



Val's Story, Chapter 2

It so happened that the first totalitarian power to occupy Lithuania were not the Nazis, it was the communist powers. They marched in, summer 1940, the red army, the communist army marched in, the secret police, the KGB followed and the communist rule turned our lives. They turned every aspect of our lives upside down. They began their purges, and the people who were affected by the purges were anybody who had a business, anybody who had land, owners, landowners, personnel, Army personnel, Lithuanian Army personnel, religious people, democratic parties, all they, they were classed as 'enemies of the people', Capitalist enemies of the people and the punishment was deportation to a Siberian or to a Russian slave labour camp. Now we had property. Our property was confiscated, there was no compensation whatsoever, not only that we were punished for being Capitalists, for having property, we were punished by putting on a list to be deported. However fate intervened. Just that week when we were supposed to be taken, arrested and deported Hitler and his army decided to begin an assault on the Russian empire, on the Communist empire. So instead of being under the Soviets, which we were a year under the Soviets, under the Communists, we were occupied by the Nazis, by the German army. The Germany army swept through Lithuania without much resistance from the Communists and they went deep into Russia. The Russian communists were completely unprepared and they fled in disarray. And that was the beginning of the Russian-German war. It lasted 4 years and it claimed 35 million victims. And we were right in the middle of it. We had to decide what to do. On the first day of the hostilities there was still a chance to escape, we could have fled east into Russia, which wasn't a very attractive proposition. Or we could have stayed put and tried to survive under the Nazis. Part of our immediate family, it was 14 members, gathered that day when the hostilities started to decide what to do. Should we try and flee and finish up in a slave labour camp in the Communist empire, in Russia or Siberia, or should we stay put and survive, try to survive under Nazi German rule? We argued about it all morning. Eventually we decided to stay put. We assumed that the Germans are more civilised than the Russians and we assumed the chances of staying alive under Germany were better than under Russia. So we preferred the Nazis to the communists. The outcome was that except for myself, all the 14 members who gathered that day perished.