

I never met my grandpa. When he died he was 40 years old. In fact, his death was neither natural nor accidental – nor were the deaths of his brothers and cousins (including a 16 year old) who went to the forest to fight for Lithuanian freedom. Their deaths were untimely, to say the least.

When we got our independence the second time in 1990, we finally found out the place and the year of their deaths – Magadan, the gold mines in Taishet, September 12, 1947. That's all...

There is no grave. There is a big hall where hundreds of people like him – young, talented people whose only crime was a love for their homeland and their people – lay to rest.

I only know what my mother and neighbours told me about my grandfather, Kazimieras Dulieba, – that he was a talented musician who not only could make his own violin, but could also make the violin sing. The neighbours didn't even call him by name. He was known as “Our Blacksmith” and as “Golden Hands” because he was able to make anything they ever asked. He could fix a tractor, a rare thing in Lithuania before World Wore II. He could fix all kinds of motors and machineries.

When soviets occupied our Lithuania, his brothers and cousins became partisans. My grandpa was helping by getting arms for them, as well as repairing and adjusting guns for them.

He had 5 sons and 2 daughters. The youngest daughter, Elena, was only one year old when, early morning of August 30, 1945, came a bunch of KGB agents to their home in the village Petrushynai ( Petrušynai) in northern Lithuania. My grandpa was away. My grandma was told to prepare herself and her children for relocation.

Their oldest daughter, 11 year old Viktorija, had heard about that kind of relocation before. So, when she managed to get out of sight of the KGB, she took the hand of her 8 year old brother Povilas and tried to escape through the rye field. Unfortunately, they got caught. Viktorija then tried to escape again, but this time by herself. The Soviets spotted her as she was approaching the forest. They fired at her and the KGB officer of Salochiai (Saločiai) – a Jew by the name of Tānkėl and his Russian assistant Ovcherenko– followed her until they lost her in the forest.

The next day, Viktorija met with her father at her grandma's home, when their sad journey of hiding in places of distant relatives began, traveling at night from place to place, a life of fear, hunger and sickness. For a half a year they hid from practically the whole world. The KGB offered a reward for information that would lead to the finding of Kazimieras Dulieba and his daughter.

The reward was claimed by the former helper (who had been well treated and well paid) of my grandparents' family. My grandpa, carrying his violin case, was shot and injured on the bridge named after the former Lithuanian president Smetona. (Ironically, on the inaugural opening of this bridge my grandpa had been given a golden watch for having won the competition for crossing the bridge by walking along the outside of the arch

framing.) Now, injured, he tried to escape by jumping into the frigid waters where winter ice was still melting, but was caught and taken to the prison of Salochiai (Saločiai). His sisters, who were bringing food to him, witnessed his mangled face and broken fingers between the doors inflicted by his cruel captors. My grandpa knew: he will never play his violin again...

At 12, Viktorija traveled a great distance, found her way to her mother's cousin and became a hard worker. The KGB never stopped hunting her. Two years later, as a result of an initiative of the American Red Cross, the kids from Siberia were returned and given to different families. These kids were being constantly reminded by their new families that, if they didn't do good, hard work they would be thrown out. Little brother Poviliukas never came back: he died in the region of Perme (Pèrmè) and was buried there by his mother and oldest brother Antanas.

The family was scattered. Brothers and sisters were separated. They were not allowed to go to school. They were good only for work...

Ten years later their mother came back. She was sick but hoped that her husband would return. I became a teenager, then I finished high school, then university, and my grandma still hoped that my grandpa will one day come back.

I don't know how my uncle Povilas looked. I have only two pictures of my grandpa. I have one picture of his partisan brothers and cousins. I have a little carafe that was touched by grandpa's hands, saved by little Viktorija who is my mother. And I have a hammer which was held by grandpa. The house and everything in it -- animals and goods,-- were confiscated by the KGB. There is now an empty field where a 60 hectares farm once stood.

The story of my grandpa is the story of tens of thousands of Lithuanian freedom fighters. Some 300 000 Lithuanian men, women and children (in a country of about 3 million) were exiled to Siberia to toil and die under sub-human conditions. Is this deliberate and systematic attempt to wipe out a people and its culture not genocide? Should not the Russians and their collaborators be held accountable for these crimes?