

Nikolay Schwartz Biography

Nikolay Schwartz

Uzhgorod

Ukraine

Interviewer: Ella Levitskaya

Date of interview: October 2003

Nikolay Schwartz is not tall and stooping man. He has long gray hair. Although he was not feeling well, Nikolay agreed to tell me about his family and his life. Nikolay has a severe hearing problem, and this made our conversation a little difficult, but he was telling much and spoke willingly. He lives alone in a one-bedroom block apartment building. His flat is very clean and he gives credit to his visiting nurse from Hesed, who visits him every day and does all housework. Nikolay has a grave form of diabetes. He doesn't leave his home and cannot take care of himself. There is only necessary furniture in his apartment: a bed, a table with medications on it and bookcases by the walls. There are books in Hungarian, Czech, Yiddish, Hebrew and English. It's difficult for Nikolay to read now: his eyesight is getting worse, but he tries to read at least few pages each day to remember the languages he knows.

My parents' families lived in Subcarpathia [1]. I didn't know my grandmothers or grandfathers. I only remember one family story that my father told me. His father, my grandfather, was forestry manager in Vinogradov all inhabitants called it Sevlyush [derived from Nagyszolos, the Hungarian name of the town, its residents called it as such affectionately] [85 km from Uzhgorod, 645 km from Kiev], for Baron Zsigmond. During World War I he left his home and to keep the gate open till he returned, but he never returned home and nobody knew what happened to him. My grandmother died before I was born. My father locked the gate after my grandmother died.

My father Izidor Schwartz was born in Vinogradov. I don't know the year of his birth. His Jewish name was Isaac. My father had two older brothers. In the early 1900s they moved to the USA and this is all I know about them. We didn't correspond with them.

Vinogradov was mainly a Jewish town like many other settlements in Subcarpathia. Its Jewish population constituted over 50%. There was also Hungarian, Czech [probably Slovak] and Ukrainian [Ruthenian] population in Vinogradov. Jews mainly lived in the center of the town. The houses were located very near to one another. The land was expensive, and there were no gardens near the houses. There was only enough space for utility facilities near the houses. There were 2-3 trees and that was all. There were big gardens in the suburbs of the town. There were many vineyards. The non-Jewish population of Vinogradov mainly dealt in vine growing and wine making. Jews traditionally dealt in crafts and trade. However, there were also Jewish vineyards and wineries. Vinogradov produced kosher wine for Subcarpathia and Czechoslovakia.

There were few synagogues in Vinogradov. I don't remember the exact number. There was a Hasidic [2] synagogue. Hasidim stayed apart from non-Jewish residents and from other Jews who did not belong to Hasidim. Hasidim had a shochet who only worked for them. My parents were religious, but they weren't Hasidim. My parents went to the synagogue near our house. It was a big

and beautiful synagogue. There were few one-storied smaller synagogues. Their location was near to any Jewish houses wherever that was, but even those who lived far from the biggest synagogue, attended it. There was a very good chazan and people came to listen to him. All Jews in Vinogradov were religious. Some went to the synagogue every day, but the majority attended the synagogue on Sabbath and Jewish holidays. All Jews observed Jewish traditions. All Jewish families had many children, even the poorest ones. They had children without thinking whether they would have enough food for them. The community helped the poor. Once a week community workers collected money for the poor for Sabbath. Every family gave as much as they could.

There was no anti-Semitism in Vinogradov and there was no national segregation. There were generations of various nationalities living side by side in Subcarpathia. They learned to respect a different faith and traditions. There were no Jewish pogroms or ravaging Jewish cemeteries or other things of this kind. There was no state or routinely anti-Semitism. Jews held official positions and were on military service. It was a usual flow of things.

My mother Serena Schwartz, nee Feuerstein, was born in Irshava town [70 km from Uzhgorod, 635 km from Kiev] in Subcarpathia in the early 1890s. I don't know my mother's Jewish name. Her parents died, when my mother was in her teens, and the children went to live with their relatives. Life was probably hard for her. My mother didn't like talking about her childhood and I don't know anything about her family, brothers or sisters. I don't know where my mother got her Jewish education, but she was very religious. She could read in Hebrew and knew prayers.

My parents got married in 1914. I don't know how they met. I think, they met through a shadkhan, a matchmaker. At that time most Jews used assistance of shadkhanim. Young people didn't know each other until after they were wed. This was when they saw each other for the first time. Considering that my parents were so deeply religious I believe they had a traditional Jewish wedding. After the wedding the newly weds settled down in my father's house that he received from his parents. This was a solid spacious houses made of air bricks. Most houses in Subcarpathia were built from this construction material. Straw was finely cut and mixed with clay. Then they formed bricks from this mixture and dried them in the sun. These were good light bricks with good heat insulation. There were few houses of the local rich families and official buildings built from bricks. Our house had a sheet iron roof. There was a mezuzah by the front door of our house like in other Jewish houses. There were 3 rooms and a kitchen in the house. One room was my parents' bedroom, one room was the sons' room and another one was the daughters' room. There were wood stoked stoves heating the rooms. Coal was not common in Subcarpathia. It was shipped from far away while there were woods all around.

My father was a harness maker. Horses were the only transportation. He built an annex to our house to serve as his shop. My father worked alone and at times had apprentices. His apprentices' parents didn't pay my father, after they finished their first year of training they began to assist my father in his work. The training lasted three years. My father provided meals to his apprentices. They could do work on their own in the third year of training, and my father profited from it. My father didn't earn much, but it was sufficient to make our living. My mother did the housekeeping.

My mother dressed traditionally. I remember her wearing neck tight dark dresses. Even in summer she wore long-sleeved clothes. She also wore a wig to go out and at home she covered her head with a kerchief. My father wore a dark suit and a hat. At home he put on a kippah. My father didn't

have a beard or payes. At home we spoke Yiddish and Hungarian. We, kids, knew Czech, but our parents only knew few common words in Czech.

My sister Klara whose Jewish name was Haya, born in 1915, was the oldest of the children. In 1916 Yelisaveta, whose Jewish name was Leya, was born, at home we called her Liz. I was born in 1918, before Subcarpathia was annexed to Czechoslovakia. I had the name of Miklos written in my Hungarian birth certificate, and my Jewish name was Moishe. My family called me Miki affectionately. When receiving my passport in 1946 I changed my name to Nikolay, so the official has written down in my passport, without asking. There were two other children born after me, but they died in infancy and I don't remember their names. Ernest, the youngest brother whose Jewish name was Aron, was born in 1928, he was recorded as Erno. My brother and I were circumcised according to the Jewish custom. I don't remember my brother's brit milah. Of course, I was not allowed to be in the room where the ritual was conducted. There were few Jews wearing black suits and black hats in the room. One of them was a rabbi. My mother took my brother's cradle filled with candy, bagels, cookies and nuts into the yard. We rocked the cradle and picked sweets falling out of there. When the men came out of the room, my mother invited all to dinner.

We could buy bread in a store, but my mother preferred to bake it. On Friday morning my mother made dough in a big kneading trough. She usually made bread for a week. She made big round loaves of very delicious bread from brown flour and for Sabbath my mother made 2 challah loaves from white flour. My mother formed loaves from dough and pleated the challah forms, put them into a basket and sent me to the baker. He baked the loaves and I came later to pick them up. When we ran out of bread before the week was over, my mother bought some from the baker. Sabbath was sure to be celebrated. Even if my father was away, he tried to return home before Sabbath. My mother did a lot of cooking for Sabbath. The family was big, and she had to cook for two days. On Friday my mother made chicken broth with homemade noodles or with dough grains. There was gefilte fish, ground radish with onions and goose fat, and tsimes [3]. When she was done with her cooking, my mother put a pot of cholnt into the oven, closed the oven leaving the cholnt overnight. It stayed hot for a long while in a ceramic pot. On Friday, before Sabbath began, we went to the mikveh. After the mikveh my father put on his fancy suit and went to the synagogue. My mother set the table, put the Saturday challah bread on it, lit candles and prayed over them. When my father came back, we sat down to dinner. Nothing was to be done after dinner. It wasn't allowed to hold money or strike a match. My Jewish friends were already waiting for me outside. We went for walks chatting. Next morning we went to the synagogue. My mother also went to the synagogue. The prayer ended at about 11. We had lunch after the synagogue. After lunch my father prayed and then sat down to read the Torah. We sat around him and he read us a Saturday section from the Torah. Then we went for a walk while my father read till Havdalah, when the first star appeared in the sky. By that time the children were to be back home. My father conducted the Havdalah, separation of Saturday from weekdays. My father lit candles that were smaller than the ones lit on Sabbath. Everybody had some wine, even the children. My father prayed, poured a little wine into a saucer to put down the candles in it. At this the Sabbath was over.

My father went to the synagogue on Sabbath and on holidays. On other days he prayed at home. He had a tallit, a tefillin and a book of prayers. We knew that when our father was praying we were not supposed to distract him from it. He couldn't hush us up, when we got noisy, during the prayer, but after the prayer he told us off. My mother went to the synagogue on holidays like all other

women. The children attended the synagogue after they turned 5 years of age. When boys turned 10, they went to the synagogue with their fathers.

We celebrated all Jewish holidays at home. We started preparations for Pesach in advance. There was a general clean up of the house. There were not supposed to be any breadcrumbs in the house on the eve of Pesach. My mother placed few pieces of bread at different spots in the house and my father searched for them with a candle. When the last piece was found, the chametz was wrapped up in paper and burned in the yard. Then it was time to take special crockery from the attic. My mother cooked traditional food: chicken broth with pieces of matzah, stuffed chicken neck and potato pancakes. We bought matzah from the bakery. My father conducted seder on the first evening of Pesach. My mother put traditional food on the table: hard-boiled eggs, a piece of fried meat, greeneries, horseradish and a saucer with salty water. My father reclined on cushions. Everybody had a wine glass in front of him. Everybody was to drink four glasses of wine during seder. There was the biggest and most beautiful glass for Elijah the Prophet in the center of the table. The front door was kept open for him to come into the house. My father put away a piece of matzah, afikoman. One of the children was to steal it and then give it back to the father for redemption. Of course, our father just pretended that he didn't see how we were stealing the afikoman: this was what the ritual was about. Then I asked my father 4 traditional questions in Hebrew and he answered them. Then we sang traditional songs. Sometimes the children fell asleep at the table, but our father didn't allow us to leave the table.

We went to the synagogue at Rosh Hashanah. When we came back, my mother put a dish with apples and honey on the table. We dipped apples into honey and ate them hoping for a good and sweet year to come.

Before Yom Kippur we conducted Kapores at home. My mother didn't keep chicks, we bought them at the market. There were white hens bought for my mother and sisters and white roosters – for my father, my brother and me. We tied their legs to turn them above our heads holding them by their legs saying: 'May you be my atonement'. Kapores was conducted in the morning, and before the first star appeared in the sky we were to have a sufficient meal. The adults were to fast till next evening. Children fasted half a day reaching the age of 8, and when they turned 13, they were to fast like adults. On the morning of Yom Kippur everybody, including children, went to the synagogue to pray until the star appeared in the sky. There was stuffy at the synagogue from burning candles and sometimes people fainted. When the first star appeared in the sky, everybody could go home to have dinner. Next day every Jewish family began to make a sukkah from wood and planks. Building a sukkah after Yom Kippur was a tradition. Some families started building a sukkah in their yards after dinner on Yom Kippur. Wealthier people had a folding roof in the hallway in their houses. On Sukkoth they used it for a sukkah. Sukkahs were decorated with ribbons and flowers. Branches with leaves or reed stems were put on the roof. Children made paper decorations for the sukkah. There was a table in the sukkah and we had meals and prayed there each day of the Sukkoth. Sukkoth is in autumn when it often rains, but even when water was pouring into our plates we stayed in the sukkah. My father explained that we had to do it to remember how Jews stayed in tents after they left Egypt.

In winter we celebrated Chanukkah. Visitors gave children Chanukkah gelt on this day. Customarily this money was to be spent on gambling, but we preferred to buy sweets. We liked it since we

rarely could enjoy candy or nuts in the family. Purim was another merry holiday. Children wearing Purimspiel costumes made the rounds of houses performing and got small change or sweets for their performances. There was also a custom of sending treatments on trays to relatives and friends. Children took trays with sweets to houses. When a hostess returned the tray, she always put some change on it. We didn't have any relatives, and my mother sent shelakhmones to our friends and neighbors.

At the age of 5 I went to cheder. There were 15 boys in my group. We had classes every day, but Saturday. Pupils sat at a long table in the classroom and the rebe sat at a small table in front of us. The rebe only spoke Yiddish. We had classes from early morning till afternoon. We went home for lunch and then came back to cheder where we stayed till evening. Then in the evening we had to do the homework. I got very tired. In the first grade we studied the Hebrew alphabet. The rebe had Hebrew letters written on a big sheet. The rebe pointed at a letter asking us what letter it was. If somebody didn't know the answer, the rebe hit him with a finger-thick and about 1 meter long bamboo stick. If somebody talked during a class, the rebe hit his table with the stick calling for silence. We knew that the next blow would be on somebody's back. In the second grade we began to read prayers and translate from Hebrew to Yiddish. My father was proud of me. He asked me to read prayers at home listening to me with a smile resting his chin on his hand. In the third grade we began to study the Torah. There was a melamed in each class. He had special training to teach this subject.

There were cheder schools for girls in Vinogradov and my sisters went to one. Girls studied the Hebrew alphabet and reading in Hebrew, but they didn't know the meaning of the words. So they read prayers aloud, but didn't understand what they were reading.

I don't know how it happened that since my childhood I was critical about the Jewish religion and traditions. I was raised in a religious family. My sisters took everything for granted while I looked down on it, as if those were the games adults played. Most boys in the cheder had long payes. My father insisted that I had payes, but I was crying and yelling that I didn't want payes. I was particularly against it, when I went to a Ruthenian school. at the age of 8. I made non-Jewish friends. I saw that other boys teased their fellow pupils who had long payes pulling them by their payes. I didn't want to be teased, so I secretly cut my payes to make them unnoticed. My father was surprised that my payes were not growing. I did well at school, though I hardly had time to do my homework. I went to cheder at 6 and we had classes for two hours, then I went to school and came home for lunch. After lunch I went back to cheder and stayed there until 7 in the evening. When I came home, I had to do my homework for both cheder and school. The rebe gave us a lot to do at home. He didn't care that we were also busy at school. School teachers felt sorry for Jewish children and didn't give us much homework. After finishing the fourth grade in my Ruthenian school I went to a Czech school. Many of my classmates went to this school as well, so studying in this school didn't make much difference for me. My parents thought that I had to know the state language living in Czechoslovakia. We spoke Hungarian at home, and there was no other place where I could learn Czech.

I studied in cheder for three years. I liked football matches. There was a football match at the stadium every Sunday afternoon. In cheder we started another section of the Torah on Sunday. I thought that if I missed one Sunday, I would catch up with the class during a week. One Sunday I

stayed in the cheder till afternoon and told the rebe that I couldn't come back after lunch. He asked me why and I said I'll go to the stadium. The rebe got very angry and said that he didn't allow me to be absent at the lesson. The rebe began to shout and threaten me, but it didn't keep me from going to the football match. Next day the rebe called me to his table, made me lie on his table in front of the class and began to beat me with his bamboo stick. I went home in tears and told my father that I would never again go to cheder, because the rebe beat me for going to a football match. My parents looked at my back with red swollen stripes on it. My mother burst into tears, and my father only shook his head. In the evening the melamed came by to complain on me. My father asked him who gave rebe the right to beat me. The rebe said that he had to teach me a lesson. My father said that he was the only one who could beat his son, and that he would not let his son go to the school where such teachers worked. He paid the rebe the month's fee and didn't send me back to the cheder. There was a poor student of yeshivah having meals in our family on Friday and Saturday. There was a custom that poor students had meals with Jewish families. My father made arrangements with him to teach me at home and promised to pay him for my classes. We had two classes per week. He taught me the torah and everything we studied in the cheder and later trained me for a bar mitzvah. It was a big relief for me to have classes at home and I had time to do my homework for school and play with my friends.

I had bar mitzvah when I turned 13. On the first Saturday after my birthday my father and I went to the synagogue. I read an section and out on a tallit for the first time in my life. My father had treatments for the attendants of the synagogue, and in the evening we had a festive dinner at home. There were my parents' friends, the rabbi, of course, and the student who trained me for the bar mitzvah. Everybody greeted me and I felt myself like an adult.

There were few Zionist organizations in Vinogradov. There was Hashomer-Hatzair [4], a communist organization of young people, and Makkabi [5]. I was attracted by the Betar. It was called a fascist organization by members of other Zionist organizations, since Betar members believed that they had to defend Palestine with weapons rather than look for diplomatic ways to establish peace on this land. When I turned 13, I joined the Betar. Betar had a building with a conference hall and a gym. Our leader who came from Mukachevo [40 km from Uzhgorod, 660 km from Kiev], finished a grammar school there. There were 5 senior members in our division of Betar. Each Saturday we had gatherings in the Betar building. They were always interesting. The leader told us about what was happening in the world and spoke about the goals and tasks of Betar. There was a territorial center of Betar in Bratislava. They published journals sending them to all Betar regional centers. We received journals with articles by Jabotinsky [6] and other activists of Betar. Our leader read these articles to us. We had fencing classes in the gym, but we fenced with sticks. We had brown uniforms and military type caps. My younger sister Klara was learning sewing. She made me a nice uniform. We wore our uniforms on all holidays.

There was inflation in 1934 all over the world. Life was getting harder and Czechoslovakia was no exception. Our family was on the edge of poverty. I finished school in 1935 and didn't quite know what to do next. It was difficult to find a job and I was happy, when our leader mentioned to me that there was an opportunity to enter the Ashtar industrial school in Moravska Ostrava in Moravia. Studying in this school was free. I agreed right away: I was eager to get a profession as soon as possible and start earning money. 2 other Betar members from Vinogradov went to this school with me.

When we arrived at Moravska Ostrava, we went to the local Betar center where we obtained a certificate to the hostel of this school. It was a big 4-storied building. Its chief accommodated me on the 2nd floor. There were 6 tenants in each room. There were partitions making 6 compartments in each room. There was an iron bed, a wardrobe, a table with a table lamp on it and a hanger for clothes in each compartment. The chief of this hostel, whose last name was Valoch, was German, brought me an assignment to the entrance exams to school. The exams were to take place at the big machine building plant where the pupils of this school were trained. I was to take two written exams: in mathematics, and another one was a psychological test. Then we had to demonstrate how we could do manual work to show our coordination movements. My examiners asked me whether I intended to become a mechanic, turner, electrician or modeler. I said I wanted to be a turner. They told me to come to a copying machine. There was a sheet of paper on it with a trajectory drawn on it. I had to draw a trajectory over it with a pencil strictly following the existing lines. I was lucky. I passed all exams and got 92 points of 100. The passing point was 90. Those two other guys from Vinogradov failed their exams and had to go back home. 10% of applicants were admitted to school. In my group of 30 students I was the only Betar member. The rest of my group mates were members of Makkabi and Hashomer. They teased me calling me a fascist and said they would demand to have me out of their group. Few days later I was called to the director office where they demanded that I show a document confirming that I was a citizen of Czechoslovakia. I didn't have any documents since I was under age and I promised to ask my parents to send me the document. I wrote them, but then it turned out that they didn't apply for Czechoslovakian citizenship. They only had documents issued by Austro-Hungarian authorities. Since the state-owned machine building plant was a training base of this school, only Czechoslovakian citizens could study at this school. Since my situation was desperate I addressed Betar for help. They advised me to address attorney Mertz, a member of Betar, asking him to apply for my citizenship. It goes without saying that I didn't have money to pay the attorney and Mertz agreed to help me for free. He called director of the plant to ask him permission for my further stay in the hostel until there is a decision regarding my citizenship issued. Betar members supported me during this period. I needed money for meals. Other students who worked at the plant were paid for this while I did not have permission to work at the plant till I had my citizenship documents. My parents didn't have money to send me. I lived from hand to mouth. I couldn't even afford to buy socks, so I learned to darn my old ones. I was very concerned about what was going to happen to me. Three members of Betar arranged for me to have meals in their homes. So I lived about 3 months till I received a temporary residential permit from Brno. It might take a long time before I received approval for Czechoslovakian citizenship. However, my documents were already submitted to the Ministry and I was allowed to attend the school and have training at the plant. I had to work hard to make up for the time I missed. The plant paid me some money, and now I could have meals at the canteen. The plant worked in four shifts, and the canteen was open round the clock. It was inexpensive and the food was very good. The Betar bought me coupons for three meals per day. There were no obstacles to my studies and I began to have all excellent marks. I liked studying there. It was a huge plant with 30 thousand employees. There was state-of-the-art equipment at the plant.

Many school students were religious and could go to the synagogue. There was a day off on Saturday and in the metallurgical shop that had to operate non-stop there were non-Jewish workers on weekends. As for me, I gave up religion and Jewish traditions. I believed it all to be the vestige

of middle ages.

In 1936, when I was a student of the Ashar school, the Betar committee advised me that there was a congress to take place in Vienna and offered me to attend it. We went there by a big bus. The Congress took place in the 18th district of Vienna, half a year before the Anschluss [7], Hitler's occupation of Austria. I had my fancy Betar uniform hoping that I would need it. The trip was good. We arrived in Vienna. Most of the group had friends or relatives where they could stay. I was accommodated in a students' hostel. I shared my room with 4 other guys from Austria and Poland who came to the congress with me. The Congress was to start 3 days after we arrived. We were to help to prepare the building for the congress. There was a lot of work to do installing stands with materials. I was the youngest participant, and they always asked me to help. I hanged big photographs of Zionist activists, posters and developed materials. The Congress was to start in the evening and we were very busy, when all of a sudden Jabotinsky and his wife entered the room where I was working with 2 other guys. . Jabotinsky asked in German: 'Who is this young man?' pointing at me. Hey replied that I was the youngest delegate of Betar. Jabotinsky stroked my hair and said: 'Seier gut!' meaning 'very good'. He looked around the rooms and left. In the evening Jabotinsky made a speech at the opening ceremony. I was sitting on the balcony with other Betar members from Vinogradov. My friends from Betar asked me to make notes of all speeches. I put down all speeches, but when Jabotinsky came onto the stage, I couldn't write, so overwhelmed I felt listening to him. He spoke for over two hours. He spoke German with a slight Yiddish accent. He spoke about his idea of the future of Palestine. He said it had to be a Jewish-Arab state. There were older attendants. It was hard for them to be sitting for so long and they took off their shoes to stretch their swollen feet, but it never occurred to them they could leave the room, so afraid they were of missing one word Jabotinsky was saying. Next day Jabotinsky's friends and associates made speeches. The Congress lasted 3 days and then we returned to Moravska Ostrava. I studied in the industrial school for 3 years. Then I had one year of industrial training at the plant. We worked 8 hours instead of 3 hours, when we studied at school. When our training was over, we received the industrial school diplomas.

The Makkabi members, my former fellow students, went to Palestine. There was an official route to Palestine via Bulgaria, from the Varna port across the Black Sea. [The route was from Varna to Istanbul in the Black Sea, across the Bosphorus, the Marmara Sea, the Dardanelles, the Aegean and the Mediterranean Seas to Palestine.] What was I to do? Betar didn't issue certificates to go to Palestine. The action of Jewish emigration to Santa Domingo began in Prague at that time. There was an office in the town called 'Kurco Action for emigration to Santa Domingo'. It sent there wealthy Jews who could afford to invest money in housing construction and open their businesses. People were spending a lot of money to move there. They understood that Hitler had already started the war and hurried to move their families and capital to a safe location. I heard about it from my former schoolmate, whose father was going to move there. So I went to Prague. There were about 300 people there. I didn't have money, but I got lucky: they admitted me to this organization. They were planning to send 70 young people there to start housing construction. Members of this organization were paying for these young people. They employed construction men, but I became one of the group anyway. I went to study English and Spanish. Everybody was in a hurry: the German troops invaded Poland and were moving across Czechoslovakia. The money people paid were deposited in a bank. Hitler occupied Czechoslovakia and arrested the bank

accounts. There was no way to get the money back, and there was no way to travel there without money. So this plan failed.

When fascists occupied Czechoslovakia, I knew I had to leave. [Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia] [8] I knew that Subcarpathia became Hungarian [Hungarian troops occupied Subcarpathia in March 1939. The western part where Vinogradov is was attached to Hungary as early as the 2nd November 1938, together with Southern Slovakia as a result of the First Vienna Decesion.] and that Jewish oppression began there. I didn't want to go back there. I was looking for other opportunities. Slovakia became a separate state. [After the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia the Nazi satellite Slovakia came into existence in March 14th 1939.] My friend from Tyachev [125 km from Uzhgorod, 615 km from Kiev] in Subcarpathia, started on our way to Slovakia. We managed to leave for Bratislava. After Prague was invaded, everybody had to go to the German commandant office where they issued passports with the capital letter 'J', Jude, typed on its cover. We obtained those passports and went to a tourist company in Prague where we got 3-month visas to Slovakia. So we took a train to Slovakia and traveled legally to Bratislava. At the border there was a luggage check. A German soldier came into our compartment and ordered us to open our suitcases. He asked us where we were heading and hearing our reply 'To Bratislava' he said: 'I know you would like to go to Palestine, but we will go there, too.'

We hoped to get a job and stay in Bratislava, but there were Slovak fascists there. Persecution of Jews began in Slovakia. Jews were taken to work camps.

My sister sent me a copy of our residential certificate saying that I resided with my parents in Vinogradov and that my parents were Hungarian citizens. So I was saying that I was a citizen of Hungary. My friend stayed in Bratislava and I decided to go home. The Hungarian Embassy refused to issue me a passport, but they issued an identity card with a photograph where it was specified that I resided in Subcarpathia. The Embassy took away my passport issued in Prague and gave me a certificate for a single trip home instead. I went to Budapest. I didn't have any acquaintances there, but I hoped to get a job. The Hungarian frontier men who came to the train to check documents took away my certificate that I got at the Embassy. When I asked what I was supposed to do without documents they replied that I would obtain them 3 days later in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Budapest. The hotel refused to accommodate me without documents. I asked them, though, and the porter allowed me to stay overnight in a little room under the roof. In the morning I had to leave. This was my first time in Budapest and I walked along the streets looking around, when I bumped into my sister Klara's friend. She offered me to stay with her relatives and took me there. They accommodated me in a small room with a bed and a wardrobe. The host didn't want to take money from me and suggested that I taught his son Hebrew and English. His son worked in a bookstore. In the basement of this store they made copies. There were no copy-machines and those were photo copies made. The Jewish owner of this store employed me and I learned to make photo copies. I worked there for about half a year. There were anti-Jewish laws [9] enforced in Hungary, but there was no particular oppression as yet. There were synagogues operating in Budapest and there was Jewish life. Later I got to know that the Jewish situation in Hungary was easier than in Subcarpathia where Jews were oppressed more.

In spring 1941 I received a subpoena for a work camp that was delivered to me where I lived. It said that I had to work there 3 months and there was a list of luggage I could take with me. From

the gathering point a group of 200 people was taken to Nyiregyhaza, a Hungarian town near Uzhgorod. We traveled in a freight train with no comforts. In Nyiregyhaza we were working on making a big pyramid-shaped sand hill for shooting training to keep shells. We were there for 3 months. Then they let us go home to see our families for one month and ordered to gather in Budapest. I went home.

My older sister Klara married Aron Weinberger, a local Jew, in 1936. He owned a winery. They had a traditional Jewish wedding. In 1937 Klara's first baby Tibor was born. Her younger son Laszlo was still a baby, when I came to see them. Klara lived with her husband and children in their house. Erzsebet and Earnest lived with our parents. I spent about a month at home. I didn't know then that I saw my father, mother and my sister Klara and her family for the last time.

I was to go back to the work camp. From Budapest we were taken to a narrow-gauge railroad construction site to Transylvania by train. [The northern half of Transylvania was attached to Hungary in August 30th 1940 according to the Second Vienna Decesion, while Southern Transylvania remained Romanian.] We were to deliver carts with gravel to the track. When the construction was over, we were taken to the USSR by train. The Great Patriotic War [10] had just begun. The Hungarian army involved work battalions in the construction of trenches and blindages near the front line. Unarmed people with spades became very good targets for shooting. Soviet soldiers did not care whether this was regular army or a work battalion. Our freight train stopped for a whole hour in Poland. We managed to shave and have our hair cut in a barber's. Then I went into a house to ask them for some hot water to get washed. I tried to keep clean and even had a folding basin for washing. I also asked those people to sell me some food. They gave me few big pieces of pork fat and a bag of flour. I exchanged my scarf, my sister's gift, for a sledge to haul my load. The train arrived at Belgorod town in Russia, near the Ukrainian border, 450 km from Kiev. We were ordered to get off the train, lined up and walked to Staryy Oskol in about 120 km from Belgorod. It was winter and the snow covered the ground. We slept in the open air. In Staryy Oskol we were taken to an old cinema theater. There was straw on the floor. There was a field kitchen on the bank of a river, and we went there to have meals twice a day. Once, when we were on the bank, we saw a military horse-driven wagon sinking under the ice and we were ordered to haul it out of there, but nobody wanted to get into the icy water. They ordered us to line up and then told every tenth inmate to step out of the line. I was so scared that I might be one of them. I couldn't swim. There were about 10 people stepping out of the line. They had to swim to the spot where the wagon was and drag it to the bank.

In Staryy Oskol we stayed about a week. In late autumn 1942 40 of us were taken to the work camp working for the German army in Yudino village on the bank of the Don River. The inmates worked digging trenches and removing the snow. The death rate was very high there and we were to replace the deceased. There were no residents left in the village. There were only German and Hungarian troops. The temperature was 30-35° below zero. We were told to find lodging. I stayed close to two guys from Subcarpathia. One of them was Ignac from Tyachev. I don't remember his last name. Another guy was Henrich Singer, a tailor from Uzhgorod. We found a half-ruined hut. There were no windows or doors in it. We were allowed to miss one day at work to put the hut in order. The rest of the camp went to work on the bank of the Don. One of newcomers managed to cross the Don to the opposite bank where there were Soviet troops. His absence was only noticed when they returned to the camp. Again they ordered us to line up, selected every tenth inmate and

shot them in front of the line. There, you will know how to desert to the Russians! We went to work every day to clean the snow for German tanks to attack. They were followed by the Hungarian infantry. We were at work from dawn till dark. We didn't undress before going to sleep. We were hoping for the Russians to come each day. When we saw 'Katyusha' units [mobile missile unit] shooting from the opposite bank, we called them 'Stalin's candles' and they implanted hope into our hearts. The Russians began their attack and there was shooting on our bank, so near, but it wasn't our luck. The Russian troops outflanked the village of Yudino. In the morning we lined up. Our guards ordered us to take spades and move to where the Romanian army was deployed. It was a sunny day and the sun reflected from the glaringly white snow. At first I had sparks in my eyes, but then I lost my sight. My friends were guiding me holding me by my elbows. We were in the rear of the column. We decided that if we came to a village we would stay behind and try to escape. We got lucky and managed to escape, when we were near a village before evening. There were no Germans left in the village. There were only locals. We were let into a house. I was the only one of the three of us who could speak Russian. Of course, Russian is different from Ukrainian, but they could understand me. They said we had to move to the rear and showed us the direction. We thought that 'rear' was a name of a village or town. We crossed a Don's arm over a bridge that the Russians built during their attack and moved on. Again we asked to stay overnight in a house. Though we were enemies, fascists, in the minds of local people, but they let us in and gave us boiled potatoes in jackets. They were very poor, but they shared with us what they had. However, before going to sleep they took away our knives, but they returned them in the morning. So we walked having a vague idea about where we were going. Henrich Singer from Uzhgorod was a tailor. When we came into a house to stay overnight, he fixed the hosts' clothes to pay back for their hospitality. In one house I fixed a sewing machine. We got meals and food to go for this. We were always hungry, but we had good luck. Once, on the front line we bumped into a truck. The driver was dead. We found dried bread in his pockets. There were horse corpses around. The frost was so severe that the meat became stone hard. We cooked a piece of horse meat on the fire somehow. But this luck didn't happen often.

Once we came to a small village and asked to stay overnight in a house. The hostess had a military overcoat on her table trying to cut it into something else. Singer offered her his help. He cut a man's jacket from this overcoat and began to sew it together manually. So we stayed longer in this village. Singer sewed clothes, and the hostess gave us food. Singer didn't hurry on purpose to enable us to stay longer. When this piece of work was over our hostess said that a school teacher asked us to come to her home to help her with sewing. The teacher lived with her sister. We stayed with them: Singer sewed clothes and I fixed whatever was broken.

Soviet soldiers came to villages looking for Germans in hiding. They came to the village where we were staying. Once the woman whom Singer made a jacket from an overcoat, asked us to cut wood for her. Singer and Ignac went there and were captured by Soviet soldiers. The woman ran to the teacher and told her that my friends were arrested. The teacher gave me shelter in her cellar. When soldiers came to ask her, she said she had no strangers in the house. So my friends were arrested and I was alone. I stayed in this village till spring 1943. The teacher told me the way where to go and I started on my way. Of course, I had to ask local resident the direction. Once I addressed a passer-by in a small town. He didn't like my accent and called a policeman. I didn't have any documents and they took me to a militia office. Of course, they didn't have any proof that

I was a spy, but where there is a will, there is a way. I had a nail sticking out inside my shoe injuring my foot. I had cheap paper backs in Hungarian in my back pack. I folded up one of those books and put in onto the nail under my heel in my shoe. This book got so ragged in my shoe that it was impossible to read one letter in it. When they undressed me in the militia and found this book they decided that it was very suspicious. They said that I was probably a spy, took me to a cell and locked the door. I was kept there for ten days. Then a military came in and told me they would take me to a camp. We walked to the railway station and took a train. The military had a weapon, but understood that it didn't make sense to try to escape anyway. We reached Voronezh [Russia, about 500 km southwest of Moscow] where there were other prisoners-of-war waiting for departure to a camp. There were many SS officers and Hungarians among them. We were kept in the quarantine few days, and when the group was big enough they took us to Usman [about 400 km southeast of Moscow]. There was a camp for prisoners-of-war in a former monastery. The camp was big. We were taken to a yard fenced with barbed wire. I was sitting on the ground, when somebody called my name from behind the wire. I saw those two guys who were with me before and few Jews. Though we met in the camp and didn't know what was to happen to us, we were happy to see each other. I didn't feel so lonely any longer. They told me that they were working in the camp and that the Russians had more trust in Jews than in Hungarians or Germans. The Jews working in the kitchen, brought me a tin of the US canned pork, a piece of bread and a spoon. Few Germans surrounded me asking for a bit of food. One of them began to take off his wedding ring to give it to me. They didn't have any resemblance to those arrogant merciless SS officers whom we saw at the front. I threw few pieces of meat onto the ground and they pounced on it. The Jews who brought me the food got offended that I gave some to fascists.

Singer had opened a garment store in the camp. They fixed the inmates clothing and made common clothes. There were Germans and Romanians working in it. At Singer's request I was sent to work in this shop. We had some privileges getting better food and being able to freely move across the camp. Then they opened a shoemaker's shop near our garment shop. There were also prisoners working there. They fixed shoes and made canvas sabot shoes on wooden soles for inmates of the camp. We stayed in barracks for 200 inmates. There were 2-tier beds inside. The barracks were locked in the evening. The Red Cross delivered food and medications to the camp. I don't remember how long we were kept in Usman before we were taken to another camp in Voronezh. In Voronezh we were taken to the bathroom upon arrival. Our clothing was disinfected. There was a very big camp there. There were German, Italian, Romanian and Hungarian prisoners in this camp. We stayed in huge wooden barracks. There were wooden plank beds along the walls in two rows. We got sufficient food there. There were American food packages of lentil with chicken meat delivered to the camp under an international agreement. The situation in the camp in Voronezh was much better than in Usman. There was sufficient food and there were washing facilities. There were Jews in the camp, but they didn't observe any Jewish traditions, though there were many religious Jews. My friend Singer was religious, for example. Of course, they didn't eat pork, but this was the only thing they could do there in this regard. This was a different world and they were torn away from their habitual reality. Singer opened a garment shop in Voronezh, only this was a better shop. They made uniforms for Russian officers, women's clothes and fixed clothes. There were few good German tailors and Singer employed them in his shop. There was a shoemaker's shop near the garment shop. I worked in It was a two-storied building. Chief of headquarters lived on the second floor. He was a colonel. Our shops were on the first floor. Singer

and I were allowed to live in a small room near our shops. The only bad thing about it was that this room was full of bugs. There were no bugs in the barracks, but here the room was swarmed with them. Before going to bed we wrapped the legs of beds with wet cloth to prevent bugs from climbing them. However, though those bugs disturbed us a lot, this was still an illusion of home. There was a house across the street from there and we often looked at the lighted windows. There was a big family living in one of apartments. We often saw a young girl through the window. There was a small river near the camp where people went to fetch water from a pump. This girl also went there with buckets every day. Singer introduced me to her. Her name was Sophia Belinskaya. She became his wife in the future. When Singer was released in September 1946, she followed him to Subcarpathia. They live in Uzhgorod. We often see each other. Singer is one of the few friends of my youth I have.

On 9 May 1945 it was announced that the war was over and that Germany capitulated. It was great joy for us. Even German prisoners were happy that the war was over. We were hoping that we would be able to go home soon, but they only began to release prisoners in summer 1946. I don't know what guidance the management of the camp had for releasing the prisoners. Singer and Ignac were released in September 1946. They decided to go back to Subcarpathia. We already knew that Subcarpathia became Soviet. I understood that we couldn't judge about the rest of the Soviet Union by the situation in Soviet camps for prisoners-of-war. I also decided to go back home, though I didn't know whether any of my family survived, but somehow, they didn't release me from the camp. I gave Singer our address in Nagyszolos and asked him to find out what happened to my family.

Since I studied in a Ukrainian school for four years I could write in Cyrillic letters. I began to write letters in Ukrainian to Stalin, Beriia [11] and Molotov [12]. I didn't get answers, but I kept writing. There were only SS officers left in the camp and I was kept with them. 1947 began. In spring chief of the camp called me all of a sudden. He asked me whether I wrote Stalin. I replied that I did and I also wrote others. Then he showed me a letter from Moscow: 'Order to chief of the camp for prisoners-of-war colonel Korzetov. You should immediately release Schwartz Nikolay Isidorovich from the camp for prisoners-of-war and send him to the place of his residence'. Colonel told me to get packed and be ready to depart. A first sergeant came into my room. He said he was to drive me home.

The first sergeant escorted me to Uzhgorod, where he took me to a militia office. I didn't have any documents, except for a certificate of release from the camp. In the militia office they developed a deed and opened a case against me since I was kept in the camp at the suspicion in espionage. They kept me in a cell in the militia for a week. They demanded that I named the people who could confirm my identity. There were no members of my family in Vinogradov that was a new name of Vinogradov. in the USSR. There were no childhood friends. Some of them perished in work battalions or concentration camps and others moved to other countries after the war. They didn't want to return to Soviet Subcarpathia. Finally I recalled the Ukrainian greek-catholic woman who came to help my mother with the laundry before Sabbath. Her name was Marina and she lived across the street from the Catholic church in Vinogradov. She was very old and I didn't know whether she was still there, but next day they brought her to the militia office. Marina recognized me and hugged and kissed me. She confirmed everything I said about my family and myself. They let me go. I went to Vinogradov, but I couldn't bear the loneliness and memories. I was alone in the

house where my family used to live. My neighbors told me that my family was taken to the Auschwitz concentration camp in 1944 where they all perished. Fortunately later it turned out that some of my dear ones survived, but my parents and sister Klara with her family and her husband's parents did perish in Auschwitz. My sister Yelizaveta and younger brother Earnest survived. I got to know about them much later, when I lived in Uzhgorod. I moved there in 1948 at the invitation of my childhood friend, who had finished the trade Academy in Mukachevo before World War II and was chief of industrial department of the executive committee [Ispolkom] [13]. I had finished the industrial school and this was all education I had, but at that time it was valued anyway. Besides, I could speak Ukrainian and Russian. When Subcarpathia became Soviet, Russian became the state language, All documents and correspondence were conducted in Russian. My friend offered me position of chief of logistic department at the mechanic plant in Uzhgorod. I had to interface with directors of other plants and enterprises. Most of them came from the USSR and spoke Russian. I started work and was doing well. My management appreciated my performance and I became a respected person in Uzhgorod.

Many things about the Soviet regime seemed wild to me. The Soviet regime waged severe struggle against religion [14]. The majority of population in Subcarpathia, Jewish and non-Jewish, was religious. Religion was an important part of people's life. Soviet authorities were closing temples and arrest clergymen sending them in exile. There was only one main synagogue operating in Uzhgorod. The rest of the synagogues were closed. This main synagogue was on the Uzh River. Later they also closed it and it became the Philharmonic. People were confused. They were not allowed to attend the synagogue or churches or celebrate holidays. Soviet authorities might fire people from work for this. Only old people who had nothing to fear went to the synagogue. There was nothing like this during the Czechoslovakian or Hungarian rule. There was also a concern of anti-Semitism that came to Subcarpathia with the Soviet power. Of course, there was anti-Semitism during the Hungarian rule, but it was when Hungary was fascists, and nobody believed there could be anti-Semitism in the country struggling against fascism. There were only demonstrations of routinely anti-Semitism at first. However, only newcomers from the USSR could say 'zhyd' [kike] in the streets or in transport. Later it developed into the state level anti-Semitism. In the late 1940s Jews had problems with getting a job or going to study in higher educational institutions. Also, the blind faith of newcomers from the USSR in the infallible rightfulness of the Communist Party and Stalin was just scary. Struggle against cosmopolites [15] in the USSR in 1948 had hardly any impact on Subcarpathia, but its range was fearful. I read newspapers and didn't understand why those people were arrested. In January 1953 the 'doctors' plot' [16] began. Perhaps, the majority of doctors in Uzhgorod were Jews. Local residents of Subcarpathia ignored newspaper publications and continued to visit Jewish doctors. Whenever somebody standing in line to a doctor's office said something about 'poisoners' and 'murderers', this somebody was surely a newcomer from the USSR. I remember 5 March 1953, the day Stalin died. It was a relief for me. I knew from one of my friends about the scheduled deportation of Jews from Subcarpathia to Birobidzhan [17] in Siberia. I realized that Stalin's death rescued us from the life of outcasts. There were many people crying and sobbing on this day in the streets and in offices. Of course, they were all newcomers from the USSR. I don't think many of them suffered from losing their dear ones like they did when Stalin died. I was bewildered by it and felt like staying away from it. I felt the same about the situation in the USSR after the 20th Congress [18] of the Party. This was something that had nothing to do with me.

I rented a room in Uzhgorod, when I moved there. Later my acquaintances, who were moving to Hungary, offered me their apartment. I went to the executive committee to request them to issue all necessary documents for this apartment so that I could have it. They listened to me and gave this apartment to an employee of the executive committee. I sued chairman of the executive committee, but he didn't even attend the sitting of the court. There was his attorney in court. The judge listened to both of us and took a decision that I was to be enrolled in the list of those who need an apartment. There were such lists in each district executive committee and it took years to receive an apartment. I really rented apartments till I grew old. I only got an apartment, when the house where I rented an apartment was to be removed. This happened in 1989.

I didn't celebrate Soviet holidays at home. There were banquets at work and my attendance was mandatory, but I didn't see any sense in those holidays. I didn't join the party. At first they told me that I needed to join the party, but that I was a prisoner-of-war might make an obstacle for it, and later they stopped talking to me about it. Anyway, I wasn't eager to join the party and took it easy.

I met my wife by chance. Shortly after I moved to Uzhgorod, I fell ill with jaundice. There was nobody to take care of me. My former school friend from Vinogradov heard that I was ill and offered me to move in with him. His wife was looking after me. There was a young Russian woman living in a neighboring house. She often came to see my friend's wife. She was a tall and beautiful blonde. I found her stories about life in the USSR interesting and besides, it was a good opportunity for me to practice my Russian. Nina Ivanova was born and lived in Leningrad. She graduated from Leningrad University. During the war Nina stayed in Leningrad. She survived the siege [Blockade of Leningrad] [19]. She was one of the few ones who were rescued by the 'Road of life' [20]. Nina was a journalist. She worked for RATAU [abbreviation for the Radio and Telegraph Agency of Ukraine] in Subcarpathia. She had a telephone at home and once I came by to make a phone call to Uzhgorod. She rented an apartment from a Hungarian owner. It was a small room with few pieces of furniture: an iron bed, a table and a chair. I didn't quite recover and fainted. Nina insisted that I stayed. She called a doctor and bought medications. I stayed with her till I recovered. Then I had to go back to Uzhgorod. I didn't think about Nina as of my future wife. We grew up in different worlds and had nothing in common. At that time I didn't consider marriage. I wanted to live my life for myself, particularly after the war and the camp. I imagined my future wife to come from Subcarpathia, even if she wasn't Jewish. I left for Uzhgorod. Some time later Nina visited me in my apartment that I was renting. She said she had moved to Uzhgorod since she had a job offer here. She stayed to live with me. We didn't register our marriage. I was OK without an official marriage. I thought I had to be free. I was thinking of possible emigration. So we lived till she got pregnant. There were few men after the war, and many women agreed to have a baby even without a husband. Nina kept telling me that she didn't want anything from me and that she would go to Leningrad and raise the child there. Of course, I couldn't allow it. Even though I didn't consider her to be my wife, a baby was a different story. In 1952 Nina gave birth to my son. We named him Alexandr. I tried to help Nina to take care of the baby. We had a visiting nurse who went for walks with the baby and did washing. Later I got to know that Nina gave our son her last name of Ivanova. She said she did it for our son to face no anti-Semitism, but it was a strong blow for me. I couldn't feel the same love to the child that I felt before.

In 1950 my sister Yelisaveta found me. Once a woman came to see me at home. I was at work and she left a package and a note for me. There was a knitted vest in the package and the address of

this woman in the note. She lived in Khust [50 km from Uzhgorod, 670 km from Kiev]. I went to see her and she told me that this was a gift from my sister. They were in Hemsjo, in a camp in Sweden together. She told me the story of my sister Yelisaveta. She was taken to Auschwitz. During a selection process she added 5 years to her age. The Germans sent her to a work camp in Auschwitz. My sister was reluctant to talk about details of this period. I know that once she was sent to a gas chamber. The prisoners were naked waiting for the gas to be pumped inside, when all of a sudden the door opened and a German officer told them to come outside. There were Polish Jews working near the gas chamber. They gave my sister and other prisoners some rags to cover their bodies. The prisoners returned to their barrack. When in spring 1945 the soviet and American armies started their attack, fascists exterminated weaker and sickly prisoners, and the remaining prisoners of the Auschwitz camp, including my sister, were sent to Mauthausen. And few days later American troops liberated the camp. My sister decided there was no way she returned home. She knew that Subcarpathia became Soviet and asked to send her to Sweden. She moved to Hemsjo town in Sweden where she met the woman who brought me that parcel from my sister. In Sweden and later in the USA my sister was called Elizabeth and Lisa in Israel. However, Yelisaveta failed to learn Swedish and didn't think she could get adjusted in Sweden. When my sister grew strong enough after the camp she asked to send her to the USA. My sister was hoping to find our father's brothers there, the ones who left at the beginning of the century. She had no idea how big the USA was and it didn't occur to her that our father's brothers might have changed their surname or moved to another country. She never found them. The woman who brought me the parcel, decided to go to Subcarpathia. My sister asked her to find me to tell me she survived. However, Yelisaveta failed to learn Swedish and didn't think she could get adjusted in Sweden.. got a US entry visa and plane tickets. Everybody going to USA, got bags with clothes. However, Yelisaveta failed to learn Swedish and didn't think she could get adjusted in Sweden. flew to New York. She didn't know anybody and couldn't speak English. She was sitting in the airport not knowing what to do. A Jewish man approached her asking her in Yiddish whether she was waiting for somebody. My sister told him her story. This man found lodging for her and helped her to get a job. At first Yelisaveta worked on a conveyor at a factory. She met people from Hungary. She also met Chaim Klein, a Jewish man from Svaliava town in Subcarpathia [50 km from Uzhgorod, 630 km from Kiev]. Before WWII he finished a yeshivah in Bratislava. During the war he was in a work battalion in Ukraine. After the retreat of the Hungarian army he got to Italy and from there he moved to USA. Chaim was a rabbi in a small synagogue in Bronx in New York. In 1949 they got married. They had a traditional Jewish wedding. My sister and her husband always observed Jewish traditions. They didn't have children.

In 1953 I was arrested. I signed bills of lading for the goods from our storage facility. There was an OBHSS audit [Department of Struggle against Theft of Socialist Property', a division of the Ministry of Home Affairs]. There were missing goods at the storage. Then they discovered bills of lading for these goods that I signed. According to these documents the receiver of the shipment was different from what was written in the bills. Though the signature had little resemblance with my signature, and besides, I was on business trip at the time, they arrested me. Either the investigation officer wanted to get done with this case, or those who were actually guilty bribed him – I don't know. He didn't listen to what I was trying to explain. They didn't examine my signature and ignored the fact that I was away from Uzhgorod on the day of issuance of those bills. I was in Kharkov [east of Ukraine, 430 km from Kiev, 1100 km from Uzhgorod]. The case was transferred to court and I was sentenced to 7 years of imprisonment in a labor penitentiary camp. I was taken to Drogobych of

Lvov region [120 km from Uzhgorod, 560 km from Kiev] to this camp. I was desperate, my life seemed to be over. When I was in the camp, I started writing complaints to the Supreme Court describing the details of the investigation process. I didn't get any response for about a year. Then a lawyer from the Supreme Court arrived to question me about my case. After listening to me he said he would solicit for the review of my case. During a retrial the court discovered many mistakes and distortion in the course of investigation. The true culprits were discovered: an accountant and a storekeeper. In 1955 they released me for absence of corpus delicti. Later I got to know that my former investigation officer was dismissed. I was restored at work, but this couldn't replace two years of my life that were wasted. Most of all I wanted to leave the USSR, but this was impossible in those years.

After my arrest Nina moved to another apartment. In two years she never wrote me a letter. I don't know whether she believed that I was guilty or was just concerned about her safety. When I returned from prison, she was living alone raising her son. My son was raised knowing nothing about Jewish traditions or Jewish history. Nina got panicky even hearing the word 'Jew'. Of course, I supported her and tried to spend more time with my son, but I didn't feel like living together with her. I had women, but I never got married.

In 1965 I met with my sister. She requested a visa to the USSR, but they refused to issue it. She came to Budapest. In those years it was easy for residents of Subcarpathia to travel to Hungary. I managed to go to Budapest where my sister and I spent almost a month. Yelisaveta and her husband decided to move to Israel, when they became pensioners. They moved to Jerusalem in 1986.

Yelisaveta told me the good news that our brother Earnest was alive. It turned out that Yelisaveta kept in touch with Earnest for a long time. When World War II began, Earnest studied in a vocational school in Budapest. The Hungarian fascists were more loyal to Hungarian Jews than to Subcarpathian Jews. Many Jews could stay in their houses in Hungary and were not taken to concentration camps. The only mandatory thing that fascists did was painting yellow hexagonal stars on Jewish houses [Yellow star houses] [21], though I guess, I know little about it, or what I know is what I heard from others. [He refers to the fact that deportations from Budapest were not finished as opposed to the Hungarian countryside.] When Germans invaded Budapest [March 19th 1944], Earnest and 50 other students of their vocational school found refuge in the Swiss Embassy. They were hiding there until the end of the war. From Budapest they moved to Romania where they tried to take a boat to Palestine. [illegally] Their boat was arrested by British soldiers and sent to Crete in Greece. They kept them for a long time there, but then Greek fishermen secretly took them to Palestine in their boats. Earnest joined a kibbutz. Then he finished a construction vocational school and returned to his kibbutz where he married Ioheved, a girl who was born in Palestine. She was a teacher. Earnest took part in the Six-Day War [22] After the war he continued his work in the kibbutz. Earnest and Ioheved didn't have children. I met with my brother once. He arrived in Budapest like Yelisaveta since he couldn't get a visa to the USSR. We spent a week together and then my brother returned to Israel. Earnest died in 1983. I didn't go to his funeral. Citizens of the USSR couldn't travel abroad then. My sister took a plane to go to my brother's funeral. Later she wrote me that our brother was buried in accordance with Jewish traditions.

I believed Soviet invasion in Hungary in 1956 [23] and Czechoslovakia in 1968 [Prague Spring] [24] as an effort of the USSR to keep all countries of the 'socialist camp' behind the barbed wire. Of course, the USSR couldn't allow a single country to refuse from socialism since it might result in many followers. The USSR took every effort, even aggression, to keep all of them under control. This was like in prison: they stopped any attempt of escape so that the others stopped even considering it.

I retired in 1982. They were trying to convince me to stay at work, but I was already seriously ill. I had diabetes and had to keep to my diet and schedule my days. It was hard to follow my prescriptions at work. My sister was telling me to join them, but I didn't see any perspectives for myself. I should have moved there earlier, when I still could work and why would an old man want to emigrate? I am not used to be a dependent and receive what I didn't work for. I worked for my pension here in the USSR and didn't think it possible for me to receive alms in the USA.

My son Alexandr graduated from the Mechanic Faculty of Uzhgorod University. Upon graduation my son married his co-student Galina, a Russian girl, whose parents moved to Uzhgorod after World War II. In 1982 their daughter Yelena was born and in 1985 – their son Nikolay. My son and daughter-in-law worked a lot and I spent much time with my grandchildren. I had time for reading. I had many books in Hungarian, Yiddish, Hebrew and English. I tried to read more to remember the languages.

When in the late 1980s perestroika [25] began in the USSR, I was indifferent to it at first, like I was to anything related to the Soviet power. I didn't care about their promises of a better life. I had heard them since I returned from the camp in 1947. Later I realized that many things were changing to the better. Gorbachev [26] allowed private entrepreneurship that had been forbidden for many years in the USSR. Many people started their businesses working for themselves. Many of my co-prisoners imprisoned for private entrepreneurship became successful entrepreneurs and respected people during perestroika. The freedom of speech that Gorbachev promised became a reality. There was no need to listen to western radios to hear the truth about the situation in the USSR. Newspapers began to publish articles describing our present and past life. The ban on religion was gone. People could go to church and celebrate religious holidays. However, in the course of Soviet rule people got so much out of this habit that at first there were not enough attendants for a minyan at the synagogue. Only few knew prayers and how to pray. Then chairman of the Jewish community of Uzhgorod suggested that I attended the synagogue. At first I went there to socialize and of course, to enable them to gather a minyan, but then it became a habit with me that developed into a need. In my childhood religion was a significant part of my life. When praying I recalled my parents, my childhood, my sisters and my brother. Every year I recited the Kaddish for my dear ones who had perished in the camp and for my deceased brother.

During perestroika citizens of the USSR got an opportunity to keep in touch with their friends and relatives living abroad. Correspondence was allowed and censorship of the mail was cancelled. It became possible to travel abroad or invite foreigners. In 1987 I visited my sister in Israel for the first time. Of course, I liked Israel very much, but I didn't consider staying there. I felt out of place, missed my home and friends and I wouldn't manage to learn Ivrit. I can still remember a little Hebrew that we studied in cheder, the language of the torah, but it's hard for me to understand contemporary Ivrit spoken in Israel. I haven't visited my sister again: I didn't get along with her

husband. We didn't like each other, and I didn't want to cause conflicts between Yelizaveta and her husband. There was an incident in Israel that strained our relationships. My sister and her husband observed Jewish traditions and followed kashrut. Chaim Klein always had his head covered. As for me, I didn't think it was necessary and didn't have a kippah or a hat. Once Chaim and I took a bus. I was sitting on a seat in the middle part and he was near the driver. A rabbi came into the bus. He happened to be Chaim's acquaintance from New York. They used to go to the synagogue together and discuss the Torah. In Israel they also met regularly to read and discuss what they had read. The rabbi saw Chaim and nodded to him, and Chaim yelled at me from where he was sitting: 'Put on a kippah immediately!' I didn't have a kippah and felt very ill at ease. Even the rabbi felt uncomfortable. He turned his head away pretending that he didn't hear. When we got off the bus, Chaim began to shout at me reproaching me for not observing Jewish traditions. I objected that not everybody in Israel wore a kippah and that if he thought it necessary he should have warned me about it. This made our relationships worse than ever and I hurried to find an excuse for going back home. I saw Yelizaveta for the last time in July 1996, when she visited Uzhgorod. In October 1996 my sister died. 3 years later her husband died too.

When I was notified about my sister's death, I went to the Embassy of Israel in Kiev. The funeral was to take place on 20 October. Her friends from the US were coming to her funeral. I called the Embassy and they promised to expedite the issuance of a visa for me. I went to Kiev. I didn't have an invitation letter, but I showed the telegram and asked them to give me an opportunity to go to my sister's funeral. I spent few days in Kiev waiting for the visa. When I came there again, they said that there was a negative response about my visa. My sister was buried, but I was not there. The Jewish community in Uzhgorod found an opportunity to have my visa for Israel issued in Budapest. Some of her friends from the US waited for me in Jerusalem to take me to the cemetery. I recited the Kaddish over Yelizaveta's grave and lit candles. I spent few days in Israel and returned home.

After Ukraine gained independence the Jewish life had a rebirth. The Jewish community became stronger. People stopped hiding their Jewish identity. However, this refers to those Jews who had moved to Subcarpathia from other areas of the USSR since local Subcarpathian Jews have been open about their identity. More people began to attend the synagogue. Frankly, I don't believe them to be real Jews. There can be no Jew without cheder. As for those who had moved here, only Ukrainians called them 'zhydy', Jews. They have never been Jews for me. They don't know Hebrew or even Yiddish, they cannot recite a prayer and they don't know that before entering the synagogue they have to put on a hat, which is different from Christian traditions. Christians take off their hats before entering a temple. It's good that they teach young people in the Jewish school and in Hesed. At least our grandchildren will know what the Soviet power deprived our children of. In Hesed there are classes in Hebrew, Jewish traditions and history. Many young men and girls attend them. Regretfully, my son or grandchildren do not identify themselves as Jews and do not take part in those activities. Hesed works a lot for the restoration of the Jewry in Ukraine. It also helps old people to survive. I do not leave my home. I live alone and need help constantly. My son cannot spend much time with me. He brings me food before going to work in the morning and then he leaves. If it were not for the Hesed assistance, I would not survive. A nurse visits me every day and a doctor comes to see me once a week. They deliver meals to my home and buy medications. They also bring me Jewish newspapers and magazines. I am very grateful to all those who help me.

Glossary:

[1] Subcarpathia (also known as Ruthenia, Russian and Ukrainian name Zakarpacie): Region situated on the border of the Carpathian Mountains with the Middle Danube lowland. The regional capitals are Uzhgorod, Berehovo, Mukachevo, Khust. It belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy until World War I; and the Saint-Germain convention declared its annexation to Czechoslovakia in 1919. It is impossible to give exact historical statistics of the language and ethnic groups living in this geographical unit: the largest groups in the interwar period were Hungarians, Rusyns, Russians, Ukrainians, Czech and Slovaks. In addition there was also a considerable Jewish and Gypsy population. In accordance with the first Vienna Decision of 1938, the area of Subcarpathia mainly inhabited by Hungarians was ceded to Hungary. The rest of the region, was proclaimed a new state called Carpathian Ukraine in 1939, with Khust as its capital, but it only existed for four and a half months, and was occupied by Hungary in March 1939. Subcarpathia was taken over by Soviet troops and local guerrillas in 1944. In 1945, Czechoslovakia ceded the area to the USSR and it gained the name Carpatho-Ukraine. The region became part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1945. When Ukraine became independent in 1991, the region became an administrative region under the name of Transcarpathia.

[2] Hasid: The follower of the Hasidic movement, a Jewish mystic movement founded in the 18th century that reacted against Talmudic learning and maintained that God's presence was in all of one's surroundings and that one should serve God in one's every deed and word. The movement provided spiritual hope and uplifted the common people. There were large branches of Hasidic movements and schools throughout Eastern Europe before World War II, each following the teachings of famous scholars and thinkers. Most had their own customs, rituals and life styles. Today there are substantial Hasidic communities in New York, London, Israel and Antwerp.

[3] Tsimes: Stew made usually of carrots, parsnips, or plums with potatoes.

[4] Hashomer Hatzair: 'The Young Watchman'; A Zionist-socialist pioneering movement founded in Eastern Europe, Hashomer Hatzair trained youth for kibbutz life and set up kibbutzim in Palestine. During World War II, members were sent to Nazi-occupied areas and became leaders in Jewish resistance groups. After the war, Hashomer Hatzair was active in 'illegal' immigration to Palestine.

[5] Maccabi World Union: International Jewish sports organization whose origins go back to the end of the 19th century. A growing number of young Eastern European Jews involved in Zionism felt that one essential prerequisite of the establishment of a national home in Palestine was the improvement of the physical condition and training of ghetto youth. In order to achieve this, gymnastics clubs were founded in many Eastern and Central European countries, which later came to be called Maccabi. The movement soon spread to more countries in Europe and to Palestine. The World Maccabi Union was formed in 1921. In less than two decades its membership was estimated at 200,000 with branches located in most countries of Europe and in Palestine, Australia, South America, South Africa, etc.

[6] Jabotinsky, Vladimir (1880-1940): Founder and leader of the Revisionist Zionist movement; soldier, orator and a prolific author writing in Hebrew, Russian, and English. During World War I he established and served as an officer in the Jewish Legion, which fought in the British army for the liberation of the Land of Israel from Turkish rule. He was a member of the Board of Directors of the Keren Hayesod, the financial arm of the World Zionist Organization, founded in London in 1920,

and was later elected to the Zionist Executive. He resigned in 1923 in protest over Chaim Weizmann's pro-British policy and founded the Revisionist Zionist movement and the Betar youth movement two years later. Jabotinsky also founded the ETZEL (National Military Organization) during the 1936-39 Arab rebellion in Palestine.

[7] Anschluss: The annexation of Austria to Germany. The 1919 peace treaty of St. Germain prohibited the Anschluss, to prevent a resurgence of a strong Germany. On 12th March 1938 Hitler occupied Austria, and, to popular approval, annexed it as the province of Ostmark. In April 1945 Austria regained independence legalizing it with the Austrian State Treaty in 1955.

[8] Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia: Bohemia and Moravia were occupied by the Germans and transformed into a German Protectorate in March 1939, after Slovakia declared its independence. The Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was placed under the supervision of the Reich protector, Konstantin von Neurath. The Gestapo assumed police authority. Jews were dismissed from civil service and placed in an extralegal position. In the fall of 1941, the Reich adopted a more radical policy in the Protectorate. The Gestapo became very active in arrests and executions. The deportation of Jews to concentration camps was organized, and Terezin/Theresienstadt was turned into a ghetto for Jewish families. During the existence of the Protectorate the Jewish population of Bohemia and Moravia was virtually annihilated. After World War II the pre-1938 boundaries were restored, and most of the German-speaking population was expelled.

[9] Anti-Jewish laws in Hungary: Following similar legislation in Nazi Germany, Hungary enacted three Jewish laws in 1938, 1939 and 1941. The first law restricted the number of Jews in industrial and commercial enterprises, banks and in certain occupations, such as legal, medical and engineering professions, and journalism to 20% of the total number. This law defined Jews on the basis of their religion, so those who converted before the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919, as well as those who fought in World War I, and their widows and orphans were exempted from the law. The second Jewish law introduced further restrictions, limiting the number of Jews in the above fields to 6%, prohibiting the employment of Jews completely in certain professions such as high school and university teaching, civil and municipal services, etc. It also forbade Jews to buy or sell land and so forth. This law already defined Jews on more racial grounds in that it regarded baptized children that had at least one non-converted Jewish parent as Jewish. The third Jewish law prohibited intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews, and defined anyone who had at least one Jewish grandparent as Jewish.

[10] Great Patriotic War: On 22nd June 1941 at 5 o'clock in the morning Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union without declaring war. This was the beginning of the so-called Great Patriotic War. The German blitzkrieg, known as Operation Barbarossa, nearly succeeded in breaking the Soviet Union in the months that followed. Caught unprepared, the Soviet forces lost whole armies and vast quantities of equipment to the German onslaught in the first weeks of the war. By November 1941 the German army had seized the Ukrainian Republic, besieged Leningrad, the Soviet Union's second largest city, and threatened Moscow itself. The war ended for the Soviet Union on 9th May 1945.

[11] Beriia, L. P. (1899-1953): Communist politician, one of the main organizers of the mass arrests and political persecution between the 1930s and the early 1950s. Minister of Internal Affairs, 1938-1953. In 1953 he was expelled from the Communist Party and sentenced to death by

the Supreme Court of the USSR.

[12] Molotov, V. P. (1890-1986): Statesman and member of the Communist Party leadership. From 1939, Minister of Foreign Affairs. On June 22, 1941 he announced the German attack on the USSR on the radio. He and Eden also worked out the percentages agreement after the war, about Soviet and western spheres of influence in the new Europe.

[13] Ispolkom: After the tsar's abdication (March, 1917), power passed to a Provisional Government appointed by a temporary committee of the Duma, which proposed to share power to some extent with councils of workers and soldiers known as 'soviets'. Following a brief and chaotic period of fairly democratic procedures, a mixed body of socialist intellectuals known as the Ispolkom secured the right to 'represent' the soviets. The democratic credentials of the soviets were highly imperfect to begin with: peasants - the overwhelming majority of the Russian population - had virtually no say, and soldiers were grossly over-represented. The Ispolkom's assumption of power turned this highly imperfect democracy into an intellectuals' oligarchy.

[14] Struggle against religion: The 1930s was a time of anti-religion struggle in the USSR. In those years it was not safe to go to synagogue or to church. Places of worship, statues of saints, etc. were removed; rabbis, Orthodox and Roman Catholic priests disappeared behind KGB walls.

[15] Campaign against 'cosmopolitans': The campaign against 'cosmopolitans', i.e. Jews, was initiated in articles in the central organs of the Communist Party in 1949. The campaign was directed primarily at the Jewish intelligentsia and it was the first public attack on Soviet Jews as Jews. 'Cosmopolitans' writers were accused of hating the Russian people, of supporting Zionism, etc. Many Yiddish writers as well as the leaders of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee were arrested in November 1948 on charges that they maintained ties with Zionism and with American 'imperialism'. They were executed secretly in 1952. The anti-Semitic Doctors' Plot was launched in January 1953. A wave of anti-Semitism spread through the USSR. Jews were removed from their positions, and rumors of an imminent mass deportation of Jews to the eastern part of the USSR began to spread. Stalin's death in March 1953 put an end to the campaign against 'cosmopolitans'.

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

[17] Birobidzhan: Formed in 1928 to give Soviet Jews a home territory and to increase settlement along the vulnerable borders of the Soviet Far East, the area was raised to the status of an autonomous region in 1934. Influenced by an effective propaganda campaign, and starvation in the east, 41,000 Soviet Jews relocated to the area between the late 1920s and early 1930s. But, by 1938 28,000 of them had fled the regions harsh conditions, There were Jewish schools and synagogues up until the 1940s, when there was a resurgence of religious repression after World War II. The Soviet government wanted the forced deportation of all Jews to Birobidzhan to be

completed by the middle of the 1950s. But in 1953 Stalin died and the deportation was cancelled. Despite some remaining Yiddish influences - including a Yiddish newspaper - Jewish cultural activity in the region has declined enormously since Stalin's anti-cosmopolitanism campaigns and since the liberalization of Jewish emigration in the 1970s. Jews now make up less than 2% of the region's population.

[18] Twentieth Party Congress: At the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956 Khrushchev publicly debunked the cult of Stalin and lifted the veil of secrecy from what had happened in the USSR during Stalin's leadership.

[19] Blockade of Leningrad: On September 8, 1941 the Germans fully encircled Leningrad and its siege began. It lasted until January 27, 1944. The blockade meant incredible hardships and privations for the population of the town. Hundreds of thousands died from hunger, cold and diseases during the almost 900 days of the blockade.

[20] Road of Life: It was a passage across Lake Ladoga in winter during the Blockade of Leningrad. It was due to the Road of Life that Leningrad survived in the terrible winter of 1941-42.

[21] Yellow star houses: The system of exclusively Jewish houses which acted as a form of hostage taking was introduced by the Hungarian authorities in June 1944 in Budapest. The authorities believed that if they concentrated all the Jews of Budapest in the ghetto, the Allies would not attack it, but if they placed such houses all over Budapest, especially near important public buildings it was a kind of guarantee. Jews were only allowed to leave such houses for two hours a day to buy supplies and such.

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

[23] 1956: It designates the Revolution, which started on 23rd October 1956 against Soviet rule and the communists in Hungary. It was started by student and worker demonstrations in Budapest started in which Stalin's gigantic statue was destroyed. Moderate communist leader Imre Nagy was appointed as prime minister and he promised reform and democratization. The Soviet Union withdrew its troops which had been stationing in Hungary since the end of World War II, but they returned after Nagy's announcement that Hungary would pull out of the Warsaw Pact to pursue a policy of neutrality. The Soviet army put an end to the rising on 4th November and mass repression and arrests started. About 200,000 Hungarians fled from the country. Nagy, and a number of his supporters were executed. Until 1989, the fall of the communist regime, the Revolution of 1956 was officially considered a counter-revolution.

[24] Prague Spring: The term Prague Spring designates the liberalization period in communist-ruled Czechoslovakia between 1967-1969. In 1967 Alexander Dubcek became the head of the Czech Communist Party and promoted ideas of 'socialism with a human face', i.e. with more personal freedom and freedom of the press, and the rehabilitation of victims of Stalinism. In August 1968 Soviet troops, along with contingents from Poland, East Germany, Hungary and Bulgaria, occupied

Prague and put an end to the reforms.

[25] Perestroika (Russian for restructuring): Soviet economic and social policy of the late 1980s, associated with the name of Soviet politician Mikhail Gorbachev. The term designated the attempts to transform the stagnant, inefficient command economy of the Soviet Union into a decentralized, market-oriented economy. Industrial managers and local government and party officials were granted greater autonomy, and open elections were introduced in an attempt to democratize the Communist Party organization. By 1991, perestroika was declining and was soon eclipsed by the dissolution of the USSR.

[26] Gorbachev, Mikhail (1931-): Soviet political leader. Gorbachev joined the Communist Party in 1952 and gradually moved up in the party hierarchy. In 1970 he was elected to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, where he remained until 1990. In 1980 he joined the politburo, and in 1985 he was appointed general secretary of the party. In 1986 he embarked on a comprehensive program of political, economic, and social liberalization under the slogans of glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring). The government released political prisoners, allowed increased emigration, attacked corruption, and encouraged the critical reexamination of Soviet history. The Congress of People's Deputies, founded in 1989, voted to end the Communist Party's control over the government and elected Gorbachev executive president. Gorbachev dissolved the Communist Party and granted the Baltic states independence. Following the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States in 1991, he resigned as president. Since 1992, Gorbachev has headed international organizations.