

Telšiai were expelled from their homes and housed in barns on the Rainiai estate.

**Jakov Gurvitch:** At 4 a.m. on 15 July, the white arm-banders stormed into the barn shouting and screaming. All men from the second floor were taken outside, and nobody cared whether they were young or old, dressed or half-naked. I was hidden by the women and covered with what they had. They also sat on me. We did not know where they were taking the men, but soon it became clear. After 20–30 minutes, we heard the shooting of machine guns and heard the screams of our relatives. All this lasted the entire day of 15 July. On that day, my father Chaim Gurvitch and the first husband of my sister Ruth, Cemach Ginsburg, were shot.

On 28 July, all who were still in the Rainiai camp and those who were still alive in the neighbouring towns were taken to a place called Geruliai. Thousands of children and women

from Telšiai County were taken there. At the end of August, there were rumours that there would be another massacre. A ghetto was being set up next to the lake in Telšiai. On 30 August, about 500 young women were taken to the Telšiai Ghetto. Jakov Gurvitch's mother Roza and his sister Ruth made it into the ghetto and thus stayed alive for the time being. Thousands of women and men from Telšiai District were shot in Geruliai on that day, however, I do not remember who told me but I knew that my mother and Ruth survived and had been taken to the ghetto.

**Jakov Gurvitch:** During the years of German occupation, I stayed with many families, and many people helped me. They risked their lives. Everyone knew they could have been shot for hiding Jews. I could put it this way: they were hiding us because of their good heart and compassion. If we offered to help on the farm, they happily agreed. This was not the main reason they took us in, however, I will always

remember the three villages near Telšiai where I felt safe – Kalnėnai, Vygantiškiai and Buožėnai – and I am still amazed at the good and honest people that lived there!

Unfortunately, painful losses befell us all: Ona Laucevičienė lost her son, Jadvyga's brother Pranas Laucevičius, and my mother lost her daughter, my sister Ruth.

From the end of December 1941 until liberation in October 1944, I found shelter with approximately 35 Lithuanian families in the city of Telšiai and different towns and villages where they hid me, fed me, and gave me shelter and warmth.

I will be grateful until the end of my life to the people who risked their lives and the lives of their dear ones rescuing me, my sister Ruth, and our mother Roza Gurvitch.

Thirteen rescuers of Jakov Gurvitch and his mother were acknowledged as Righteous Among the Nations.

Juozapas and Stanislava BYRA  
Raimondas and Stasė BUKNYS  
Stanislava DAUSINIENĖ  
Ona LAUCEVIČIENĖ  
Jadvyga LAUCEVIČIŪTĖ-BAUŽIENĖ  
Halina MONTVILIENĖ and her husband  
Domicėlė and Pranciškus ŠAULYS  
Halina and Waclaw SZUKSZTA

Forty rescuers of Jakov Gurvitch and his mother Roza Gurvitch were awarded the *Life Saviour's Crosses*.



Jakov Gurvitch with his young wife Sofija and mother Roza, Telšiai, 1947



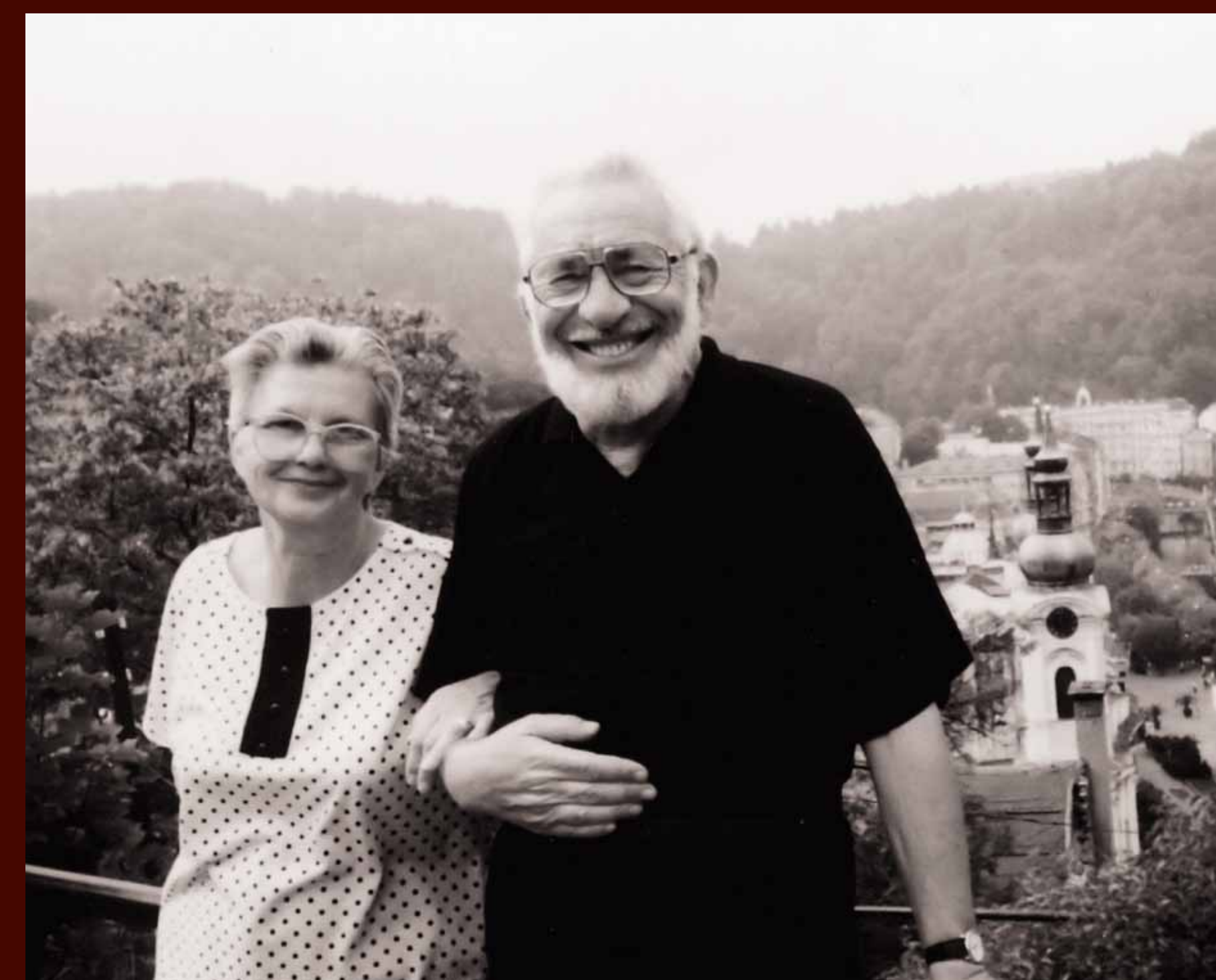
Jakov Gurvitch, his daughters Rachel and Ruth, and Genovaitė Buknyte (on the left) the daughter of Buknys, who rescued him



Jakov Gurvitch and Jadvyga Laucevičiūtė-Baužienė, Telšiai, 2005



Jakov Gurvitch with Zuzana Gumuliuskiene, the granddaughter of his rescuer, Stanislava Dausiniene, Telšiai, 2005



Sofija Gurvitch and Jakov Gurvitch, citizens of Israel

*I will always remember the three villages near Telšiai, where I felt safe – Kalnėnai, Vygantiškiai and Buožėnai – and I am still amazed at the good and honest people that lived there!*



Jadvyga Laucevičiūtė with Telesforas, the son of Jakov's sister Ruth Gurvitch and Jadvyga's brother Pranas Laucevičius. Telšiai, 1945. Ruth and Pranas were shot near the Virvyte River on the last day of the German occupation. Jadvyga Laucevičiūtė-Baužienė raised Telesforas, and Jakov helped her in any way he could



From left to right: Stanislovas Dausinas, Zuzana Dausiniene, Stanislava Dausiniene, 1959



Stanislovas Dausinas and Zuzana Dausiniene

Jakov Gurvitch remembers: "Stanislava Dausiniene and the people who were closest to her, i.e. her son Stanislovas Dausinas, his wife Zuzana, their daughter Elena Adomaitiene (Dausinaitė), and her husband Jonas Adomaitis, saved Jews throughout the war. This family was my guardian angel throughout the entire occupation."



Jonas Adomaitis and Elena Adomaitiene with their grandson



Telesforas' grandparents Ona Laucevičienė and Pranas Laucevičius on their wedding day

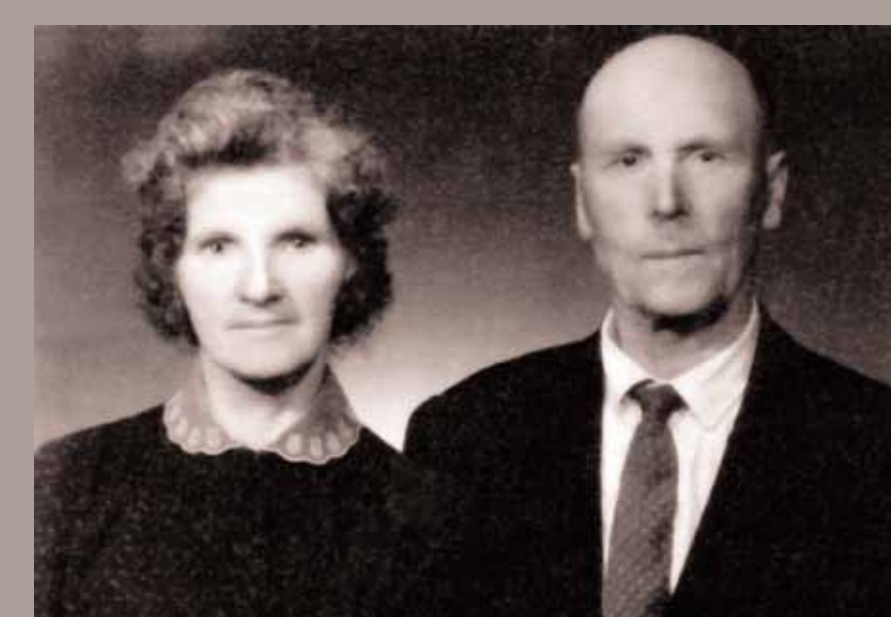


Vaclavos Gričius helped Jakov Gurvitch and Abraham Desiatnik a lot. He also hid sisters Ziv, Vaclavos Gričius in the middle of the first row. The photo taken before the war



The Byra family in August 1930. Village of Vygantiškės, Telšiai District

The Byra family hid Jakov at their place in Vygantiškės village for the whole summer of 1943. He got friendly with the children of Stasė Byrienė and Juozas Byra: Aldona, Modesta, Juozas and Eugenija. However, he had to leave this place because Gestapo started searching in the surrounding areas.



Stanislava Byrienė and Juozapas Byra



Domicėlė Saulienė and Pranciškus Šaulys

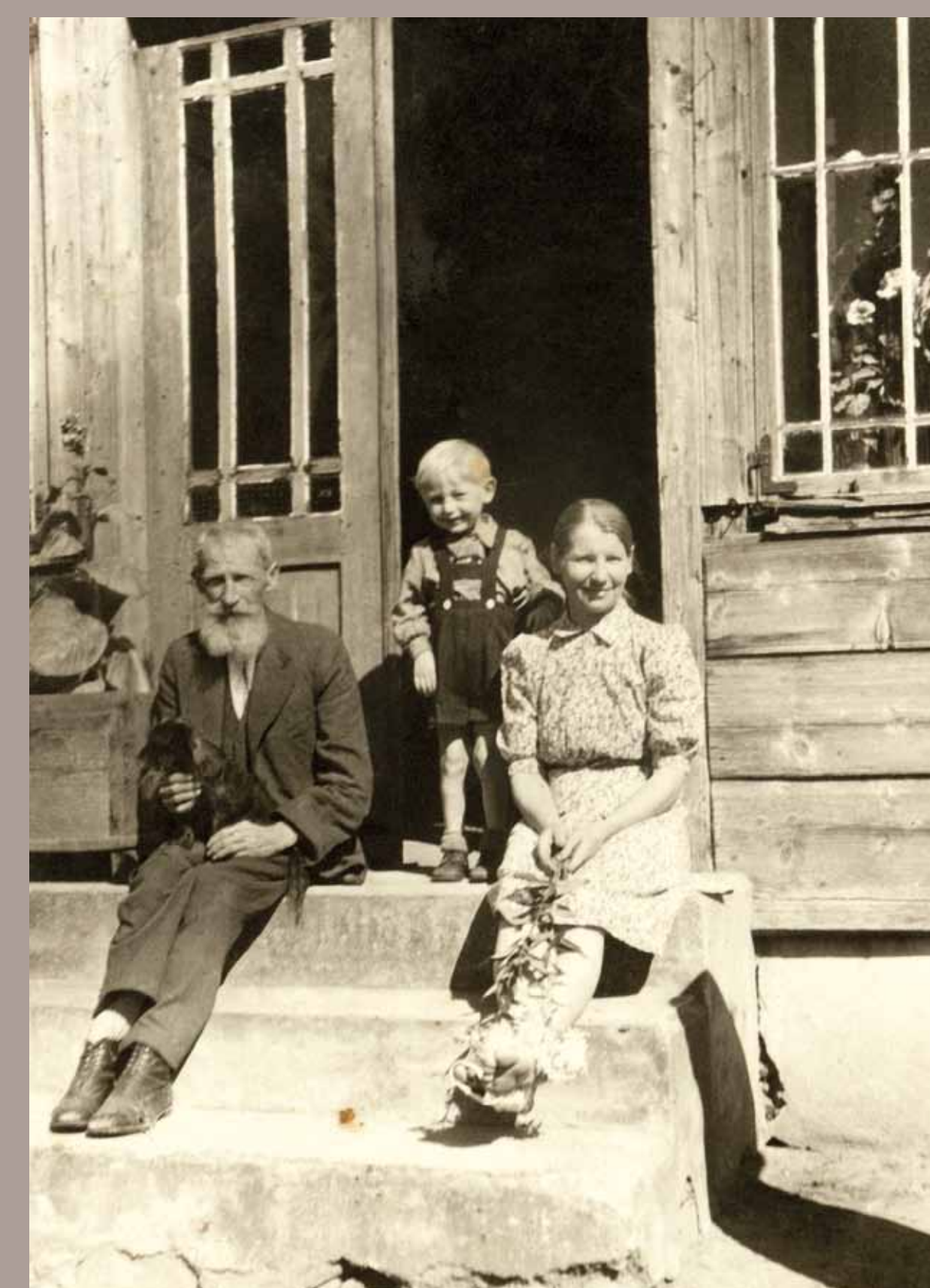
Three cousins – Pranciškus, Julijonas and Napoleonas Šaulys – lived in the village of Kalnėnai. These three farmers hid Jews in 1941–1944



Jakov Gurvitch: "I am seventeen, and the war is over"



Halina and Waclaw Szukszta accepted Jakov and his mother Roza during the especially cold winter of 1942. The Szuksztsas lived in the centre of Telšiai. Above them lived Mr Judvickis, head of the Security Department. In spite of the especially warm welcome at the Szuksztsa's, the Gurvitch family could not stay there long, because policemen frequently visited the head of the Security Department



The Montvilas family. Picture taken before the war. It was when he lived with the Montvilas family in Kvedarna that Jakov Gurvitch met the liberation



# Ranana Kleinshtein, 1932

## Vilkaviškis



The farm of Veronika and Stasys Strimaitis, village of Žėčkalniai, Barzdai District, Šakiai County. During the war, that was a hiding place for Jews. It was when they lived at this farm, that Ranana Kleinshtein and her mother Esther met the liberation, August, 1942

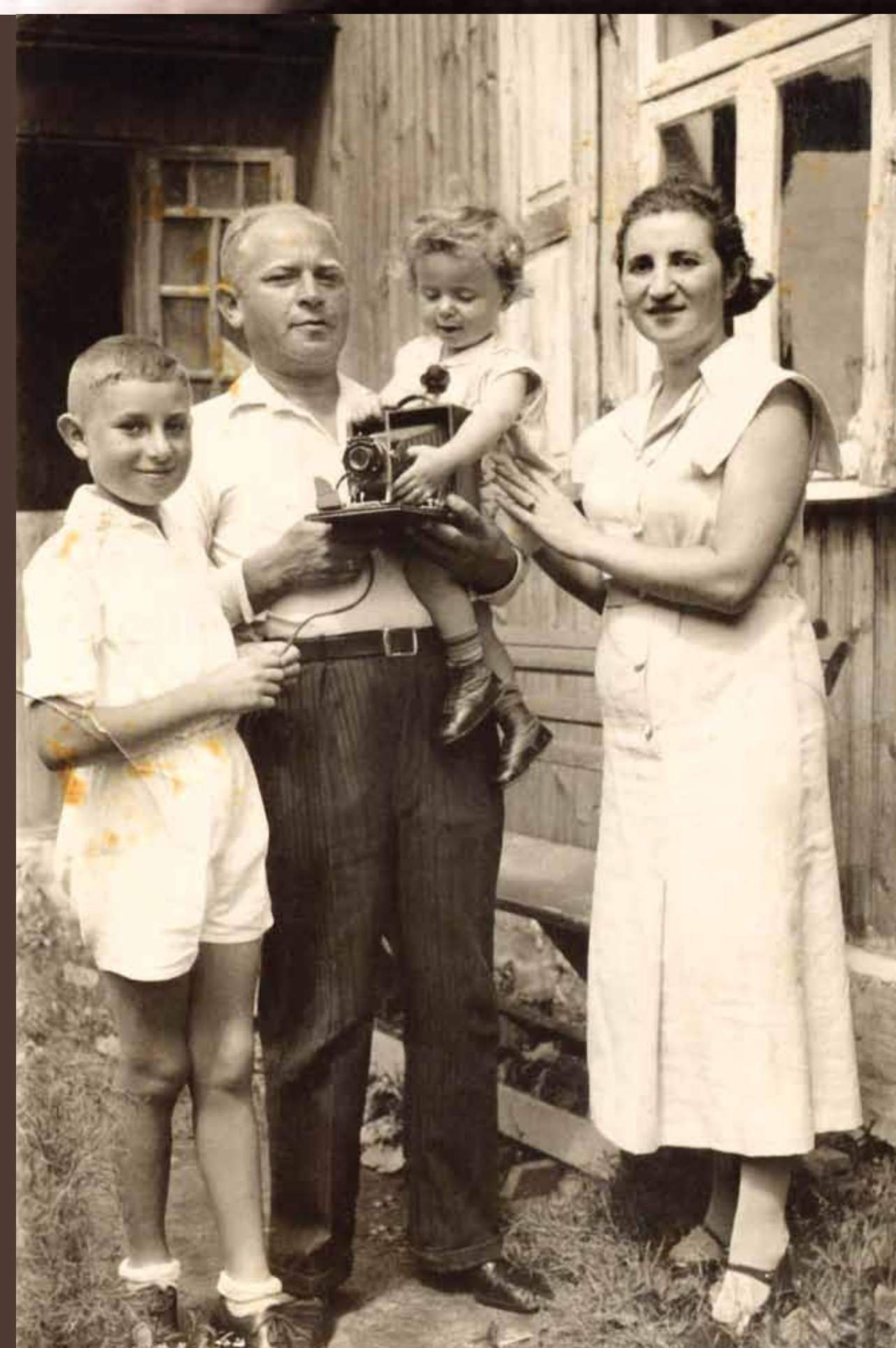
**Ranana Kleinshtein:** *Somebody advised us to go to the Strimaitis family, who had 40 hectares of land and a huge garden in the village of Žėčkalniai in Šakiai County. They were said to have never refused to help. We went there and it was true: the Strimaitis family accepted us, provided shelter in their house, and even built a double wall in the room where we stayed. Behind the room was our hiding place in the event of danger. Veronika and Stasys Strimaitis had four children: daughters Milda, Laima and Dalia, and son Aidas. With the Strimaitis family, I felt more at ease. I could walk in the courtyard and the garden.*



Veronika and Stasys Strimaitis with their daughters. From the left: Milda, Laima and Dalia. Vilkaviškis, 1938



Esther and Moshe Kleinshtein with their son Zeev and daughter Ranana. Vilkaviškis, 24 June 1935. In 6 years, on 28 July 1941, Moshe Kleinshtein, his son Zeev, and other Jewish men in Vilkaviškis were killed



Esther and Moshe Kleinshtein with their son Zeev and daughter Ranana in Piliškiiai, 1934



The eight-year Jewish school in Vilkaviškis, 1930. The family of school principal Moshe Kleinshtein lived on the first floor of the school building, their windows are on the right

Veronika STRIMAITIENė, Stasys STRIMAITIS and their daughter Milda STRIMAITYTė-PUTNIENė  
Awarded the Righteous Among the Nations medals and Certificates of Honour in 1994  
Awarded *Life Saviour's Crosses* in 2001

Laima STRIMAITYTė-MAKAUSKIENė  
Awarded the *Life Saviour's Cross* in 2001

**Ranana Malchanova-Kleinshtein:** At 3:30 a.m. on 22 June 1941, our town was bombed by German aircraft. After that, there was a global panic and everyone who was able tried to flee to the East. My father managed to get a horse-drawn carriage, but we were only able to ride it a short while. Around noon German soldiers blocked our way and told us to go back to Vilkaviškis.

Ranana's father Moshe Kleinshtein (the director of the eight-year Jewish school in Vilkaviškis), her brother, and many other Jewish men were locked in the basement of the printing house. Ranana stayed at home with her mother Esther.

**Ranana Malchanova-Kleinshtein:** At 28 July 1941, a line of Jewish men, including my father, my brother Zeev, and a group of my father's relatives, was herded towards the barracks. During the day, we could hear the shooting in Vilkaviškis for a long time.

Ranana was herded to the town of Piliškiiai together with selected families of Jewish craftspeople and those who were spared the massacre in Vilkaviškis on 28 July.

**Ranana Malchanova-Kleinshtein:** Since I was blond, not like a Jew at all, and spoke perfect Lithuanian, I could freely walk through the town of Piliškiiai. One day when I was walking back home, I noticed Germans banging on the windows of the house where Jews were living and telling them to get outside with their belongings. I realised it was a raid. I ran to my mother and persuaded her to flee. She grabbed a small basket, put a towel, a few clothes, and some other small things in it, and on a cold dark November night we left, going wherever our feet would take us.

One night after another we walked from one farm to another. Some people would accept us, and others refused to help, fearing the danger. We would usually stay in the attic or the barn. In the winter, the barns were very cold and our

blankets would freeze to our faces. I, and all the more so my mother, could never appear in the courtyard. During the day we had to stay lying down. Some food would be secretly given to us. Obviously, there was no light.

Somebody advised us to go to the Strimaitis family, who had 40 hectares of land and a huge garden in the village of Žėčkalniai in Šakiai County. They were said to have never refused to help. We went there and it was true: the Strimaitis family accepted us, provided shelter in their house, and even built a double wall in the room where we stayed. Behind the room was our hiding place in the event of danger.

With the Strimaitis family, I felt more at ease. I could walk to the courtyard and the garden. I became friends with Milda, who was the same age, and we would herd the cattle together and play around when we had time.

Since they were also hiding other Jews, we had to change hosts. We returned to the Strimaitis family now and then, however.

We were hiding at the Strimaitis place during the summer of 1944. Retreating Fascists were running rampant and it became too dangerous to keep us in the house. We would hide in the bushes near the cornfield in the daytime, and Milda would bring us food.

One day, I heard a noise and the clatter of hoofs. I carefully approached the road and saw a row of soldiers wearing non-German uniforms. I realised they were Russian soldiers. We were free! We bid farewell to the Strimaitis family, took to the road, and after several days of hitchhiking arrived in Vilnius...



Ranana in the children's home in Vilnius, Žygimantų St. 6. 1946



After the war, Ranana Kleinshtein (on the left) and her best friend Liza Kabaker, pupils of Secondary School No 6. Around 1948



Ranana's mother Esther Kleinshtein. Vilnius, 1947



The best students of Vilnius Secondary Schools No 6 and No 8 in Red Square in Moscow. Ranana Kleinshtein is the 4th from the left. Moscow, 1950

*We were hiding at the Strimaitis place also during the summer of 1944. When the front approached, we met the liberation hiding in the forest. After several days of hitchhiking we arrived in Vilnius. All of our property had burnt down, we had nothing to live on and they gave us food coupons. These were barely enough not to die of hunger. My mother got tuberculosis and her treatment was long. For 18 months I lived in a home for Jewish children. I was ill with hepatitis, diphtheria and scarlet fever. But we were free!*



## George Gordimer, 1938

## Seymour Gordimer, 1937

## Šiauliai



A 1945 record of a rare moment: 18-year-old Morta Kalendraitė is giving the rescued boy whom everyone called Simas (Seymour Gordimer), the brother of Jona (George Gordimer), to his father Ira (Ickas) Gordimer



Andrejus Kalendra, a follower of Leo Tolstoy's ideas and organiser of the Gordimer's rescue



The family of Andrejus Kalendra, who organised the rescue of the Gordimer family. Pre-war photo



The Kalendra family house. 1937

The back of the photograph

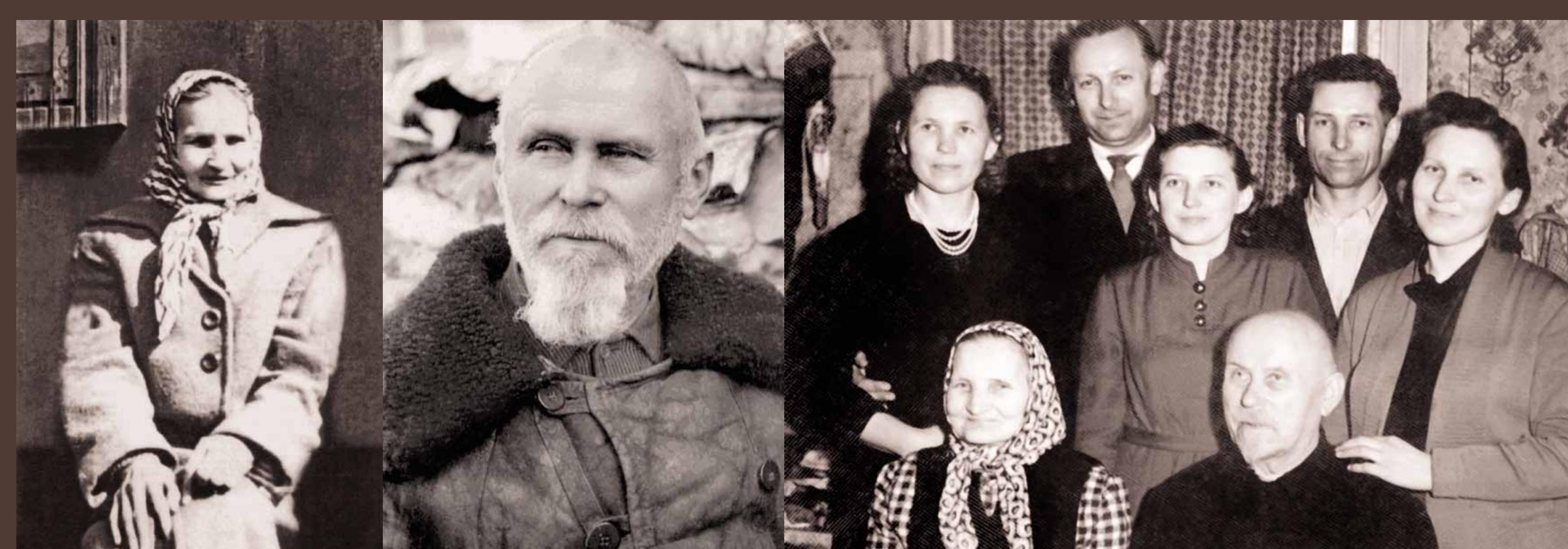
**George Gordimer:** Without the efforts of the Kalendra, Plekavičius, Garbačiauskas and Vaškys families (including Zelma Vaškytė) it is difficult to imagine how the entire Gordimer family would have managed to survive the long years of the war. Their survival would be impossible without the help of so many good and courageous people!



The family of Joana and Antanas Plekavičius



The family of Marijona and Steponas Garbačiauskas. Pre-war photo



Marijona Garbačiauskienė

Steponas Garbačiauskas

The family of Marijona and Steponas Garbačiauskas. Radviliškis, 1957

**George Gordimer:** My name is George Gordimer (Jona Gordimeris in Lithuanian). I am the son of Ira Gordimer (Ickas Gordimeris in Lithuanian) and Sonia Gordimer and the younger brother of Seymour Gordimer (Šolomas Gordimeris in Lithuanian).

My parents were taken to do forced labour during the *Children's Action* in the Šiauliai Ghetto on 5 November 1943. Fortunately for my brother Seymour and me, my father's sister, Rochelle Glickman, did not go to work that day because she was sick. When my aunt Rochelle heard about the *Children's Action*, she hid my brother in a shed next to the house we were living in. I was hidden in a wooden barrel with a cover and my brother was hidden behind an old mattress. When my parents came home that evening they took my brother and me to a cellar (there were 6 other children hiding in that cellar). We stayed there for 3 days.

The first *Children's Action* took place on 5 November 1943 in the Šiauliai Ghetto. On that day 570 children and 260 elderly people were deported to Auschwitz and later killed there. SS Hauptsturmführer Förster from Einsatzkommando-3A was in charge of the annihilation of these Jewish children and elderly people.

**George Gordimer:** My father contacted Andrejus Kalendra. Kalendra owned a farm near Žarėnai and was my father's regular customer. Kalendra was well known in the area and was highly regarded by everyone. Kalendra organised a rescue operation and enlisted his relatives and friends to help him. On the third night that my brother and I were hiding in the ghetto, my father took Seymour out of the ghetto in a potato sack and Kalendra transported my brother to his farm. At the Kalendra farm, my brother was called Simas and was introduced to strangers as a refugee from Russia. My brother remained at the Kalendra farm until the summer of 1945.

The morning after my brother was transported to the Kalendra farm, my mother took me out of the ghetto under her coat while everyone was going to work. With the help of a Lithuanian policeman, my mother took me to a house where Antanas Plekavičius (a good friend of Kalendra) and my father were waiting. Antanas Plekavičius transported my parents and me by horse and wagon to the farm of Steponas Garbačiauskas and Marijona Garbačiauskienė. They had five children. Marijona was Kalendra's sister.

Three weeks later, George and his parents moved to the place of Augustas Vaškys and Klara Vaškiene, good friends of Andrejus Kalendra. At the end of 1943, Augustas Vaškys' sister Zelma gave George shelter on her farm, and in the summer of 1944 Zelma took him to Antanas Plekavičius, a good friend of Andrejus Kalendra.

**George Gordimer:** In March or April 1945, my parents came to the Plekavičius farm by truck to pick me up. I remember that I was afraid to go with them and I hid behind Mrs Plekavičienė. Sometime in the summer of 1945 my parents picked up Seymour from the Kalendra farm.

Without the efforts of the Kalendra, Plekavičius, Garbačiauskas and Vaškys families (including Zelma Vaškytė), it is difficult to imagine how the entire Gordimer family could have survived the period of 1941–1945.

Andrejus and Monika KALENDRA and their daughters Morta JAKUTIENĖ, Meilutė Zofija LEVINSKIENĖ and Viktorija SURKIENĖ  
Marijona and Steponas GARBAČIAUSKAS  
Joana and Antanas PLEKAVIČIUS  
Klara and Augustas VAŠKYS  
Zelma VAŠKYTĖ-MATVIEJENĖ  
Awarded the Righteous Among the Nations medals and Certificates of Honour in 2008  
Sixteen rescuers of the Gordimer family were awarded the *Life Saviour's Crosses*



The Gordimer family. The parents, Ira (Ickas) and Sofia (Sonia), their children Seymour and George. USA, after the war



George Gordimer with his wife Dorothy. Vilnius, 1998



George Gordimer (on the left) and Stasys Garbačiauskas. Radviliškis, 1998



On 23 September 2005, President Valdas Adamkus awarded the Kalendraitė sisters Morta Jakutiene (left) and Zofija Meilute-Levinskiene (right) the *Life Saviour's Crosses* for saving the Gordimer family

*Andrejus Kalendra, a follower of Leo Tolstoy's ideas, was devoted to the moral self-improvement and benevolence to the society rules. He did not allow the doomed to perish and involved his relatives and friends into the Gordimer family rescue process. In 1945, the Gordimer family left Lithuania for the USA. However, the Kalendra family had not escaped the post-war repressions. In 1951, Andrejus Kalendra, his wife Monika and daughter Morta were exiled to Siberia. Andrejus died in exile. His wife and daughter later on returned to Lithuania.*



# Sulamita Fromanaitė, 1941

## Šiauliai



Sulamita Fromanaitė as a five-year-old girl at her home



Sulamita's father Natanas (Nisan) Fromanas, originally from Vilkaviškis, served as a volunteer in the Lithuanian army. Around 1954–1955



Sulamita's mother Polė Gavronskaitė-Fromanienė. Photo taken before the war



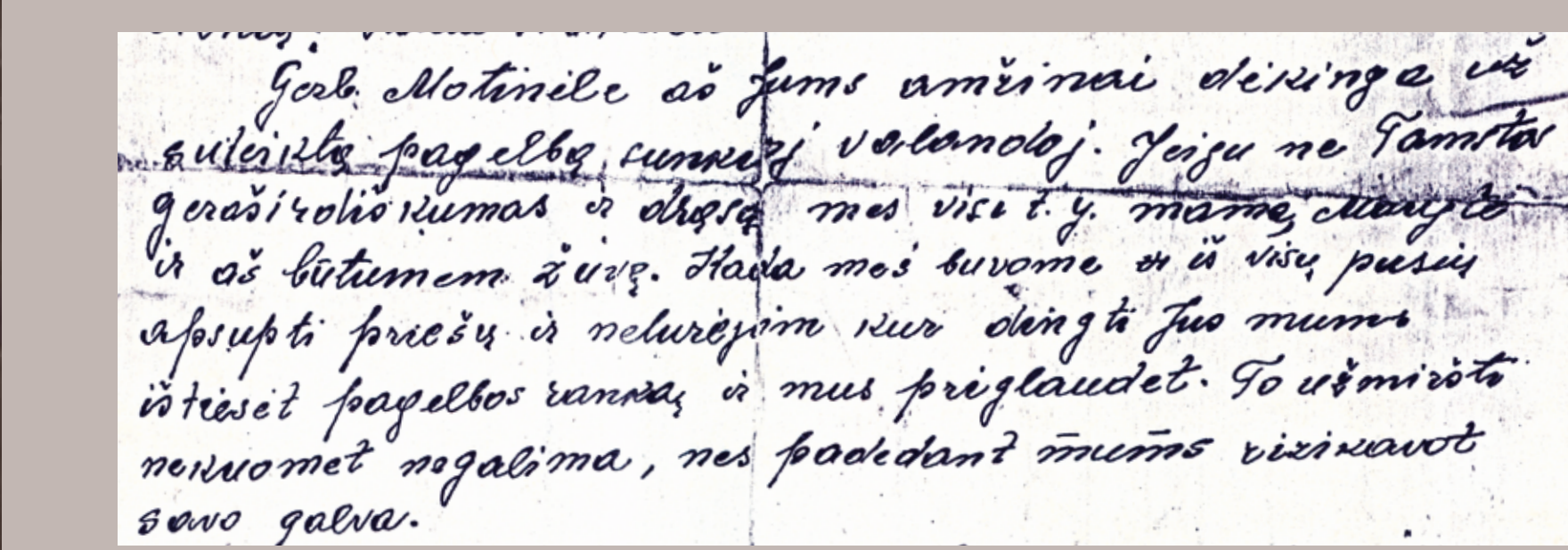
Sulamita Fromanaitė's family. In the first row, from left to right: Sulamita's grandfather Isakas Gavronskis (died before the war), her grandmother Eta Gavronskienė, and her mother's brother Jankelis Gavronskis (emigrated to SAR before the war). In the second row, from right to left: Pole Gavronskaitė (Sulamita's mother), Helmanas Gavronskis (her mother's brother), Feiga Gavronskaitė, Sulamita's mother's sister



Sulamita Fromanaitė's grandfather Davidas Fromanas with his wife and their daughters. The family was killed in Paneriai during the war



Feiga Gavronskaitė, the sister of Sulamita's mother, and Jankelis Gavronskis, their brother. This photograph was taken one day before Jankelis Gavronskis left for the Republic of South Africa



A letter from Polė Fromanienė "Žukauskienė" to the Mother Superior (Marja Rusteikaitė)

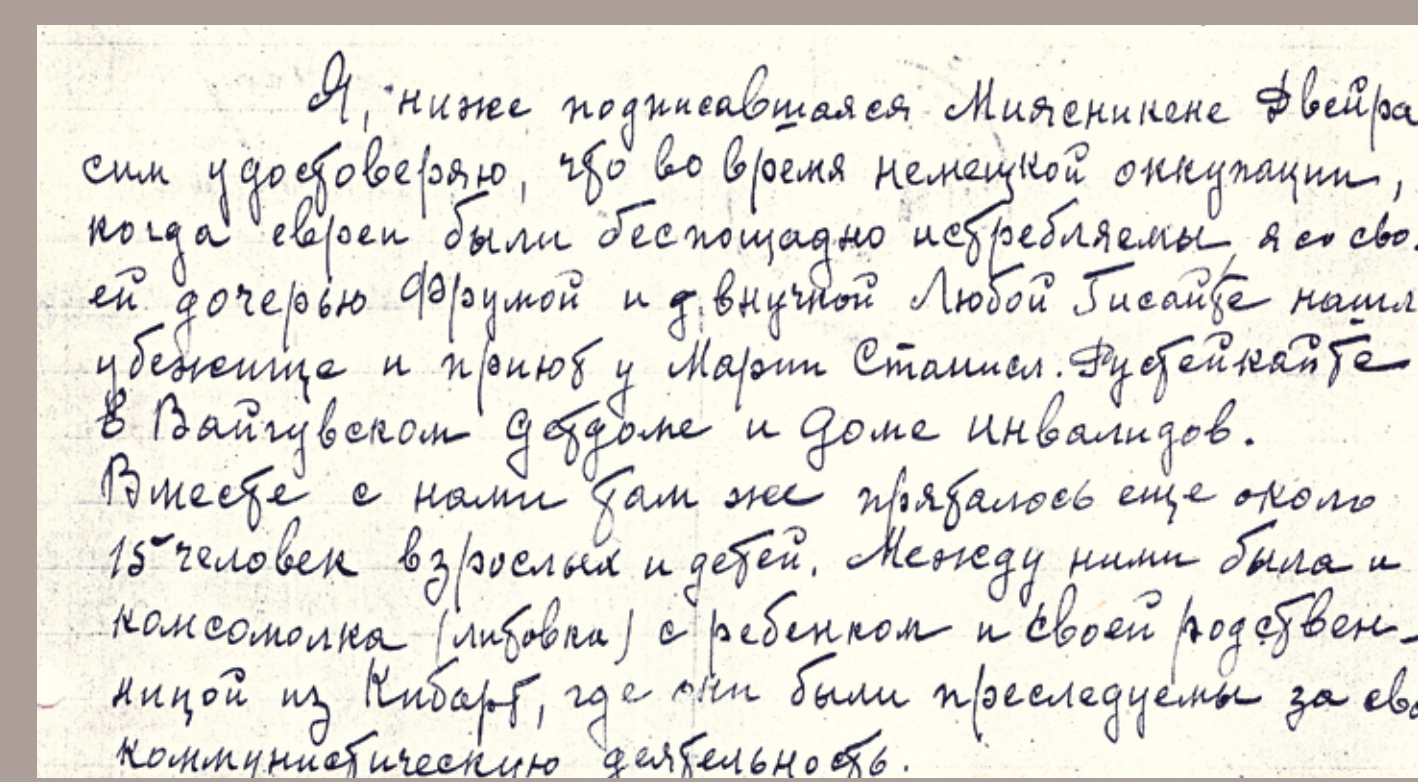
My dear Mother Superior,  
I am eternally grateful to you for your help at a difficult hour. If not for your good heart and courage, we would all be dead. When we were surrounded by enemies on all sides and there was nowhere to go, you extended your helping hand and gave us shelter. It is not possible to ever forget this, since by helping us you were risking your life.

With deepest respect,  
Polė Fromanienė  
"Žukauskienė".

Vilnius, March of 1945



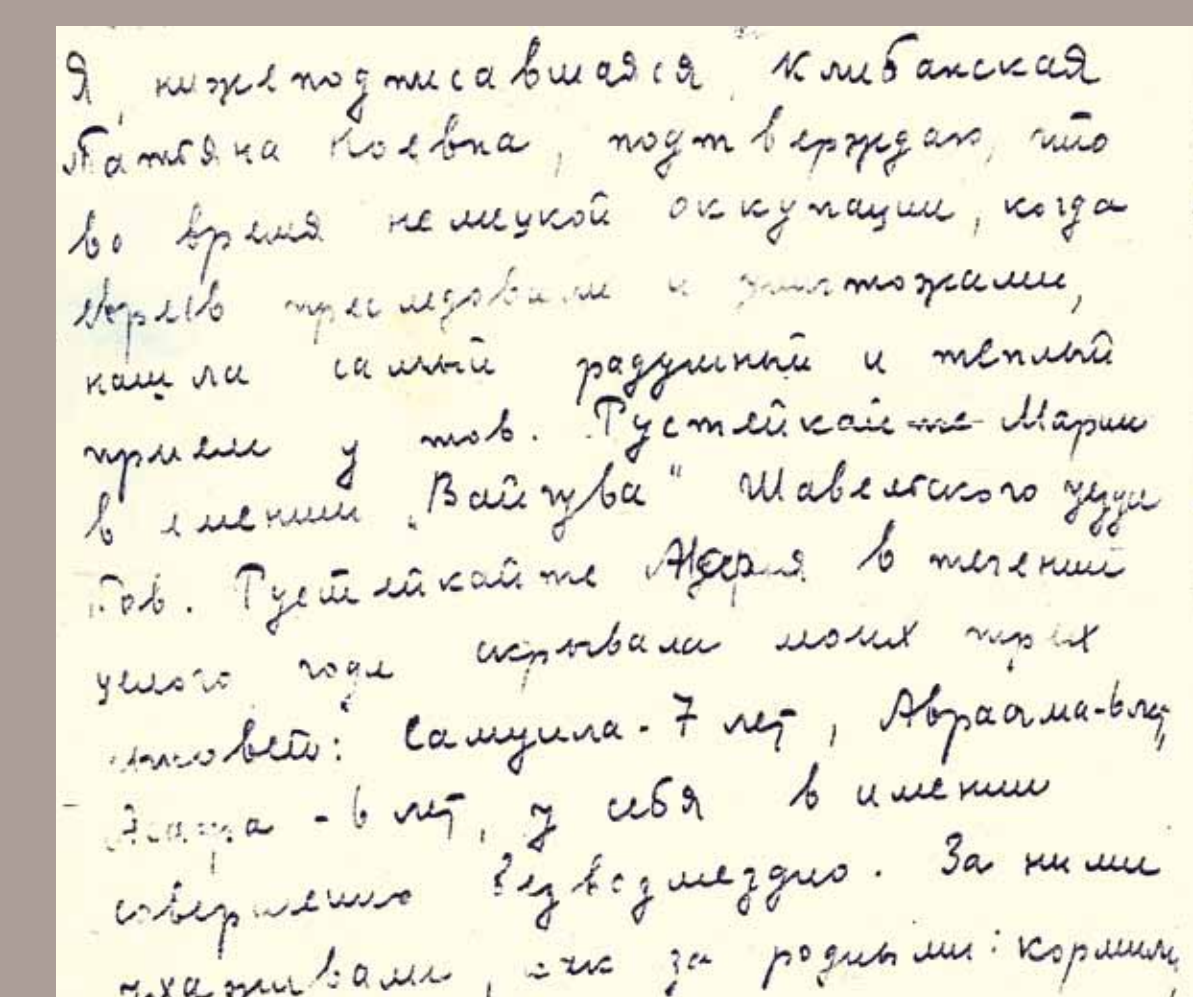
Marja Rusteikaitė. 28 November 1935



Dveira Miasnikienė's testimony about Marja Rusteikaitė

### From Dveira Miasnikienė's testimony dated 30 November 1945:

I, the undersigned Dveira Miasnikienė, hereby confirm that during the German occupation and callous extermination of the Jews, I found warm and kind refuge at Marja Rusteikaitė's Vaiguva charity home in Šiauliai County. Marja let my three sons – Samuil, 7, Avraham, 6, and Asaf, 6 – stay at her manor free of charge for an entire year. She looked after them as she would look after her own relatives and provided them food, clothes and education. [...] The children did not want to part from Marja Rusteikaitė, who treated them like a mother. Before leaving, we were given food, socks for the children, and necessary clothing, as all our belongings had been lost in the ghetto.



Tatjana Klibanskaja's testimony about Marja Rusteikaitė

### From Tatjana Klibanskaja's testimony dated 14 May 1945:

I, the undersigned Tatjana Klibanskaja, hereby confirm that during the German occupation and callous extermination of the Jews, I found warm and kind refuge at Marja Rusteikaitė's Vaiguva charity home in Šiauliai County. Marja let my three sons – Samuil, 7, Avraham, 6, and Asaf, 6 – stay at her manor free of charge for an entire year. She looked after them as she would look after her own relatives and provided them food, clothes and education. [...] The children did not want to part from Marja Rusteikaitė, who treated them like a mother. Before leaving, we were given food, socks for the children, and necessary clothing, as all our belongings had been lost in the ghetto.



Charity home that Marja Rusteikaitė ran at Vaiguva. During the war, it was the hiding place for 15 Jews



Antanas Margaitis



Eleonora Margaitienė

The family of Antanas Margaitis, a teacher at Šiauliai Gymnasium, was the first to extend a helping hand. On an agreed day Antanas Margaitis waited at an agreed place with a cart to take Sulamita, her mother Polina and grandmother Eta to the village.

**MARJA RUSTEIKAITĖ**  
Awarded the Righteous Among the Nations medal and Certificate of Honour in 1996 and the *Life Saviour's Cross* in 1992  
**ELEONORA AND ANTANAS MARGAITIS**  
Awarded the Righteous Among the Nations medal and Certificate of Honour in 1991 and the *Life Saviour's Crosses* in 2004

**Sulamita Fromanaitė-Lev:** I was born on 7 June 1941 in Šiauliai. A paediatrician told my mother that if on Sunday, the 22nd of June, the weather was nice she could take me outside. But the war broke out that Sunday and we spent the entire day in the basement.

The Froman family, together with other Jews from Šiauliai, were confined to the ghetto in July 1941. Sulamita was brought to the ghetto with her mother Polina, her father Natan, and her grandmother Eta Gavronskienė.

**Sulamita Fromanaitė-Lev:** Mum was herded to work every day, and grandma would stay with me. I was often ill, and we had no food. My mother did hard physical labour – sometimes she worked on the railway, sometimes in the slaughter house, or in the fields. When my mother worked at a slaughterhouse, she tried to milk at least a few drops of milk from every cow into a small bottle. She had the bottle tied to her leg and poured

the milk there. It was strictly forbidden to bring anything into the ghetto. The punishment for that was death.

Once they searched her and upon finding the milk they took her to the police station, but one inhabitant of the ghetto, Isaac Sher, got vodka and tobacco from somewhere and managed to bribe the policeman to get her back. A human life was worth that much.

During the *Children's Action* on 5 November 1943, Sulamita was given a sleeping pill to keep her from crying. Her grandma hid with her in the attic. A terrible panic set in when parents returned from work and did not find their children.

**Sulamita Fromanaitė-Lev:** My mother was coming towards our house without knowing what she would find there. One heartbroken old man told her that he had seen her mother and her child being taken away. My mother had my cap in her pocket; she squeezed the cap in her hand, firmly convinced that it was all

that she had left of her child. Like crazy she rushed towards the house and came upon a policeman who was sitting and playing a harmonica. She ran up to him and shouted, "You scoundrel, how dare you play when blood is being shed all around and your hands are steeped in blood?" She expected him to kill her since she had neither the desire nor strength to go on living. But the policeman did not even beat her. He only said, "You are still young. You will go to Germany to work".

When Polina Fromanienė got home with no hope of finding her child, she could not recover from disbelief for a long time that her daughter and her mother were alive. After the *Children's Action*, no children were supposed to be in the ghetto and those who remained were doomed. Polina Fromanienė resolved to seek help outside the ghetto's walls.

**Sulamita Fromanaitė-Lev:** Antanas Margaitis, who was the teacher at the Šiauliai Gymnasium, and his family were the first

people to extend a helping hand to her. Antanas Margaitis waited for us in a yard at an agreed hour on an agreed day. That day my grandmother, my mother, and I were in the column of people being herded to work. Before setting off, I was again given some sleeping pills. Then my mother tied me to her body with strings, put on a wide coat and wrapped herself in a large shawl. While walking, she held me under her shawl because it seemed as if I was slipping. My mother and grandmother succeeded in jumping out of the column. Antanas Margaitis put us onto a cart and took us to the village.

The women started wandering from one village to another because they could not possibly stay at one place for long. The last stop of their wanderings was Marja Rusteikaitė's, who was founder of the Sisters of Divine Providence monastery, manor in the town of Vaiguva in Kelmė District. Polina Fromanienė worked in an office there, and Sulamita's grandmother walked in the town dressed in a nun's clothes. Under the protection of Marja Rusteikaitė, Sulamita, her mother, her grandmother, and a dozen other Jews who were hidden there made it to the end of the war.



Sulamita with her mother and her grandmother. From left to right: Eta Gavronskienė, Sulamita, Pole Gavronskaitė-Fromanienė, Vilnius, around 1947



Sulamita Fromanaitė-Lev. Around 1961–1962



Sulamita and her mother Polė. Around 1957–1958



At the conference held at the Sisters of Divine Providence monastery in Panevėžys and devoted to Marja Rusteikaitė, the founder of the monastery. Nuns with guests. Sulamita Fromanaitė-Lev (in the middle of the second row), who has been rescued as a child, and Chairman of the Jewish Community of Panevėžys Genadijus Kofmanas (second in the second row). In the first row sitting from right to left: Mother Superior Leonora Kasulytė and head of the Department of the Righteous of the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum Danutė Seičinskaja. 27 August. 2011



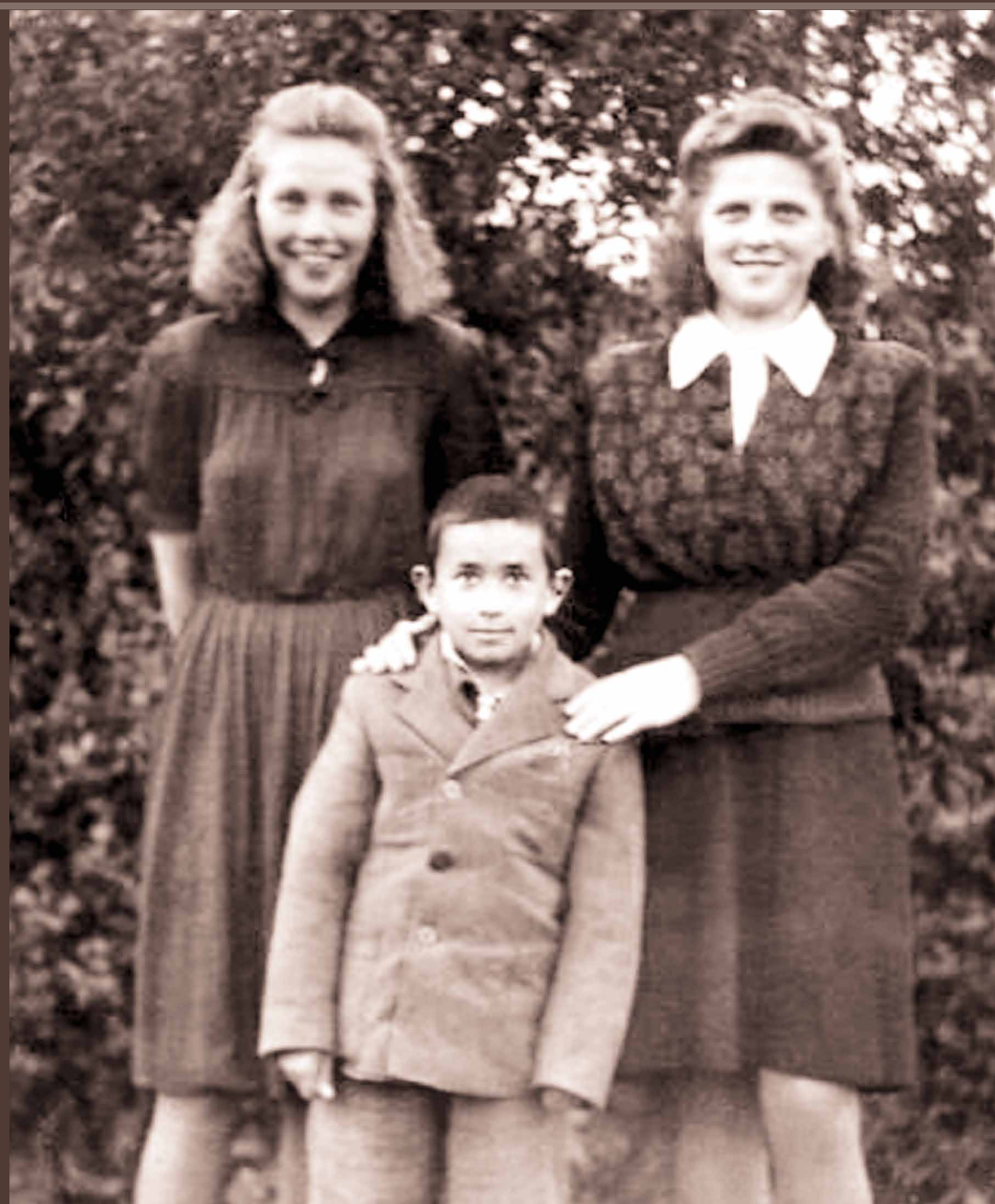
Sulamita Fromanaitė-Lev brought the Sisters of Divine Providence monastery a letter of thanks signed by Simonas Alperavičius, Chairman of the Jewish Community of Lithuania, for Marja Rusteikaitė's, the Righteous Among the Nations, sacrifice when rescuing Jews and for taking care of children and old people

To avoid suspicion, even upon meeting my mother I would never utter the word mommy. Once, when there was nobody around I asked, "Oh Lord, there is nobody around. Can I say MOMMY to you?" I often ponder: is it possible in a normal life to make or convince a child to never utter the word mommy? I am sure that it is not. Under extreme circumstances, children quickly turn into adults.



# Alfonso Bukontas, 1941

## Dapšiai, Mažeikiai District



Alfonso Bukontas with Irena (on the right) and Stefa (on the left), the daughters of Elena Lauraitienė, Marija Bukontienė's sister. Dapšiai, around 1948

Dentistry students at the Faculty of Medicine of Vytautas Magnus University. Nechama Gurvitch (second from the left in the second row). 1928–1929



Alfonso Bukontas' brother Azriel Michnickis with his playmate Rūta. Around 1940



Jankel Michnickis with his son Azriel and their relatives. Around 1940



Nechama Gurvitch with her sons: little Mordechai (born in 1941) and Azriel (born in 1934). Around 1941

**Alfonso Bukontas:** I, Alfonso Bukontas, was born in 1941 (as written in all of my identification documents) in the village of Dapšiai in Mažeikiai District. My father Jeronimas Bukontas was a farmer and had a farm with 25 hectares of land. He married Marija Daubarytė, who with her sister Elena Lauraitienė was working on his farm. Their third sister, Kotryna Šulciėnė, lived in Židikai, 11 km from Dapšiai. My memories of my father Jeronimas Bukontas are vague: in 1945, when the Soviet army returned to Lithuania, he was arrested and we never heard of him again. Later, when Stalin died and people started coming back from the Soviet labour camps, my mother was informed that her husband had died of torture in a forest in Arkhangelsk forests. He was accused of collaborating with the Germans and sentenced as a traitor and "enemy of the nation".

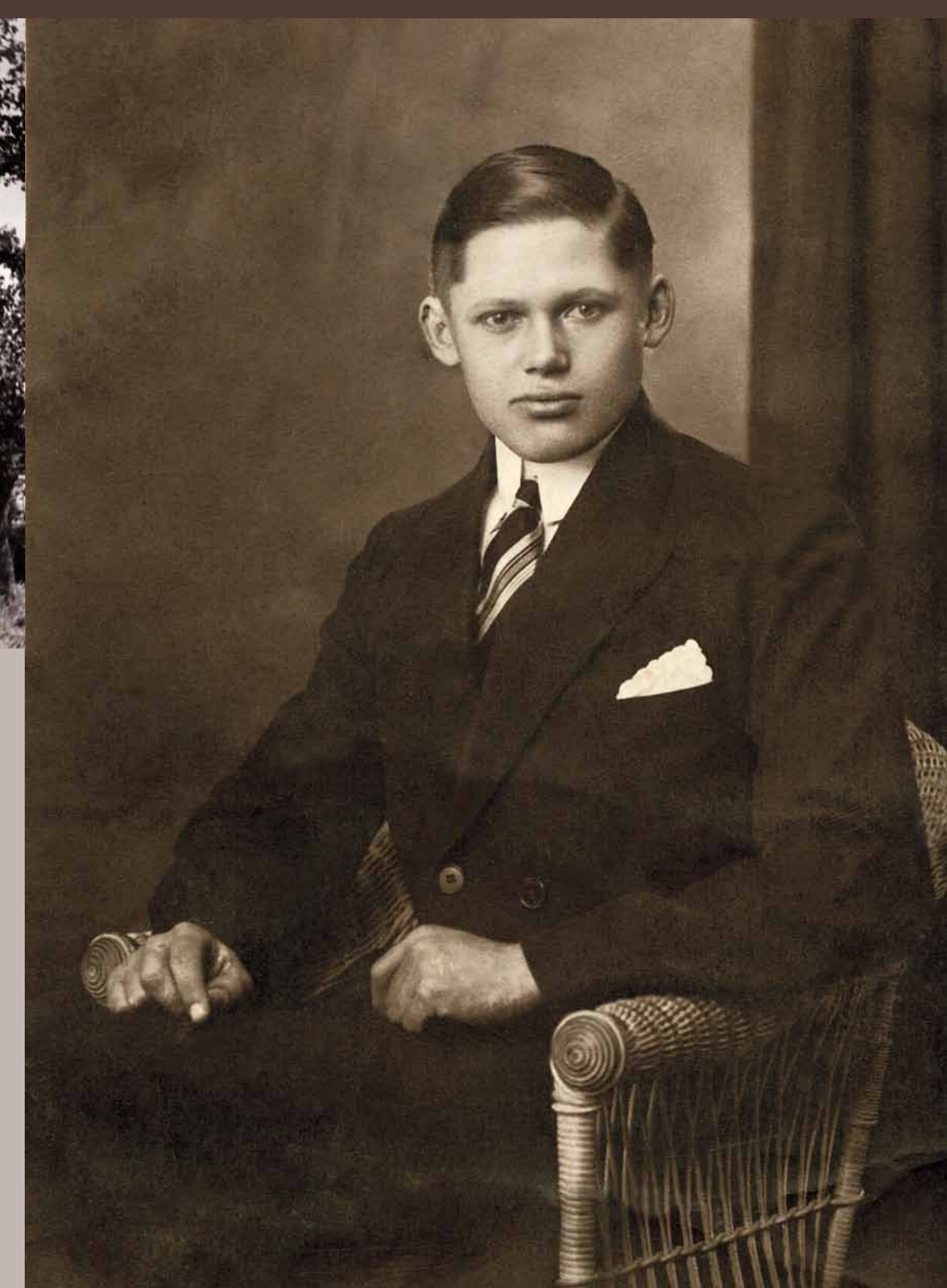
Alfonso Bukontas started to go to Židikai Secondary School in 1954. He finished in 1958 and became a student of Lithuanian language and literature at Vilnius University.

He visited Židikai rarely, only during his holidays. During one such visit during his holidays, about fifteen years after the war, Alfonso Bukontas learned how he was saved, his real name, and the names of his parents and his brother from his aunt, Kotryna Šulciėnė, and from letters written by Father Martinkus.

**Alfonso Bukontas:** It emerged that Kotryna Šulciėnė happened to be living across from my parents' house and used to visit them often to help with the house cleaning and farming. Once my parents were away, they had left for Vilkaviškis to visit my grandparents. Only my father's sister Ševa was at home with my brother and me. When the Nazis started rounding up Jews, allegedly to work in Lublin, Ševa decided to leave me with good people (I was several months old then) and take my brother with her. I stayed with Kotryna Šulciėnė for some time, but when the white armbanders found out that she was hiding a Jewish baby, they started terrorising her. Va-



**Alfonso Bukontas:** I have this memory, which is more like a dream, of me being carried by Jeronimas Bukontas while he says, "This is my son! He will bear my family name!"



Jeronimas Bukontas. Germany, 1927



Elena Lauraitienė



Alfonso Bukontas' rescuers: sisters Marija Bukontienė, Elena Lauraitienė and Kotryna Šulciėnė with their relatives

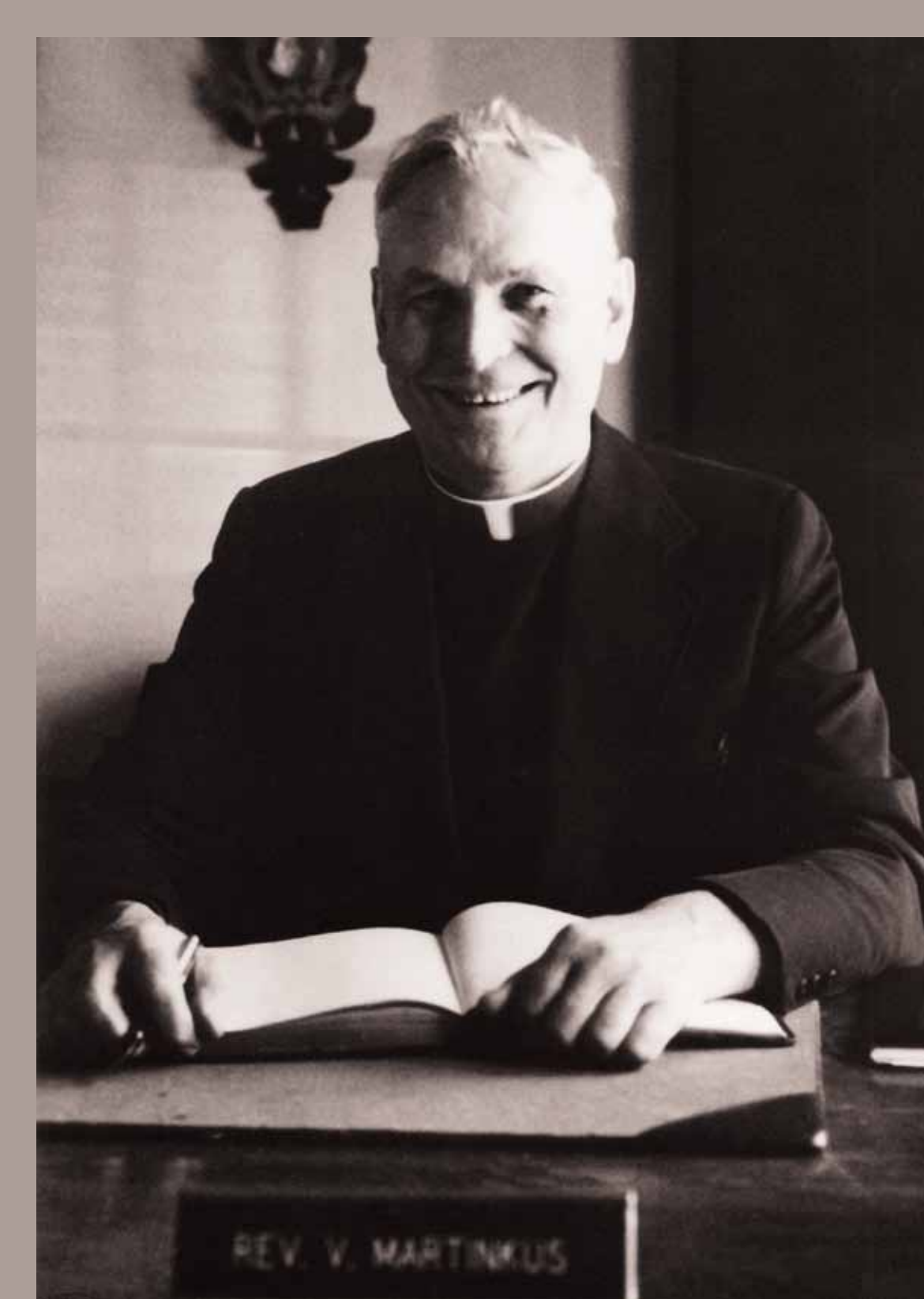


Kotryna and Zenonas Šulcas

As advised by Father Vaclavas Martinkus, Zenonas and Kotryna Šulcas secretly brought the little Alfonso to Kotryna's sister Marija Bukontienė, who lived in the village of Dapšiai.



Alfonso Bukontas (sitting in the middle) with Marija Bukontienė (on the left) and Elena Lauraitienė (on the right). Standing (from left to right): Lauraitienė's children Stefa, Antanas, and Irena. At the Bukontas' farm in Dapšiai. 1953



Vaclavas Martinkus. Providence, USA, around 1978

Marija and Jeronimas BUKONTAS, Vaclavas MARTINKUS  
Awarded *Life Saviour's Crosses* (1992), Righteous Among the Nations medals and Certificates of Honour (1995)

Kotryna and Zenonas ŠULCAS, Elena LAURAITIENĖ  
Awarded the *Life Saviour's Crosses* (2014)

From a letter Father Vaclavas Martinkus wrote to Alfonso Bukontas on 31 March 1961:

*German soldiers demanded that all Jews must be herded to the synagogue. Then the soldiers demanded that the Lithuanians must shoot them. They called the commandment in Mažeikiai but he could not help in any way. They refused to shoot and did not know what to do. Then I went to the synagogue and found the German sergeants. I told them clearly that no one can be shot if he did not breach the laws and there is no court decision.*

clavas Martinkus provided her a horse and a cart and gave her instructions, and she and her husband Zenonas Šulcas took me to Dapšiai. The priest came to the village shortly thereafter, baptised me, and entered my name in the church's book of baptised babies.

Someone informed against the priest for baptising a Jewish baby, however. Vaclavas Martinkus was interrogated, but he was strong. Later the local radical nationalists intimidated the sisters Marija and Elena by threatening to shoot everyone if they didn't give up the baby. However, the sisters risked their lives and the lives of their children and refused to obey the thugs. The situation was improved due to Jeronimas Bukontas' ties with the Germans and his knowledge of the German language. The family managed to be left alone after providing bribes of money, food and vodka.

I have this memory, which is more like a dream, of me being carried by Jeronimas Bukontas while he said, "This is my son! He will bear my family name!"

Each time when strangers passed through our yard, he would take me to one of the empty rooms in the huge house and ask me to stay there, at the same time distracting me with various games.

**Alfonso Bukontas:** The Jewish poet Hirsch Osherovitch got to know my story. He asked all his acquaintances and soon I had the addresses of several people who had known my parents. Finally, I got the first photographs of my mother, father, brother and myself. I found out that my father had studied law in Paris at the Sorbonne and that he perished in Kaunas in 1941. My mother had graduated from the Faculty of Medicine of Kaunas University. She was taken with my father from Vilkaviškis to the Kaunas Ghetto and in 1944 was driven to the Stutthof concentration camp where she perished in April 1945, two weeks before the liberation. Meanwhile, my brother and Aunt Ševa were shot in a pinewood forest on the bank of the Venta River not far from Mažeikiai.

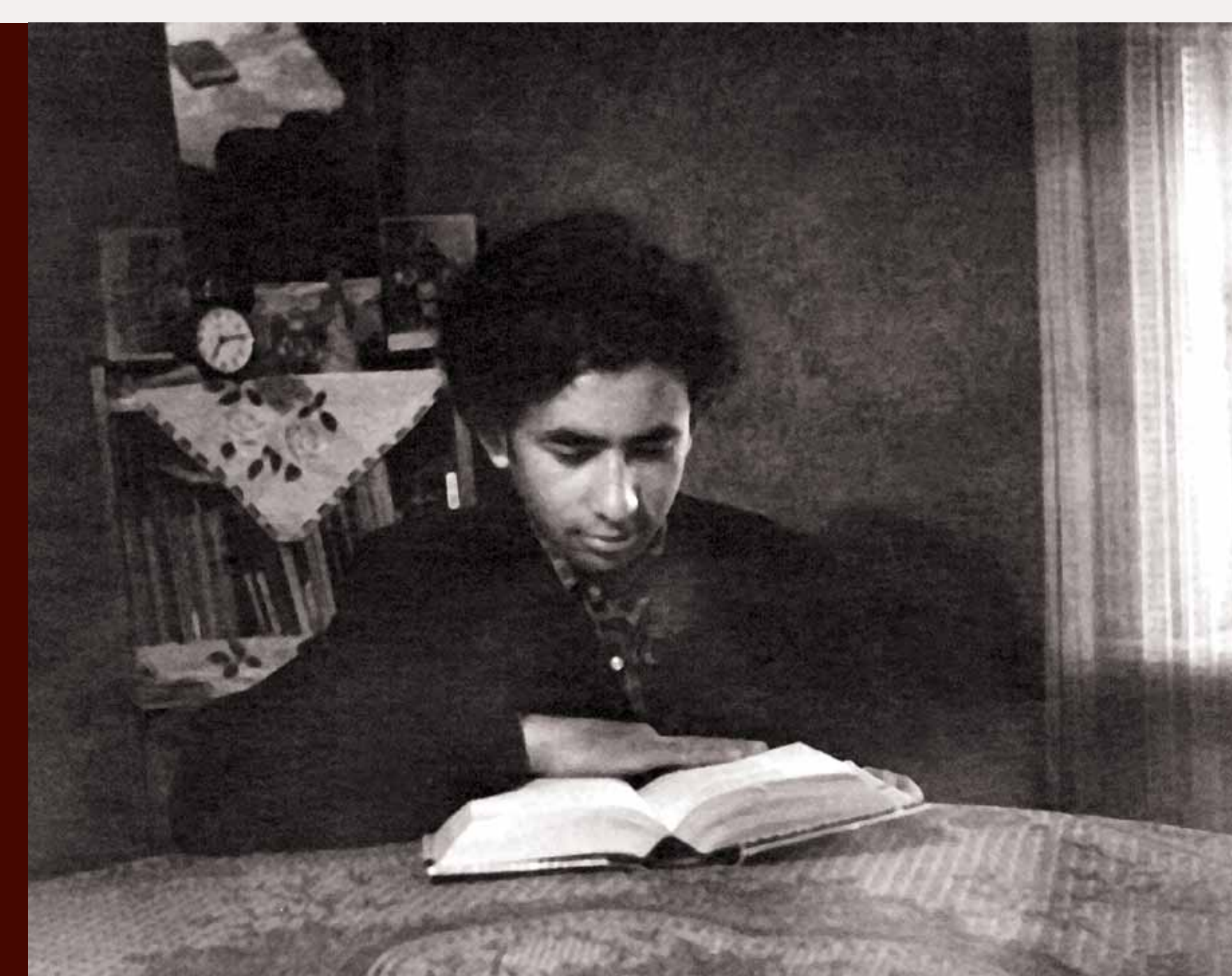


Photo taken when Alfonso Bukontas was a student. Vilnius, 1960

Alfonso Bukontas with his daughter Simona. Vilnius, around 1983. Picture taken by A. Žiziūnas



Alfonso Bukontas in Dapšiai, around 1972



*My mother Marija Bukontienė loved me very much and took good care of me, grieving about my setbacks and rejoicing about my achievements. Elena and Kotryna were also very motherly. It often seemed to me that I would get more tenderness and attention than their real children.*



# Icchokas Meras, 1934

# Janina Meraitė, 1929

Kelmė



Icchokas and Janina after the war, Kelmė, 1945 or 1946

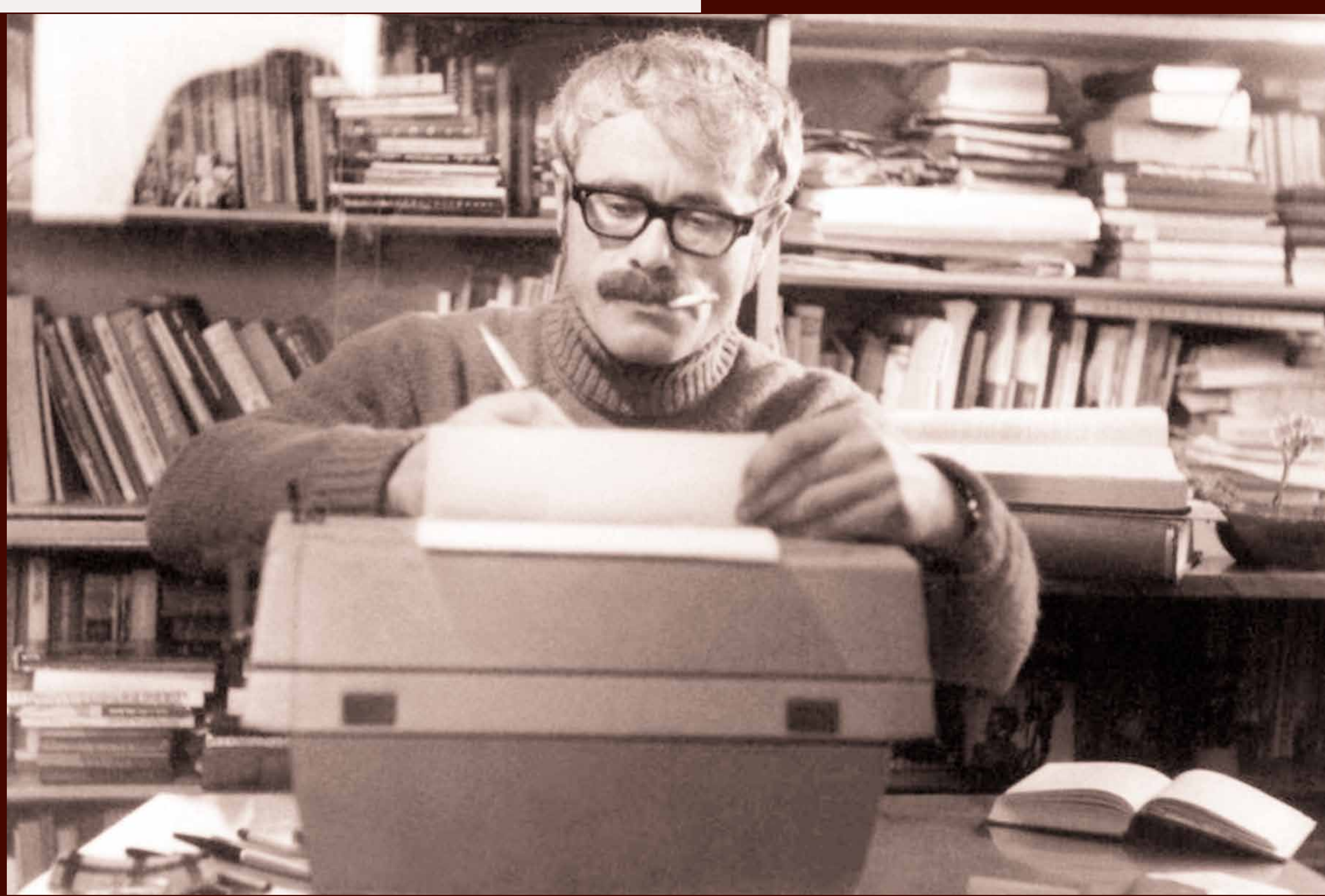


Left: Leiba Litvin, the brother of Janina's and Icchokas' Meras mother. In the middle: Miriam Litvin-Meras, Janina's and Icchokas' Meras mother. Right: Yehuda Meras, Janina's and Icchokas' father. All were killed in the summer of 1941. The picture was taken in 1928

**Icchokas Meras:** My father Yehuda (in pre-war independent Lithuania, he was director of the Kelmė Jewish People's Bank; in Soviet Lithuania he was unemployed for a while but later worked as a cashier at the State Bank), my mother Miriam, my sister Yonina (Janina Meraitė) and I were living in Kelmė, Lithuania when the war broke out on 22 June 1941. Almost the entire town was burned down. The house where we lived also burned down. The German army occupied the town on 24 or 25 June.

A few days later local armed men (most likely members of the Lithuanian Activist Front with white armbands) started using violence against Jews.

My father, who tried to resist the taunts of the white armbanders, was injured and imprisoned at the entrance gates of the Kelmė manor house, then taken to Raseiniai, and finally shot to death near Raseiniai at the end of July 1941.



Icchokas Meras. Israel, around 1975



Bronislava Dainauskienė. Kelmė, 1971

**Icchokas Meras:** I see beside me two women. One of them, Miriam Meras, a Jew. She bore me and, surrounding me with her great maternal love, guided me through early childhood, until the executioner's gravel pit barred her path. The other – Bronė Dainauskienė, an illiterate Lithuanian woman, a mother of six. Embracing me with both arms, she tore me away from the edge of the pit, hid me from evil eyes and bore me anew as her seventh child. Furtively, she guided me in life until my early youth.

Icchokas. He was transferred from one home to another in this way until eventually he was left alone in the street.

**Icchokas Meras:** I sat on Kalnų Street in the evening, crying near the threshold of the house of those people, afraid of going into the house and not knowing what to do. Just then Juozas Dainauskas, a total stranger who was drunk, walked by. He asked why I was crying and I said that I was a little Jewish boy and that no one wanted to keep me at his place and that some wanted to give me up to the authorities.

He asked whether I had something at that place, whether I wanted to take something along, and I said that no, I didn't. He then banged on the door of that house with a rock, took me by the hand, led me to his house, and there pushed me into the embrace of his wife Bronislava Dainauskienė, uttering, "Well, here's another child for you".

They had six of their own: Veronika, Petras, Ona, Aleksas, Stefa and Genė.

That is how I became the seventh child in the Dainauskas household.

Juozas Dainauskas saved my life by taking me from the street to his home.

But the one who rescued me the entire time, hiding me from prying eyes, bathing me, feeding me a bite more than her own children, and cuddling me near her heart or saying a loving word to me more than her own children, taking me quickly to the forest if she saw strangers approaching from afar was Bronislava Dainauskienė, who in every way sought not only to save my life, but also to warm me with the motherly care I had lost when I lost my mother.



Yonina Meras-Gersh

Yonina Meras (Janina Meraitė) was sheltered by Petronėlė Urbelienė-Unikauskienė for almost the entire German occupation, until the beginning of October 1944. Yonina lived dressed like a farm maiden and helped the Urbelis family with the household work. She took great care not to be seen by any strangers. If she saw someone she went to hide immediately in the cellar where potatoes were kept. "She felt a human duty to rescue me from death. She knew well that in this way she risked her own freedom and life. Her husband Adomas Urbelis also did the same."

Icchokas Meras, Frida Meras, Aleksandras Shtromas, Danielis Bliudzas. Israel, around 1975



Juozas Dainauskas



Petras Dainauskas



Icchokas Meras' rescuer Michalina Legantienė



Janina Meraitė's rescuer Petronėlė Urbelienė-Unikauskienė



Petronėlė Urbelienė-Unikauskienė (on the right) with her adopted daughter Onutė and an unknown woman near their house in Kelmė, Kalnų 14, where Janina Meraitė and her brother Icchokas hid during the war



From the left: Teresė Sankutė-Toliušienė, Zofija Sankienė, Janina Sankutė-Miškinienė

When it became impossible to hide Icchokas and Janina in Kelmė, Legantienė and Urbelienė began stopping farmers on the village road and asking them to take the children as shepherds. But nobody wanted to take Jewish children, only farmer Sankienė, convinced by her daughter Teresė Sankutė, took the children and actually saved them from death at a final shooting of Kelmė Jews on 22 August 1941.

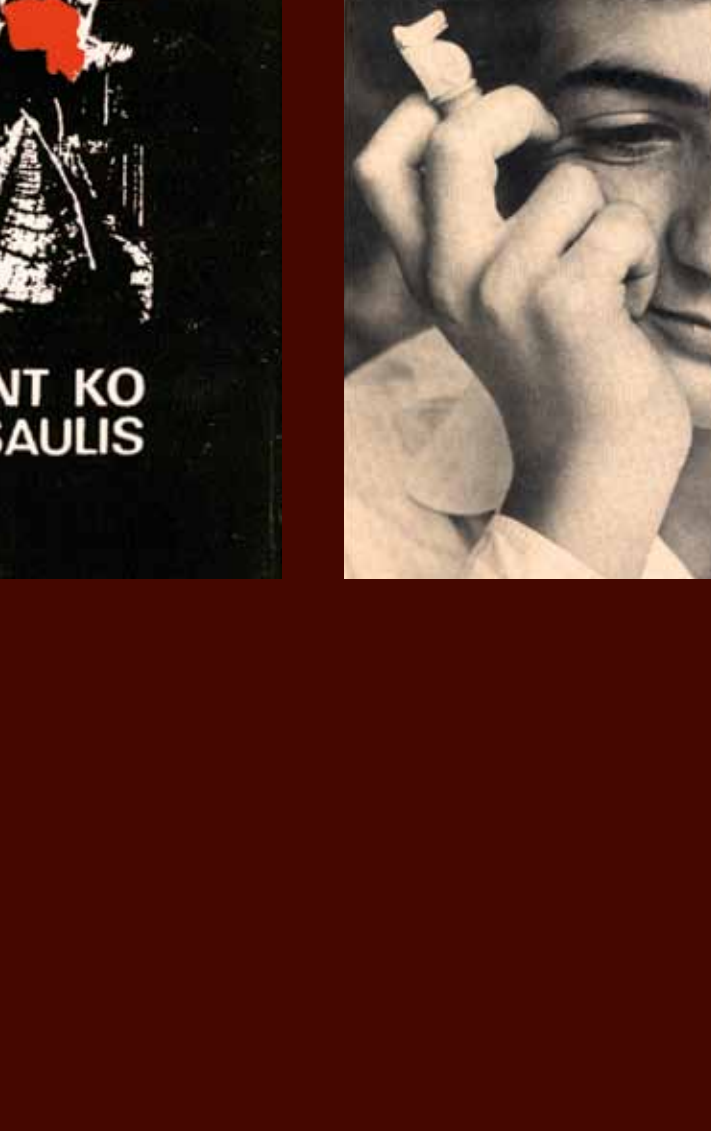
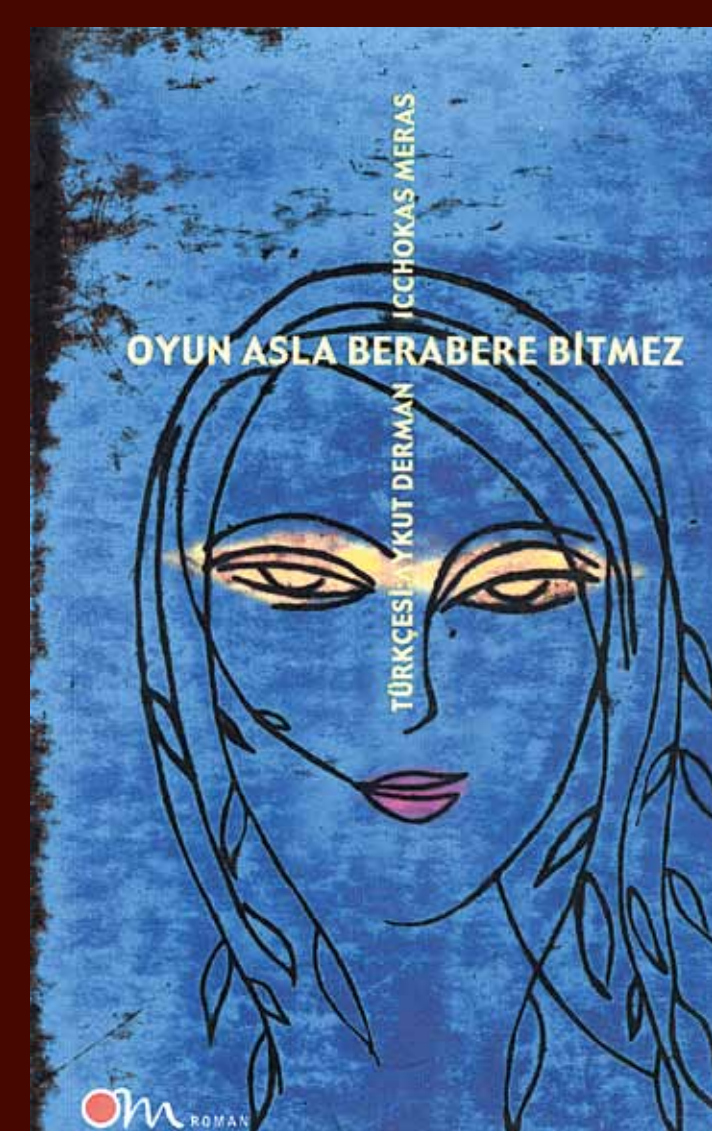
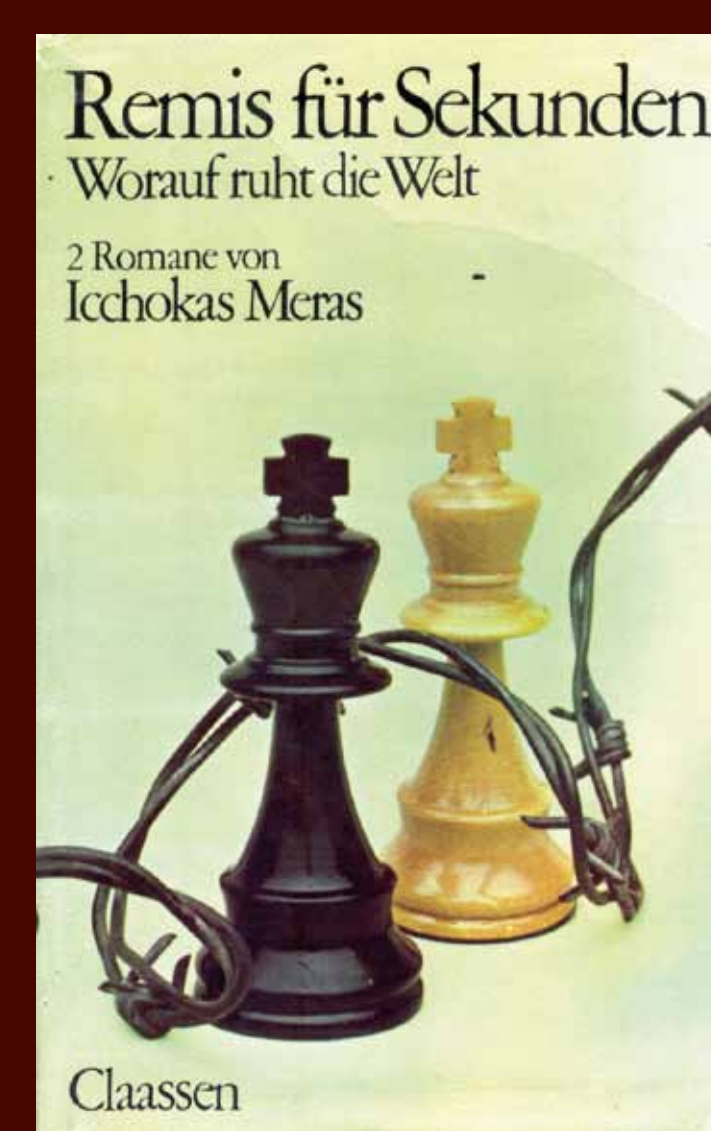
Bronislava Dainauskienė's first and main helper in keeping me safe and hiding me was their oldest son Petras Dainauskas.

If I was at home, Bronislava or Petras were always right next to me, so when trouble approached, they could save me.

I hid at the Dainauskas home until 6 October 1944, when Kelmė was occupied by the Red Army as the front was broken. I lived there a bit longer after the war, until 1946.

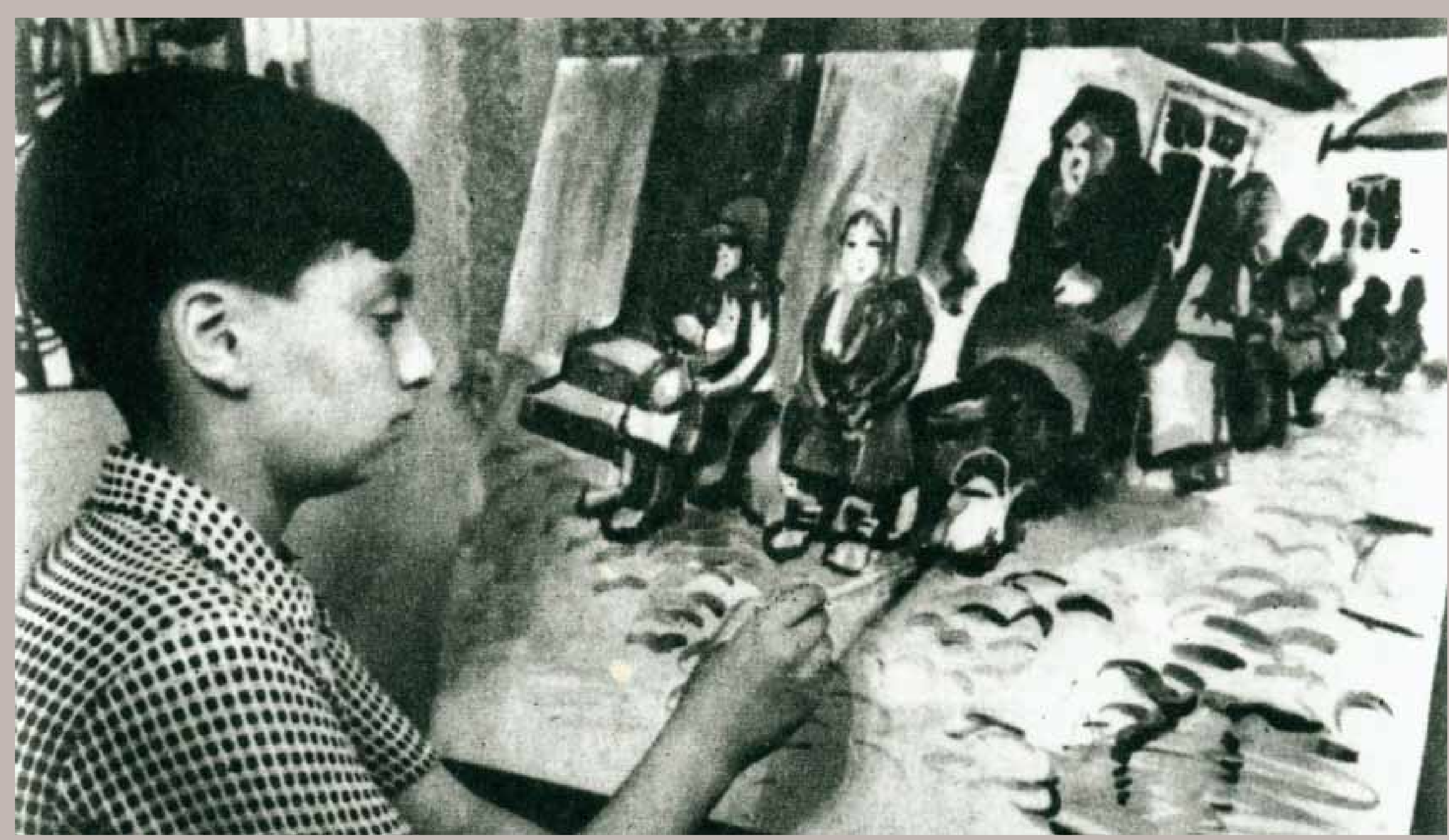
Michalina LEGANTIENĖ, Adomas URBELIS and Petronėlė URBELIENĖ-UNIKAUSKIENĖ, Juozas and Bronislava DAINAUSKAS, and their son Petras awarded Righteous Among the Nations medals, Certificates of Honour (2004), and *Life Saviour's Crosses* (2004)

Zofija SANKIENĖ and Teresė SANKUTĖ-TOLIUŠIENĖ awarded Righteous Among the Nations medals, Certificates of Honour (1994), and *Life Saviour's Crosses* (2004)





Together with their parents, thousands of children were put behind barbed wire in the Vilnius, Kaunas and Šiauliai ghettos. The children living in ghettos suffered from hunger and cold, experienced different shortages and watched the death of their loved ones. They were paralysed by constant fear. Each day there was a threat of abduction, tearing from their mother's arms and taking them away in an unknown direction. The painful experience of the children of Holocaust is reflected in their diaries, pictures, letters and photographs...

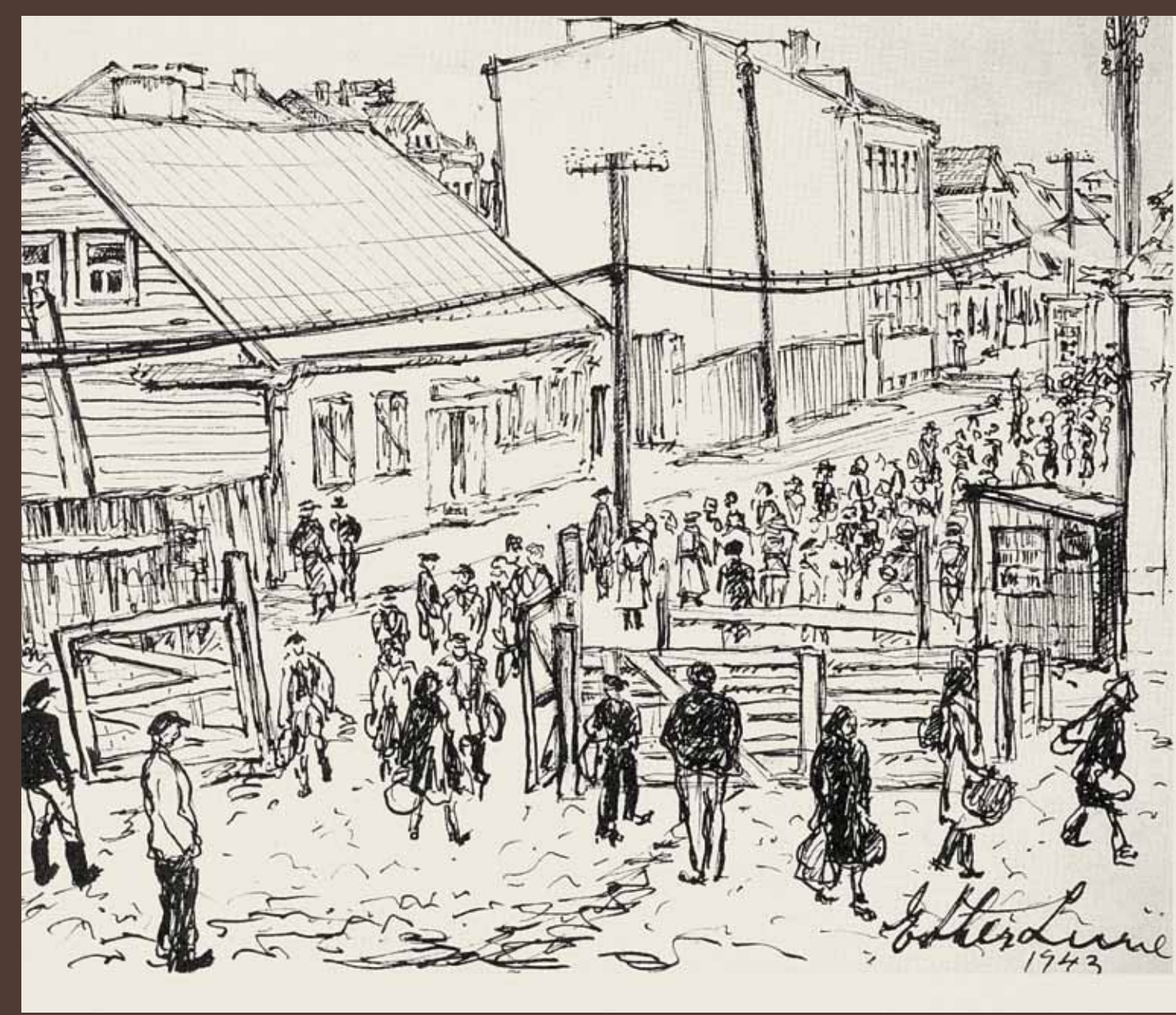


Samuel Bak:

We run and burst into a small room whose window has been blocked by several burlap sacks. The women grab me, push me under the bed, and cover me with tattered cloths. I feel the presence of two more children. One of them is Slava's daughter. I recognize her from her subdued nasal voice with which she lets everyone know how very uncomfortable she feels. Someone whispers, "Please keep quiet". Noises from the corridor suggest that our door is being barricaded by the stuff that is scattered nearby. Two or more men who are

quickly arranging some heavy objects call out to each other. Among their voices I recognize Father's. The noise that penetrates from the yard through the ground-floor window swells to a wail of sobs and cries that are drowned by the rattle of machine guns and pistol shots. A piercing woman's voice shrieks "Murderer! Murderer!" It is quickly silenced by the sound of a shot. I crawl into myself. I know the children with whom I played only yesterday will not be there any more.

From Samuel Bak's Memoir's Painted in Words, 2001



Dovydas Leibzonas:

I was only 5 or 6 years old, and had a friend called Shlioma who was my playmate in the backyard. Sometimes, ghetto residents would organise concerts. Once, I asked my mother why people were crying while listening to the music. There are some good memories too – I will never forget the day when my mother, who worked at people's houses, brought us a huge sandwich that took me and my sister about a week to eat. I can still see a colourful detailed picture of that sandwich in my mind.



Rosian Bagriansky:



This was one of the coldest winters on record and no heat! Water melted from snow became ice before we could drink it, and rotten, frozen potatoes, when available, were often our meals. My mother, who became the concertmaster of the Lithuanian Opera after the war, valiantly cooked the potato peels with her frozen hands, and was resourceful in finding straw or other weeds for her soups.

Aviva Tkatsch:



There were many "actions" when children were taken. My aunt Sarah and her child were taken during one of these "actions" and never heard from again. My parents told me that there was a hiding place made under a sofa, big enough for my mother and me, and when there were rumours of "actions", we were hidden there. I have no idea how my mother kept me quiet for hours, but I know that now I panic if I have a blanket over my face. We lived like this for two years.

Yakov Zoreff (Goldshmidt):

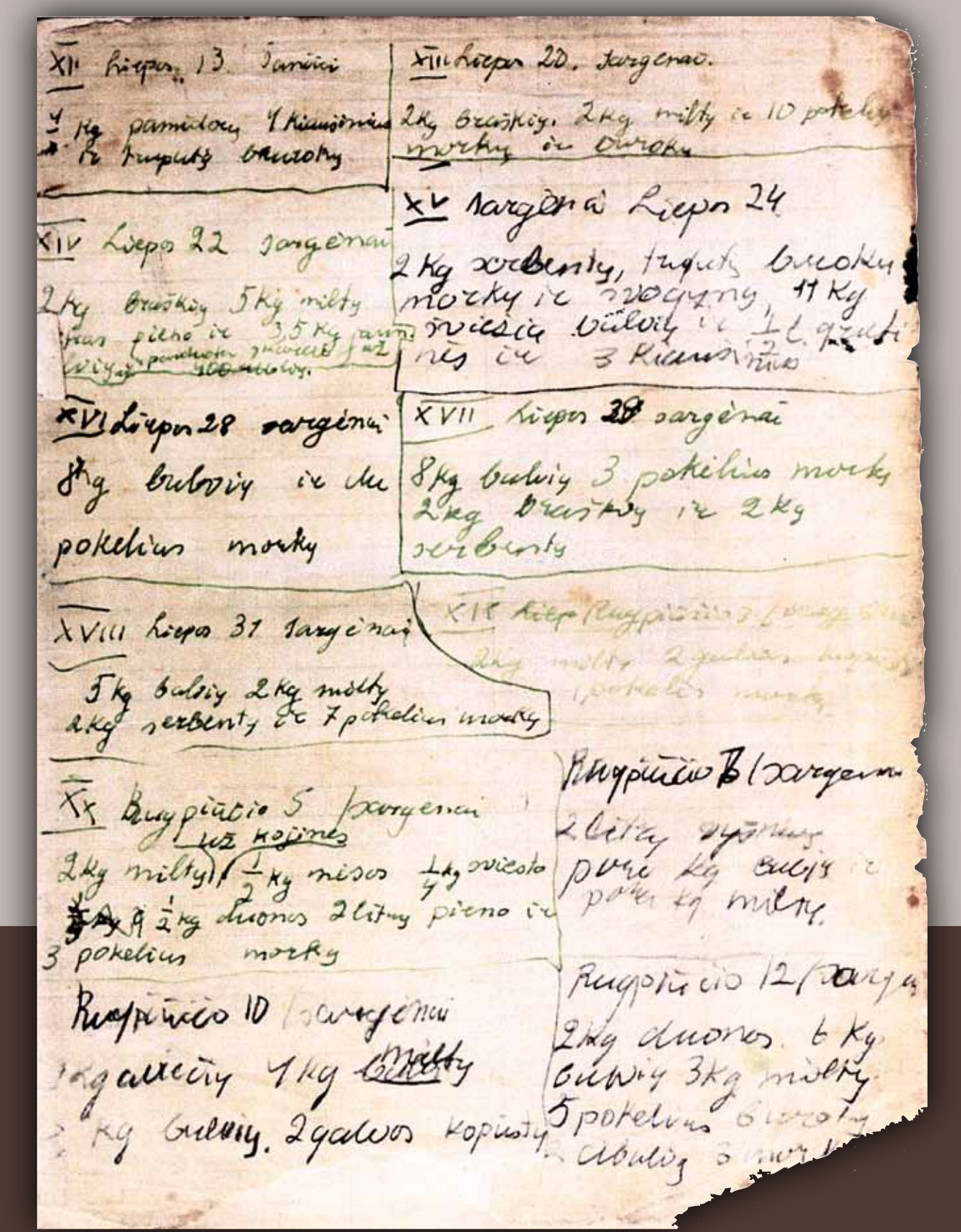
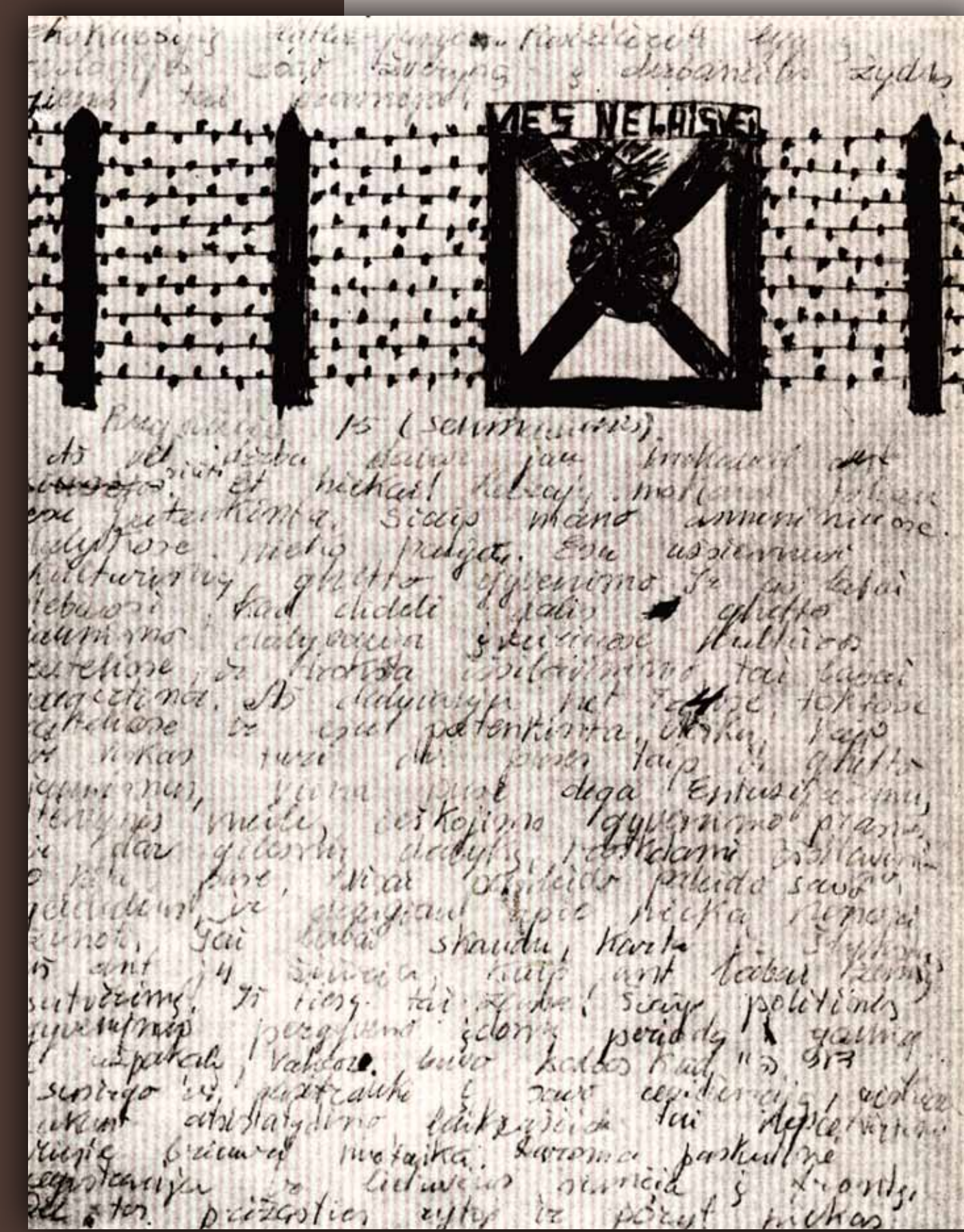
Why, father would wonder, did not the children cry or object to being forced into a cramped hole in the ground? Clearly, I felt the danger and so didn't object to the shot of Luminal that the nurse gave to sedate me. I spent two days underground. My parents took me out at night. I didn't cry; I ate whatever there was. The next morning I extended my arm to get the injection and crept back into the hole as if I understood everything.

Tamara Lazersonaitė:



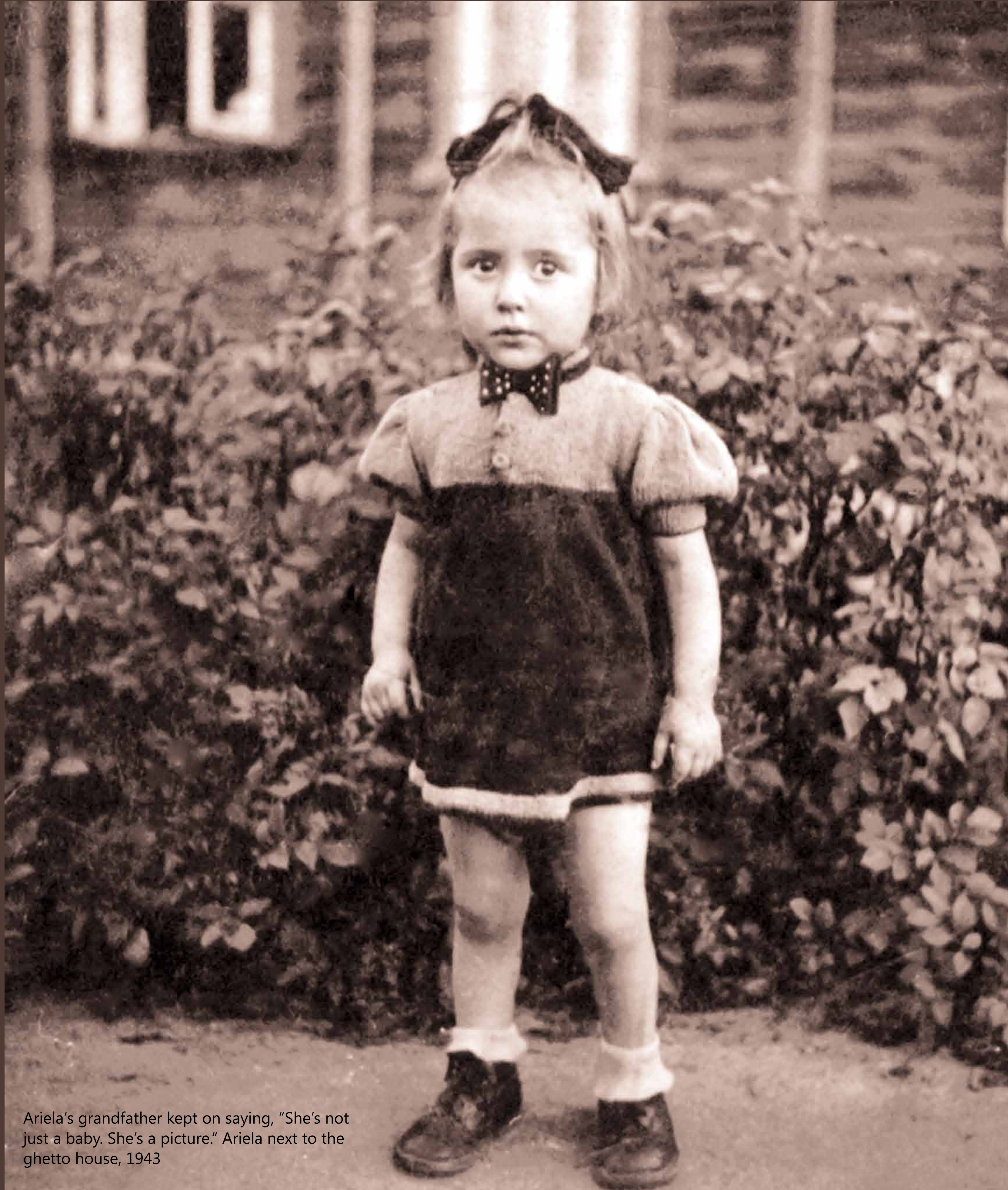
The Action. Some 1,500 small children and elderly people were brought to the forts. 40 policemen finished their lives in the 9th Fort. Others were kept for a few days and released due to the information they provided. A majority of the hiding places were found. The young generation up to the age of 12 died, elderly people died, we will also die. But the mothers, the mothers! The cats scratch and bite and do not give their kittens away. The hen covers its chicken with its body and defends them, whereas the Jewish mother has to give her own child away and watch it being thrown into the truck like a dog. There were brave mothers who were strangling their children with their own hands and who asked to kill them and then look for their children through the corpses. Eternal glory to such mothers! What about the children? Newlyweds gave everything they had: the husband was carrying his old disabled parents; the wife went together with little children. Terrible! But what a sun there was! It was smiling in the sky. After decades you finally see such beautiful scenes, so beautiful that you start laughing! And you are making fun of humanity...

From Tamara Lazersonaitė's diary, 27 March 1944 (Monday)

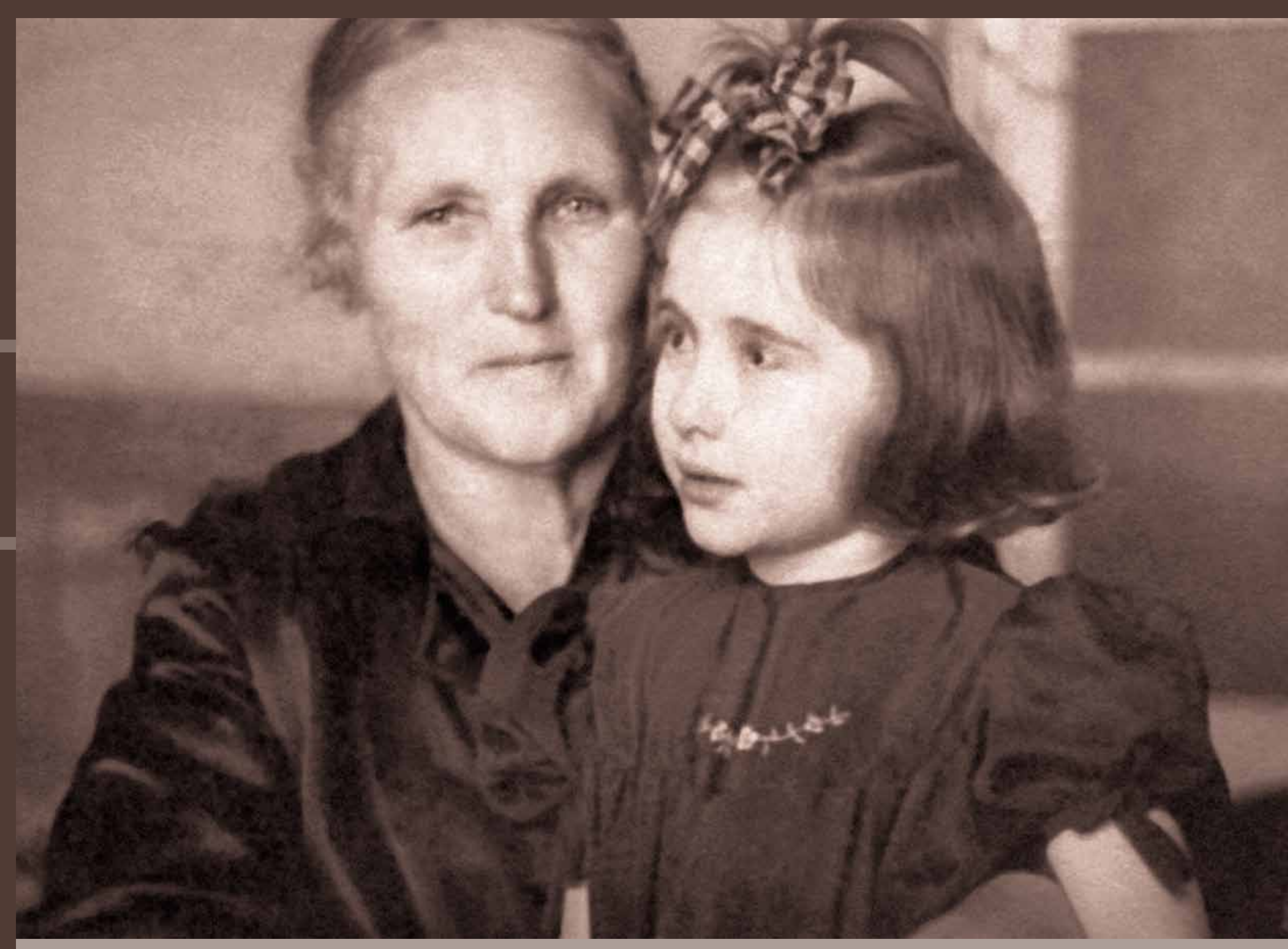




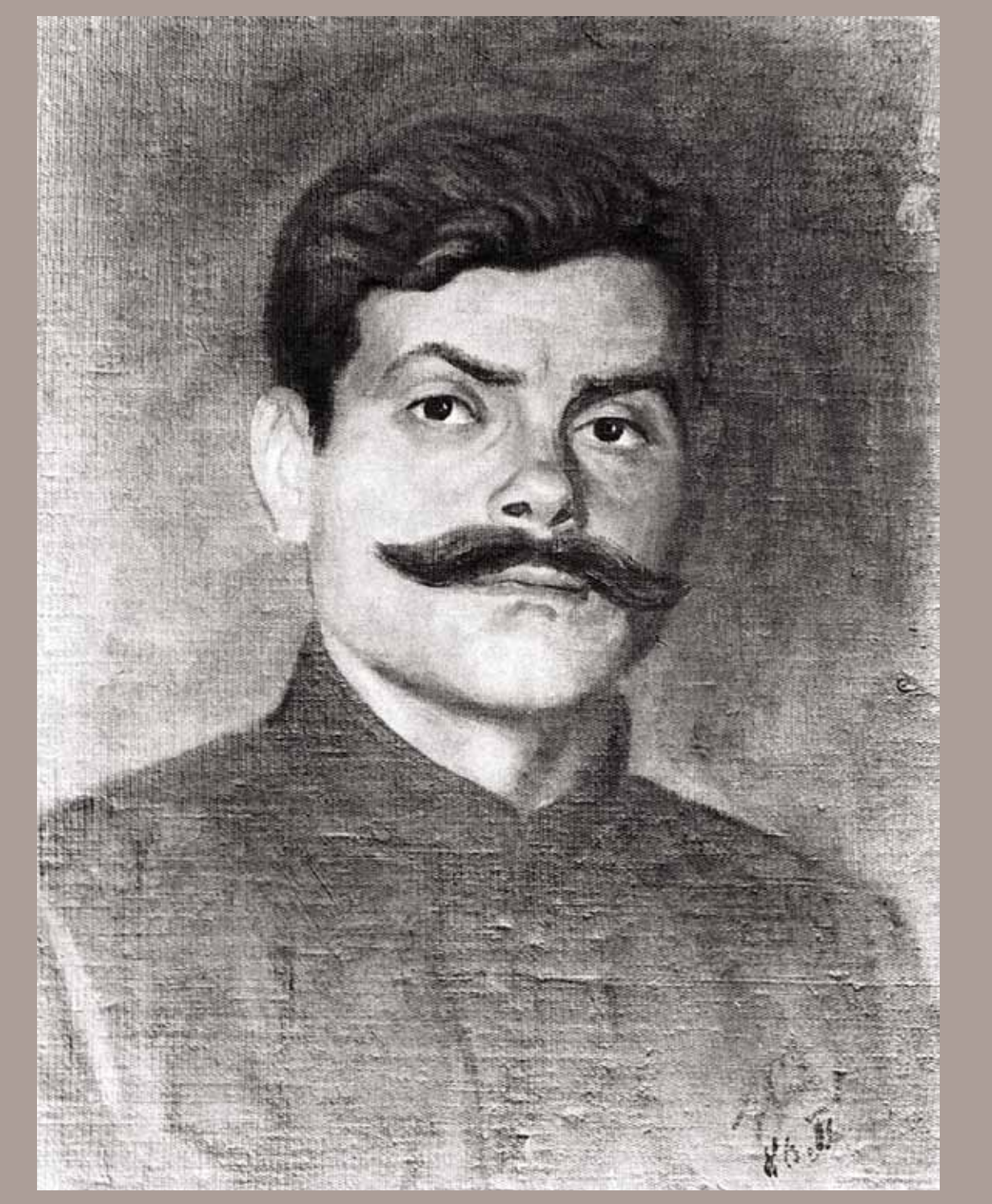
# Ariela Abramovičiūtė, born in 1941 in the Kaunas Ghetto



Ariela's grandfather kept on saying, "She's not just a baby. She's a picture." Ariela next to the ghetto house, 1943



Ariela with her rescuer Julija Dautartienė. 1945



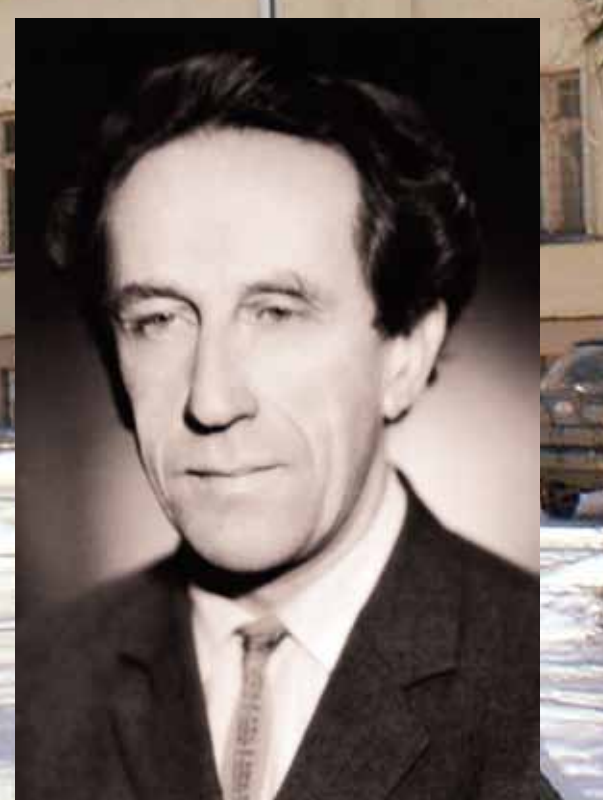
Juozapas Dautartas



Ariela turns four. There is no ghetto any more. Her first birthday party at home. In the first row from left to right: Naomi Gurvich, Mika Karnovsky, Ariela Abramovich, Esther (Esya) Elin, Dalia Judelevich. In the second row: Moshe Rosenblum (left), Yakov Taft (behind Ariela), Kama Ginkas (right)



Kaunas Foster Home Lopšelis, 2006



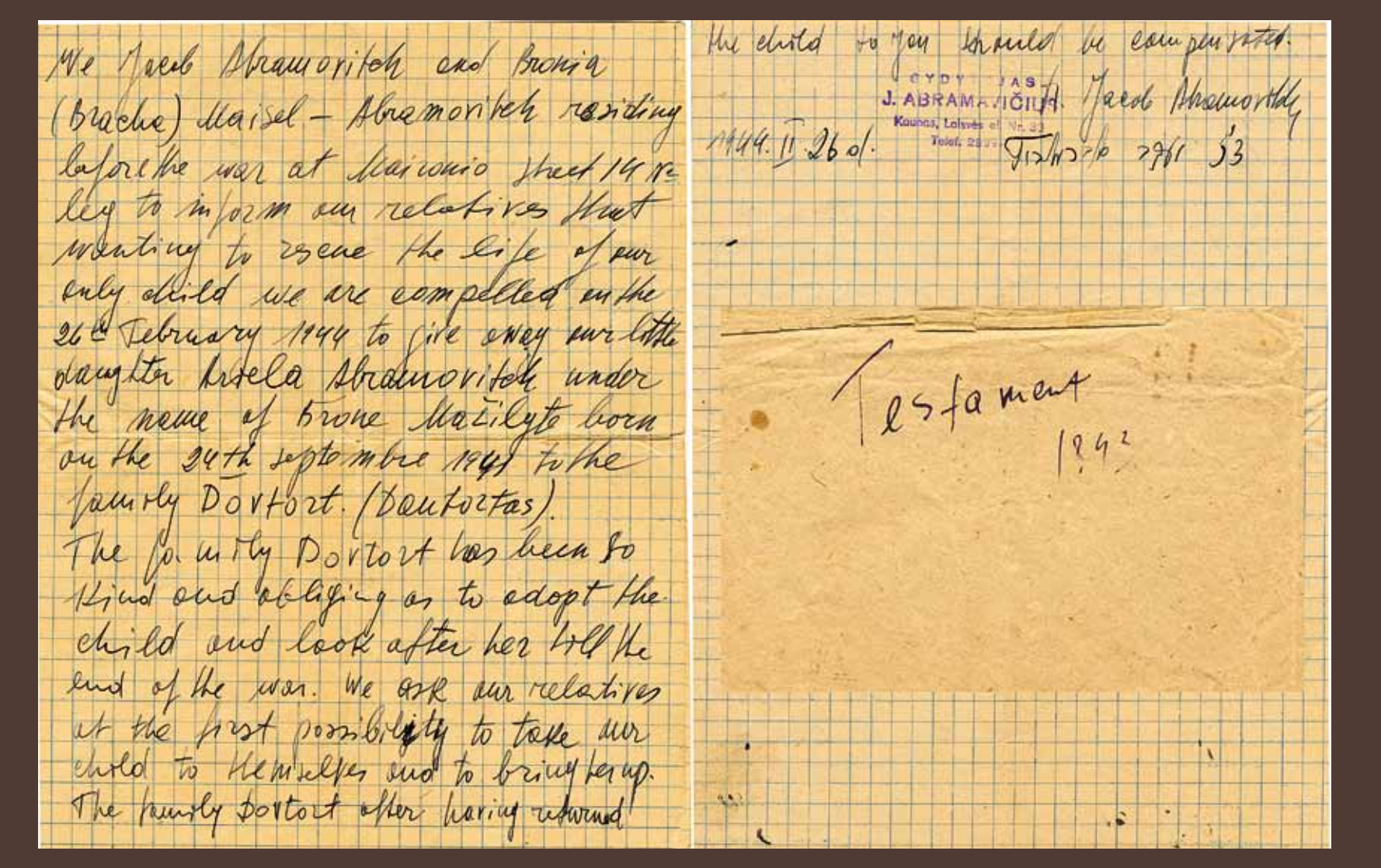
Paediatrician Petras Baublys (1914-1973). Photo taken in 1965

Approximately 5,000 children were among the imprisoned Jews in the Kaunas Ghetto. Some were smuggled out of the ghetto and were hidden by Gentiles. Between 250 and 300 in all, survived. Ariela Abramovich Sef and Ilana Kamber-Ash, both born in the Kaunas Ghetto, initiated the collection of personal testimonies of other children who, like them, had been rescued. Ilana and Ariela felt strongly that we, children of the ghetto, were growing older, there was an increasing urgency to preserve our stories for the future generations.

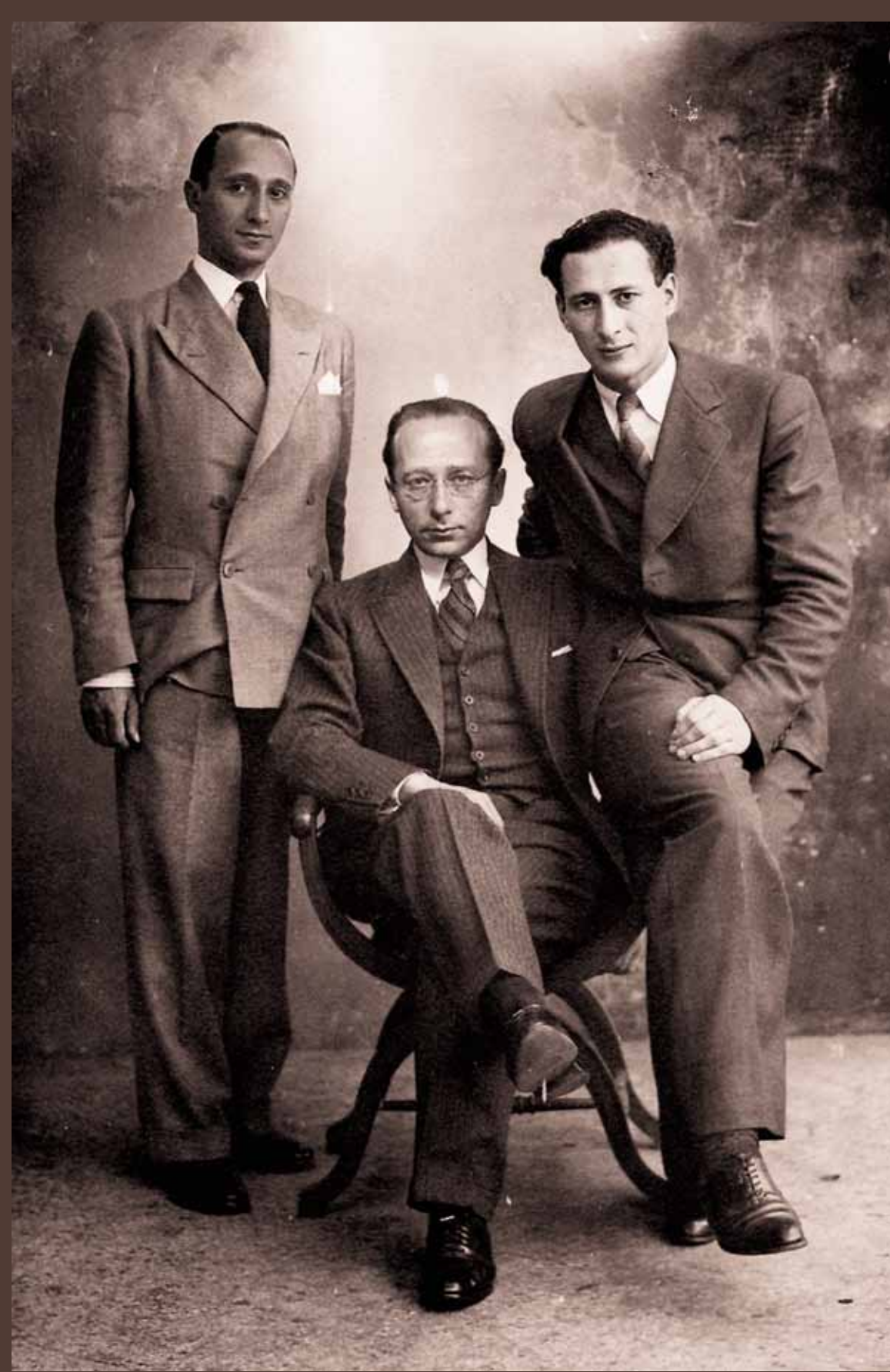
From the book: *Smuggled in Potato Sacks* Fifty Stories of the Hidden Children of the Kaunas Ghetto Edited by S. Abramovich and Y. Zilberg First published in 2011 by Valentine Mitchell



Ariela Abramovich's identity certificate issued by Jewish Ghetto Police in Vilijampolė, Kaunas in 1942



This letter signed by Jacob Abramovich (also in Hebrew) and dated 26 February 1944 was written both in Russian and in English. The latter version was intended for the relatives who escaped to England, USA and Palestine before the war. The letter was kept enclosed in the envelope. On top of the envelope was written Testament 1943.



Ariela's father Jacob Abramovich (right) with his brothers Leon and Aaron. France, 1935



Ariela's mother as a student in London, 1937



Ariela's parents Jacob and Bracha Abramovich with Ariela's grandmother Berta Maisei in Kaunas just before the war, 1939



Ariela's grandfather Solomon-Itzik and grandmother Sira with their grandchildren. Kaunas, 1935



Ariela's grandmother Sira a few days before the Children's Action in the Ghetto Kaunas. Both Ariela's grandparents were taken out during this action of 27 March 1944 and killed.

Ariela's parents left the following instructions for their relatives:  
"We, Jacob Abramovitch and Bronia (Bracha) Maisei-Abramovitch, residing before the war at Maironio Street No. 14, beg to inform our relatives that wanting to rescue the life of our only child we are compelled on the 26th February 1944 to give away our little daughter Ariela Abramovitch under the name of Bronia Mažilyte born on the 24th September 1941 to the family Dovort (Dautartas). The family Dovort has been so kind and obliging as to adopt the child and look after her till the end of the war. We ask our relatives at the first possibility to take our child to themselves and to bring her up. The family Dovort after having returned the child to you, should be compensated"

**Ariela Abramovičiūtė:** I was born at the end of October 1941. It was a very bad timing, but there was nothing to be done and when I was only five days old, wrapped up against my mother's breast, I went through or rather I was taken to the Great Action. That was when the ill, the elderly, cripples and new-born babies were selected and sent off to die or, to use the German term, to do "lighter labour", while the young and healthy were sent off to work "for the good of Germany".

The SS commander Rauca, was standing on raised ground and pointing with his truncheon to indicate who should go to the right (right meant death), and who should go to the left (left meant life). He was separating families. Relatives were pushing and straining towards each other.

The whole Abramovich family huddled together and managed to get to the "good" side except for Ariela's grandmother Sira. She was an old and wise woman, who understood everything that was going on. Not to upset her family, she had hidden in the crowd

of those selected for death. However, Ariela's father took three leaps over to the "bad" side, hunted out and literally dragged his mother out of the crowd to the "good" side. Then he ran up to the German officer and explained to him in fluent German that he had been given permission to go and fetch his mother.

Before the war, doctors Jacob Abramovich and Petras Baublys were colleagues. Jacob Abramovich decided to bribe the ghetto guards, to take Ariela out of the ghetto and leave her at the door of the orphanage *Lopšelis*. The rest of the family was in tears as they deemed it to be too dangerous.

**Ariela Abramovičiūtė:** On 14 December 1943, my father gave me an injection to send me to sleep and after the parents had dressed as farmers, they carried me to that orphanage.

He left me by the door on the porch in a sack with a label on it which read, *I am an unmarried mother and unable to take care of my child and ask for my daughter Bronia Mažilyte to be taken into your care.*

One fine day doctor Baublys sent a word that I was dying and that, if there was even the slightest chance, the parents needed to come and fetch me. Yet taking me back into the ghetto was not an option...

At the beginning of 1944, Ariela's parents escaped the ghetto for good and set off to persuade the fisherman Dautartas family to take Ariela in. Julija Dautartienė was told that the little girl was very clever and blonde, but what was handed to them was a blood-stained mess.

Their faith got the better of them though and they started praying for Ariela's recovery. Ariela's parents meanwhile had decided to come and find out if everything had worked out all right. At first Ariela's mother did not recognise her child. Then at last, when she recognized a mole somewhere on the bleeding piece of meat, she accepted that it must be her daughter after all. Ariela's father started doing the secret rounds of the pharmacists whom he had known from before the war. They gave him medication to treat his daughter. Julia's husband Juozas knew a good

deal about folk remedies, made herbal infusions and cleaned the girl's wounds with them. Rather soon a miracle happened and Ariela recovered.

**Ariela Abramovičiūtė:** My parents did not take me home right after the Germans retreated. I refused to part with Mama Julija. I did not recognise my father, saying "Good day Pan, good day Pan (or Good day Sir)". As soon as it was explained to me that I had other parents, I started sobbing, clinging on to Mama Julija's skirt. It was only after my parents had visited me several times that Mama Julija was able to pull me away from her. I sailed into Kaunas in a boat with Mama Julija's husband, Dedunya and Vladas. I would only agree to leave home by boat.

As they retreated, the Germans blew up and burnt the ghetto. The people who took shelter in the underground tunnels, to which our family was refused access because of me – a small child – were all burnt alive. My grandparents were led out of the ghetto in March 1944, together with two thousand other old people and children. They either died as they were being driven along or were shot. Our other relatives, as mentioned earlier, were taken off to Estonia and Poland. My Aunt Rebecca also perished in Stuttgart. My uncles and their sons perished, while their wives and daughters survived.



After the war Ariela's father helped the children whose parents were killed by Nazis. In this picture Ariela's father is with the children from the Jewish orphanage. Kaunas, 1945



Family holidays is Kulautuva. Ariela with her parents, cousin Ania and brothers Ben (in the middle) and Solomon (right). Around 1953



Solomon, Ariela and Ben. England, 1978



Ariela Abramovičiūtė-Sef

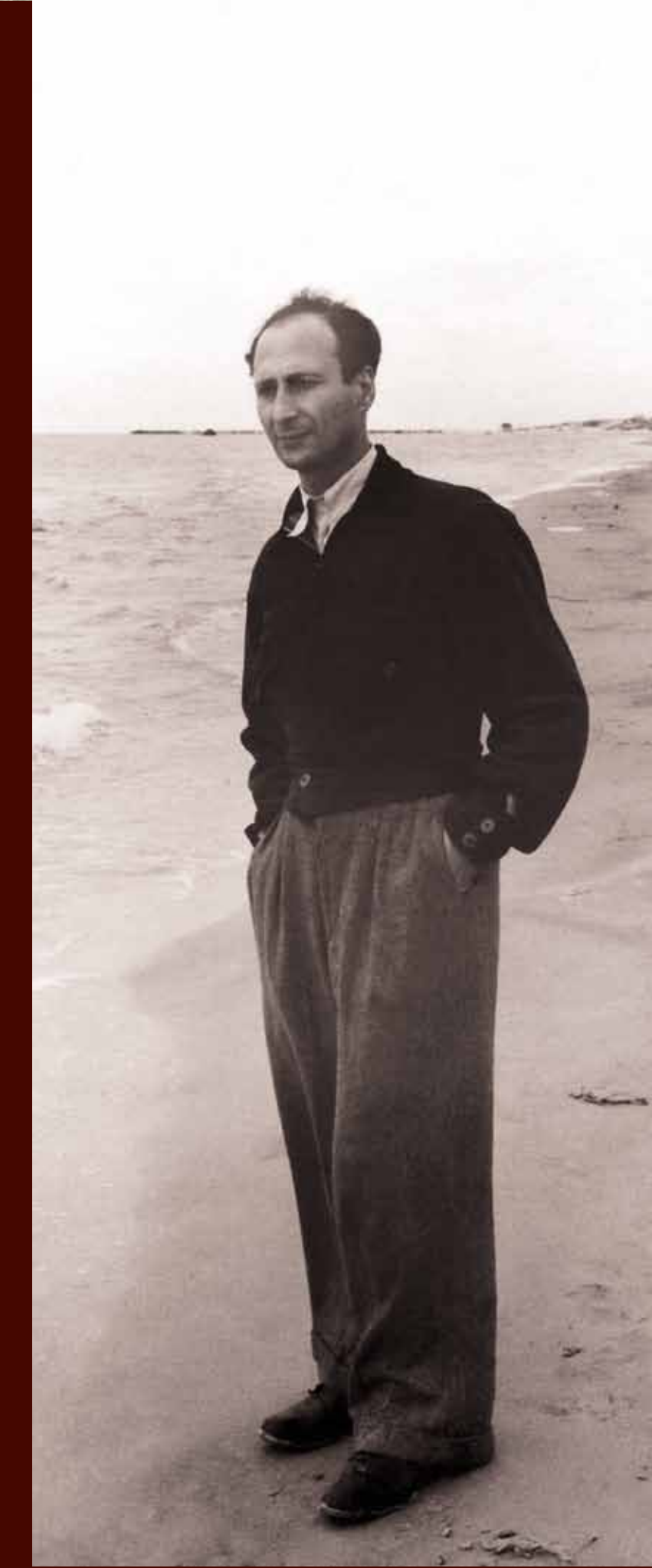
Julija ir Juozapas DAUTARTAS  
Awarded the Righteous Among the Nations medal and Certificate of Honour in 2004  
Awarded the *Life Saviour's Crosses*

Petras BAUBLYS  
Awarded the Righteous Among the Nations medal and Certificate of Honour in 1977  
Awarded the *Life Saviour's Cross* in 1993

Ariela and Ben in Hotel Villon, Vilnius, 2006



Ariela's father in Palanga, 1949



When it became known that there was going to be another raid my Father said firmly, "Ariela's not going to be rounded up". Father gradually came round to the idea of hiding me – come what may. The other relatives regarded him as a madman. But he went on saying, "I'm going to throw her out of here".



# Tamara Lazersonaitė, 1929

## Kaunas

The three mothers. That's how Tamara calls Bronė Pajedaite, Veronika Žvironaitė and Petronėlė Lastienė



**Tamara Lazersonaitė:** In December 1943, just before my birthday I discovered that a girl of my age escaped from the ghetto, and I wrote in my diary: "Chavka got out of the ghetto into the city. It's a pity. Mum, I also want to! I want to live!"  
 Could it be that this phrase reached Heaven, and God decided to give the girl a chance? And the rescue carousel started to turn around with Bronė Pajedaite, Petronėlė Lastienė, Veronika Žvironaitė, and Vera Effertienė participating in it. They even were not humans any more, they were angels whom God has sent.



Bronė Pajedaite Veronika Žvironaitė Petronėlė Lastienė



The Lazersonas' family house before the war. Kaunas, Vyduo Avenue 31.

Lithuanian Army doctor Vladimiras Lazersonas and his wife Regina. Kaunas. Around 1920. Both parents of Tamara perished during the war. Vladimiras Lazersonas got killed in Dachau and Regina Lazersonienė in Stutthof.



Professor Vladimiras Lazersonas in his apartment in Kaunas on Vasario 16-osios Street. 1924



Tamara's name day. From the left: Viktoras, Tamara with nanny Elena Zebrauskaite and Rudolfas. In the front: nanny's daughter Elenute



Rudolfas Lazersonas (first from the right) with his classmates. Lithuanian Gymnasium No 4, Kaunas, 1940



Veronika and Petras Effertas



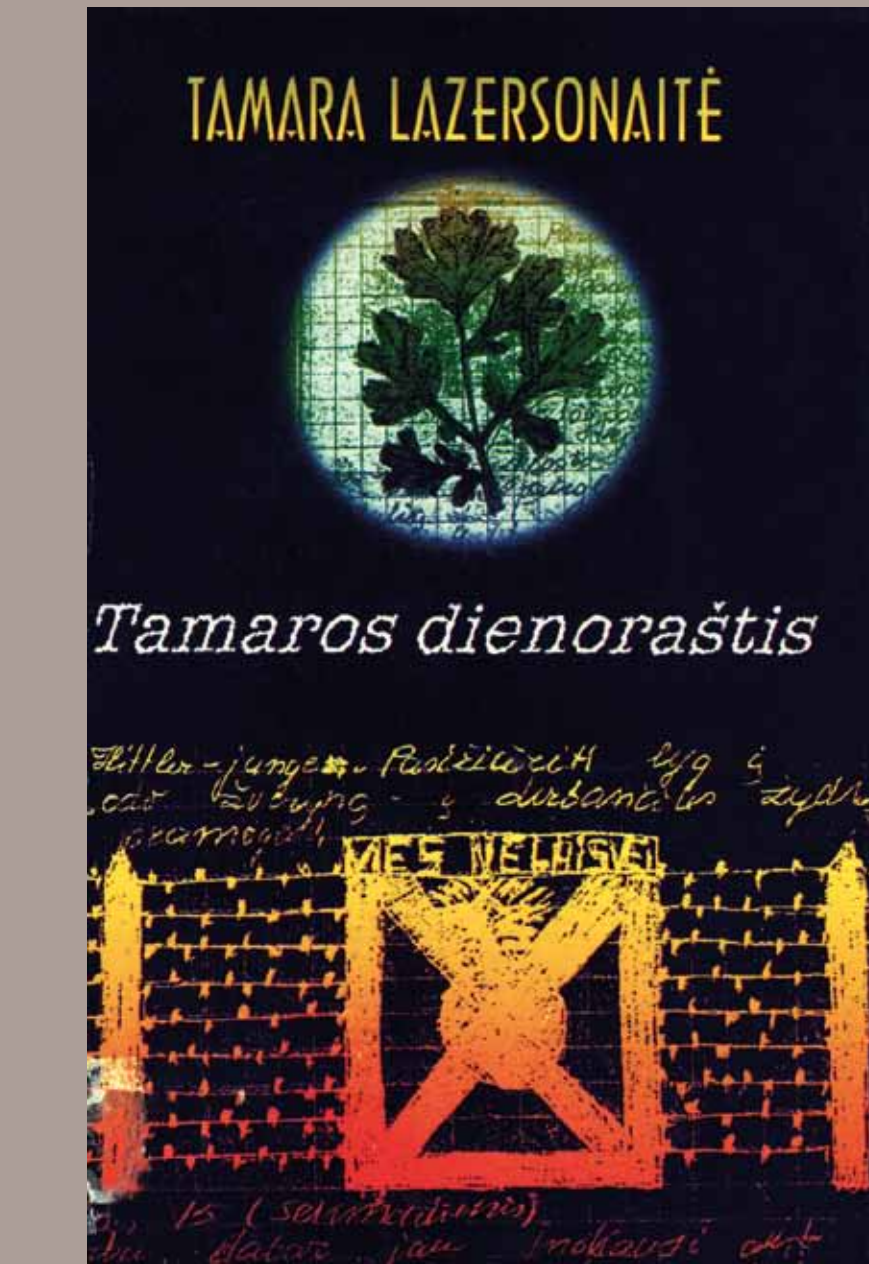
Pakamačiai estate in Pasvalys region where Tamara Lazersonaitė, with the help of Vera Effertienė and Petras Effertas, lived during the spring and summer of 1944



Compatriots Veronika Žvironaitė and Bronė Pajedaite rescued Tamara during the war. After the war they took care of Tamara Lazersonaitė and Onute Keilsonaitė who became orphans



The first from the left: Veronika Žvironaitė, Angarsk village, Boguchan District, Krasnoyarsk County



Bronė PAJEDAITE, Petronėlė LASTIENĖ, and Veronika ŽVIRONAITĖ  
 Awarded the Righteous Among the Nations medals and Certificates of Honour (2000)  
 Awarded the *Life Saviour's Crosses* (2001, 2004)  
 Veronika and Petras EFFERTAS  
 Awarded the *Life Saviour's Crosses* (2005)

**Tamara Lazersonaitė-Rostovskaja:** I was the youngest in the family. I was not a special child. I was an average pupil, played with dolls and liked poems, fairy tales and flowers. In the ghetto I used to keep a diary, write poems, and... feed the entire family. When I was 13, I went to work in a brigade so I would have an opportunity to bring food home and so we would not die of starvation. I undertook this duty with willingness and pride, as I was the youngest and provided food for the entire family.

There were three children in our family: Rudolfas was the eldest and we used to call him Rudikas, Viktoras was the middle one, and I, Tamara, was the youngest and the only daughter.

Tamara's father Vladimiras Lazersonas (born in Moscow) was a doctor, psychologist, professor at Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, and in 1940–1941 the head of the Department of Psychology at Vilnius University. Tamara's mother Regina Lazersonienė (born in Plonsk, Poland) worked as a paediatrician. Her parents met in Frankfurt when they were studying medicine. Tamara's

brother Rudolfas was quite gifted. He passed the secondary education exams at the age of fifteen. He wanted to flee to the East on the first day of the war, but his father convinced him to stay. When the Germans occupied Kaunas, Rudolfas received a telephone call from his teacher asking him to come over so that they could supposedly discuss procedures concerning the high school certificate. Rudolfas went out and never returned. Most probably he was shot dead in the 6<sup>th</sup> Fort. Tamara dedicated a poem to his brother, who dreamed of becoming an astronomer. The poem is called *Cry* („Крик“).



Rudolfas Lazersonas, killed in summer 1941 in Kaunas

*You were digging the hole for yourself,  
 The drunken fascists got tired,  
 And you were full of energy,  
 But, God, your hands were trembling!  
 You dug for a long time, awkwardly  
 The land so beloved,  
 And shivering penetrated your body  
 The spade did not go well.  
 What were you thinking about, poor child...  
 The crows were cawing ghastly,  
 The clip was filled with cartridges,  
 The bell tolled, inviting one to mass,  
 On Sunday. This last day.  
 You got grey, my brother, in a minute  
 And screamed wildly...  
 My soul was pierced  
 With your pre-mortal cry,  
 The world remained deaf...  
 It never heard your cry.*

They survived: brother and sister (Viktoras Lazersonas and Tamara Lazersonaitė). Vilnius, 1946. Tamara's brother Viktoras Lazersonas managed to escape from the condemned to death line during the liquidation of the Kaunas Ghetto, and after running as far as he could from Kaunas, he asked for help at the unknown farmer's house. With the help of the Vitkauskas family he was hiding in the forest until the liberation of Kaunas.



Tamara with Anusia (Onute) Keilsonaitė. Post war picture. Both orphans lived at Bronė Pajedaite's place until Bronė was arrested by KGB



**Tamara Lazersonaitė-Rostovskaja:** On 15 December 1943, just before my birthday, I discovered that a girl my age had escaped from the ghetto, and I wrote in my diary: "Chavka got out of the ghetto into the city. It's a pity. Mum, I also want to! I want to live!"

I worked on the assembly line in rubber factory, as is appropriate for a girl of 15. Suddenly I was asked to go to the office. And now I remember my trials: how I looked there, so dirty, shabby and unhappy. There was an unknown woman in the office. She asked me whether I remembered my teacher Petronėlė Lastienė and whether I wanted to go and see her. Of course I wanted, very much! This unknown woman was Bronė Pajedaite.

This is how my unpredictable journey started: I moved from one good family to another, changing my residence. Those people were heroes. I wanted to scream, "Do not open the doors; I am marked with a sign bearing death!" But more than anything I wanted to live.



On the eve of the Catastrophe Day, Tamara is going to light the torch on behalf of all those who wrote diaries during the Catastrophe. Tel-Izhak Kibbutz, Israel, 1 May 2000

From the left: Tamara Lazersonaitė-Rostovskaja, her daughter Ida and granddaughter Natali next to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington in 1997. Here the authentic Tamara's diary was displayed in the exhibition on the history of the Kaunas Ghetto

Veronika had a big room that she shared with me. She was my biology teacher and an inspector at Gymnasium No 5 in Kaunas. She was especially sensitive to the pain of others and radiated warmth and love. I felt a special attachment to her. She would understand me after I had uttered just a few words.

One night German soldiers searched Veronika Žvironaitė's house. During a meeting of the "security council", it was decided to take Tamara to the countryside. Vera and Petras Effertas, very kind people, lived on the beautiful Pakamačiai manor near the Latvian border. Petras was the administrator of the manor and Vera was Petronėlė Lastienė's sister. The serene, picturesque location became Tamara's home until the retreat of the Nazis. Then Tamara returned to Kaunas and settled at Bronė Pajedaite's place. She found her friend Anusia Keilsonaitė there. Bronė gave shelter to both orphans and shared her bread with them. Tamara lived with Bronė until 18 September 1945. Bronė Pajedaite was arrested and killed in the KGB building in Kaunas. Tamara was again accepted by Veronika Žvironaitė but soon after (in the autumn of 1945) Veronika was also arrested and sent off to the Gulag. Žvironaitė returned home in very poor health only many years later. Tamara exchanged letters with Žvironaitė until her benefactor's death. In October 1945, the KGB also arrested and deported Petronėlė Lastienė to Siberia. She was imprisoned there for ten years. Tamara became an orphan for the second time.



Tamara Lazersonaitė-Rostovskaja with her grandchildren: Kori, Joel, Ariel, Natali, and Keshet

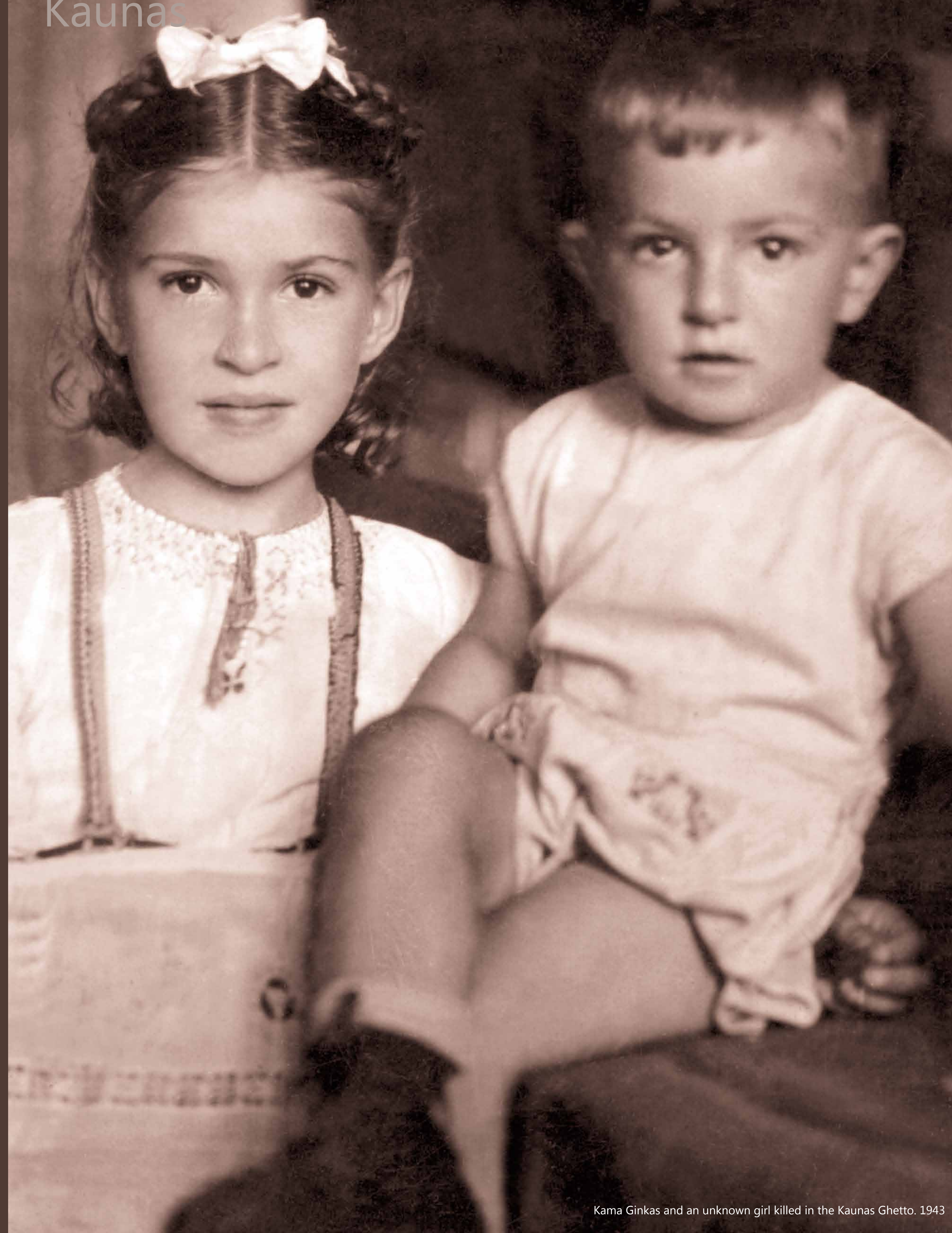
*I wrote to the KGB that Lastienė was rescuing Jews, but unfortunately my appeal did not help. When she came back, I asked her whether she knew anything about my letter. It appeared that the investigator had informed Petronėlė about this and asked why she would do that. My teacher replied, "Have you ever heard about humanity?" Those people were like that... My life took my real mother from me but gave me three other mothers, who embraced me with warmth and love and took care of me like their own daughter. Unfortunately, the terrible "red plague" killed those mothers too. I became an orphan for the second time.*



# Kama Ginkas

## Born in 1941

Kaunas



Kama Ginkas and an unknown girl killed in the Kaunas Ghetto. 1943

**Kama Ginkas:** I found myself in the ghetto when I was six weeks old. When I turned two, my parents and I escaped from the ghetto. The Lithuanians who were hiding us were taking a fatal risk: I was very curious and would run first to open the door. I couldn't pronounce "r" and once I asked a German officer who came to their house "Vos?", which in Jewish meant "What?"

The people who saved Jews did it for a variety of reasons. Some of them did it for money. More exactly, for valuable items. But the majority, and all of those whom I know, did it for noble reasons, using the only suitable definition. Vladas Varčikas, the husband of Sofija Binkienė's daughter Lilijana, was a person like this.

For two years my parents did not give in to any of Varčikas' persuasive arguments. Leaving the ghetto meant imminent death. And in the ghetto at least...

There was a moment however when it became clear to everyone. My grandmother, my mother's brother, and our neighbours and acquaintances had already been shot. They killed my grandfather on my father's side in the Panevėžys Ghetto. It became known to everyone what was going on. Kaunas is a big city and first such actions were carried out in small towns. Rumours spread fast. After the *Children's Action* was carried

out in Šiauliai, it meant that a similar one would follow in Kaunas. My parents understood that we had to run away.

How did we run away? I vaguely remember a bag of potatoes that I was crammed into, and prior to that I was given sleeping pills because I was uncontrollable (strangely, the sleeping pills did not seem to work). One version is that the bag with potatoes and me was thrown over the fence, and my parents left through the gates, giving a bribe to the guards. Another version is that they put the bag with potatoes into a stroller and took me away.

We stayed the night in Apolonija Grendienė's house after we left the ghetto. She gave my parents the stroller in which I was taken away, and she organised our transfer over the guarded bridge in Vilijampolė, near the Kaunas Ghetto.

And there we were, at the place of the Binkis family. Later there were other "transfer points". We did not stay long in any one place: a day or two, a week, or a month. It would have been dangerous to stay longer.

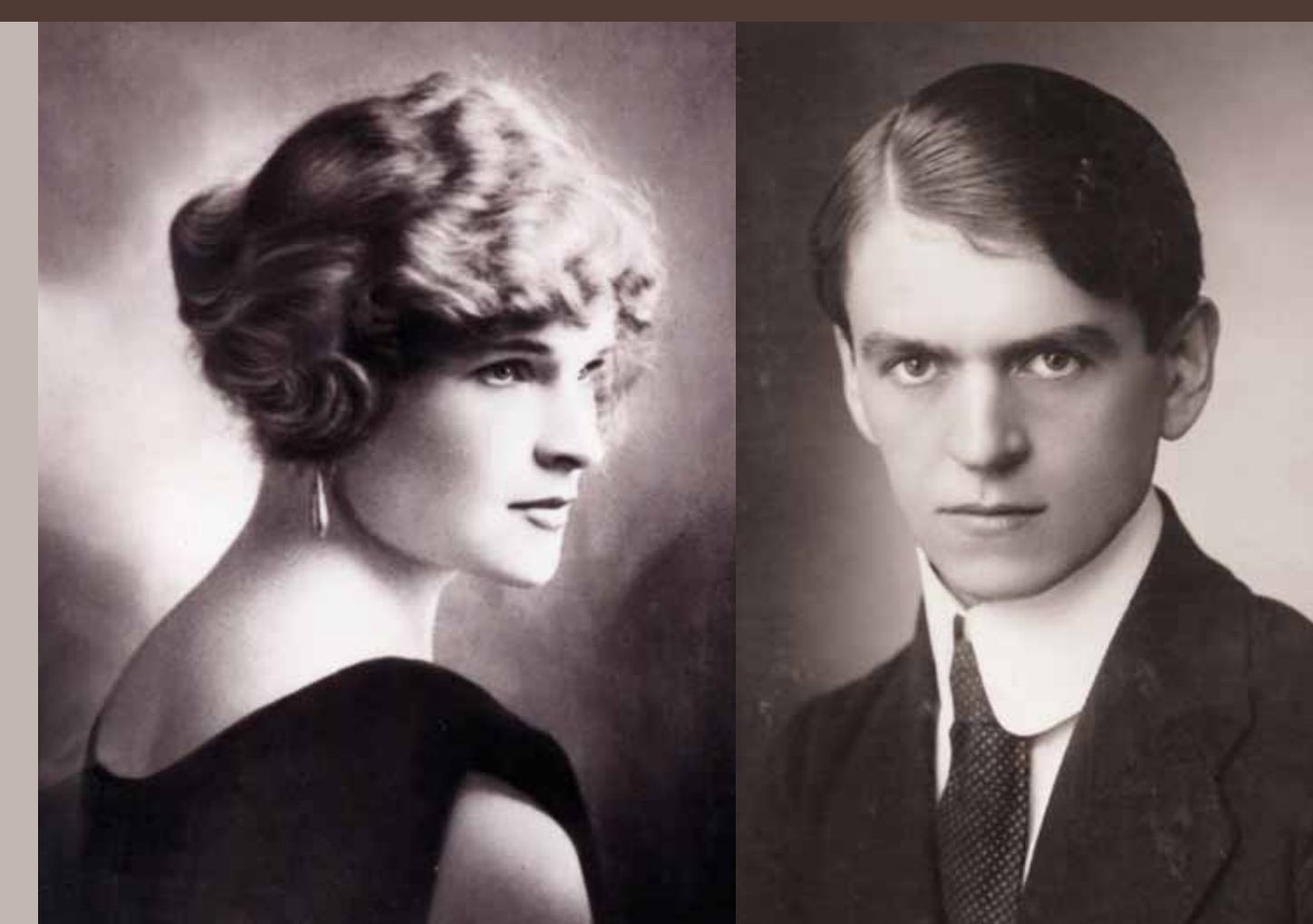
In the war-time Sofija's husband, Lithuanian poet Kazys Binkis, suffering from a heart disease (died on 27/04/1942), Sofija's two daughters Irena and Lilijana with Lilijana's husband Vladas Varčikas and Sofija Binkienė herself continuously hid the



Sofija Binkienė. Israel, 1968

*Those who survived the German occupation will understand what it meant to Jews to have a home they could go to during the most difficult times of their life. For us, it was the home of "Aunt Zosia" which we jokingly called a hotel for Jews. We found not only refuge there, but also a warm-hearted atmosphere and willingness to help, which gave us courage and hope. And that was so important during those years!*

Beba Shatenstein-Taborisky, Adina and Shmuel Segal, Raja Judelevich, Gita Judelevich and Margalit Stender-Lonke From the Israeli newspaper *Hava s'npaha (Our Country)* 5 April 1984



Sofija Binkienė. Around 1926 Kazys Binkis. 1920



Vladas Varčikas. 1935 Lilijana Binkytė-Mozūriūnienė. Around 1950 Irena Nacevičiūtė-Damijonaitienė. 1957



Kama Ginkas' rescuer Antanina Skačkauskienė-Vaičiūnienė

Antanina Skačkauskienė-Vaičiūnienė worked in a home for mentally disabled children and hid Jewish children there. It was the "transfer point" until a more reliable and safer place was found. They placed Jewish children together with ill children and wrote *Typhus Abdominalis* (typhoid fever) on the door to prevent the Germans, who were afraid of any kind of contagious diseases, from entering. Once she confessed to her mother, "I am hiding Jewish children. I could be killed for it. What should I do?" Her mother, a simple peasant woman, replied, "Then you will know what you died for".



Kaunas care home for disabled children, Apuolės Street 20, where Antanina Skačkauskienė-Vaičiūnienė worked in 1941-1944



Apolonija Grendienė

The Ginkas family, after escaping from the ghetto, spent the night at Grendienė's home, and then she managed to organize their transfer via strongly secured Vilijampolė bridge.



Children and nurses from Kaunas care home for disabled children

ghetto refugees. Physician Mironas Ginkas with his wife Mania and their little son Kama were hiding there, with some intervals, for a long time. Gita Judelevich, aged 11, came alone, and Sofija managed to hide her at home during the entire occupation period. Gita's mother, Raja Judelevich visited Gita from time to time. Sonia Ginkaite, Gutia Shmukler, and Roza Stender with her daughter Margalit also visited this home. Beba Shatenstein-Taborisky and Adina Segal with her husband Samuel lived there for some time too. In case of danger the people in hiding would be transferred to other places. Kama Ginkas met the liberation in a care home for mentally disabled children.

**Kama Ginkas:** The Binkis family were fantastic people. On the Avenue of the Righteous in Jerusalem there is a tree planted by Sofija Binkienė herself and a memorial plate with all the names of the Binkis family engraved. A fantastic family and a fantastic story.

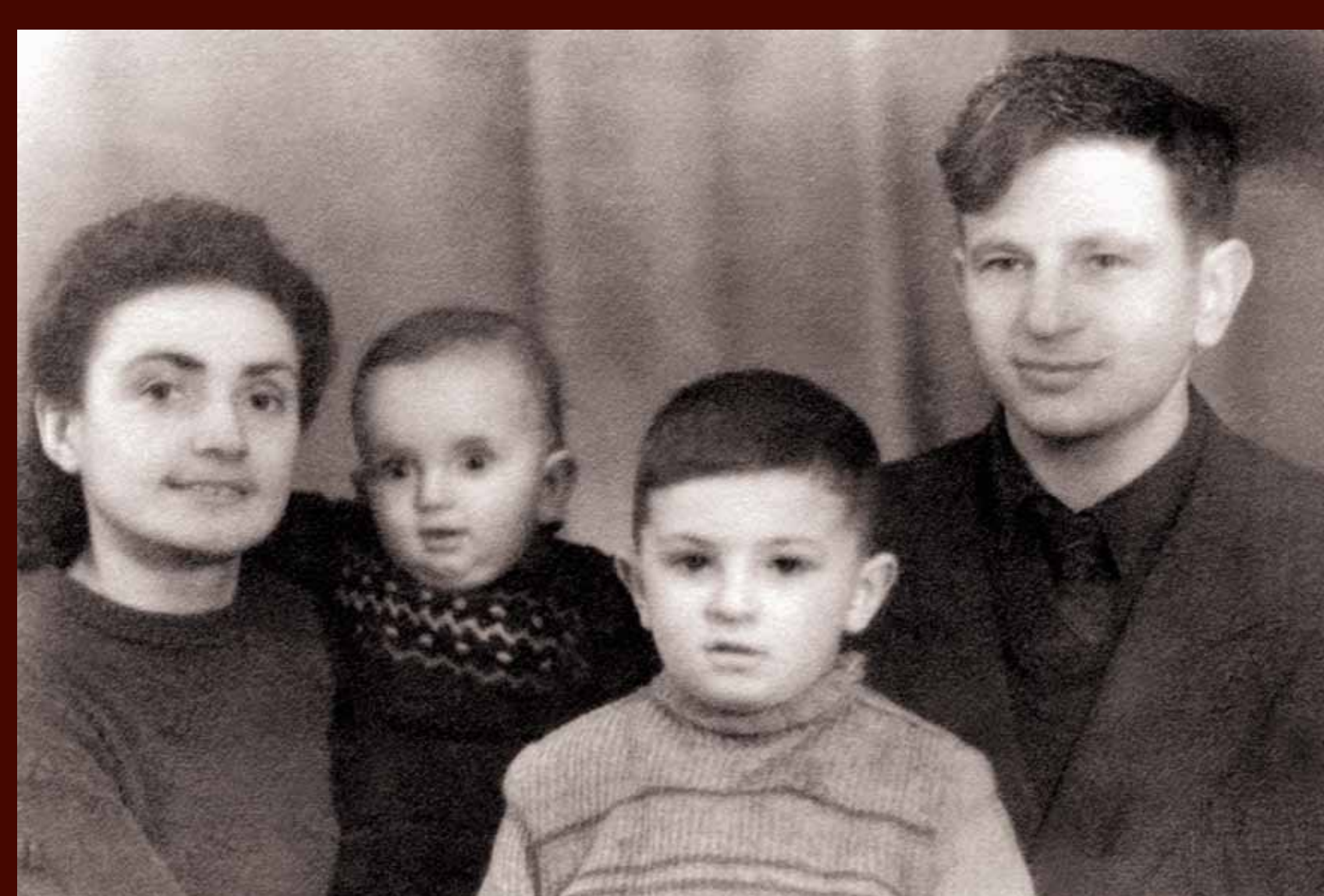
**Sofija BINKIENĖ**  
Awarded the Righteous Among the Nations medal and Certificate of Honour in 1967

Lilijana BINKYTĖ-MOZŪRIŪNIENĖ,  
Vladas VARČIKAS, Irena NACEVIČIŪTĖ-DAMJONAITIENĖ, Kazys BINKIS,  
Gerardas BINKIS, Eleonora BINKYTĖ  
Awarded the Righteous Among the Nations medals and Certificates of Honour in 1988

Antanina SKAČKAUSKAITĖ-VAIČIŪNIENĖ  
Awarded the Righteous Among the Nations medal and Certificate of Honour in 1993

Apolonija GRENDIENĖ  
Awarded the Righteous Among the Nations medal and Certificate of Honour in 2005

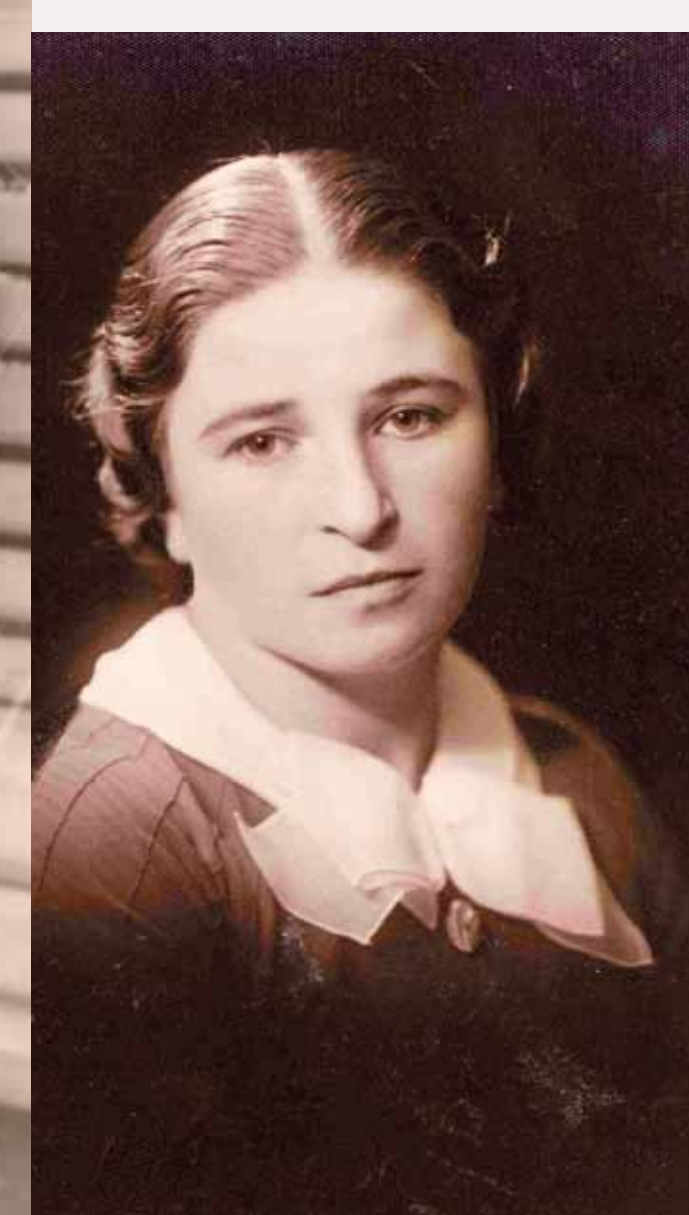
The Ginkas family saviour's were awarded the *Life Saviour's Crosses*



The Ginkas family after the war: Fruma Mania Ginkiene, Eugenius Ginkas, Kama Ginkas, and Mironas Ginkas. Vilnius, 1946



Kama, Alisa and Zhenia Ginkas. 1956



Sofija Ginkaite-Shabadiene, Kama's aunt, in the war-time visited the Binkis family's home rather frequently



Gita Judelevich (Judelevičiūtė) in the Binkis family's flat. Kaunas, February 1942



Adina Segal and her daughter Iga



Roza Stender with her daughter Margalit. 1944

*My mother used to say, "Kama, you are alive. Hitler came to Lithuania to kill you but you are alive to Hitler's disappointment". However, when I recently reminded my brother, who was born in 1945, of these words, he disagreed with me, "Kama, you're wrong. Our mother was speaking about me, that I was born in the face of Hitler's fury."*



Thanks to the efforts of the rescued people, in 1968 Sofija Binkienė went to Jerusalem to participate in the ceremony that Yad Vashem held in her honour.

From the left: Esther Fridman-Golan, Adina Segal, Sofija Binkienė, Beba Shatenstein-Taborisky, Adina Segal's mother Frumkina, and Adina Segal's husband Shmuel Segal. Jerusalem, 1968



# Fruma Vitkinaitė, 1933

## Kaunas



**Fruma Vitkinaitė:** *Helene Holzman and her daughter Margarete accepted me into their family. The word "orphan" is foreign to me, because I had close friends and a beautiful youth. I felt Helene's and Margarete's strong love and care. I had a new family, I went to school, and I studied at university.*



Helene and Margarete Holzman with Fruma Vitkinaitė-Kučinskienė in the balcony of a house on Višinskio Street, Kaunas, 1958



From the left: Natalija Jegorova-Melioranskaja, Rivka Ošerovičienė, Natalija Fugalevičiūtė



Lidija Goluboviėnė (Fugalevičiūtė) with rescued children. Sitting from the left: Liuda Shatunova, Lidija Goluboviėnė, Meishele Lafer (Kolka), Vilita Shatunov, Klavdija Shatunova, Rima; standing from the left: Rosian Bagriansky (Irite), Fruma Vitkinaitė, Vyuktas Jagminas, unknown child. Summer of 1944



Riva Shmukler-Vitkinienė and her son Josifas. Kaunas, around 1928



Fruma Vitkinaitė's parents Riva Shmukler-Vitkinienė and Vulfas Vitkinas. Kaunas, around 1925. Both Fruma's parents perished during the liquidation of the Kaunas Ghetto



Josifas Vitkinas, Fruma's brother who perished during the liquidation of the Kaunas Ghetto



Marie and Max Holzman. About 1940

Max Holzman disappeared during the pogroms in Kaunas in June 1941. Marie, the nineteen-year-old daughter of the Holzmans used to visit German soldiers in hospital and agitated them for peace, not to fight any more.

The girl was arrested in the same hospital and brought to prison. Marie Holzman was killed during the *Great Action* at the 9th Fort.



The Holzman family at home. Kaunas, 1940



Olga Kuzmina-Dauguvietienė

For about a month, until she was secured a birth certificate with the name of Danutė Vitkauskaitė, Fruma was hiding at Olga Kuzmina-Dauguvietienė's place. From there Fruma went to the children's home on Ugniagesių Street headed by Stefanija Andriūnienė.



Fruma Kučinskienė and Stefanija Andriūnienė (Stephanie Egan), who was head of Kaunas children's home in 1941–1944. Kaunas, 2000

**Fruma Vitkinaitė-Kučinskienė:** I, Fruma Malka Kučinskienė (Vitkinaitė), was born on 3 June 1933 in Kaunas. I was the third child in my family. My first brother died early and I grew up with my other brother, Josif, who was 7 years older than me. My father came from a big family that had moved to Kaunas hundreds of years ago. He was the Technical Director of *Koton*, a socks factory. My childhood was very beautiful. I remember holidays with relatives at my paternal grandparents Vitkins home near Town Hall Square and at my maternal grandparents Shmuklers home in the Žalialaknis neighbourhood and their great love for us, their grandchildren.

A happy childhood ended for Fruma on 22 June 1941. On the second day of the war, Riva and Vulf Vitkin decided to retreat from Lithuania but were forced to return. They settled in the ghetto in Krikščiuoikacio Street 58 together with several families of their relatives.

**Fruma Vitkinaitė-Kučinskienė:** My grandparents were killed during the *Great Action* at the end of October 1941. After this horrific day with its "left-right" sorting, people who came home alive were very mournful. After that day, my relative Rivka Shmukler-Ošerovich escaped from the ghetto with the Bagrianskis family. It was only with her help that my cousin Gutia Fish (Shmukler), who was six years older than me, and I survived. Rivka was hidden at Natalija Fugalevičiūtė's home. Fugalevičiūtė's friend Natalija Jegorova-Melioranskaja had also moved to her place. These women were amazing. Among the hiding ones they were known by the name "Angels". They moved to live in one place together just so they could help others.

I was among the hiding people too. I did not want to part with my parents or my brother. I resisted leaving them and did not sleep night after night, but eventually I was taken from the ghetto against my own will.

Vulf Vitkin, Fruma's father, took his daughter to a Jewish policeman in order to transfer the girl to the Natashas. He managed to bring the girl through the crowded groups of people returning to the ghetto from their work. Both Natashas waited behind the ghetto gates. Fruma saw her dad and brother for the last time on that late autumn evening. The same evening Fruma Vitkinaitė's name was changed and she became Danutė Vitkauskaitė.

**Fruma Vitkinaitė-Kučinskienė:** The other day, Helene Holzman visited both Natashas. She spoke German and this scared me. After the visit of her daughter Margarete, I was taken to their home. While I was hiding at the Holzmans', Rivka came one day and took me out for a walk. "Your mother is at Natashas'. But you cannot cry. You have to tell her that you are fine. You cannot show any weakness because your mother is very worried." During that short period, my mother's hair had become grey and she was thin and sad. That was the last time I

saw my mother. Since she did not want to leave my father and my brother, she returned to the ghetto the next day.

Fruma was hid and sheltered by several amazing women: Natalija Fugalevičiūtė, Natalija Jegorova-Melioranskaja, Helene and Margarete Holzman, and Olga Kuzmina-Dauguvietienė; at different periods she lived shortly in the children's home headed by Stefanija Andriūnienė and on the farm of Lidija Goluboviėnė, Natalija Fugalevičiūtė's sister. Together with fifteen other children whom Lidija Goluboviėnė hid and took care of, Fruma lived to see the liberation.

**Fruma Vitkinaitė-Kučinskienė:** I knew nothing about the fate of my parents or my brother. I used to go to the synagogue where lists of people coming back from concentration camps were posted. When it became known that all my relatives had died during the liquidation of the Kaunas Ghetto, Helene Holzman and her daughter Margarete accepted me into their family.



Riva Shmukler-Ošerovich, Margarete and Helene Holzman. 1950s



Two sisters Margarete and Fruma, 1964



Helene Holzman with Fruma Vitkinaitė-Kučinskienė's son Danas Kučinskis. Kaunas, 1965



Cover of Helene Holzman's book



Helene Holzman (1891–1968)

Natalija FUGELAVIČIŪTĖ, Lidija FUGELAVIČIŪTĖ-GOLUBOVIENĖ, Helene HOLZMAN, and Natalija JEGOROVA-MELIORANSKAJA Awarded the Righteous Among the Nations medals and Certificates of Honour (2005) Awarded the *Life Saviour's Crosses* (1999)

Olga KUZMINA-DAUGUVIETIENĖ Awarded the Righteous Among the Nations medal and Certificate of Honour (1985) Awarded the *Life Saviour's Cross* (2001)

Margarete HOLZMAN (1999) and Stefanija ANDRIŪNIENĖ-EGAN (2000) Awarded the *Life Saviour's Crosses*

*She was a fragile blond haired girl with a high forehead and a pretty nose. From the first glance she had nothing of a Jew. Only an observant person would know that she was not a Lithuanian from her deep green almond eyes full of sadness of her tragic nation. We nourished her well, brought some books with pictures, told her fairy tales, but she was sad all the time.*



# Moshe Rosenblum

## Born in 1940

### Kaunas



Three-year-old Moshe Rosenblum, in the Kaunas Ghetto. 18 July 1943

**Moshe Rosenblum:** After the war my parents kept warm, heartfelt, and truly close relations with our rescuers until their very last days. These are the people who enabled us to avoid the terrible fate of almost all Lithuanian Jews. I also have a family, two sons and grandchildren. They have been rescued too.



Monika Lukoševičienė



Bronius Lukoševičius



Sofija Čiurlionytė. 1948



Danutė Čiurlionytė-Zubovienė. November 1937



Vladimiras Zubovas. November 1937



Helena Vobolevičienė and Vincas Vobolevičius



Helena Vobolevičienė with her children: Bogdanas (on the right) and Jonušas



From left to right in the first row: Lotta Kenigsbergienė, Helena Vobolevičienė, Raja Rozenbliumienė. From left to right in the second row: Borisas Kenigsbergas (Raja Rozenbliumienė's brother), Vincas Vobolevičius, Anatolijus Rozenbliumas



Anatolijus Rozenbliumas with his brothers and sister. First row, from left to right: Solomonas, Anna (Bellinzoniene), Izidoras. Second row: Anatolijus, Aleksandras



Anatolijus Rozenbliumas. Around 1930

**Moshe Rosenblum:** I spent the first year of my life in pre-war Kaunas. There were three persons in my family: my parents Anatolijus Rozenbliumas and Raja Rozenbliumienė and me, Moisiejus (Moshe Rosenblum). My father was a building engineer. He designed more than 100 buildings of various purposes, including the Kaunas Sports Hall, and the largest bridge in Lithuania over the Nemunas River (near Alytus).

On the second day of the war, the Rozenbliums tried to leave their home but they had to return. During the first days of the war, Jewish flats in Kaunas were searched and looted. Many people were taken to the 7th Fort, where continuous executions were carried out in early July. Thousands of people, almost exclusively men, were shot dead. Anatolijus Rozenbliumas was taken to the fort three times but was not accepted because the fort was "too overcrowded". The mass murder that accounted for the death of a third of the ghetto's residents took place on 28 October 1941. It became known as the *Great Action*.

M. Kopelman, the chief of the Jewish ghetto police, succeeded in convincing the Germans to release the Rozenbliumas family by telling the Germans that Anatolijus Rozenbliumas was an engineer of high qualification and the Germans might need him in the future.

At the end of 1943, Moshe's parents heard the news about the *Children's Action* on 5 November in the Šiauliai Ghetto and decided that the boy could not stay in the ghetto any longer.

**Moshe Rosenblum:** Antanas Midvigis, agronomist, once stopped my mother in the street and then told that he was ready to help. He took my mother and me to Vincas Vobolevičius, who owned a farm in the village of Šaliai near Vandžiogala. I still see that image: night, the dark streets of Kaunas, and myself in a stroller. I think we stopped at the place of the Zubovas-Čiurlionis family before we reached Šaliai. It had happened before that my father or my mother would stop at their place for a while when leaving the ghetto. The Zubovas family could not

hide us at their place for any longer period: German raids in the town centre were a routine practice.

**Danutė Čiurlionytė Zubovienė:** Valdis (Vladimiras Zubovas) had a visitor on his doorstep. The visitor was Anatolijus Rozenbliumas, his co-worker from the Military Apartments Office, the author of the famous Kaunas Sports Arena. Rozenbliumas was in need of temporary refuge for his wife and son since the hideout for them was still being prepared in a village. The flat belonged to my mother, Sofija Čiurlionienė, so he had to discuss that with her. She agreed without hesitation. It was, probably, the highest risk taken in order to rescue the lives of the Rozenbliumas family.

Vincas and Helena Vobolevičius raised two children, one of them was a new-born baby. Their living place was too busy and crowded, so, they didn't accept the Rozenbliumas' baby-son but a few days later they found another place for him.

Monika Lukoševičienė, Helena Vobolevičienė's sister, agreed to accept Moshe. Raja Rozenbliumienė took her son and left the ghetto in the night-time. She chose side streets and they reached Monika and Bronius Lukoševičius' home in pitch darkness.

**Moshe Rosenblum:** On Christmas night in 1943, a big group of Jewish prisoners escaped from the nearby 9th Fort. One of them stopped by the Lukoševičius' farm. One night, a group of Lithuanian policemen burst into the house and carried out a raid. Monika grabbed me, put me into her bed, and lay down on top of me so that my head came out through her armpit. I could see everything in the room. I could see the flashlights running under the bed and in the wardrobe and men in black. After they left, Aunt Monika collapsed unconscious.

When my mother learned about the incident, she supposed that the Lukoševičius family would be afraid to keep the child, but they did not refuse to keep me. I stayed with them for a total of eight months until the liberation.

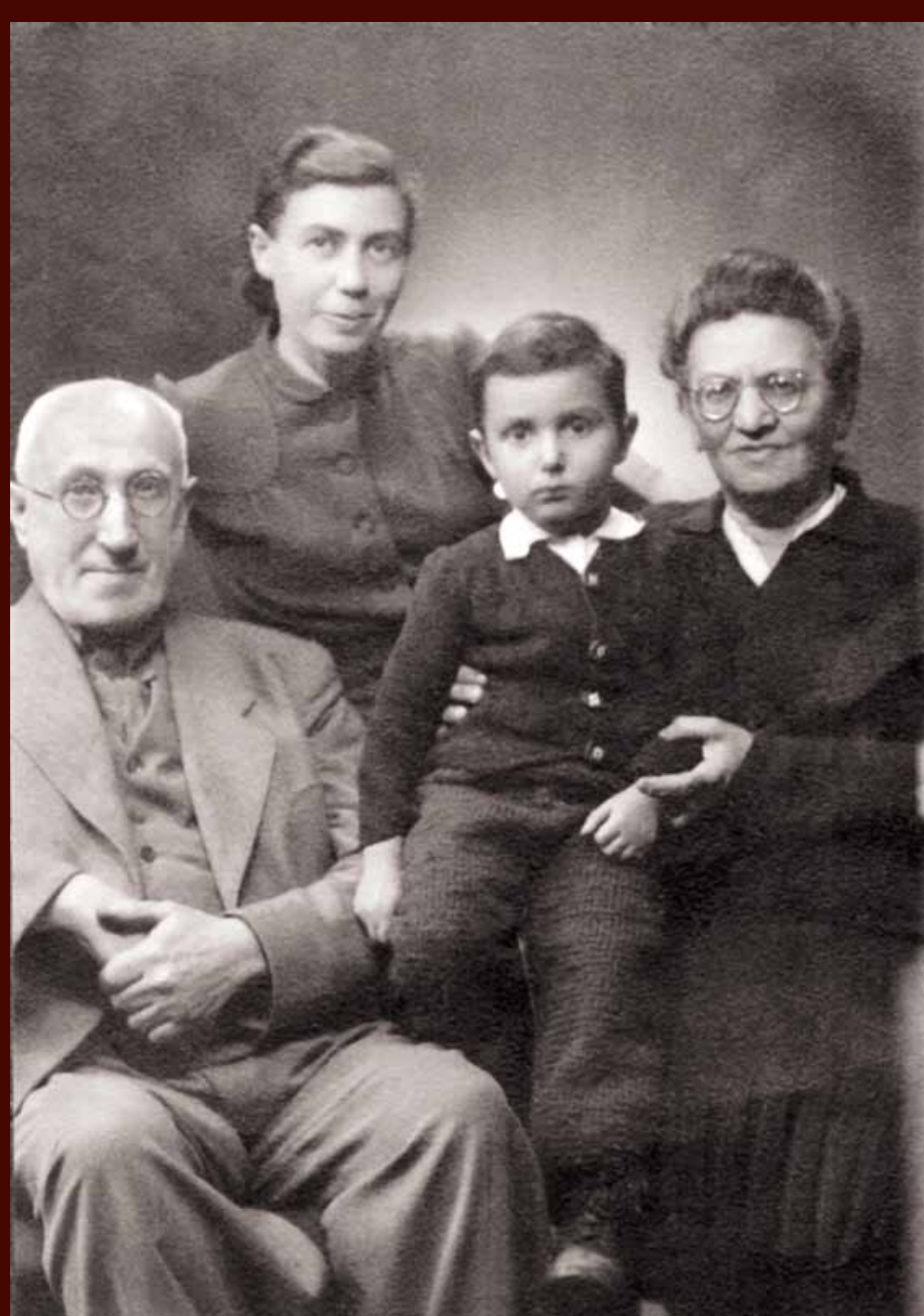
My parents stayed in the ghetto until 29 March 1944. It was very difficult to escape at this time but they found a solution: they joined a brigade of Jewish workers taken in a boat over the River Neris. They spent one day at the place of the Zubovas family and then reached the Vobolevičius' farm where a hiding place had been built for them. My grandparents (the Kenigsbergases) were there already. Helia Vobolevičienė and Vincas Vobolevičius took care of my family for four months until the Red Army came.



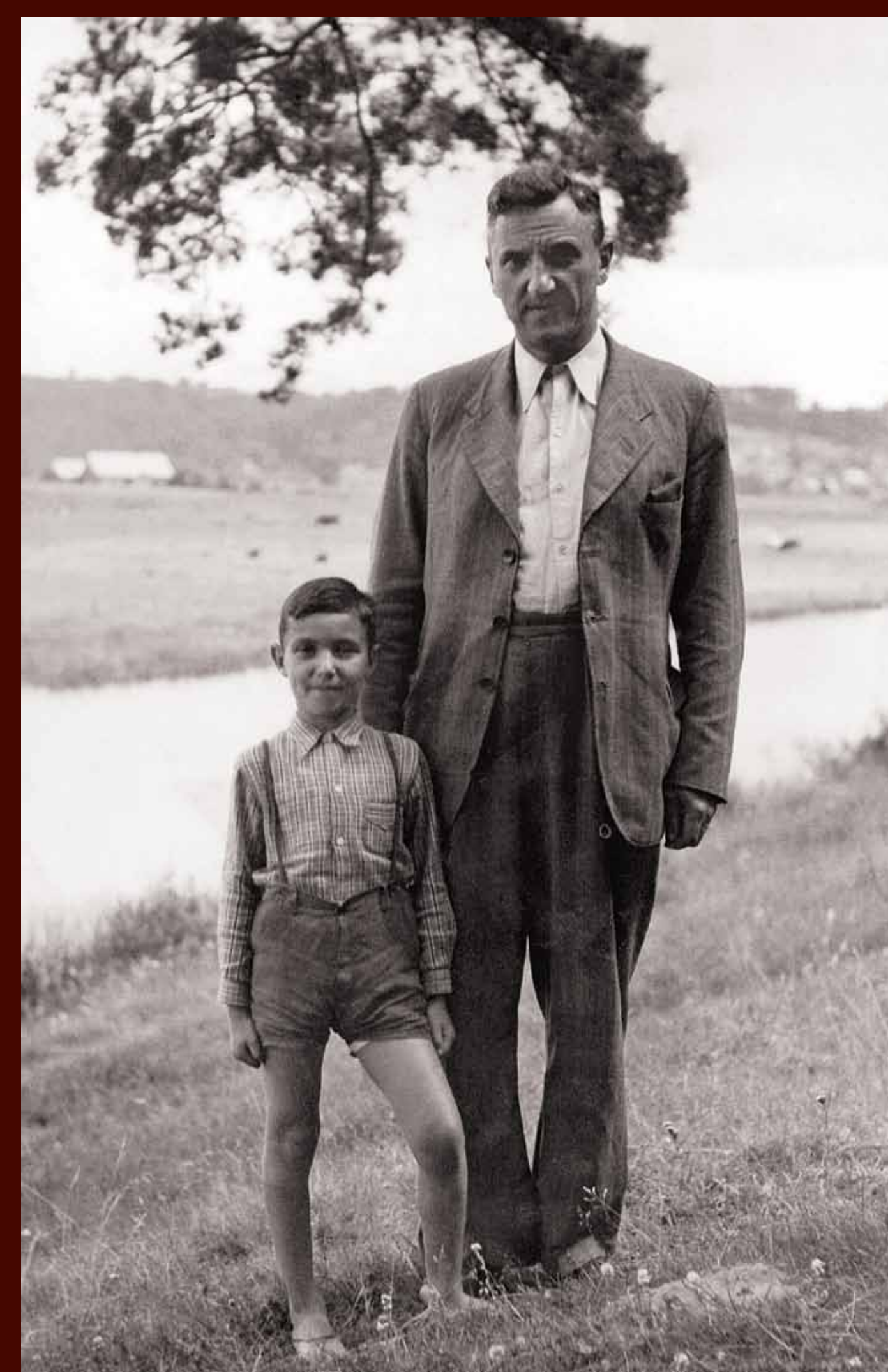
Doctor Anatolijus Rozenbliumas (1902–1973), famous constructions specialist, professor of the former Kaunas Polytechnic Institute (later Vilnius Engineering Construction Institute)



Raja Rozenbliumienė and Anatolijus Rozenbliumas with their son Moshe. Around 1947



Raja Rozenbliumienė with her parents Chana Kenigsbergienė and Faivušas Kenigsbergas and her son Moshe. 1945



Anatolijus Rozenbliumas with his son Moshe. Around 1949

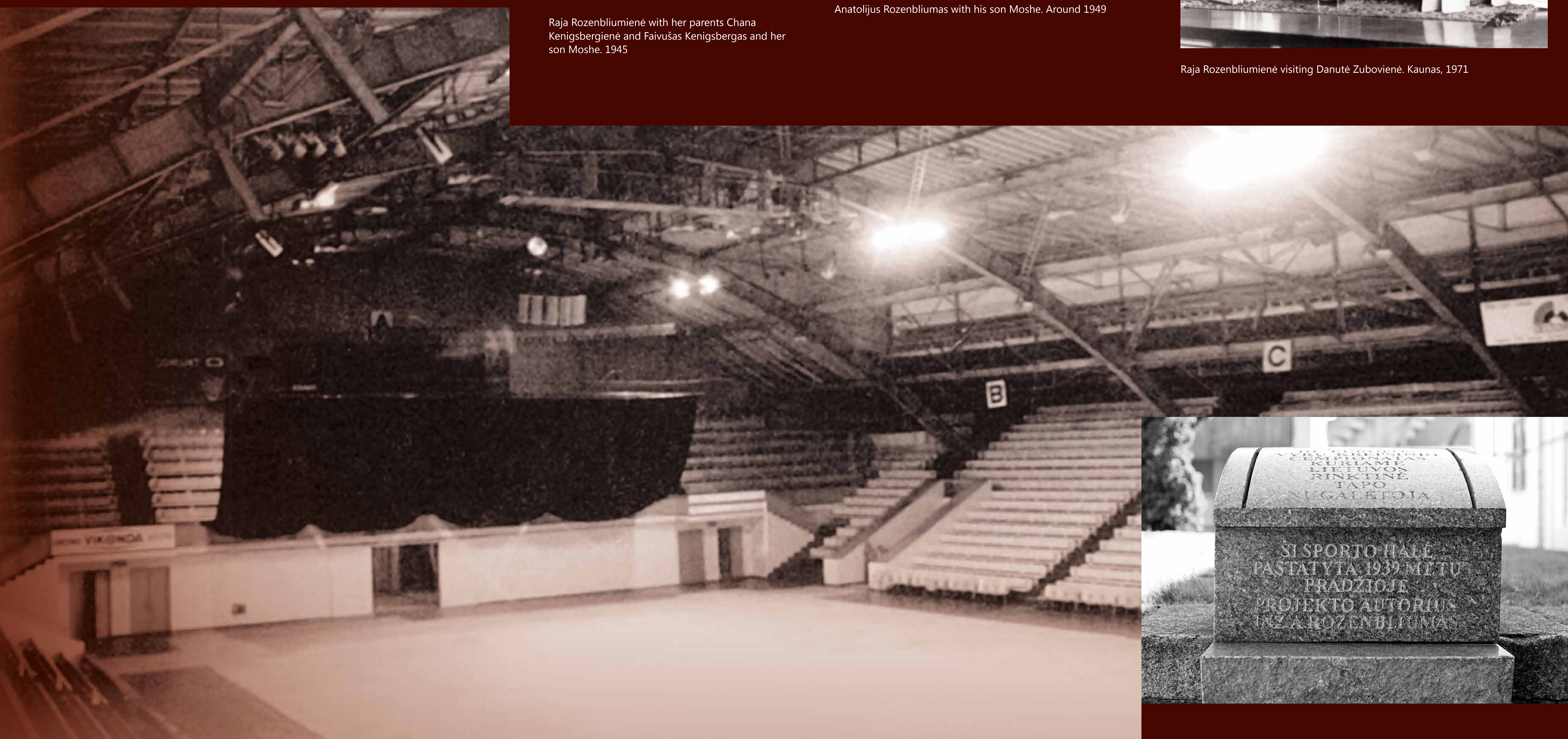
Helena and Vincas VOBOLĖVIČIUS, Monika and Bronius LUKOŠEVIČIUS Awarded the Righteous Among the Nations medals and Certificates of Honour in 2006 and the *Life Saviour's Crosses* in 2005

Sofija ČIURLIONIENĖ, her daughter Danutė Sofija ZUBOVIEENĖ, and her daughter's husband Vladimiras ZUBOVAS Awarded with the Righteous Among the Nations medals and Certificates of Honour in 1991 and the *Life Saviour's Crosses* in 1999

Anatolijus Rozenbliumas became especially famous when he designed the Kaunas Sports Hall in an extremely short time for the European Basketball Championship held in Lithuania in 1939



Raja Rozenbliumienė visiting Danutė Zubovienė. Kaunas, 1971





# Irena Veisaitė, 1928

## Aleksandras Shtromas, 1931

### Kaunas



Irena Veisaitė, Kaunas, 1938. The photograph was hidden (buried in the ground) and saved by Dr. M. Brauns with his other documents (it was found after the end of the war)



Izidorius Veisas and Sofija Shtromaite-Veisienė start their honeymoon journey. Kaunas railway station, around 1927



Sofija Veisienė and her daughter Irena, Kaunas, 1938



Sofija Veisienė with Aleksandras Shtromas and Irena Veisaitė on the way to Birštonas, 1938



Stefanija Paliulytė-Ladigienė and her husband general Kazimieras Ladiga. Pre-war photo

**Irena Veisaitė:** *Mrs Ladigienė took the most incredible risks. She didn't have a separate flat and there was an SS headquarters in the same house. Had I been caught, Mrs Ladigienė would have been executed in Paneriai with all her children. But her deed, which I would call heroism, was so natural, as if there could be no other way.*



Ona and Juozas Strimaitis, Brussels, 1938



Irena Veisaitė's rescuer Dr Pranas Bagdonavičius. USA, around 1960

Irena Veisaitė's rescuers  
Ona and Juozas STRIMAITIS, Stefanija LADIGIENĖ, Pranas BAGDONAVIČIUS, Awarded the Righteous Among the Nations medals and Certificates of Honour in 1992

Stefanija LADIGIENĖ (1992), Pranas BAGDONAVIČIUS (2003), Awarded the *Life Saviour's Crosses*



Aleksandras Shtromas as a student, around 1948

Parents of Aleksandras Shtromas and Margarita Shtromaite – Jurgis Shtromas and Eugenia Kocin-Shtromiene. Jurgis Shtromas, the former Director of the Department of Trade and Industry at the Ministry of Finance, later the Director of the State Lottery Main Agency, Director of *Parama* during the first Soviet occupation. On 27 June 1941 he was killed in Kaunas in the of *Lietūkis* garage. His wife Eugenia (born in St. Petersburg) committed suicide in Stuthof at the end of 1944.



Jurgis Shtromas and Eugenia Shtromiene. 1923



Aleksandras Shtromas with his sister Margaret in their apartment in Kaunas. Around 1935



The birthday of Aleksandras' cousin Liova Shtromas. Kaunas, 1933

First row from the left sitting: unknown girl, Aleksandras Shtromas, Liova Shtromas, Dmitrijus Kopelmanas, Samuilas Trockis, Irena Veisaitė. Standing in the second row from the left: nanny of the girl sitting at the table, Sofija Shtromaite-Veisienė, Aleksandras Shtromas' nanny Veronika, Valdemaras Ginsburgas (cousin of Margaret, Aleksandras and Irena), Edia and Jevsiejus Shtromas, Liova Shtromas' parents (Edia Shtromienė together with her son Liova were killed in the Kaunas Ghetto during the *Great Action*), Margaret Shtromaite, Chaja Shtromiene (died in the Kaunas Ghetto in 1942) grandmother of Margaret and Aleksandras Shtromas and Irena Veisaitė.

This picture is from the personal Henry Kopelman Gidoni's archive



Kaunas Ghetto resident Chana Bravo. After the ghetto was liquidated, she was deported to a concentration camp. She came back to Lithuania in 1945. Since 1971 she lived in Israel. Pre-war photo



Marija and Antanas Macenavičiai with their daughter Judita. Kaunas, 1935

**Irena Veisaitė:** I was born in Kaunas in 1928. My father Izidorius Veisas was a Director of the Central Agency of the Lithuanian State Lottery. My mother Sofija Shtromaite-Veisienė had studied economics. Before the war, I was a pupil at the Sholem Aleichem Gymnasium. My parents divorced at the beginning of 1938. My father left Lithuania in 1939 and spent the war years in Belgium. He died in California in 1973.

My mother was operated on 16 June 1941 in the Kaunas Red Cross Hospital. During the first days of the war, my mother remained in the hospital; she was weak and could not walk... On Thursday, a man bearing a white armband appeared in the hospital, I was told to leave the ward and that my mother was under arrest. Doctor Kanauka, who had operated on my mother, did not discharge her. He stated that he was responsible for his patients and it was his duty to care for my mother until she was strong enough and mobile. In the context of those days it was an act of heroism. On Friday, I brought some clothes to my mother. The white armband was flirting with the nurses, so I managed to

sneak into the ward unnoticed. That was where I saw my mother for the last time, and where we had our last conversation.

On Sunday, my mother was taken straight from the hospital ward to the Forced Labour Prison on Mickėvičius Street. I never saw her again. I do not know where she died or where she was tortured to death for no reason. She was 35...

From 1941, when I was left alone, until November 1943, I lived in the ghetto with my mother's parents and her sister's – my aunt's – family. I was thirteen years old when I came to the ghetto. I mostly remember the constant fear, and the overwhelming desire to stay alive and the gnawing hunger. My greatest dream was one day to be able to eat to my heart's content...

Juozas and Ona Strimaitis, who were friends of Veisas family before the war, found Irena in the ghetto. Ona and Juozas prepared documents for Irena and urged her to escape from the ghetto. On 7th of November, 1943, under great risk, Irena merged into the workers' column and went out from the ghetto

together with it. Later on she reached the Strimaitis' home. Next morning Juozas Strimaitis took Irena to Vilnius, to the physician Pranas Bagdonavičius, his wife Ona's brother.

**Irena Veisaitė:** In March 1944, I went to live with Stefanija Paliulytė-Ladigienė, the widow of the Lithuanian general Kazimieras Ladiga. Since she already had six children, I was welcomed as the seventh. I was introduced to all her children as their sister. The first evening, when we sat down at the table to eat our meagre wartime meal, I noticed that Ladigienė gave me a larger share of the food than her own children. There is no way I could relate what that meant to me at that particular time... It seemed like some sort of miracle.

I lived in Stefanija Ladigienė's family until her arrest on 14 March 1946. She was sentenced by a three-man KGB "court" and imprisoned in Siberia. Stefanija Ladigienė died in Vilnius, in my arms on 18 September 1967. I remember all the people who helped me survive the horrors of the Holocaust with love and gratitude. All of them risked their lives in helping to save mine.

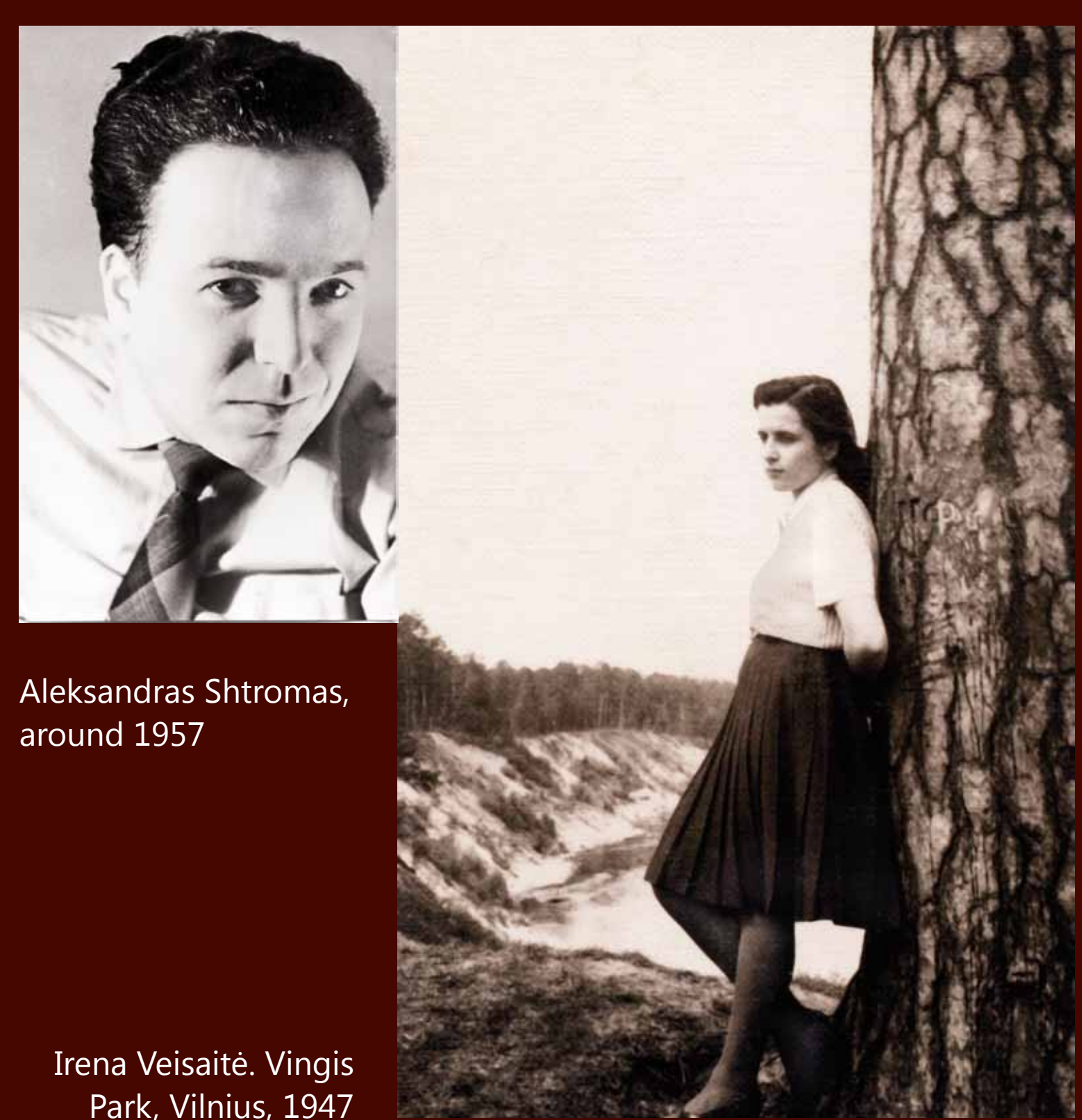
**Aleksandras Shtromas:** It happened so that four of us managed to survive: my sister Margaret and myself, Irutė (Irena) and our cousin Vova (Valdemaras) Ginsburgas.

The war started on Sunday. My father was killed in the infamous garage of *Lietūkis* together with all the others who were caught. He was arrested on Monday and on Friday he was killed already. In the garage they did not shoot people, they killed them by torture.

Of course, people helped me to escape. I was a child and I would not have managed on my own. There was a woman called Chana Bravo in the ghetto. She was very active in looking for places where children could be hidden. During the Smetona years, Chana Bravo worked with Macenavičienė at *Žemės ūkio* bank. Assigned to a workers' brigade in town, Chana Bravo met up with Macenavičienė, who said, "If you have any problems, tell me, and I'll help. It's hard for me to watch what's going on, we need to do something". This made Chana Bravo think about sending me to the Macenavičius family.

The Macenavičius family treated me well, they washed me in the tub and asked me what I was going to do. I told them about the plan to pretend I was a Russian boy from Maksimovka village. They told me that they would not let me go, as they could not commit such a sin, because if they let me go, they would be letting me go to my death and they would never be able to live with this. They offered to let me stay with them and so I did. I lived there from November 1943 till August 1944 – for nine months.

Aleksandras Shtromas' rescuers  
Marija and Antanas MACENAVIČIUS  
Awarded the Righteous Among the Nations medal and Certificate of Honour in 1976 and the *Life Saviour's Crosses* in 2003



Aleksandras Shtromas, around 1957

Irena Veisaitė. Vingis Park, Vilnius, 1947



Irena Veisaitė and her cousin Aleksandras Shtromas in Anykščiai, 1993. Picture taken by Antanas Sultkus



Stefanija Ladigienė in Siberia with her children Benediktas, Jonė and Algis



Ona Strimaitienė, Irena Veisaitė, Ona Strimaitienė's children and grandchildren. Irena Veisaitė's rescuer Ona Strimaitienė (Bagdonavičienė) receives the Righteous Among the Nations medal. New York, 1991



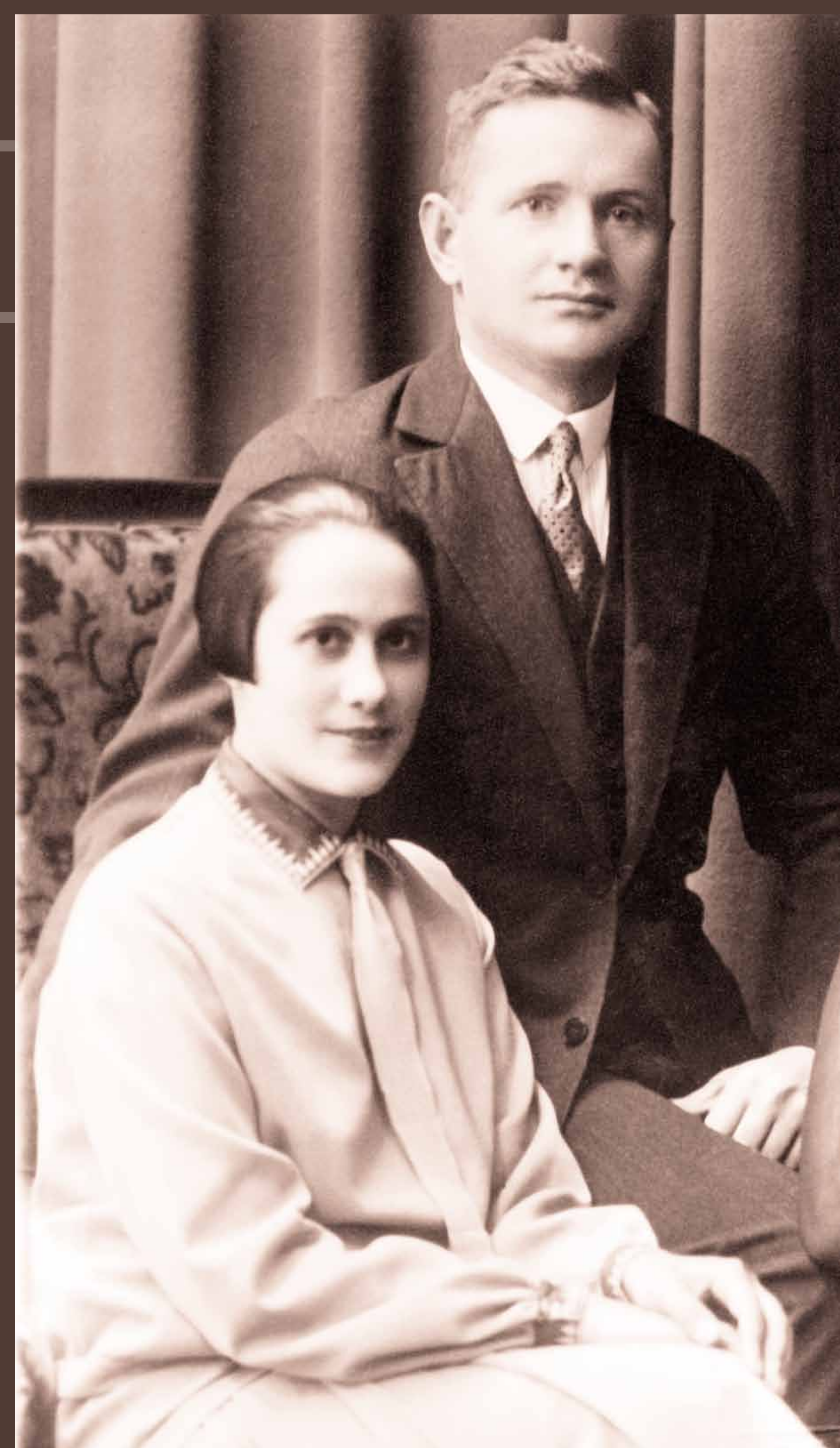
Aleksandras Shtromas (in the middle) with his rescuers Marija and Antanas Macenavičius. Kaunas, 1952

*I remember the three commandments my mother gave me:  
to live within my means and to be independent;  
to live with the truth, not to lie, to be open to people;  
never to take revenge...*



# Tobijas Jafetas, 1930

## Kaunas



Juozas and Marija Katinskas



Ona Katinskaitė-Doveikienė



Pranė Špokaitė-Juodvalkienė



Kotryna Katinskaitė (on the left) with co-worker from Vilnius University

**Tobijas Jafetas:** Aunt Masha and Uncle Juozas raised and educated me. Aunt Masha was like a real mother to me and Uncle Juozas wanted to adopt me. But I wanted to stay who I was born as.



Tobijas' mother Berta Shustef-Jaffetienė with her first baby Azriel, Kaunas, around 1925



The pupils of Shwabe Gymnasium after the graduation from a four-year primary school. Third from the left in the second row Tobijas Jafetas



Tobijas Jafetas, Kaunas, around 1932



Tobijas' brothers. From the left: Fima and Azrielis Jaffetas, Kaunas, around 1932



Azrielis Jaffetas, Kaunas, around 1932



Tobijas' parents and aunt. From the left: his mother Berta Jaffetienė, his father Rafaelis Jaffetas, Maria Jaffet (Dinerman), Kaunas, around 1922



Tobijas' parents: Berta and Rafaelis Jaffetas

**Tobijas Jafetas:** I was born in 1930 in Kaunas. We were three brothers in the family: the eldest Azriel (Azia), Fima, who died at the age of six, and me, Tobijas, the youngest. My father Rafaelis Jaffetas was from a big family that lived in Rezekne, Latvia. In 1923, my father moved to Kaunas and worked as a representative of UK textile companies in Lithuania.

My mother graduated from the Real Gymnasium in Riga. She did not work anywhere, she raised and taught us.

In 1939, our family moved to the UK, as my father realised that it was not safe to stay in Lithuania. My brother and I started going to school in Brighton.

My cousin Onytė (Ona Katinskaitė) graduated from *Aušros* gymnasium the same year and my mother invited her to stay with us in the UK. Times in Europe were becoming more and more turbulent and my mother decided to take Onytė back to her parents in Kaunas and took me with her. Unfortunately, we could not return to the UK, as our visas were no longer valid after the change of the government in Lithuania in 1940. So

my father stayed in England with my brother, while my mother and I stayed in Kaunas.

Tobijas was sent to pioneer camp in Palanga in the summer of 1941. It was a miracle that he managed to return to Kaunas after the outbreak of war. Soon after that Tobijas and his mother were imprisoned in the Kaunas Ghetto. Tobijas survived the *Children's Action* of 27 March 1944. He managed to hide himself.

**Tobijas Jafetas:** ... The end of March of 1944 was beautiful and sunny. One morning we got the feeling that bad things were happening around us. The ghetto was surrounded, and security strengthened. Soldiers came to a house nearby. There was a lot of noise and screams coming from the house. I realised that I needed to hide. I went to the attic where I kept the rabbits, set them free from the cages and hid beneath the grass while closing the door to the stairwell. I sat like that lis-

tening very carefully... The noise quietened down in the nearby house, and the soldiers moved to our house. I heard steps in the stairwell and the screaming of a woman in our apartment. After an hour or so you could hear the voices of men near the attic door. They did not open it, but forced it open with a blow. The door fell on the grass that I was lying under. The rabbits got scared and started running. Somebody came to the attic, walked around looking for people, and poking the grass. I heard them say, "The only things alive are the rabbits, maybe you'd like some?" They left. I lay motionless. After a good hour or so there were no longer voices in the house but I still didn't move. I realised, I was lucky – the rabbits had saved me. Our Getala was gone. Her mother was walking around like a mad-woman. There were practically no children left in the house...

Right after the *Children's Action*, Tobijas' mother decided to hide the child. Tobijas left the ghetto at an appointed time. He bid farewell to his mother in the *Silva* socks factory and went

to meet Kotryna Katinskaitė. She took Tobijas across the bridge where they were met by Tobija's cousin Onutė Katinskaitė. They all went to a flat on Prezidento Street where Pranutė Špokaitė-Juodvalkienė lived. She was a baby-sitter of Tobijas' cousin Liova Frenkel and helped a lot of Jews. Pranė brought food to the members of the Jaffet family imprisoned in the ghetto many times. At great personal risk forged documents were secured for Tobijas. The name on the documents was Jonas Vaitkevičius. Next morning Kotryna and Onutė took the boy by train to Vilnius, to Marija and Juozas Katinskas' home. They had tenants in their flat at Kaštonų Street: a policeman and a student. Tobijas lived in hiding but in the custody of the people who loved him. Aunt Marija Katinskienė and her husband Juozas Katinskas survived till the end of the war.

After the war ended, Tobijas often went to the train station waiting for the deportees returning from the concentration camps in the hope of seeing his mother.

**Tobijas Jafetas:** One day Mr Meris from Dachau came to see us. He had been in the Kaunas Ghetto until its liquidation in July 1944. Mr Meris was a good acquaintance of my parents. According to him, my Mum was shot at the fifth gates of Varniai. She bribed a soldier by giving him all her remaining valuables, he let her out and then shot her in the back...

Mr Meris could tell us nothing about Uncle Frenkel and Liova. Maybe they were incinerated in *malina*, or maybe they died in the concentration camp.

Tobijas Jafetas met his father for the first time after the war in 1958 in Leningrad. His brother Azriel finished his studies in Great Britain and became an architect. The brothers met for the first time in 1960 in Moscow.



Tobijas Jafetas, Vilnius, around 1949



Tobijas' first meeting with his family after the war. From left to right: Toviva Jaffet, Max Shustef, Tobijas' brother Azriel Jaffet and Tobijas, London, 1969



Kotryna Katinskaitė (on the left), Marija Katinskienė, Lija Futlik (Marija Katinskienė's sister) and Juozas Katinskas, Vilnius, around 1960



The Katinskas family. Sitting are Marija and Juozas Katinskas, standing is Ona Katinskaitė-Doveikienė with her daughter Nelytė, Palanga, 1954

Juozas KATINSKAS and his sister Kotryna KATINSKAITĖ  
Pranė ŠPOKAITĖ-JUODVALKIENĖ  
Awarded the Righteous Among the Nations medals and Certificates of Honour in 2006

Juozas KATINSKAS, Kotryna KATINSKAITĖ, Ona DOVEIKIENĖ (KATINSKAITĖ)  
Awarded the *Life Saviour's Crosses* in 2006.

Time passed very slowly. My mum came. We hugged each other. She was visibly worried, pressed me close to her, saying that she could not go with me now. She needed to get ready, and then she would come but I had to go right now. Everything would be fine. Soon a man came and said that a woman was waiting for me on the street. These were the last moments my Mum and I were together.



# Danutė Pomerancaitė, 1941

## Kaunas



Danutė Pomerancaitė, 1944



Danielius Pomerancas before the war



Danielius Pomerancas with his orchestra

**Danutė Pomerancaitė:** When I watch the Lithuanian film showing the young Kipras Petrauskas, I look at Elena Petrauskienė and their daughter Aušra and I cannot imagine how those beautiful young people with children of their own could risk their lives by taking in a Jewish baby. After all, it was a well-known family!



Danutė Pomerancaitė with her rescuer Elena Žalinkevičaitė-Petrauskienė, 1946



Elena Petrauskienė with children in Germany in 1947. The little girl in front in the white dress is Danutė Pomerancaitė. Aušra is the first from the right



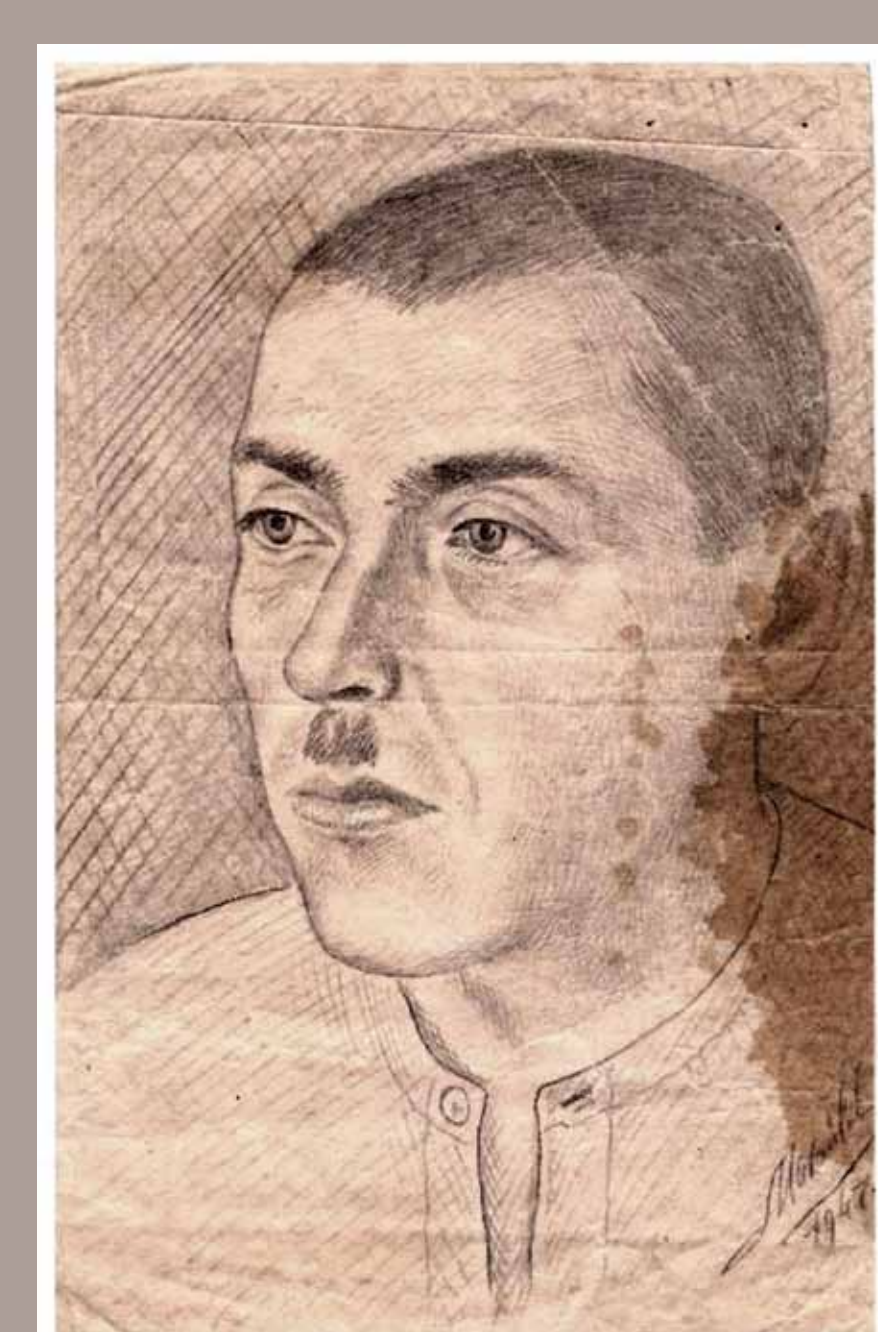
Kipras Petrauskas, his daughter Aušra and Danutė Pomerancaitė, 1948



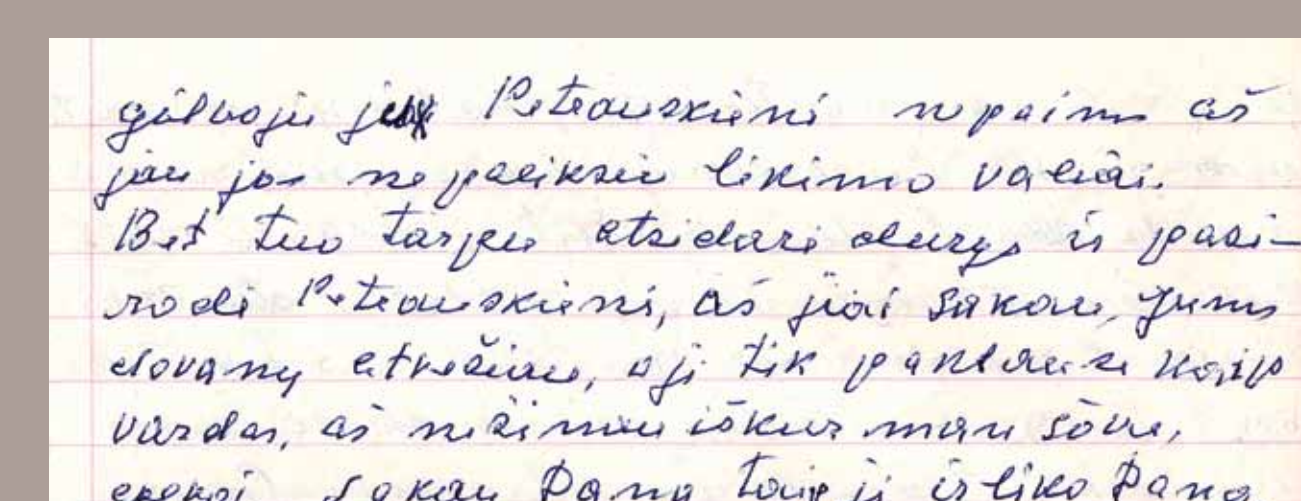
Danutė Pomerancaitė, Vilnius, around 1957



Balyš Simanavičius. Pre-war photo



Portrait of political prisoner Balyš Simanavičius. Arkhangelsk, 1947



Facsimile of Balyš Simanavičius' diary

I pressed the doorbell and stood waiting for someone to open the door. It took a long time or so it felt at the moment. All this time, a small girl was looking at me in silence. It seemed to me she was begging me with her eyes to rescue her. I felt so sorry for her and thought to myself that if Petrauskienė did not accept the child I would not abandon her to the mercy of fate. But at that moment the door opened and Petrauskienė appeared on the doorstep. I said to her, "Brought you some presents".



Rūta Lopianskaitė (Pomerancaitė) on the left with friends. Kaunas, around 1946-1947

**Rūta Lopianskaitė:** People who had friends and acquaintances tried to smuggle the children out of the ghetto and hide them. My mother had such an acquaintance too. Balyš Simanavičius was the director of Kaunas fur factory. My mother knew him from before the war. They agreed to get me out of the ghetto. I was drugged, put in a potato sack and smuggled out of the ghetto under an agreement with the gate guard. Balyš Simanavičius took me to some farmers living in a village near Kaunas. Balyš Simanavičius also helped to find a hideout for my mother in Kaunas.

**Danutė Pomerancaitė-Mazurkevich:** I was born at the beginning of the war in the Kaunas Ghetto. My father Danielius Pomerancas was a brilliant violinist and my mother had finished child-rearing courses in Germany before the war. I adored my father when he was alive and I still adore him now that he is gone. There was one more person whom I truly adored – Elena Žalinkevičaitė-Petrauskienė. The Petrauskas family rescued me.

My mother has told me about the actions in the ghetto and about the Great Action when the Germans told everyone including children and elderly people to line up and then directed them to go left or right. One side meant life and the other one meant death. We were spared then, although I was still a baby and my mother could barely stand on her feet after the childbirth.

One time, everyone was told to bring their children outside their houses, and my mother decided to keep me indoors. She stuffed me into a pillow. When the Germans came, they searched the apartment, and the pillow with me inside was

thrown against the wall in the process. They did not find anything and left. There was an article in English saying that I was a "baby that never cried".

My mother succeeded at meeting Elena Petrauskienė in the city. She agreed to rescue me. The problem was how to get me out of the ghetto. A doctor was found who gave me a lot of sedatives and told them to put me in a potato sack. Balyš Simanavičius had to take me out of the ghetto. I was given quite a high dose of drugs, and I could have died. I fell asleep, but somehow I knew I was leaving my parents and so I kept waking up, and whining. Fortunately, I soon calmed down and was carried out of the ghetto successfully.

When Simanavičius brought me to the Petrauskas' home no one knew what to call me. So they named me Danutė. Later I went to Palanga with the Petrauskas family. Kipras Petrauskas returned from Palanga to Kaunas and Elena Petrauskienė together with the children left for Germany escaping the battle line in this way.

While we were in Germany, my father was sent to Dachau concentration camp. Somehow, he managed to obtain a violin, which gave him the strength to survive. Without this violin, he said, he probably would have perished.

Once the war was over and the Americans had liberated the concentration camps, my father, weighing some 30 kilograms, walked on foot to Lithuania. There he found my mother who was hiding in the Petrauskas apartment and had miraculously survived.

After the end of the war, our families found each other with the help of the Red Cross and Kipras Petrauskas. I can still remember the moment of our arrival in Kaunas. I was just a little girl. There were journalists and crowds of people as the Petrauskas family and my father were well-known people.

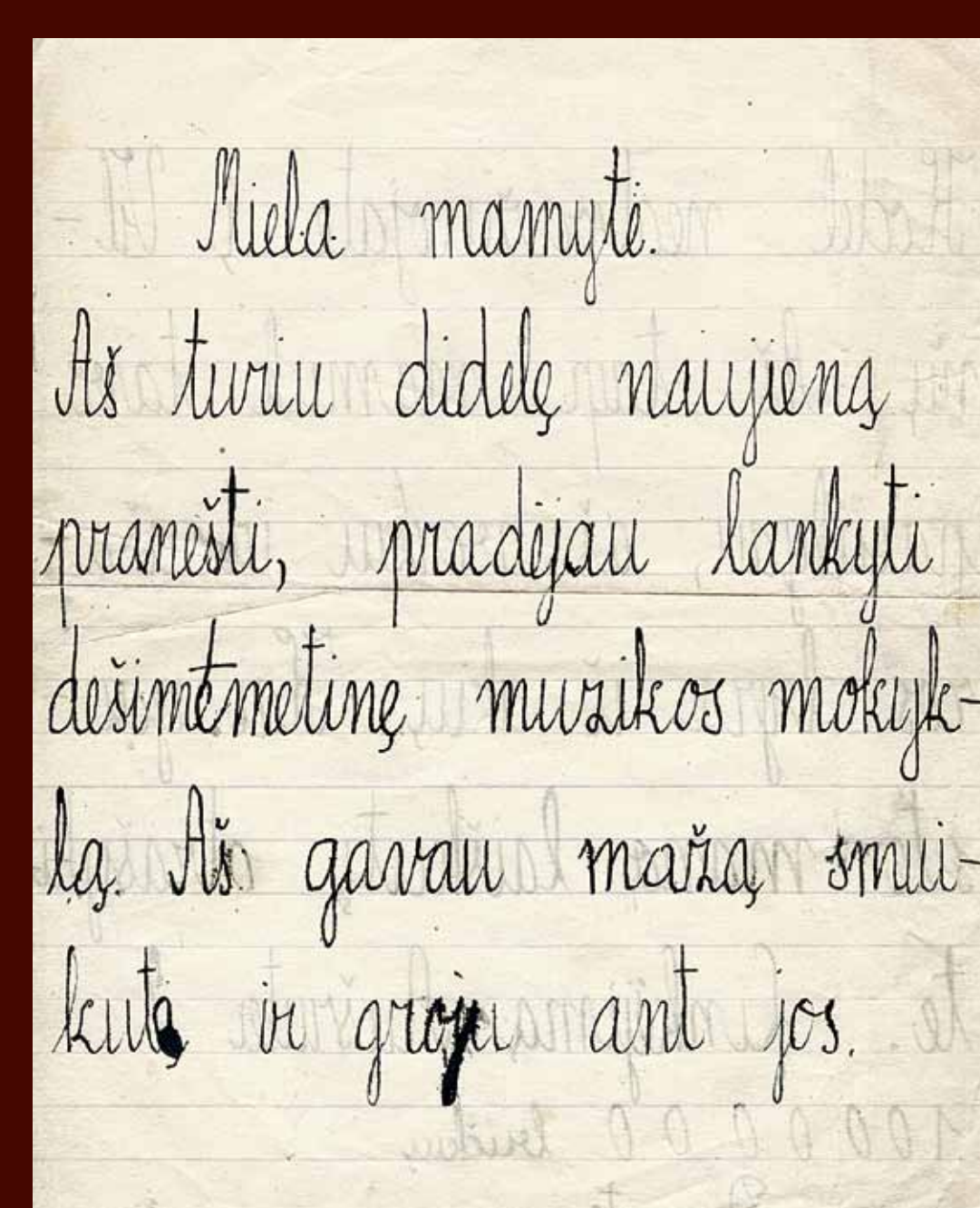
I can still remember my real mother showing up and my real father kissing me. And I remember saying to my real father, "You are so small. And this is my dad Kipras Petrauskas. Look, how handsome he is. And look at my mommy!"

**Aušra Petrauskaitė about Danutė Pomerancaitė's life in her family:** She would rush to our house and I would always be asking to see her too. I felt as if a part of my body had been torn away from me. Danutė felt likewise. Sometimes, they would bring her to our house at night. Then we would gladly spread our bedding on the floor and sleep together, and everyone would be happy.

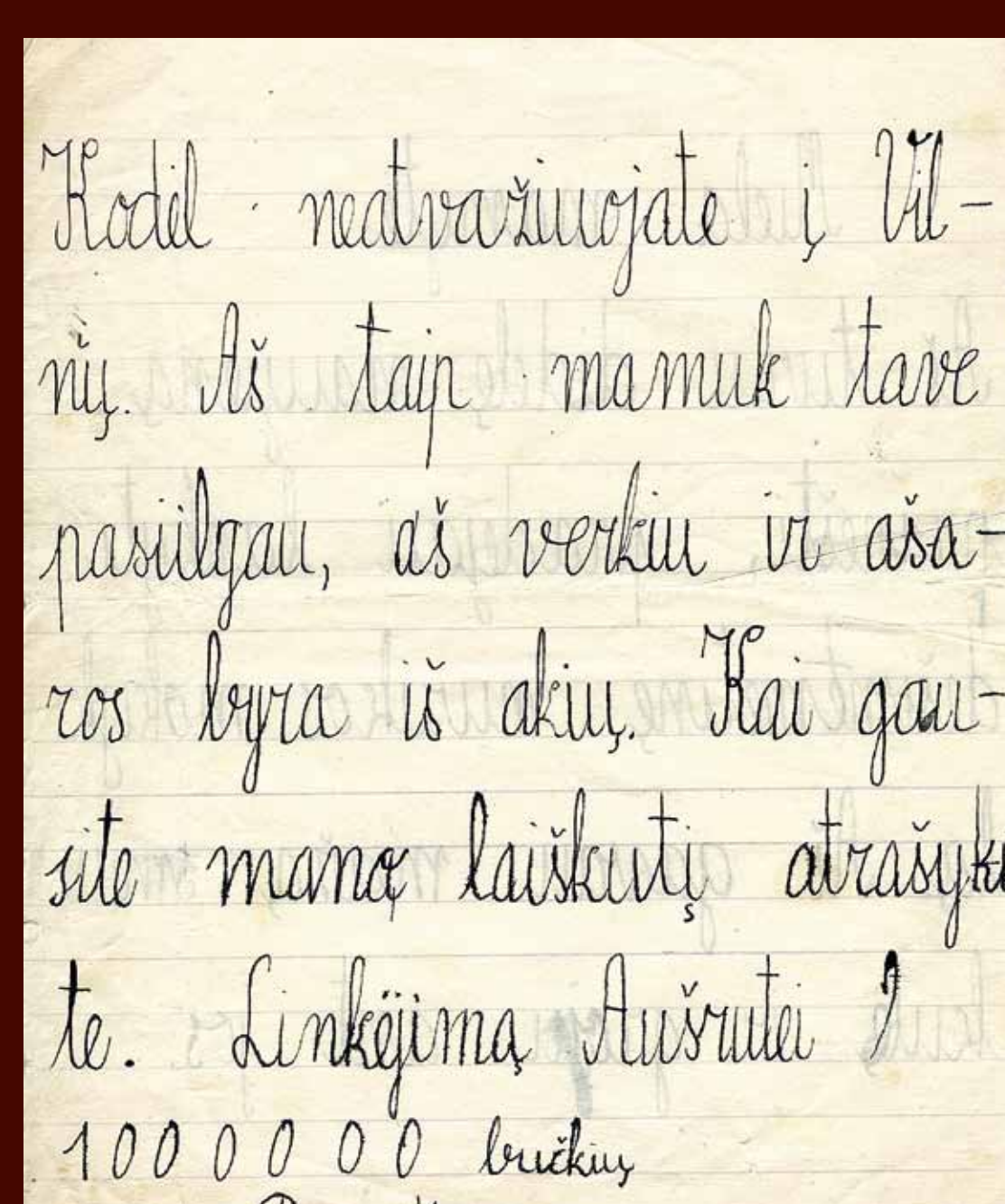
**Danutė Pomerancaitė-Mazurkevich:** I also remembered the words, said by actor Dauguvietienė. She told me that when Petrauskienė, my second mother, would give bread to her children, she would use a thread so each child would get an equal share. She would measure the bread out with a thread and give everyone a piece. They were very kind to me and I never felt I was treated unfairly. On the contrary, everything was done to make me feel good.

When I was in Germany, my mother had adopted her sister's daughter Rūta, already after the war. She had been rescued by village people. Thus, I got another sister.

In fact, I had two mothers all my life and I called them both mother: the one that had given birth to me and the one who had rescued me. And when Jurijus and I wanted to get married I had to get permission from two mothers and two fathers, which was not an easy thing to do.



Danutė Pomerancaitė's letter to Dear Mother Elena Petrauskienė



Danutė Pomerancaitė is learning to play violin



The Pomerancas family from left to right: Danielius Pomerancas, Danutė Pomerancaitė, Rūta Lopianskaitė (Pomerancaitė) and Riva Pomerancienė. Vilnius, around 1950



From left to right: Danutė Pomerancaitė, Elena Petrauskienė, Aušra Petrauskaitė, Vilnius

Elena ŽALINKEVIČAITĖ-PETRAUSKIENĖ and Kipras PETRAUSKAS Awarded the Righteous Among the Nations medal and Certificate of Honour in 1999  
Awarded the *Life Saviour's Crosses* in 1993

Balyš SIMANAVIČIUS  
Awarded the *Life Saviour's Cross* in 1999

*I've left alone with the sleeping baby. My children and the nursemaid heard nothing and slept calmly. Only now I've seen all the danger of this event. I remembered how the notary's family perished in Vilkaviškis. I was sitting and thinking: maybe, this man will bring Germans to us tomorrow? And maybe he even wouldn't wait until tomorrow? Maybe ... There were many "maybes", that I was thinking this night about. Maybe, this is quite another baby, not this, whom we have talked about. Well, this is not important, it's, at least, a baby, an innocent baby. I've read the note that was left, "Her name is Suzi, but call her Danute."*

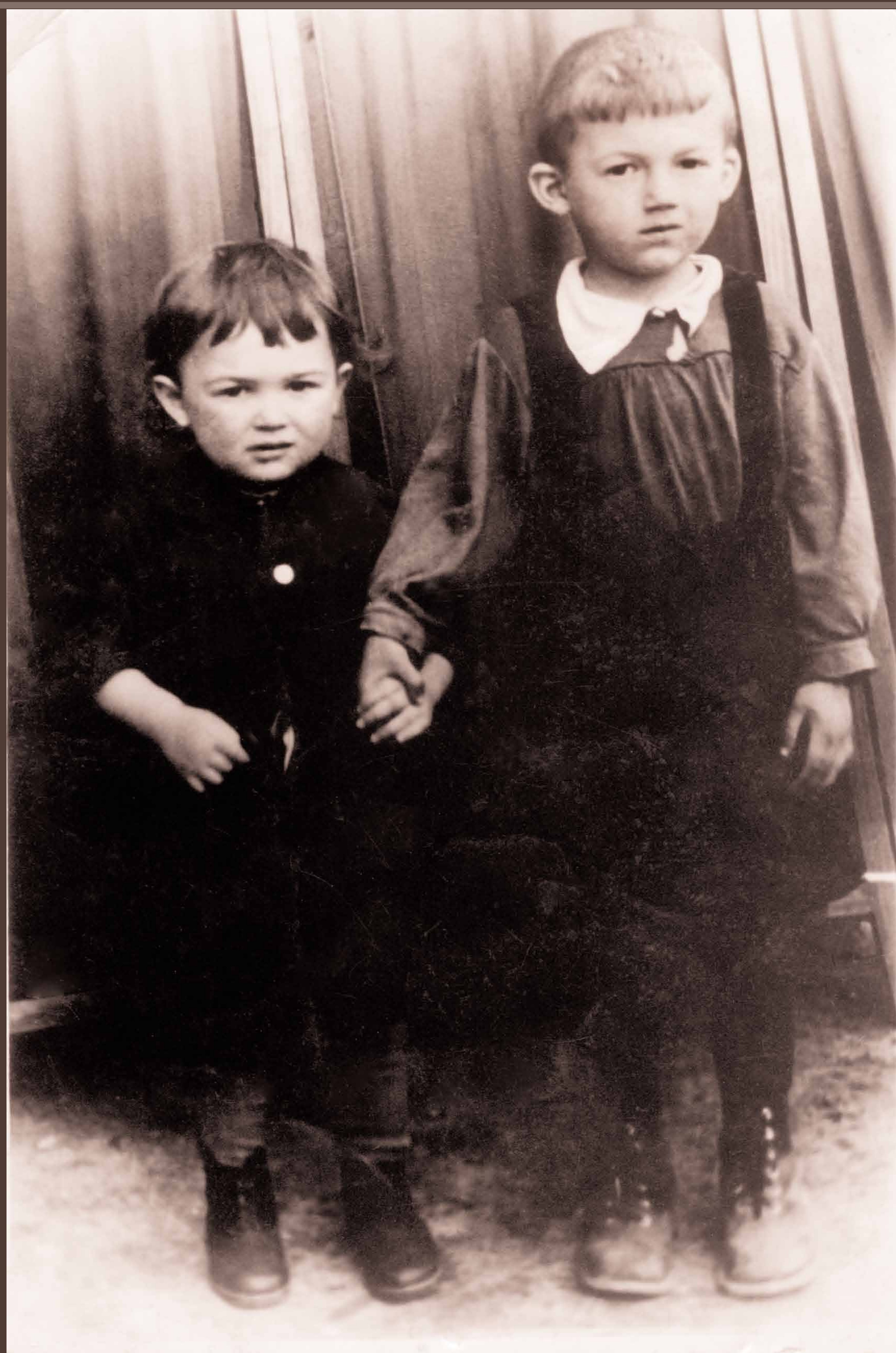
E. Žalinkevičaitė-Petrauskienė



# Sergej Korablikov, 1942

# Ilja Korablikov, 1941

## Vilnius



Sergej Korablikov-Kovarskij (on the left) and Ilja Korablikov, Vilnius, 1945



Sergej and Ilja Korablikov's father Makar Korablikov, Vilnius. Around 1938  
Makar Korablikov was one of the leaders of the Vilnius underground. He was in contact with an anti-Fascist organisation from the ghetto, and commanded fighting groups both in the city and Rūdninkai Forest. He was arrested and killed by the Gestapo in November 1943



Sergej Korablikov's mother Basia Kovarskaja, Vilnius. Around 1936  
Basia Kovarskaja was killed as a group of partisans was withdrawing from encirclement. The exact place of her death is unknown. It is thought that it occurred close to lake Narutis.

**Sergej Korablikov-Kovarskij:** When I was 10, I found out that the Korablikov family – Fetinija and Jevdokija – had rescued me during the war and for 10 years they raised me under difficult conditions. When I found that out, I had to rewrite my whole life story. There were difficult meetings and stories about my mother, about my father Makar Korablikov, the circumstances of their death. I started to feel that I really was a Jew...

Sergej was born in the ghetto in December 1942. His father was a Russian named Makar Korablikov, and his mother was a Jew named Basia Kovarskaja.

Before the war, his father had married a young Jew named Bluma Trockaja. They had a son named Ilja. Makar Korablikov lived with his wife and child on Tyzenhauzų Street in Vilnius until the war. When the war broke out, Bluma stayed in her home, and did not go to the ghetto. But when she saw a column of people being driven out, and realised her parents were in the column, Bluma ran out and hugged her mother and father.

She wasn't allowed to leave the column. They drove everyone to Paneriai and shot them.

Makar's sister, Fetinija Korablikova, took the orphan Iljusha in. In the ghetto, Makar found Bluma's friend Basia Kovarskaja and told her about his wife's death. The two young people were soon attracted to each other and in December 1942 the fruit of their love, Sergej, was born. Leaving the baby in the ghetto was dangerous.

**Sergejus Korablikov-Kovarskij:** Planted in a basket tied to a rope, I was let down from the window of the Jewish hospital to the street where Fetinija Korablikova was waiting to pick me up.

After they had managed to hand me over to the Russian Korablikov family, my mother Basia along with a group of people escaped from the ghetto and joined the partisans. She was subsequently killed in an ambush.

My father Makar Korablikov was arrested in 1943 and shot by the Gestapo.



Fetinija Korablikova



Fetinija Korablikova with rescued children Sergej (on the left) and Ilja, Vilnius, 1945

**Sergej Korablikov-Kovarskij:**  
*My second mother Fetinija Korablikova took me from the ghetto and registered me as her son. During the war, there was a constant threat that someone would spread a word about it. In fact there were moments, when it was said that that is a child of Jews. That was like a kiss of death.*



Former ghetto hospital. Planted in a basket Sergej was let down by a rope through a ghetto hospital window to the street, where Fetinija Korablikova was waiting for him



The Kovarskij family. Standing on the left: Basia Kovarskaja with her brothers Josif, Volf, Rachmil (Rachmil) and his family disappeared during the first days of the war). Sitting: their parents Leah and Zalmen Kovarskij, Švenčionys, around 1938



Basia Kovarskaja with friends in Bernardinai Garden



Basia Kovarskaja (sitting in the front) with friends in the village



In Vilnius before the war: friends on Tauras Hill. Basia Kovarskaja is third from the left

### SEARCHING THE PAST

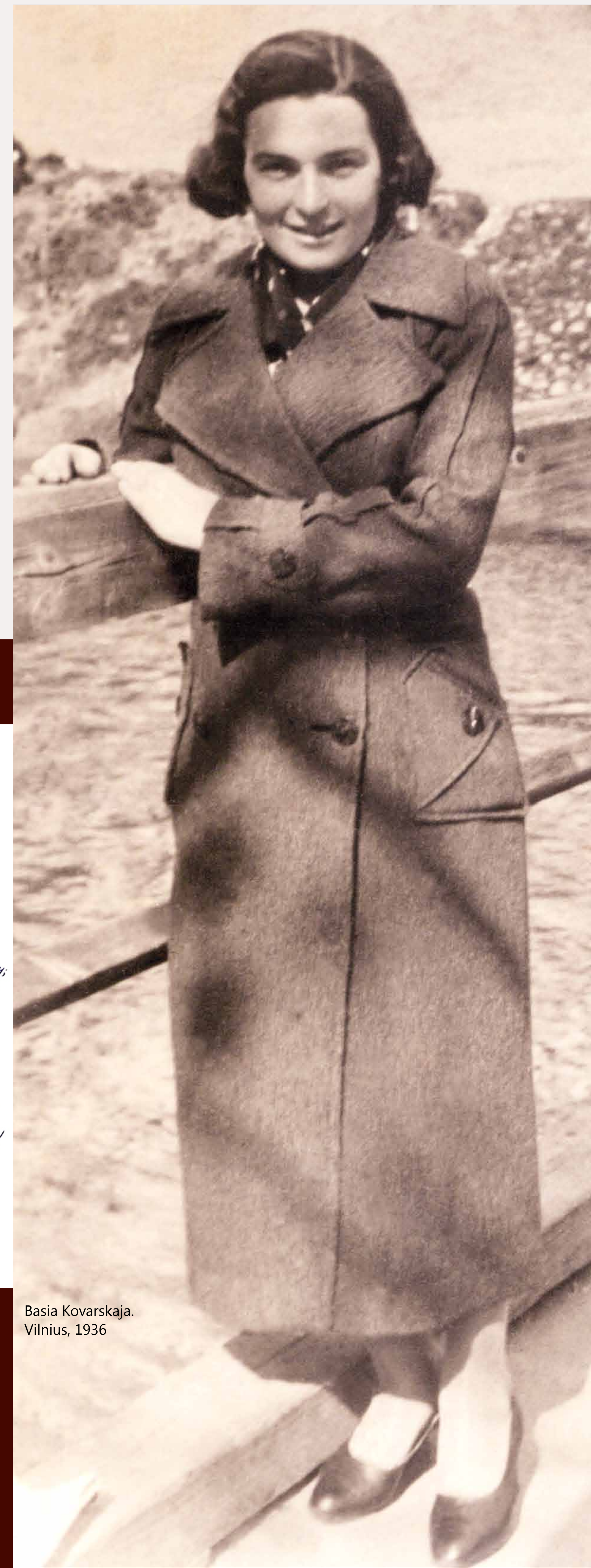
The edge of Vilnius.  
Empty, sandy roads  
Run to Juodasis Šilas,  
To Paneriai...

Quietly and bitterly  
My glance is aiming for the future,  
Bringing the silent justice.

This is our room: the holes in the floor,  
The place where our bed used to stand...  
The oil lamp in the corner is glowing quietly  
Casting the shadow from the copper crucifix.

And myself, suddenly unburdened after so many years,  
Standing silently in front of this shadow  
And remembering the garden, the spring, the blossoms!..  
Two White Birds that are gone,  
Whose love turned darkness into the Light!

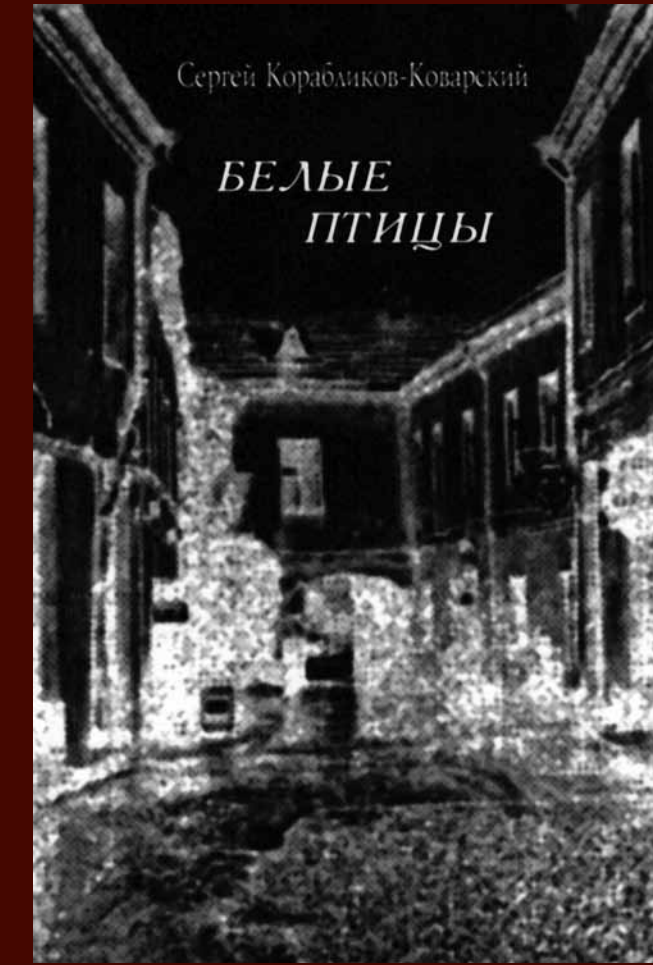
Sergej Korablikov-Kovarskij, Tiberias, Israel



Basia Kovarskaja, Vilnius, 1936



The Korablikov family after the war. Sitting from left to right: Fetinija Korablikova, Sergej's brother Ilja, Sergej's cousin Liuda Korablikova (Ivan's daughter), Sergej, Valentina, the wife of Jevdokija's son Ivan. In the centre of the second row: Jevdokija Korablikova. Standing: Fetinija's husband Pavel Smernecev (left), and Ivan, Jevdokija Korablikova's oldest son. Vilnius, around 1946-1947



Sergej Korablikov is donating a painting  
The Righteous Among the Nations Award Ceremony at the Lithuanian Government Office on 28 April 2014 had a special guest: Sergej Korablikov-Kovarskij, who came from Israel. He presented the students of Vilnius St. Christopher Gymnasium with a painting. The author of the painting is Leonardas Gutauskas, a famous painter and poet. Sergej had this painting with him in all the main endeavours of his life. It depicts a small lane in Vilnius Old Town with a silhouette of a passer-by receding into the horizon. This figure reminds Sergej of an unknown priest – the Saviour – who saw how he was let down on a rope from a window of the Jewish hospital to the street where Fetinija Korablikova was ready to take him. Quite by chance, at that same moment a priest was walking by on the street and saw the baby being let down from the window. The priest blessed the little Sergej and he believes this was a sign that all would end well for him...

Jevdokija KORABLIKOVA  
Fetinija KORABLIKOVA  
Awarded the *Life Saviour's Crosses* in 2002  
  
Awarded the Righteous Among the Nations medal and Certificate of Honour in 2005



Facsimile of the poem "Searching the Past"  
*Трижды Европа  
Знай, Панаeriai. Трясина, песок,  
Пустынный, желтый гул,  
Но изобретены детьми на черной топ  
И Ко Панаeriai...  
Спасения свои, спасения и спасения  
И спасения свои, спасения и спасения  
И спасения свои, спасения и спасения...  
И в, спасения и спасения и спасения  
Спасения и спасения и спасения и спасения  
И спасения и спасения и спасения и спасения...  
Спасения и спасения и спасения и спасения  
Но все спасения и спасения и спасения!*  
С. Корабиков - Коварский  
Телавис

*And remembering the garden, the spring, the blossoms!..  
Two White Birds that are gone,  
Whose love turned darkness into the Light!*



# Hands Bringing Life And Bread



Rut Lacman (Irena Urbonaitė) with her second mother Marija Urbonienė. Rut is 15-16 years old

From *Lopšelis* I was taken by Marija Urbonienė, who is not alive anymore... Of course it was a great joy for me. She did not have her own children and brought me up like her own daughter. She soon realised that I was not a Lithuanian girl because when I was little I spoke Yiddish. We lived in a small town and the neighbours soon started saying that I was "an ikke" – a Jew and that Marija should take me back...

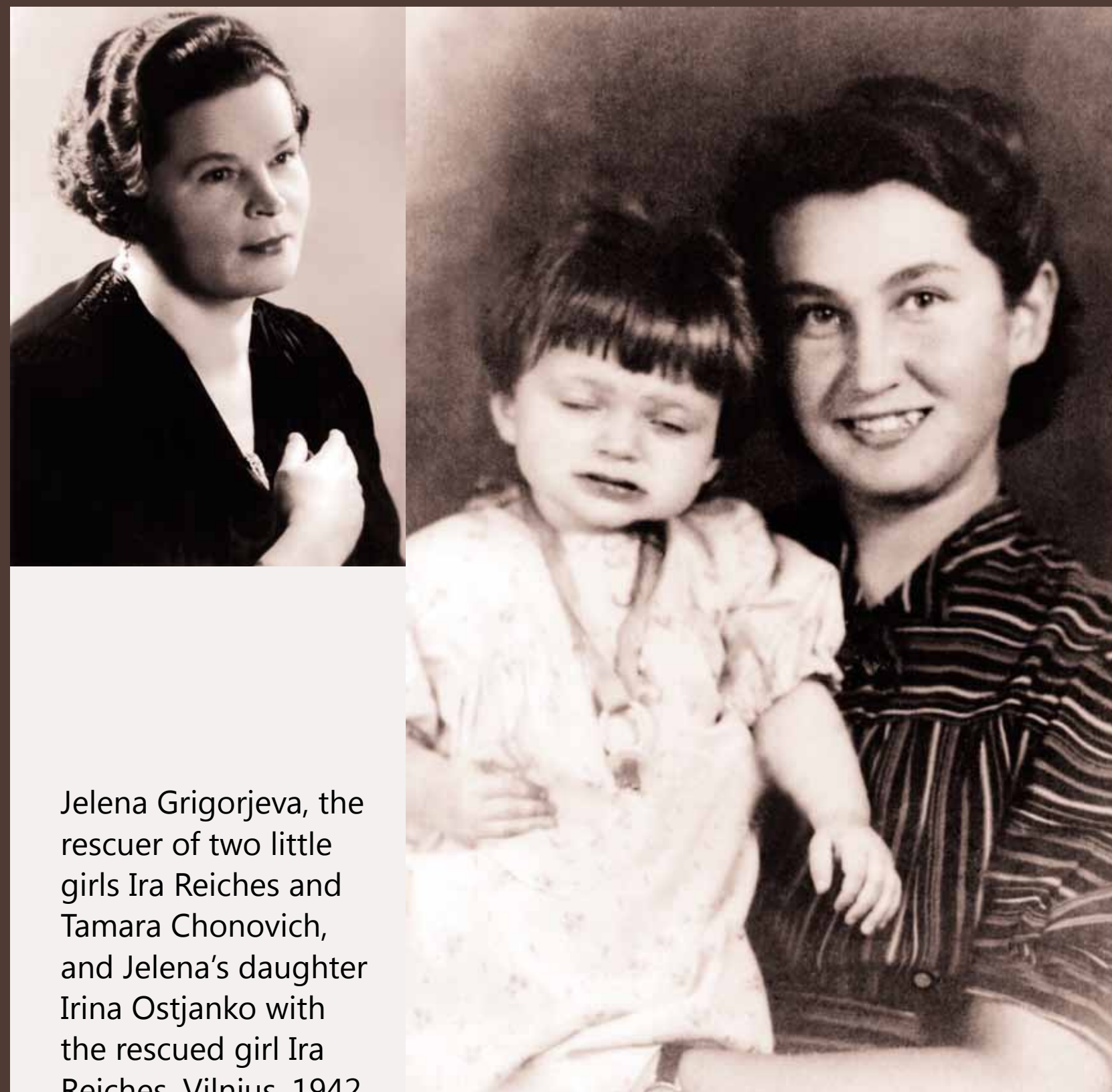
The war was not yet over and she feared for me and for herself. Then we moved to a distant Lithuanian village where nobody knew us. This is how I grew up in their family...

I discovered the true story of my life only 26 years later.

I was a Mother myself...

This incredible woman Marija Urbonienė brought me up, loved me like her own daughter and with her help I returned back to my nation, as she wished only the best for me...

Rut Lacman



Jelena Grigorjeva, the rescuer of two little girls Ira Reiches and Tamara Chonovich, and Jelena's daughter Irina Ostjanko with the rescued girl Ira Reiches. Vilnius, 1942

The first time I saw my mother was in 1957, when she received permission to visit me, and in 1961 I left for Israel. I had to leave my "Russian mom" Jelena Stepanovna, her daughter Irina, and that was not easy to do. They had raised me, and I graduated from school while living with them, and started to study at the institute. I was loved and pampered the whole time. It's hard to think, what would have happened to me if we had not met those noble-hearted brave people, who did not fear risking their lives for two little girls they didn't even know.

Ira Reiches-Roth

I remember her care, which she gave to everyone visiting her whether they were a Jew, deaf mute, a Russian or a German. Full of love and dignity, she risked her life for others. She was an extraordinary woman, who lived in extraordinary times and managed to overcome the horrors and create a space for kindness and compassion. I could listen to her play the piano and learn to dance and know there would always be a kiss and a hug... I felt very special to her as she was to me. Now, I understand the risks she took and realise the strength of her faith. For a long time I couldn't do that.

Rosian Bagrianskytė-Zerner



Rosian Bagrianskytė and Lidija Golubovienė in the war period



Antanina Žemeckienė and Rozeta during the war

The doctor at Ukmergė hospital helped me to survive. When my mother was gone, he gave me over to a Lithuanian nurse of the hospital, Antanina Žemeckienė. She agreed to take me under her care and I stayed with her till the end of the war.

Rozeta Ramonienė

Ichokas Meras

## We cannot forget

Like a prayer I utter the last names of those people, who during the years of the Fascist occupation hid and saved a few Jewish children, among them me, in Kelmė and the surrounding area: Bronė Dainauskienė and Juozas Dainauskas, Michalina Le-gantienė, Adomas Urbelis and Petronėlė Urbelienė-Unikauskienė, Šalkauskai, Stasė Damanskaitė, Stefa Kulevičiūtė, Elena Kaušaitė and her sisters, Konstancija Norkaitė, Butkus family, Urbelis family, Aleksandra Grišaitė, Žukauskas family, Damanskas family, Šimulis family and many others, whose names I do not know.

Like a prayer I utter the names of those people, known and unknown, at one time seen or unseen, who, despite the horrible terror, saved the doomed to death, in all of Lithuania, in cities and towns, in villages and smaller dwellings.

Like a prayer I utter the names of those people who offered the hand of help and friendship to those who were subjected to physical and spiritual destruction in different European countries, overtaken by the brown plague.

We have not forgotten and we shall never forget. Not we, not others. Not just from sheer gratitude or contentment gained by performing a noble humane duty. For the sake of responsibility, too. History remains history. No one has the licence to tear its pages at will, drenched in tears and blood, branded with suffering and self-sacrifice, no one has such a right and such power.

From the article "On Heroism" *Unarmed Fighters (Ir be ginklo kariai)*. Ed. Sofija Birnikienė – Vilnius, Mintis, 1967

Until my second mother Stasė and aunt Bronė were alive, we kept close contact. Stasė did not have any children except me and aunt Bronė's children Genutė, Teresa and Jarikas are like my sisters and brother.

Stasė kept two letters written by my grandmother Rosalia Trovberg from the ghetto. You can only imagine what I feel reading them...

Joel Trovberg

Stasė Vaitkaitytė with Joel Trovberg, born on October 20, 1940. The picture was taken on 19 May 1944. The photo was later delivered to Joel's grandmother Rosalia in the ghetto.



During the entire horrible time my friends and guardians were not only Vincas Valionis and Teofilė Valionienė, but also their children Vincentas and Aleksandra. Little Vincas turned 10 in April 1944, and was going to school, and probably loved me more than his little sister. He protected me, took compassion on me, told me fairy tales and promised to not only rescue me, but also my parents. Unfortunately, that was a duty too difficult for children.

Judita Pacaitė-Mackevičienė

The Stanionis couple had no children of their own. They had me baptized and gave me a new name of Lily Stanionytė and treated me like their own daughter. We went to Church regularly and I was proudly wearing a cross. Zosia Stanionienė was afraid that they could betray me and she realized that it wasn't safe for me to stay in Kaunas, so she decided to take me to her mother in Žemaitija, a Western part of Lithuania.

Zosia risked her life hiding a Jewish child and running from town to town from village to village to keep away from persecution and from the front line. We were in constant danger of death, from outside as well as from inside the family.

Rona Rozental Zinger



Genutė returned after some time to Kovno, leaving me behind for another year with her parents and three of her sisters. Genutė's parents cared for me. I felt that they treated me even better than their grandchildren. I regarded them as my own grandparents. They were poor, decent, hardworking farmers, who lived a simple life, mostly on bread, potatoes and porridge, which I liked. We had apples from our trees, and mushrooms, blueberries and wild strawberries from the nearby woods. For me, there was also always a glass of fresh milk and occasionally an egg. We had a dog – Princas, whom I became very attached to. I felt I was part of the family!

Katja Segalson, Radžiūnai village, Ukmergė District, 1944



Bronislava and Adomas Gecevičius with their daughters. From left to right: Ligija, Vitalija, Teklytė (Tikva), Oak Park, Kaunas, around 1944

### Tikva's (Teklytė's) letter to Bronė and Adomas Gecevičius

I hope that this letter reaches you and finds you well. First, let me say who I am. My name is Tikva, and I was that little girl whom you had taken from the Kaunas Ghetto in May 1943. I remember well living at your home, however I have only indistinct memories of your faces. I often recollect an image of your house, how I used to play with two little girls. For a series of years I kept thinking of how you were doing and that it would be a great pleasure to get some news or a letter from you. My aunt told me the story of how you risked your lives by taking me in your home. Now, when I am grown up, I understand your self-sacrifice and marvel at your kindness. How can one repay for saving one's life? It's a great deed. There are no words to express my feelings. The words are powerless here. I just want to tell you that I have been thinking of you for years.

Tikva Chlomovich-Jeral



Marija Bakšienė and Kazimieras Bakša with Rožytė in the summer of 1944 in Kaunas

Marija Bakšienė, Mamytė (Mommy) as I called her, often travelled to remote villages to exchange things for food. Otherwise the family would have died of hunger. Each time when she would go, she would bring a little bit of honey, just for the child, and bread and eggs, and flour, and grain for everyone. After each long journey by foot (she did not have any form of transport), she would be bent over from the heavy bag on her back. She could not straighten her back for a long time, and I would ask her, "Why are you walking so ugly, Mamytė?"

Roza Lamdanskytė-Riaikenen

Nurse Jadvyga Stančiauskaitė-Liepinaitenė with the children she raised. *Lopšelis* orphanage in Kaunas. Around 1943–1944

### Jadvyga Stančiauskaitė-Liepinaitenė, who worked in *Lopšelis* starting with 1943, remembers:

...There was an order not to lock any of the doors during the night – usually they were locked. The children who were brought had their hair cut and their heads treated with potassium permanganate. The boys were kept separately from the girls. The Gestapo used to come to check on *Lopšelis* twice or three times a week in the middle of the night and we were threatened all the time that if they had found at least one Jewish child, we would have faced death...





# Whosoever saves a single life, saves an entire universe



Ona Šimaite (1894–1970)

*Even the smallest person can do a big job*

Ona Šimaite

From the very first days of the Vilnius Ghetto, she started helping the ghetto prisoners. Ona delivered mail back and forth, obtained forged passports, hid escapees, looked for homes where Jewish children would survive and risked her life bringing weapons and ammunitions to the ghetto. When leaving the ghetto, she would take with her valuable archive material: documents, manuscripts, rare books.

Ona was arrested at work in the university library on 28 April 1944. The German occupational authorities sentenced her to death. Vilnius university professors and staff managed to bribe German officials to change the sentence to imprisonment at a concentration camp. Ona first was deported to Dachau then to a concentration camp in the occupied France. After four months of hard labor loading train cars, seriously sick, Ona Šimaite was freed by the Allied forces on 10 September 1944.

*I once saw swarms of people with yellow patches on their backs walking one after another. Men, women, children. Like shadows, barely moving, pale and exhausted. They were walking and falling right there on the ground. "Why am I not doing something? Why am I not helping them?" the thought had been nagging from that moment on. "I have to save at least one person from death!"*

Juozas Stakauskas



Juozas Stakauskas (1900–1972)



Marija Mikulska (1903–1994)



Vladas Žemaitis (1900–1980)

In the premises of the state archive at the former Benedictine monastery on Šv. Ignoto Street 5, Father Juozas Stakauskas, teacher Vladas Žemaitis, and sister Marija Mikulska (sister Benedikta) hid 12 Jews from the Vilnius Ghetto and rescued them from death.

When the Nazis occupied Vilnius, in this archive they accumulated books and different documents seized from other conquered cities.

A well-concealed place for hiding people was equipped there. After the liquidation of the Vilnius Ghetto the following people found sanctuary there for almost a year: doctor Libo and his wife Vera and daughter Liuba, Grigorij and Leah (Irena) Jaszunski, 10-year-old Samuel Bak and his mother Mita Bak, Jakov Jaffe and his wife Sofia and sister Fira, and Miriam Rolnikaitė (later Lisauskienė).

*Revive belief in a human being*



Stanislava Ruzgienė (1918–2005)



Jonas Ruzgys (1904–1998)

The writer Jonas Ruzgys approached the gates of the Vilnius Ghetto in his usual courageous manner in order that his acquaintance, the wife of his former pre-war co-worker Dr Aizenberg, would *regain belief in a human being*. Jonas and Stasė Ruzgys, at great risk, helped first Aizenbergs' daughter Rita and then her mother Lisa to secretly leave the ghetto and hid them both in their apartment in Žvėrynas. Mother and daughter spent the rest of the occupation hiding in the small apartment of the Ruzgys family. The Ruzgys managed to save not only Lisa Aizenberg and her daughter, but also other people who escaped from the Vilnius Ghetto. Stasė and Jonas hid some people with their friends and acquaintances. Marija Petuchauskienė and her son Markas Petuchauskas and Rebeka and Fania Feldmanaitė were among those rescued by Stasė and Jonas.

*Maria Fedeka asked the Gestapo agent if he would be able to hug his own child if his hands were stained with other children's blood...*



Maria Fedeka and Dala Smilg, 1944 or 1945. The girl with her parents left for Brazil in 1946

Maria Fedeka and her husband Stanislaw were known for their strong opposition to anti-Semitic practices in pre-war Vilnius.

Everybody who needed help knew the address of Maria Fedeka. Maria always acted without the support of any organisation. As her son Ziemowit recalls, "...During the occupation my mother waged war, a private one, against the Gestapo..."

The main problem was to find resources to rescue the Jews. Maria's daughter Barbara remembers how her mother used to sell things from their home in the market.

Not a single night went by without a Jew being sheltered under the roof of Maria Fedeka and her husband. Maria Fedeka used to bribe the employees of the Passport Office in order to get false "authentic" documents for people who were under threat. Many of them pronounce the name of Mrs Maria with respect.

*Juozas Rutkauskas arranged Christian documents for many Jews. He saved more than a 100 Jewish lives...*

Ona Šimaite



Juozas Rutkauskas (1904–1944)

During the war, a Lithuanian official Juozas Rutkauskas worked at Vilnius District Rudamina Passport Office. Rutkauskas demonstrated exceptional energy and resourcefulness in rescuing Jews. After the liquidation of the Vilnius Ghetto, some Jews were constantly hiding at Juozas Rutkauskas' home. Rutkauskas used his daughter's birth certificate to arrange a passport for a Jewish girl Jeanne Ran in the name of Margarita Rutkauskaitė and found her a job as a translator in one of the German occupation offices in Minsk. In 1944, Juozas Rutkauskas was arrested and murdered by the Gestapo. Most of the people provided with false documents by Rutkauskas went to Germany as workers from the East and thus survived. After the war, Jeanne Ran published her recollections about the Holocaust years and dedicated many warm words to Juozas Rutkauskas.

## Rescuers of Jews: Righteous Among the Nations

After the restoration of Lithuania's independence, every year on 23 September on Remembrance Day for Jewish Genocide Victims, the President of Lithuania recognises citizens who saved Jewish lives in Lithuania during the Holocaust and passed the most severe test of their humanity, by awarding them the *Life Saviour's Cross*. The majority of these modest men and women, who usually did not even regard their actions as heroic deeds but only simple humanity, have not lived to accept the honour but were recognised posthumously. Their decision to save the cruelly persecuted innocent people at a time when hatred and calumny were propagated and Jews were being slaughtered, required great bravery, selflessness and spiritual strength. The rescuers had to maintain secrecy in preparing hiding places for the condemned, and had to share their food rations. They had to be careful not to mention the people they

were hiding to their relatives, friends and closest neighbours because the penalty for saving Jews was death. Such a decision often needed the agreement and acceptance of risk by all members of the rescuer's family. The persons being hidden and their rescuers had to live in continuous fear for many weeks, months and even the full duration of the war.

Because of this, even after the passage of so many years, the humane and brave actions of the rescuers have not been forgotten in Israel and Lithuania.

The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority Yad Vashem (in Hebrew meaning *memory* and *name*) calls those rescuers recognised by Yad Vashem Righteous Among the Nations, and awards them medals with the inscription: "*Whosoever saves a single life, saves an entire universe*". In Lithuania the rescuers of Jews are awarded the *Life Saviour's Cross*.



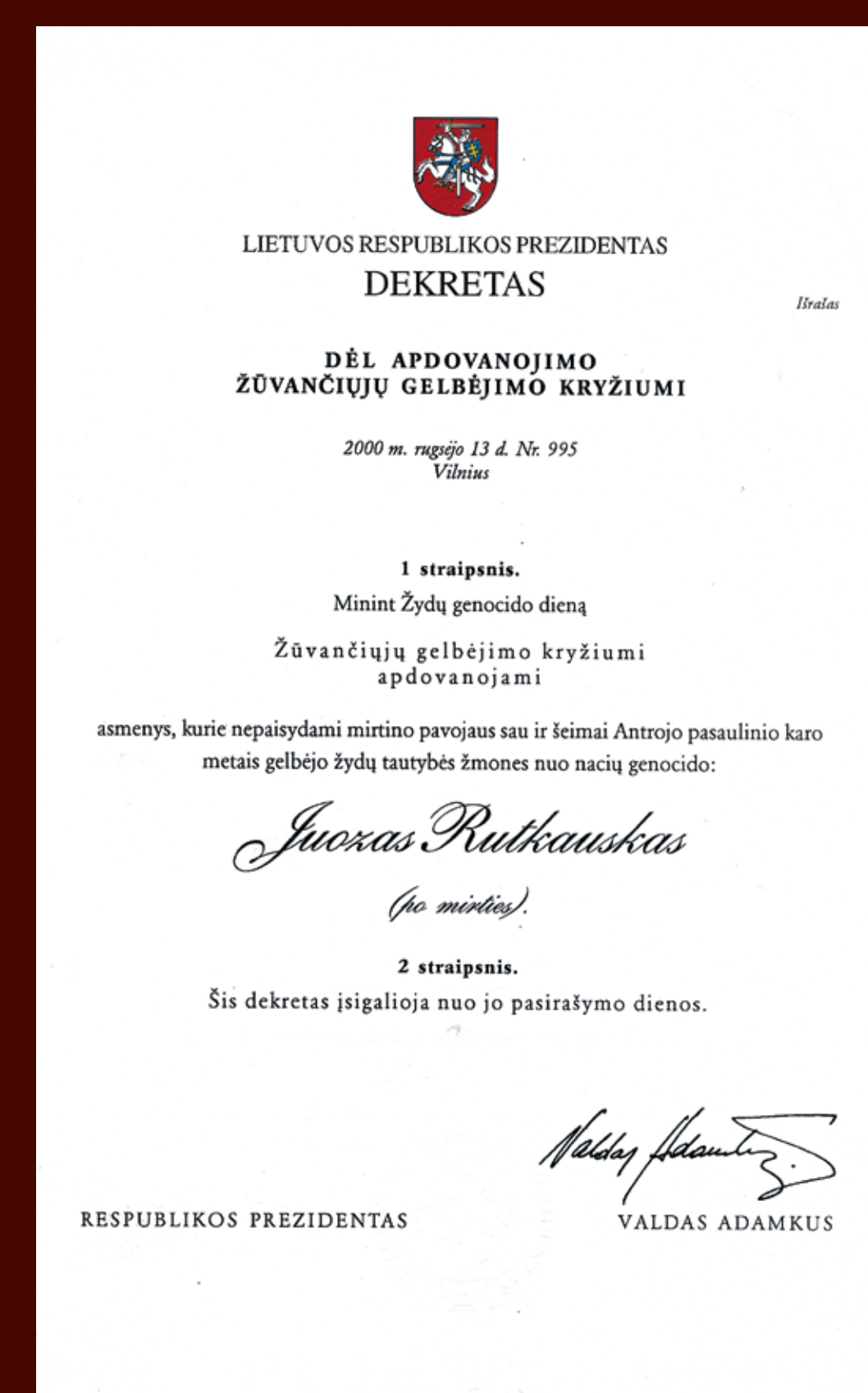
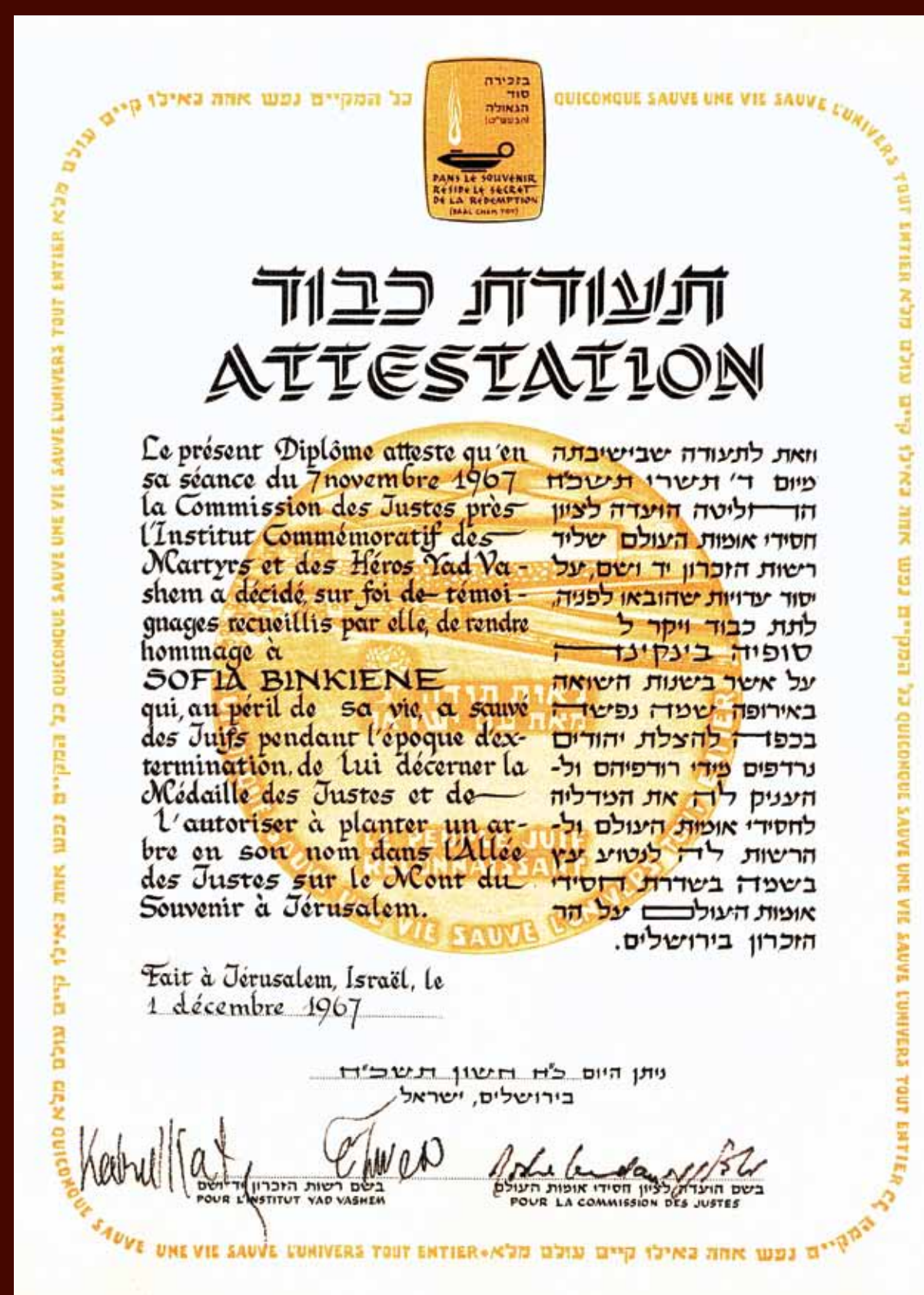
Yad Vashem medal and Certificate of Honour

The recognised rescuers of Jews, the Righteous Among the Nations, are awarded Yad Vashem medals and certificates of honour with the inscription: "*Whosoever saves a single life, saves an entire universe*". According to Yad Vashem data of November 2014, as many as 878 Lithuanian citizens had been recognised as the Righteous Among the Nations and with time new names appear on the list...



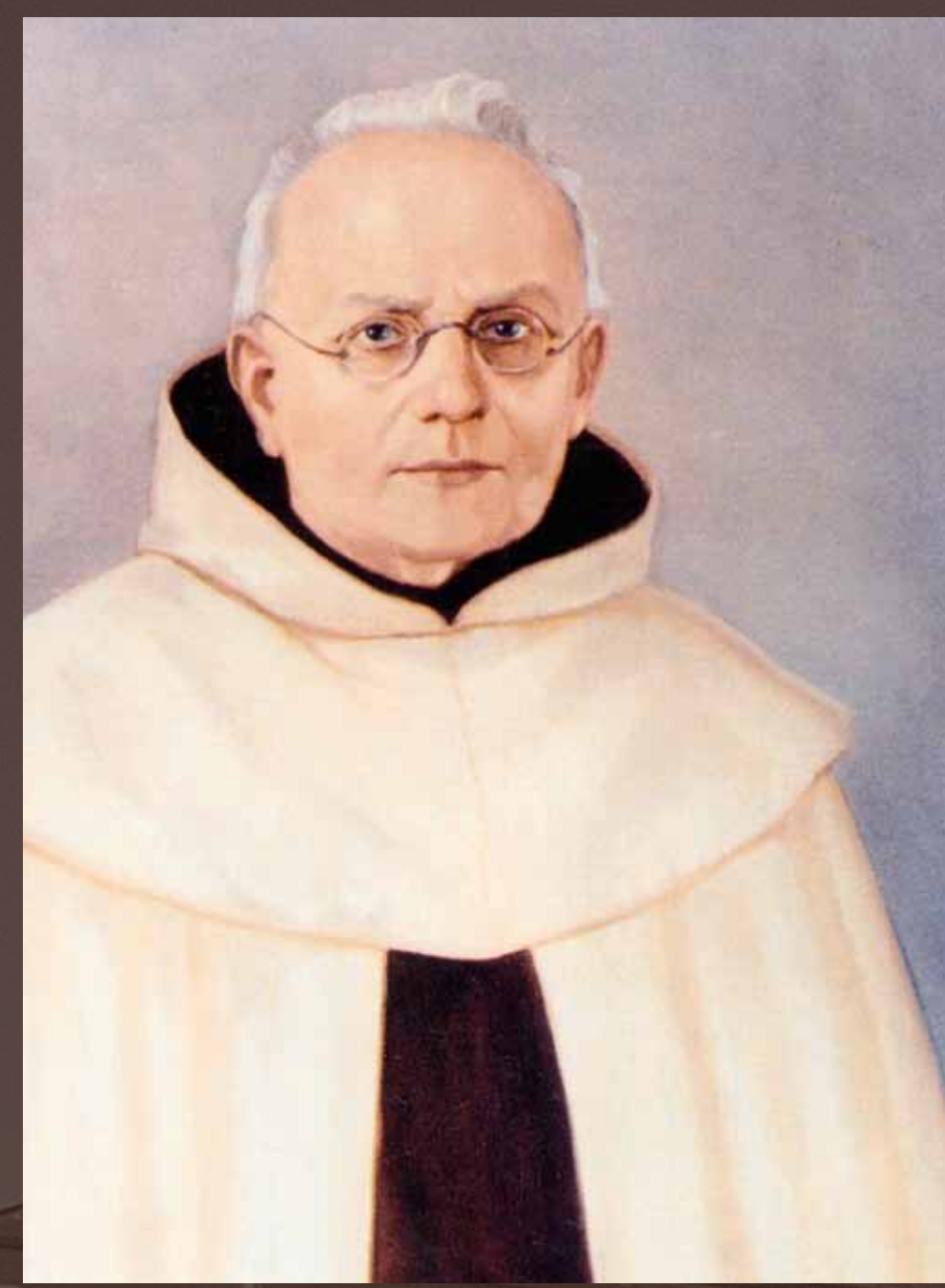
Life Saviour's Cross

Every year on 23 September the President of the Republic of Lithuania awards the *Life Saviour's Cross* to the rescuers of Jews on the Day of Remembrance of the Victims of the Genocide of Lithuania's Jews. During the period of 1992–2014, according to recommendations of the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum, 1297 rescuers of Jews were awarded the *Life Saviour's Cross* for saving Jews during the Holocaust in Lithuania.



*Then I, persecuted fugitive of the ghetto with no rights, became friends with parish priest Andrzej Gdowski, who hid me in the times of danger to the risk to his life.*

Hermann Adler



Andrzej Gdowski (1871–1948)

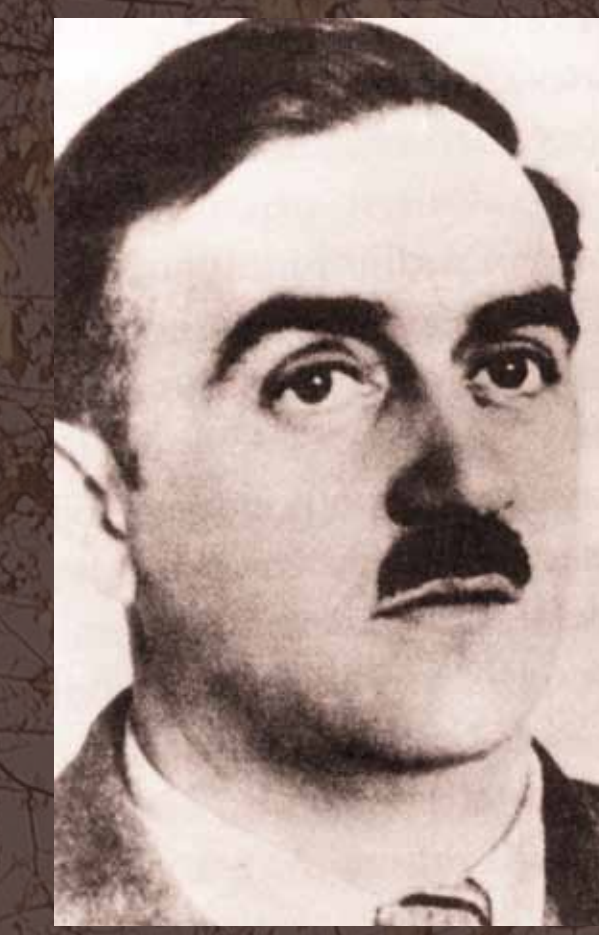
Andrzej Gdowski, who was the parish priest of St. Theresa's Church and the Chapel of the Gates of Dawn and the prior of the Monastery of the Discalced Carmelites during the war, used to hide Jews in the grounds of the monastery and provide them with documents. In the course of this very risky activity, the parish priest often came into contact with Wehrmacht Feldwebel Anton Schmidt. Andrzej Gdowski arranged passports for Hermann Adler, a refugee from Germany, and his wife Anita Distler, a vocalist of the Vienna Opera and a refugee from Austria. These documents allowed

them in 1942 to leave Lithuania. In 1942, Andrzej Gdowski was arrested and imprisoned, together with other Carmelite brothers, in atrocious conditions in Lukiškės Prison. Later, the detainees were transferred to Panevėžiukas Concentration Camp near Babtai and then moved to Šaltupis, where they met liberation. After the war the premises of the Monastery of the Discalced Carmelites were nationalised and the monastery moved to a private apartment. Andrzej Gdowski died in 1948 in Vilnius and is buried in Rasos Cemetery.

*Ich habe ja nur Menschen gerettet... (I merely rescued people...)*

From Schmidt's parting letter to his wife and his daughter

Born in Vienna, Anton Schmid was drafted to the German army after the annexation of Austria by the Reich. In June 1941, Feldwebel Schmid was appointed the head of the Vilnius distribution station at the railway. He would register German soldiers that had fallen behind their units and send them back to the frontlines. Moreover, Schmid was in charge of the workshops where uniforms were made and machinery fixed. Anton Schmid would issue yellow *Scheins* (work permits) for the sick and the weak. Sometimes he even managed to get an "expert" from the Lukiškės prison. Feldwebel Anton Schmid would transport the Vilnius Ghetto prisoners to other cities, where Jew extermination actions had not yet started. About 300 people



Anton Schmid (1900–1942)

were taken from the Vilnius Ghetto in an official truck and employed in Voronov and Bialystok factories. Writer Hermann Adler with his wife, who had escaped from the ghetto, lived in Schmidt's apartment, which was located in the same building as the distribution station, Geležinkelio St. 15, Vilnius. Members of the ghetto resistance organisation and contact persons between Vilnius and Warsaw ghettos used to meet in the same place.

In January 1942, Anton Schmid was arrested. Court-martial pronounced the sentence on February 25. Anton Schmid was to be shot for treason of the Reich by helping the Jews.

He was executed on 13 April 1942 in Vilnius.





# Unarmed fighters...

Although I tried to collect as much material as possible about many people, new information is far from being complete. I keep learning about new "unarmed fighters", operating in different places of the Republic. And there are so many who remain and will remain unknown: some of them died (both saviours and those who were saved) and some moved abroad. Many of them have no opportunity to speak about themselves, while others simply think that they performed their human duty.

Words by Sofija Binkienė, *Righteous Among the Nations*, the compiler of the book *Unarmed Fighters*, 1967

*She is a victim because she lost her husband and daughter. But at the same time she is a courageous activist who refuses to remain a victim and organises resistance...*

Reinhard Kaiser

During the pogroms in Kaunas in June 1941, Helene's husband Max Holzman was lost forever. The elder daughter of the Holzmanns, 19-year-old Marie was arrested, imprisoned and later shot in the 9th Fort. After this dreadful loss, Helene managed to overcome her despair and decided to save her younger daughter Margarete and as many people as she could, concentrating on the children from the Kaunas Ghetto. Fruma Vitkinaitė-Kučinskienė tied her fate with Helene Holzman and her daughter Margarete forever. When it became clear that Fruma's parents and her brother had perished during the liquidation of the Kaunas Ghetto, Helene Holzman adopted Fruma and surrounded her with love and kindness. The museum's documentary *Vilties etudās (Etude of Hope)* is dedicated to the memory of Helene Holzman.



Helene Czapski-Holzman. 1911

*Their eyes would tell me, "There can be no talk of risk when a human being wants to be a human being!"*

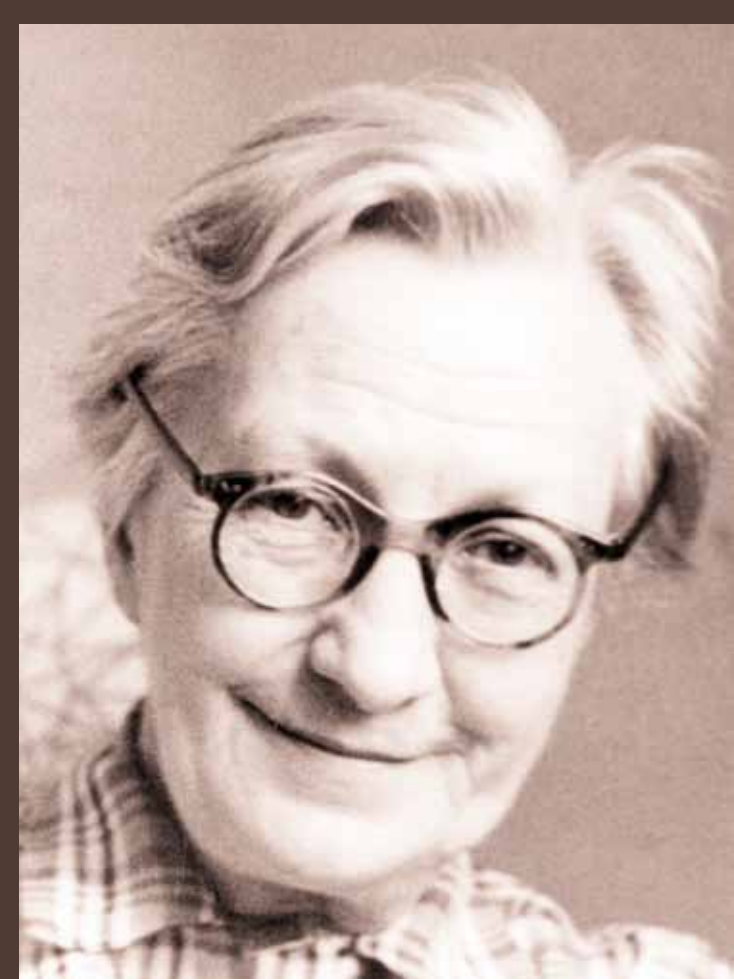
Rivka Osherovich



Natalija Fugalevičiūtė (1905-1985)



Lidija Golubovienė (1896-1989)



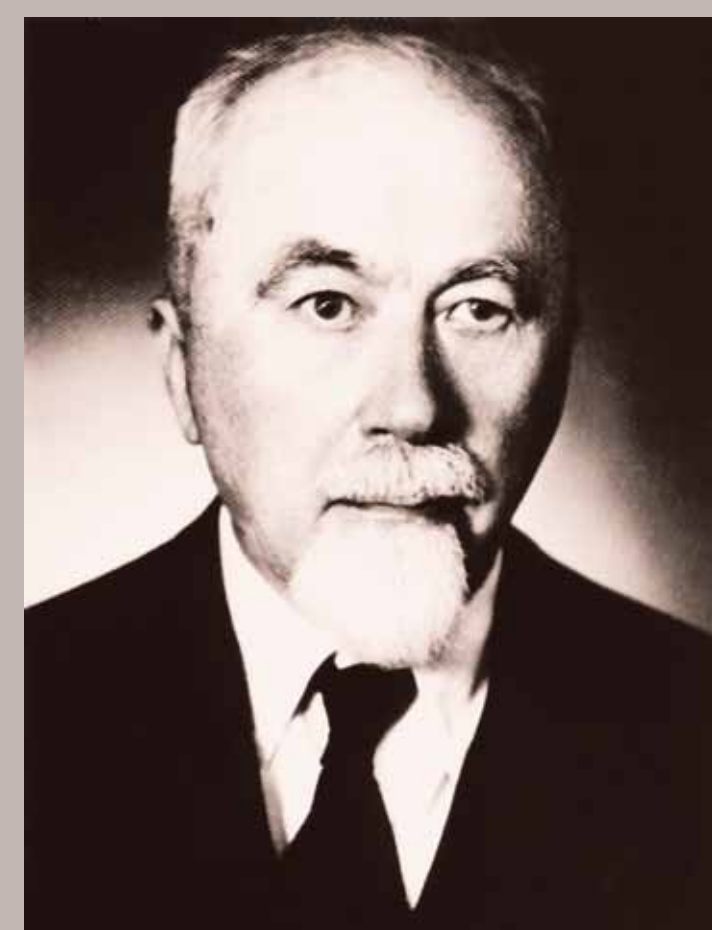
Natalija Jegorova (1899-1989)

Natalija Fugalevičiūtė lived with her close friend Natalija Jegorova in Kaunas in a small wooden house. They both came to the aid of all in need, irrespective of their religion or origin. During the war at least a dozen ghetto inmates found periodical shelter with these noble women. Among them were Helene and Margarete Holzman,

Rivka Shmukler (later Osherovich), Gerta Bagriansky, Beba Shatenstein-Taborisky, Roza Stender, Fruma Vitkin (later, Kučinskienė), six-year-old Dvora Biron and others. Natalija Fugalevičiūtė's older sister Lidija Golubovienė's home in Kulautuva became a shelter for persecuted Jews, Russian refugees and young orphans.

*No one in our family asked why we had to help those unfortunate people. It had to be done and that was it.*

Liūda Mažylytė-Rasteikiene



Pranas Mažylys (1885-1966)

Pranas Mažylys, medical doctor, lived with his wife Antanina and their teenaged children, Jonas and Liūda, in a large apartment on Putvinskio Street in Kaunas. The apartment was situated close to the gynaecology and obstetrics clinic established by Mažylys in 1935. An engineer, Isaak Judelevich, was the first to be hidden by the Mažylys family during the first days of the German occupation. At the beginning of 1943, seven-year-old Lilija Levintoff, the daughter of the Mažylys' pre-war tenants, came to live with them. In the spring of 1944, hospital personnel found a new-born at the front door. The boy had been born in the ghetto and dropped off at the hospital with the professor's consent. The rescued baby boy's real name was Grisha Teper. The survivors, their families and their friends treated Professor Mažylys with great respect and the help extended by him was never forgotten.

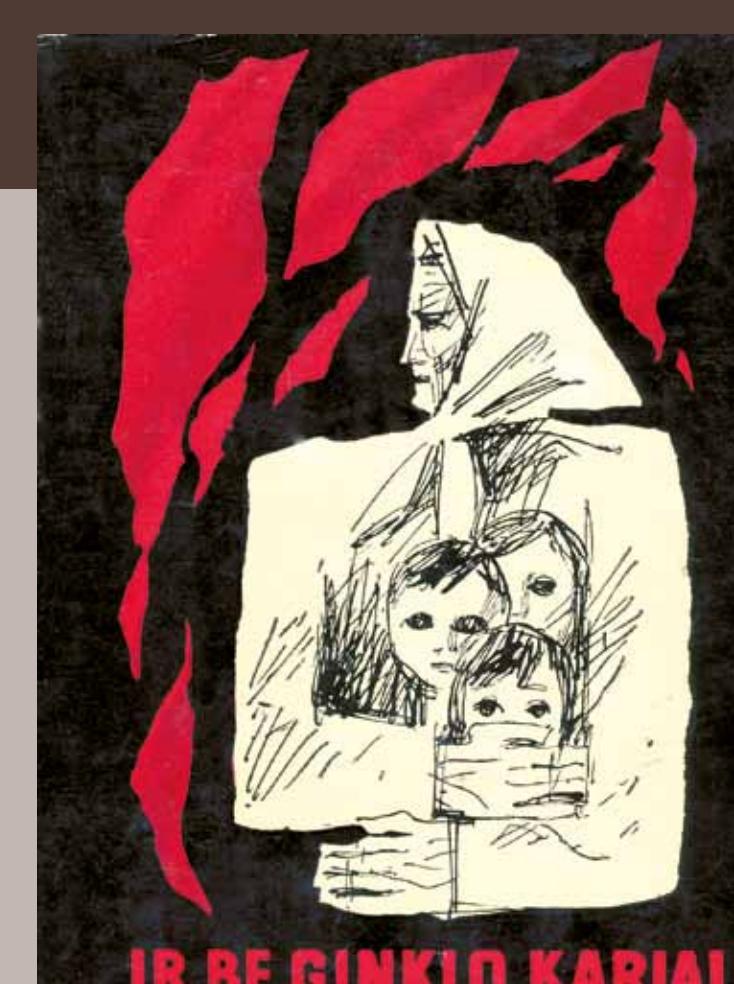
Doctor Elena Buivydaitė-Kutorgienė considered it her duty to save people, saying that a doctor not only has to provide medical aid, but also to love people as they are. During the Nazi occupation, this noble humanitarian helped all persecuted people, including Jews and prisoners of war. She became one of the most active masterminds behind the saving of Jews in the city of Kaunas. Today, it is impossible to say how many lives were saved by Elena Kutorgienė. Her courage and resourcefulness were something extraordinary. Throughout the war Elena Kutorgienė's son Viktoras, also a doctor, was an active member of the Kaunas underground and once even was captured by the Gestapo. However, despite the dangers he continued with his humanitarian activities.



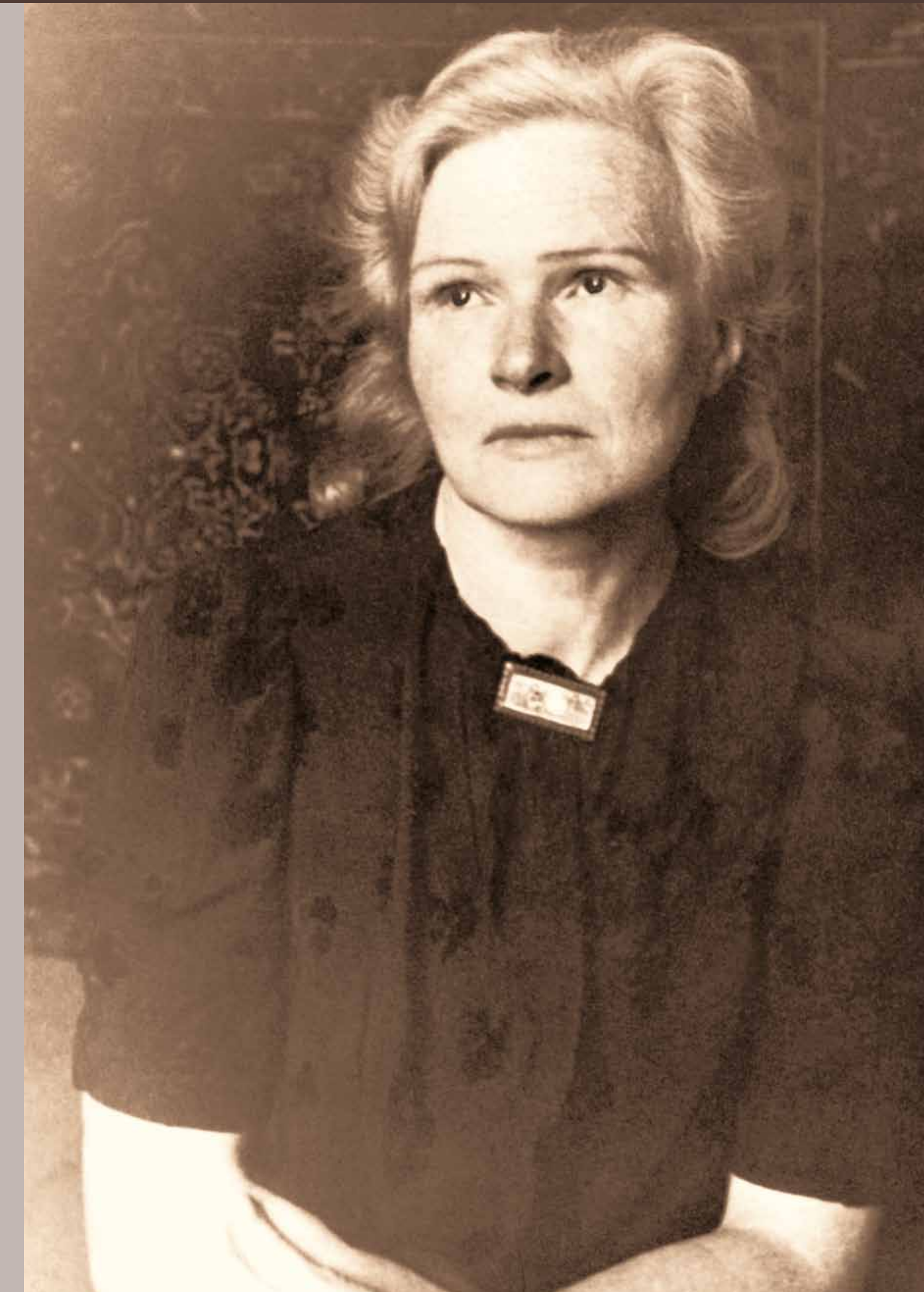
Elena Kutorgienė (1888-1963)



Viktoras Kutorga (1920-1991)



From the very first days of the German occupation in Lithuania, when the persecution and extermination of Lithuanian Jews started, Sofija Binkienė and her daughters Lilijana and Irena, Kazys Binkis' children Gerardas and Eleonora, and Lilijana's husband Vladas Varčikas became actively involved in rescuing Jews. The Binkis house became the main address for the Jews of Kaunas. Plans for escape from the ghetto and forged documents were made at the Binkis home. Sofija stayed in contact with other women, rescuers of Jews, for the purpose of establishing contact with ghetto inmates and encouraging them to flee and go into hiding. Gita Judelevich, Raja Judelevich, Pesia Melamed, Mironas Ginkas, Fruma Mania Ginkiene, Kama Ginkas, Sonia Ginkaite-Shabadiene, Beba Shatenstein-Taborisky, Gutia Shmukler, Roza Stender, Adina Segal, Samuel Segal and many others found refuge with the Binkis family. Seven members of this family have been acknowledged as Righteous Among the Nations.



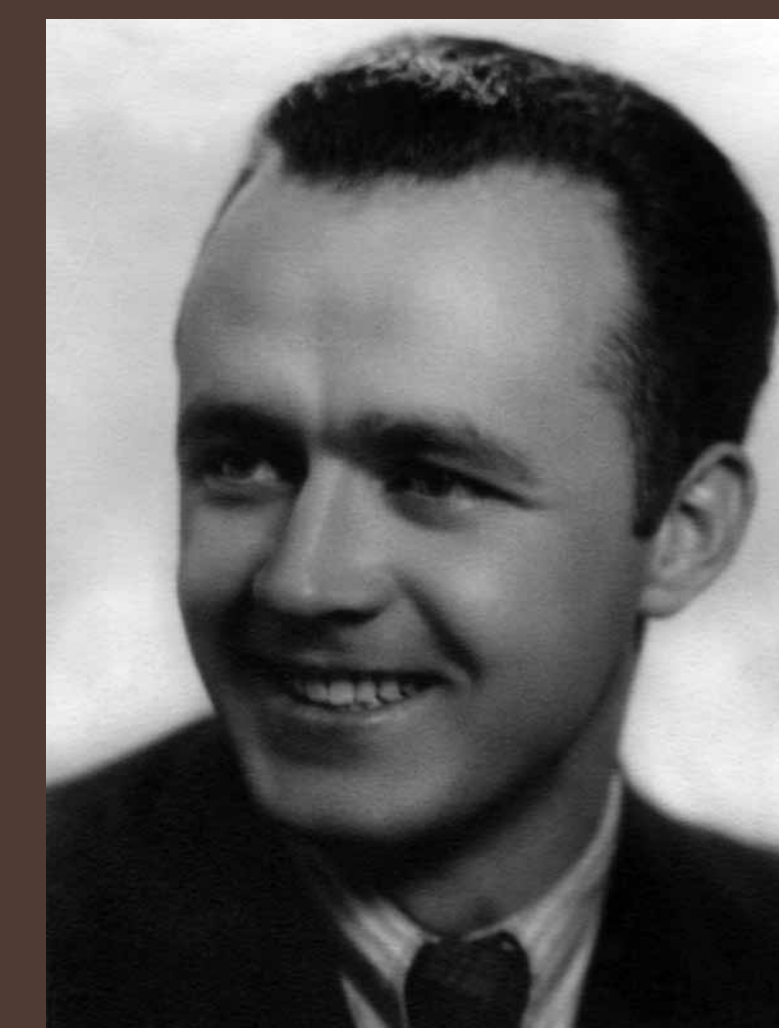
Sofija Binkienė (1902-1984)



Sofija Čiurlionienė (1888-1958)



Danutė Sofija Čiurlionytė-Zubovienė (1910-1995)



Vladimiras Zubovas (1909-2007)

*This place where you are surrounded by the paintings of Čiurlionis, encouraged people to come, and speak about their problems, and ask for advice...*

Dalija Epšteinaitė



Petras Baublys (1914-1973)



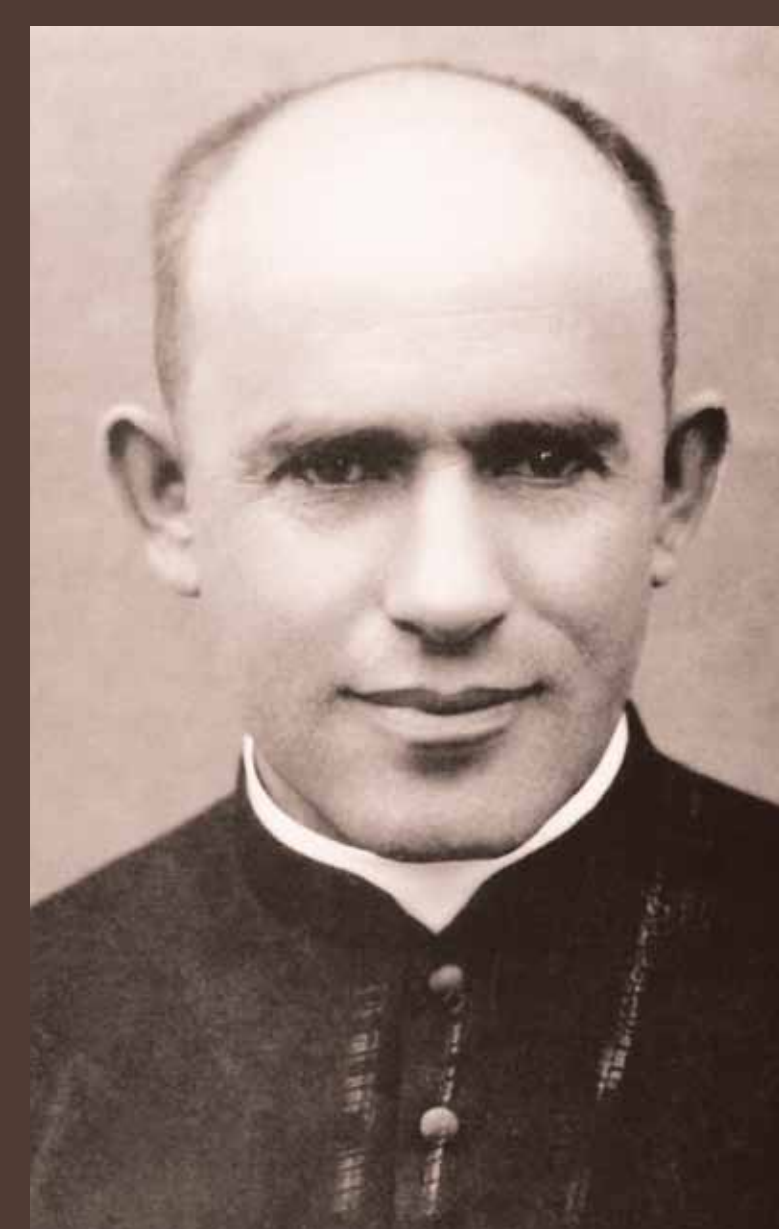
Antanina Paulavičienė (1903-1988)



Jonas Paulavičius (1898-1952)

During World War II (1942-1944) Petras Baublys was the head of the *Lopšelis* orphanage in Kaunas. Thanks to the humanism and dedication of this doctor, as well as his colleagues, *Lopšelis* became a shelter and a place of survival both for orphans and for severely persecuted Jewish children. Dr Baublys and his staff succeeded in saving the lives of dozens of Jewish children mostly from the Kaunas Ghetto. A number of women from the Kaunas Ghetto underground organisation appealed to the doctor to open the gates of the orphanage to Jewish children. Dr Baublys, who had been thinking of helping Jewish children even before this, readily agreed and the women began transferring the children from the ghetto to his care. Petras Baublys' brother Sergijus Baublys and his wife Jadyga hid and rescued an inmate from the Kaunas Ghetto Rachile Blumental.

During the war Jonas Paulavičius and his wife Antanina, their children Kęstutis (15) and Danutė (16) lived in Panemunė, Kaunas suburbs. Jonas Paulavičius set himself the humanitarian aim of rescuing as many Jews from the Kaunas Ghetto as possible. Together with his son he equipped two hideouts under their house. The Paulavičius family rescued 12 Jews: Yitzhak and Lena Shames, their little son Shimele and Lena's mother, doctors Chaim and Tania Ipp, engineer Aron Neimark and his wife Mania, Jochanan Fain, Miriam Krakinowski, Riva Katavushnik, and David Rubin. Although Jonas fell at the hands of an unknown killer in 1952, his memory and that of his family and their sacrifice are cherished with the utmost gratitude and respect by further generations of those rescued by the Paulavičius family.



Bronislovas Paukštys (1897-1966)

*You think that I helped the Jews a lot, but my heart aches when I think that I could have done much more if only God Almighty had granted me a better understanding of the surrounding world.*

Bronislovas Paukštys



Bronius Gotautas (1901- apie 1970)

*Let the Gestapo shoot me, but everyone will see that resolved people still exist.*

Bronius Gotautas

At first, these were individual Jews from among his acquaintances, but when others learned about the priest who was rescuing Jews, the Holy Trinity church in Kaunas became a temporary shelter for scores of Jews, among them Pnina Sheinzon and her daughter Shulamith, Masha Rabinovich (later Aisenbud), Rachel Rosenzweig (later Lewin), Dr Pesya Kissin, Pnina Suknin-Gofer and many others. Father Bronislovas Paukštys provided Jews with forged identity documents, hid them in parsonages and churches, fed them, and at night took them to reliable people. Bronislovas Paukštys' brother, Professor Juozas Paukštys, joined him in his acts of rescue and periodically hid Jews in his house in Kaunas.

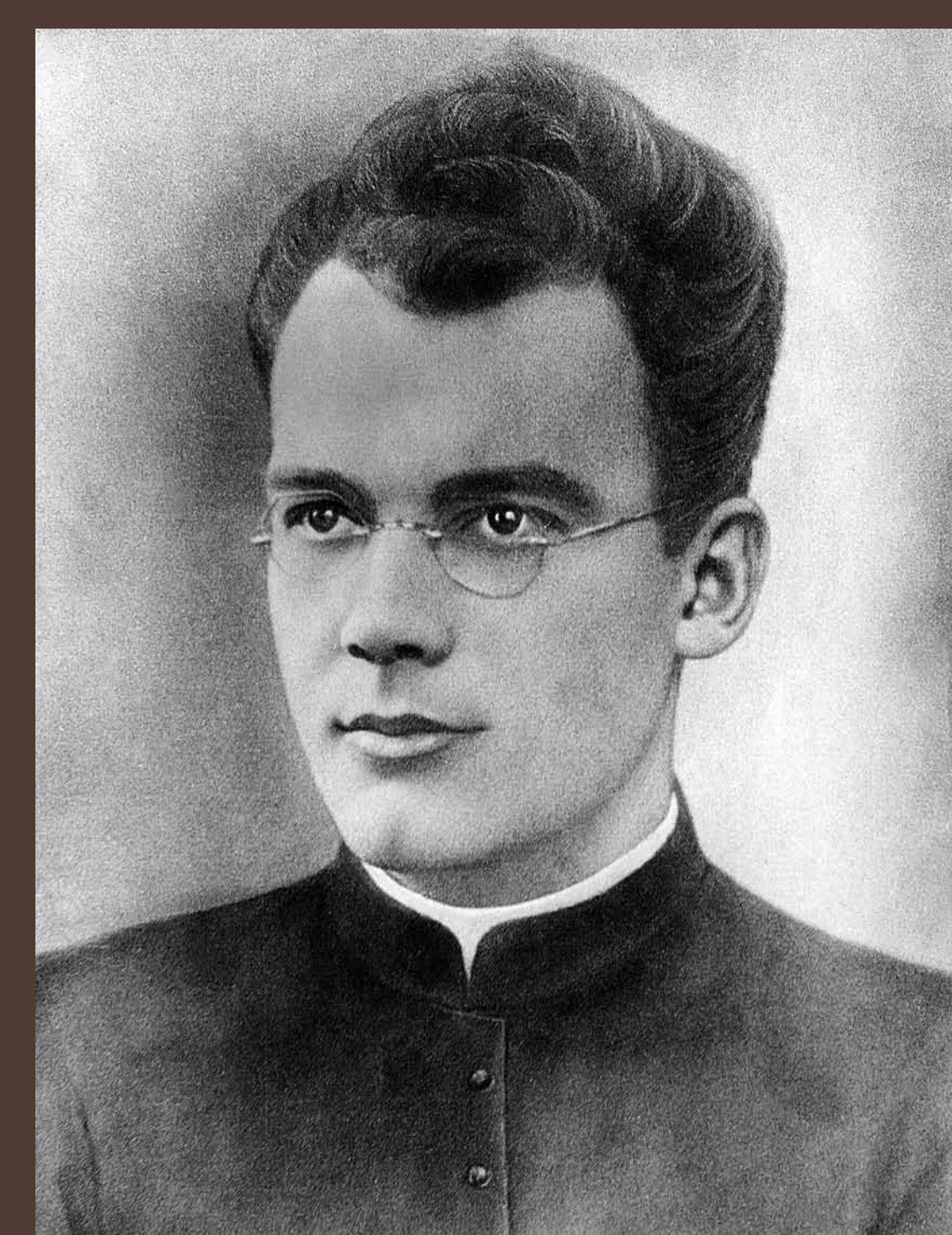
Bronius Gotautas, who everybody called *Brolukas* (Brother) made friends with the Capuchin monks of Petrašiūnai in Kaunas. He would pass on to the Jews the forged passports that were made by priests. He was an altruistic and fearless fighter against the Nazi butchers. The survivors remember Gotautas wearing a patched overcoat and carrying a leather bag on his shoulder. In that bag, among the books were medicine and food that he would give away to the poor. Gotautas would act very boldly without giving a second thought to his own fate. At the end of the war, Bronius Gotautas was arrested by the Gestapo and deported to Germany for hard labour. After the end of the war, Gotautas stayed in Germany where he lived till the end of his days.





# My door is open to everyone...

Mykolas Šimelis



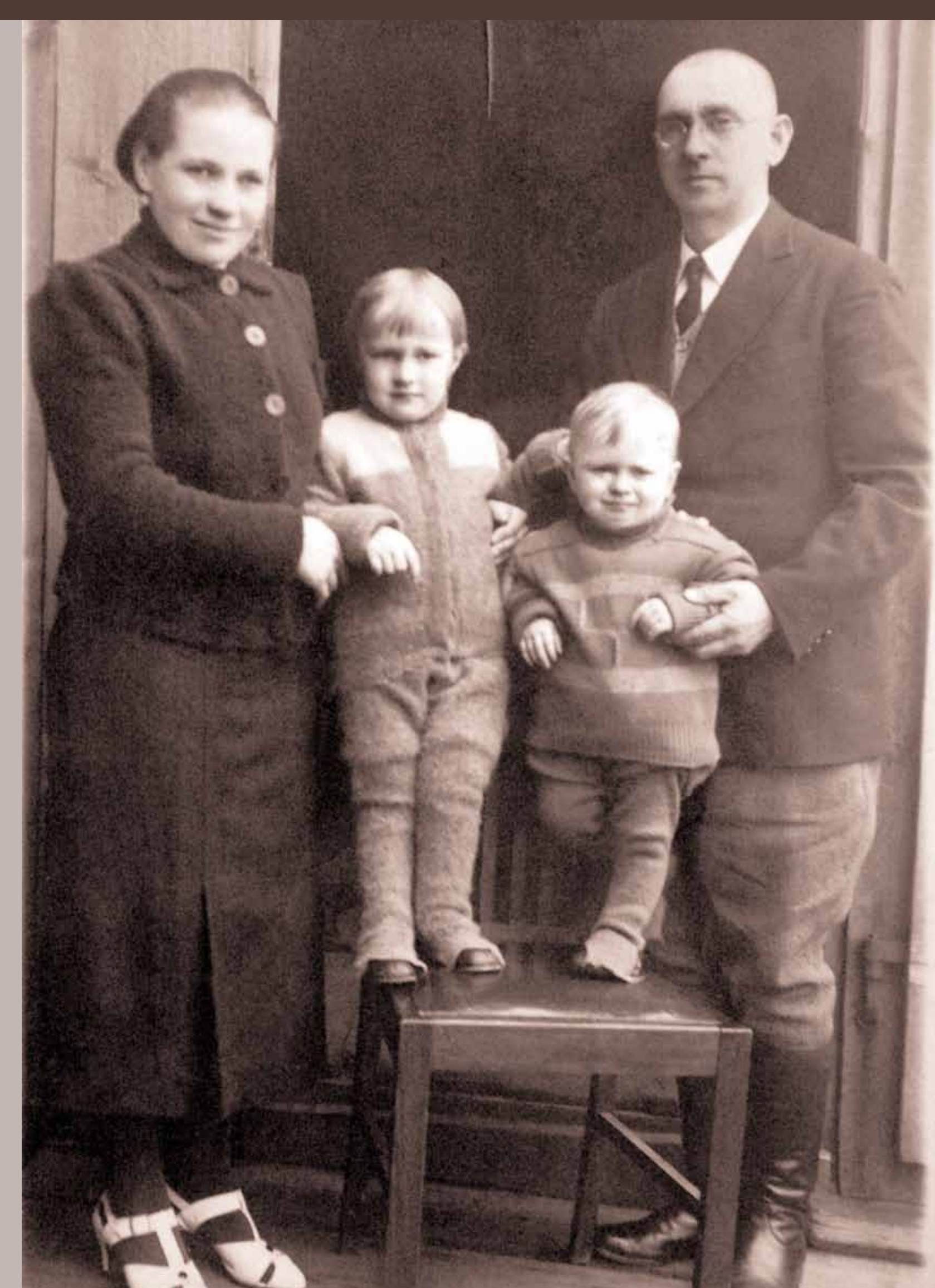
Vladas Požėla (1913-1997)

Most of the rescuers were not idealists, they did not plan to be rescuers but the moment came, when they had to make a decision, on which another person's life depended.

*For 26 years I have been looking for the priest, eager to thank him for saving my life, for the unexpected freedom, for the opportunity to enjoy the world. It is only thanks to him that me and lots of others have survived.*

Benjamins Fuksis

Father Vladas Požėla was the chaplain at Šiauliai prison. Every day he brought not only consolation to the prisoners' souls, but also carried messages from the free world and letters which were most strictly forbidden. During the air raid on 19 June 1944 Šiauliai was showered with bombs. The prison guards were panicking and rushing about. Meanwhile, the priest was opening the doors of prison cells...



Mykolas Šimelis (1889-1945) and Jadvyga Šimeliene (1906-1944) with daughters

When Mykolas Šimelis, a forester in Bačkony Forest, discovered a Jewish acquaintance at a forced labour site in Kaunas, he said, "My door is open to everyone". In November 1943, Moshe Musel brought a group of nine people from the Kaunas Ghetto to the Mykolas and Jadvyga Šimelis home in the village of Tarpumiškis (Kaišiadorys region), including the Koren and Aranovsky families, as well as Moshe's wife Polia. A couple months later three more people were brought in. Polia Museliene's sister with her husband ran away from the Kaunas Ghetto and came to the Šimelis home to hide too. Mykolas Šimelis saved 14 Jews during the war. It cost him his life. On 10 July 1945 Mykolas Šimelis was murdered in Strošūnai Forest.



Juozas Straupis (1900-1978) and Bronislava Straupienė (1902-1996)

The Straupis family farmstead in Šarnelė village became a true centre of salvation for the Jews in Telšiai District. Straupis took the Faktor family of 12 people from Alsėdžiai in a carriage and on bikes to the farmstead of Juozas and Adolfina Kerpauskas. Later three more relatives of the Faktors were brought by



Juozas Kerpauskas (1889-1978) and Adolfina Kerpauskienė (1897-1985)

Juozas Straupis from Telšiai. The Straupis family hid in their own farmstead the Blat family, Tauba Jankelevich, Malka Kaplanaitė, and David Kaplan. The Straupis and Kerpauskas families rescued 25 people.

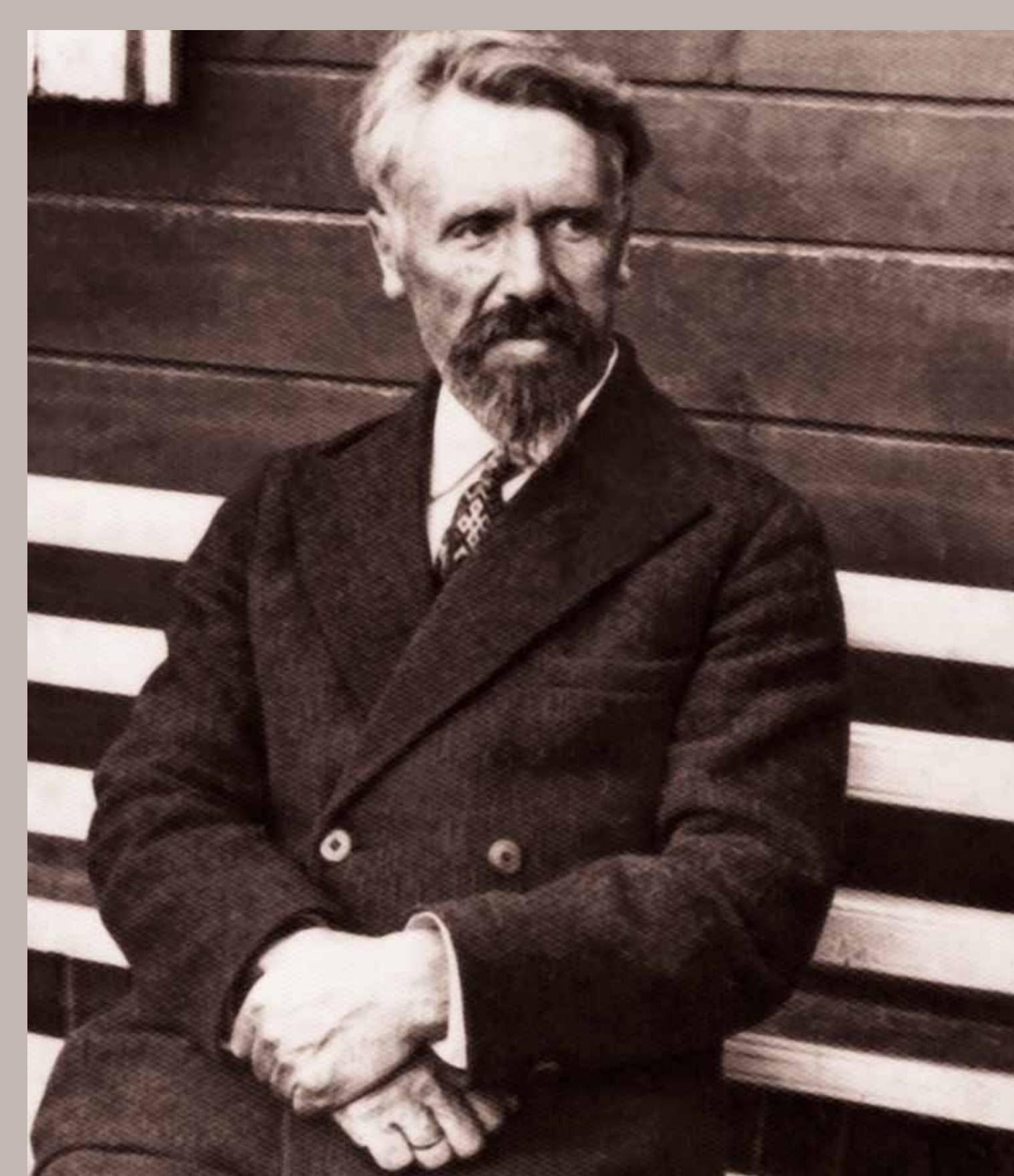


Stanislava Venclauskienė (1874-1958)

Danutė Venclauskaitė (1903-1998)

Gražybė Venclauskaitė (1912)

The family of famous pre-war lawyer Kazimieras Venclauskis and Stanislava Jakševičūtė-Venclauskienė was known in Šiauliai for their charitable deeds. Their house became home to more than a 100 orphans. The lawyer died in 1940. His wife and daughters Danutė and Gražybė continued with their noble purpose. During Nazi occupation they were rescuing Jews: Eta Blank and her daughter, Vulf Peisachovich, Sofija Kozlovsky with her father and others. Danutė opened a sewing enterprise where 50 to 150 Jewish women were making military winter caps and received food donated by local farmers. Danutė had an entrance permit to the ghetto and would smuggle food and medication into the ghetto almost every day. When Eta Blank died, Danutė's sister Gražybė took Eta's daughter Anikė Chana to Žemaičių Naumiestis and stayed there till the end of the war.

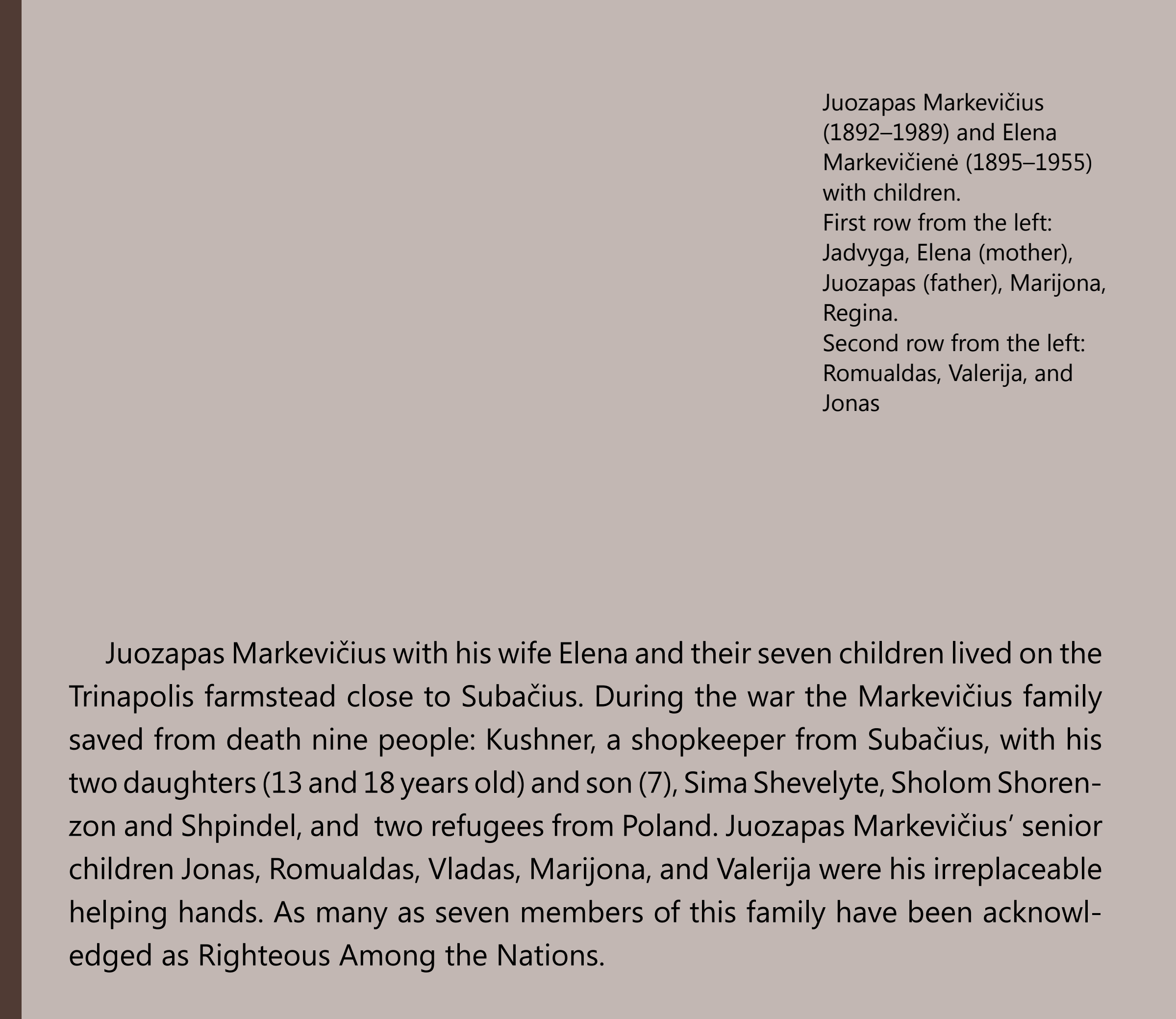


Vytautas Žakavičius (1876-1944)

*I do not know where his grave is... Maybe my grandfather lies Inside the massive 20th century Sarcophagus of the Martyrs?! Or maybe his soul Together with the morning sun Gives us new hope every day*

Marija Maciauskienė dedicates these words to her grandfather Vytautas Žakavičius

Doctor Vytautas Žakavičius lived and worked in Pakalniškiai village (Šakiai District). During the Nazi occupation he was actively helping Jews. In autumn 1943, he hid the family of Dr Matusevich who were brought from the Kaunas Ghetto by his acquaintances. Encouraged by Žakavičius, farmers Bronius Jocevičius, Jonas Petrauskas, Jonas Janulaitis, and Pranas Simokaitis opened their door to seven escapees from the Kaunas Ghetto. Information about Vytautas Žakavičius' deeds reached the Gestapo, and on 18 March 1944 armed Nazi soldiers turned up in Gelgaudiškis and arrested all the Jews that were hiding there, including their rescuers. Later Janulaitis managed to escape and Simokaitis was deported to Germany. At the end of July 1944, Bronius Jocevičius, Jonas Petrauskas and Vytautas Žakavičius were shot to death in the 9th Fort.



Juozapas Markevičius (1892-1989) and Elena Markevičienė (1895-1955) with children. First row from the left: Jadvyga, Elena (mother), Juozapas (father), Marijona, Regina. Second row from the left: Romualdas, Valerija, and Jonas

Juozapas Markevičius with his wife Elena and their seven children lived on the Trinapolis farmstead close to Subačius. During the war the Markevičius family saved from death nine people: Kushner, a shopkeeper from Subačius, with his two daughters (13 and 18 years old) and son (7), Sima Shevelyte, Sholom Shorezon and Shpindel, and two refugees from Poland. Juozapas Markevičius' senior children Jonas, Romualdas, Vladas, Marijona, and Valerija were his irreplaceable helping hands. As many as seven members of this family have been acknowledged as Righteous Among the Nations.

To Father Polikarpas Macijauskas all were equal. For him they were not a Russian, a Jew, or a German – he hid a Human. Father Macijauskas hid Jews in the Kolainiai monastery and provided them with forged documents. Dr Petras Girbudas was well known locally for his goodwill towards Jews. He wasn't able to hide Jews in his home for more than a few days. Father Macijauskas and Dr Girbudas would make agreements with local farmers and

choose remote farms covered by trees. Alfonsas Songaila, an eighteen-year-old farmer, would bring Jews from the Šiauliai Ghetto to these farmsteads in a carriage pulled by a horse. Father Polikarpas Macijauskas, Dr Girbudas and the young Alfonsas Songaila became true organisers for rescuing Jews in Šiauliai District and especially in Kelmė area.

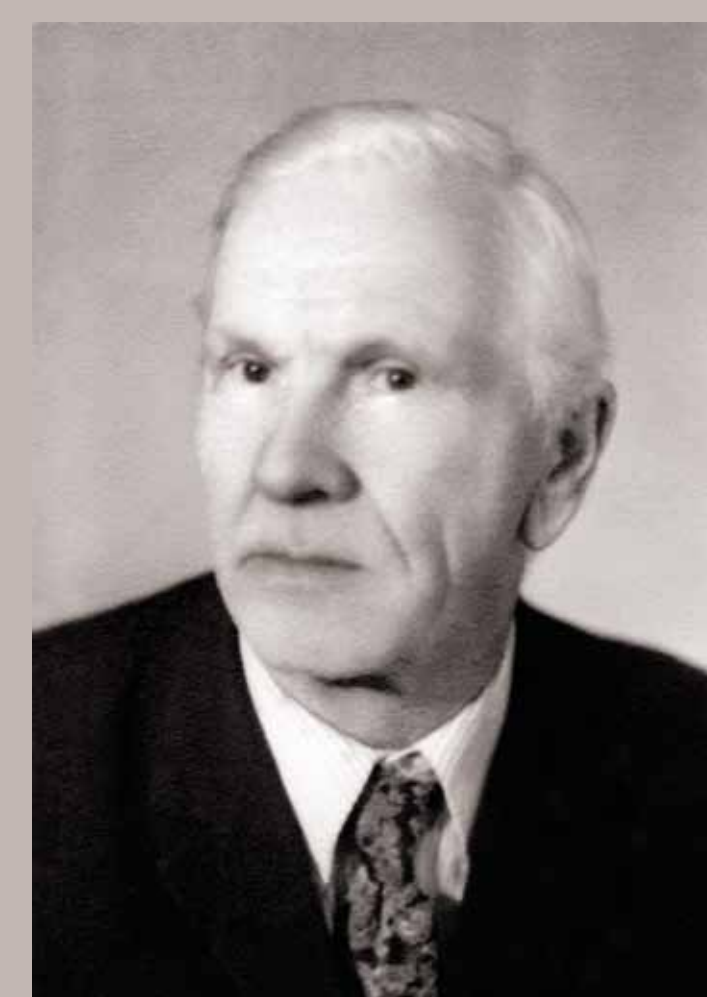


Polikarpas Macijauskas (Maciejovskis) (1891-1965)



Alfonsas Songaila (1924-2006)

Petras Girbudas (1892-1967)



Jaroslavas Rakevičius (1904-1978)



Teklė Rakevičienė (1904-1943)



Juozas Rakevičius (1921-1991)



Algimantas Rakevičius (1934)

The Rakevičius family saved about 50 Jews from the Kaunas Ghetto from death. The escapees had to make 80 kilometres to the Rakevičius home in Keidžiai village. For safety reasons, people from the Kaunas Ghetto had to walk or cart with horses. The process would take three, four or even more days. At the Rakevičius' place the escapees were distributed and accommodated. They would have to be taken to safer places, and later taken back. Among the people rescued by the Rakevičius family are Nozhikoviene with her son and daughter, Rachel Drugeiraite and her sister, the Elts family, brother and sister Gancas, the families of Elijashevich, Man, Lea Brik (Barak) with her son Aharon, the Leibzon family, Sara Zivaite, Liba Raibshstein with her daughter Mirele, the Zarkin family, Mazinteriene, Orchik Kelts and his wife Sore Beile, the Kuliesha family, the Libman sisters and brother.

Standing: Zenonas Rakevičius (1924); sitting: Česlovas Rakevičius (1923-2009) and Riva Hiršovičūtė-Rakevičienė



Father Polikarpas Macijauskas with nuns in Kolainiai Benedictine monastery where Jewish women were hiding disguised as nuns

*I did not hide Your truth in my heart. I preached Your truth and Your salvation...*

Ps. 40, 11





# Many years after...

I should like to point out the importance of these Holocaust rescuers, recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations, as a therapeutic antidote to the unhealed wounds of the Holocaust. These knights of the spirit represent an affirmation of life – contra death; their stories – a tool to want us to go on and hope, rather than despair.

Mordecai Paldiel



1. Genutė Pukaite and Katia Segalson-Rosen, Israel, 1991
2. Moshe Kukliansky and Jonas Daugevičius, 1995
3. Moshe Kukliansky and Kazys Žukauskas, 1995
4. Ruth Kron-Sigal and Ona Ragauskienė, Šiauliai, 2000
5. Markas Petuchauskas with Stanislava and Jonas Ruzgys in Vilnius
6. Emmanuel Shlom and Vladas Bušauskas, Guronai, Trakai District, 2005
7. Moshe Kukliansky and Jonas Daugevičius, Sventijanskas, Lazdijai District, 1995
8. Jadvyga Laucevičiūtė-Baužiene and Telesforas Laucevičius, Telsiai, 2005
9. Tikva Chlomovich-Jeral and Bronislava Gecevičienė, USA, 1990
10. Rescuers of Izaakas Gilkas with their families and children visiting him at home, 2004



Since 1962, Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority in Jerusalem, awards the title of the Righteous Among the Nations, medal and certificate of honour to the rescuers of Jews. At first, as a symbol of the renewal of life, trees were planted on the Hill of Remembrance to honour the Righteous Among the Nations. At present the names of the Righteous are commemorated on the Wall of Honour in the Garden of the Righteous. New names of Lithuanian citizens are added to the list every year.



Shulamit Gordon-Lirov and Ernestas Kutorga. Yad Vashem, 1998



Liuba Funkkaitė-Chessakov and Bronė Grigalaitienė. Yad Vashem, 1991



A tree planted in April 1982 in memory of Father Bronislovas Paukštys. Lawyer Avraham Tory, who was rescued by Paukštys, is holding the portrait



Virginija Mačionienė and Jadvyga Korsakienė accept the award on behalf of Ona and Antanas Korsakas. Yad Vashem, 2 May 2011



Rescuers of Jews meet with people they rescued in the Holy Land in 1991. They were invited to visit the Israeli Knesset. On the photo with the chairman of the Knesset Dov Shilansky

The Righteous Among the Nations award ceremonies also take place in Lithuania. The awards to the rescuers of Jews and their relatives are presented by the Ambassador of the State of Israel.



The Ambassador of the State of Israel Chen Ivry presents the Righteous Among the Nations Awards to Adomas Gecevičius (sitting in the centre) and his wife (posthumously) on 21 May 2008, Kaunas Town Hall



The Righteous Among the Nations award ceremony at the Tolerance Centre of the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum on 19 April 2012. The Ambassador of the State of Israel Hagit Ben-Yaakov and the Israeli Minister of National Infrastructure Uzi Landau present the Righteous Among the Nations medal to Janina Grigaliuniene

The National Memorial Day for the Genocide Victims of the Lithuanian Jews has been commemorated every year since 1992. On that day Lithuanian citizens who passed the ultimate test of humanity – rescued Jews during the Holocaust – are honoured and awarded the *Life Saviour's Cross* at the Presidential Palace of the Republic of Lithuania.



Writer Vladas Dautartas accepts the *Life Saviour's Cross* on behalf of his mother Julija Dautartienė from the hands of Algirdas Brazauskas, President of the Republic of Lithuania on 14 September 1995

President of the Republic of Lithuania Valdas Adamkus presents the award to Janina Viktoravičienė (Rutkauskaitė), 28 September 2004

President of the Republic of Lithuania Dalia Grybauskaitė presents the *Life Saviour's Cross* to Jadvyga Jukelevičienė (Kazakevičiūtė), 21 September 2012



Holocaust survivor Moshe Kukliansky (in the middle) and his relatives with descendants of the rescuers. The Presidential Palace, 19 September 2008

Exclusive stories of the rescued Jewish people and their rescuers illustrated by a large amount of photos and videos, the museum's books on the subject, the information about the rescuers, who were awarded, documentaries and interviews are available in our virtual exhibition "Rescued Lithuanian Jewish Child Tells about Shoah" [www.rescuedchild.lt](http://www.rescuedchild.lt)



The participants of this exhibition – rescued Jewish children during the war, scattered around the world in the post-war years. They shared their stories in 2004–2009.

**AUTHORS OF THE EXHIBITION:**

- © Danutė Selčinskaja, curator of the exhibition, 2014
- © Jovita Stundziaitė, museum specialist, 2014
- © Jūratė Juozienė, designer, 2014

© The Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum, 2014

We would like to thank all the participants of the exhibition: the Holocaust survivors, their rescuers, and the relatives of rescuers, who shared their painful memories and permitted us to use pictures from their archives.

The Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum expresses its gratitude to:

the Office of the Chancellor Archive of the President of the Republic of Lithuania; Kaunas 9th Fort Museum for their permission to use archive photos, and for their advice and support.

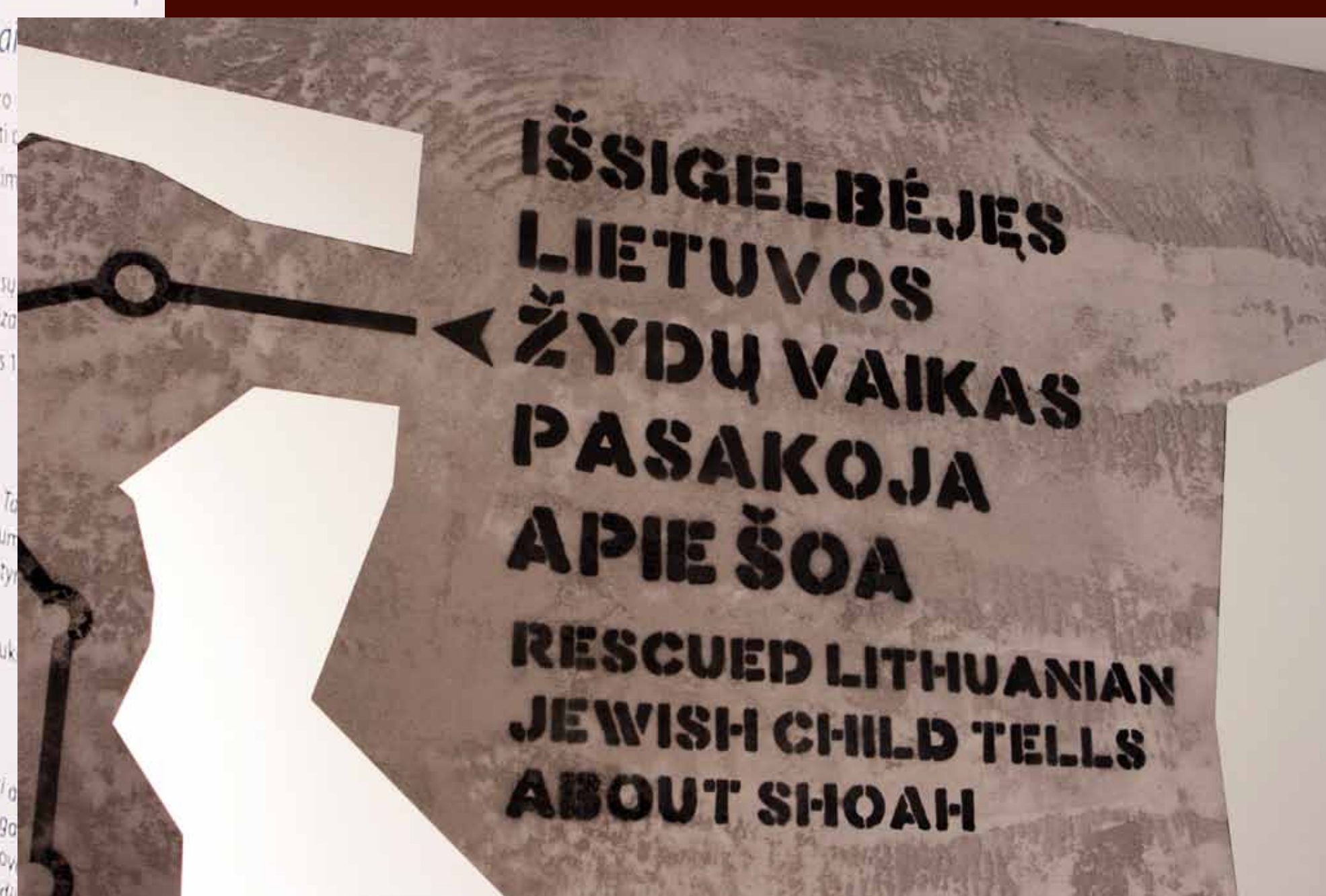
The Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum wishes to thank most sincerely the following institutions and persons for their financial contributions:

The Lithuanian Council for Culture under the Ministry of Culture

UAB Venecija LT  
Telesforas Laucevičius, Ben Brahm, Dr Solomon Abramovich and other persons who have contributed to the remembrance of the rescuers of Jews.



On 23 September 2009, the day of the museum's 20th anniversary and the Memorial Day for the Genocide Victims of the Lithuanian Jews, the modern permanent exposition "Rescued Lithuanian Jewish Child Tells About Shoah" was opened at the Tolerance Centre (Naugarduko g. 10 / Aguonų g. 2).



We kindly invite you to visit the permanent exposition *Rescued Lithuanian Jewish Child Tells About Shoah*

Tolerance Centre of the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum  
Naugarduko g. 10 / Aguonų g. 2, LT-01309, Vilnius  
[www.jmuseum.lt](http://www.jmuseum.lt)