

Ignac Neubauer

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Uzhgorod

Ukraine

Date of interview: October 2003

Interviewer: Ella Levitskaya

Ignac Neubauer is a lean agile short man with thick gray hair. He speaks Russian with a noted Hungarian accent and often uses Hungarian words. Though Ignac is a severely ill man, who has had two infarctions and few surgeries, he is very sociable and willingly agreed to give this interview and tell the story of his family. Ignac lives with his younger daughter's family in a three-bedroom apartment in a modern house in a new district of Uzhgorod. After his wife died he feels it very important to be needed in his family. Ignac buys food products and likes cooking. He spends much time with his grandson Robert and they share love and affection to each other.

[My family background](#)

[Growing up](#)

[During the war](#)

[After the war](#)

[Glossary](#)

My family background

My paternal grandfather Israel Buchbinder was born in the 1860s. I don't know my grandfather or grandmother's birthplace. I think my grandmother (nee Neubauer) was the same age with my grandfather. I don't know my grandmother's first name. I didn't know anybody of my grandparents' families. My father's family lived in the Ruthenian village of Dubovoye [It is 135 km from Uzhgorod, 580 km from Kiev] Tyachev district in Subcarpathia [1](#). I don't remember Dubovoye village. My father and I visited it twice during my school vacations, but I have no memories of these short visits left. I don't know what my grandfather did for a living. My grandmother was a housewife that was customary for Jewish families.

Before 1918 Subcarpathia belonged to Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The state language was Hungarian. There was no anti-Semitism in Subcarpathia. Jews could have their businesses, study and serve in the army. Everyday anti-Semitism was rare. There were generations of multinational population in Subcarpathia and people respected each other's religion and traditions. In 1918 Subcarpathia was annexed to Czechoslovakia [First Czechoslovak Republic] [2](#). That was the heyday of Subcarpathia. Czechs were very friendly toward Jews. Jews had the right to hold official posts. Czechs patronized Jews believing them to be initiative and hardworking people.

There were four sons and two daughters in my fathers family. I remember being surprised at the thing that some brothers and sisters' surname was Buchbinder and some – Neubauer. My father explained that at that time Jewish didn't register marriages in the town hall, but only had religious weddings with a chuppah and a rabbi issued a ketubbah, a marriage contracts, to them. [Civil marriage was introduced in Hungary as late as 1895.] Therefore, it happened that the children had

their father or mother's last name given to them. The first baby was given his father's surname, the second one – his mother's, etc. My father oldest brother's name was Moric Buchbinder, Moishe-Gersch in Jewish. Then there was a sister, whose first name I don't remember. Her surname was Neubauer. My father brother Haskl's surname was Buchbinder. My father, born in 1899, had the surname of Neubauer. His name was Adolf and his Jewish name was Avrum. Then there was my father's brother Menyhert, his Jewish name was Mendl and his surname was Buchbinder, and there was a younger sister. I don't remember her first name, but her surname was Neubauer.

My father's family spoke Yiddish at home. Of course, they also spoke fluent Hungarian and Ruthenian [The language of the Subcarpathian Ruthenians, it is also spoken in some parts of Slovakia and Romania. Some consider it a dialect of the Ukrainian other as a separate Slavic language.]. My father said his parents were very religious, but I don't know any details, unfortunately. My father and his brothers got religious education in cheder. The children went to cheder at the age of 3. I don't know whether any of them had any secular education. It wasn't mandatory at that time. A Jew was supposed to know Hebrew to read a prayer and get a profession to support a family. My father's parents sent my father to learn the farrier's craft. Farriers were in demand in villages where farmers kept livestock. My father loved and understood animals and worked with them his whole life. Though he didn't have a veterinary diploma he selected and trained horses for the army.

I hardly know anything about my father's sisters. They lived somewhere in Central Hungary after they got married. I've never seen them. All I know is that they had children and were housewives. My father's older brother Moric Buchbinder lived in Kosice (in Slovakia now). He was a tailor. Moric was married and had three children. I don't remember his wife or children's names. After WWII Moric returned home from a camp, but his wife and children perished. After the war Moric lived in Kosice, Czechoslovakia. After the soviet regime came to Subcarpathia in 1945 our contacts terminated. My father's brothers Haskl and Mendl lived in Dubovoye. They were married and had children. I don't remember their names. I don't remember what Haskl was doing for a living. Mendl owned timber storages. He was the wealthiest of all brothers. He had four sons from his first marriage. During WWII both brothers were drafted in work battalions and taken to the front in the Ukraine. Haskl perished in 1943 and Mendl returned home after the war. His wife and sons perished in a concentration camp.

My mother's family lived in the Subcarpathia village Malaya Dobron, Kisdobrony during the Hungarian rule. This village exists no longer. There was a bigger village of Velikaya Dobron [30 km from Uzhgorod, 680 km from Kiev], nearby and these two villages merged after the war. Now it is one settlement of Velikaya Dobron. My mother's father Moishe Preis was born in the Ruthenian village of Rakhov (it is a town now) in the 1870s. My grandmother Etel Preis was born in 1875. I don't know my grandmother's place of birth or maiden name.

Malaya Dobron was a small village. There were about 150 families living in the village and 30 of them were Jewish. Jewish families were big. There was a big synagogue in the village. On Sabbath and Jewish holidays men and women went to the synagogue. There was a big yard in the synagogue and there was a shochet shop in the yard and farther in the backyard there was a mikveh. There was a cheder in the same street as the synagogue. There were over 200 Jewish families in the neighboring village of Velikaya Dobron. It was a big village. There was a Jewish cemetery in the village and in Malaya Dobron there was a Jewish sector in the village cemetery.

Grandfather Moishe was a shoemaker. My grandmother was a midwife. My grandfather served in the Hungarian army in his youth. Even when I knew my grandfather he had a military bearing. He was average height, slim and straight. He didn't have payes or a beard. He had a big curled up moustache. My grandfather wore high boots of soft shining leather and a jacket cut in military fashion. He always had a military type cap on his head. He wore a kippah to the synagogue. His fellow villagers called my grandfather Moishe the Soldier. My grandmother was a short fat woman. She had quick moves and looked young. She had no wrinkles on her face and always smiled. She was a very kind and smart woman. She wore long skirts and long-sleeved blouses with high collars like other women in the village. My grandmother wore a wig to go out and at home she covered her head with a kerchief.

My grandparents lived in a small house made from air bricks, a mixture of clay and cut straw. Many houses in Subcarpathia were built of air bricks that were inexpensive, rather strong and warm. It is used in construction even nowadays. There were three rooms, a kitchen and a small annex building where my grandfather had his shop. My grandfather worked alone and when his sons were growing old enough they began to help their father in his shop. There were no other employees in the shop working for my grandfather. He mainly fixed shoes, and this work didn't cost much. I don't think my grandfather's family was wealthy. Perhaps, this was why my grandmother had to work, which was not customary with married Jewish women.

My grandparents had eight children. I only know my mother's year of birth, but I will name the others according to their seniority. My mother's sisters and brothers were called by their Jewish names in the family, and I don't know their Hungarian names. My mother's sister Elka was the oldest. The next one was their brother Pinchas. My mother was born on 4 August 1900. Her Hungarian name was Fanni, and her Jewish name was Faige. After my mother her brother Lajos was born. His Jewish name was Laib. Then came brother Lipe, sister Rivka and brother Bernat.

They spoke Yiddish in my mother's family and Hungarian to their non-Jewish neighbors. My mother's parents were religious. They celebrated Sabbath and Jewish holidays at home. On Saturday and on Jewish holidays my grandmother and grandfather went to the synagogue. My grandfather took his sons to the synagogue when they reached the age of 3. All children got Jewish education. The sons went to cheder in Malaya Dobron. Girls went to the cheder in Velikaya Dobron in about 2 km from Malaya Dobron twice a week. The children also finished a 4-year Hungarian elementary school. After bar mitzvah grandfather began training his sons in his business. They all became shoemakers.

My mother's older sister Elka married Gersch Scher, a local Jewish man. He was a timber dealer. Elka and her husband had 3 children. Pinchas was married. His wife's name was Baila. They also had eight children. Lajos' wife Blanka was a housewife. They didn't have children. Lipe was married. His wife's name was Lea. They had four sons. Rivka's husband Wolf Steinberg was a cabinetmaker. Rivka was a housewife. They had 6 children. Bernat had two children. He was a shoemaker and his wife was a housewife. My mother's sisters and brothers were religious. They observed Jewish traditions, went to the synagogue on Sabbath and Jewish holidays and celebrated Sabbath and Jewish holidays at home. They all lived in Malaya Dobron.

I don't know how my parents met. I think their marriage was prearranged by matchmakers, which was a customary thing at the time, when parents asked a shadkhan to find a match for their son or

daughter. Usually parents of a couple made all necessary wedding arrangements and the couple only met before a chuppah. In towns, though, young people could meet by themselves, but in villages traditions were stronger. My parents got married in 1922. They never told me about their wedding, but I'm sure it was a traditional Jewish wedding.

Growing up

After the wedding the newly weds moved to Velke Kapusany village [30 km from Uzhgorod] in present-day Slovakia. They rented a house. My father was employed to prepare horses for the army. He was to determine whether a horse was fit for the army. Many Jews kept horses selling them to the army for good money. My mother was a housewife. I was born in Velke Kapusany on 2 March 1924. My Hungarian name was Ignac, and my Jewish name was Nuns-Laib. In 1926 my father's job was over and my parents decided to move to Malaya Dobron to be close to my mother's parents. The rest of my parents' children were born in Malaya Dobron. There were six of us. In 1925 my brother David was born. In his birth certificate he had his Hungarian name of Dezso, if my memory doesn't fail me. Mordechai, Marton by his birth certificate, was born in 1927. Then came Haim-Shmil, Sandor, born in 1929. In 1930 the first daughter Hermina, Haya-Tsire in Jewish, was born. Helena, the youngest, Haya in Jewish way, was born in 1934.

We lived in the house that my parents rented few years. It was a small house made from air bricks. There were two rooms, a kitchen and a storeroom. There were few fruit trees near the house and a shed and a small chicken house in the small yard. There was a big Russian stove ³ in the kitchen where my mother cooked. This stove heated the kitchen and a room and there was another stove to heat another room. My father worked as a veterinary on calls in Malay and Velikaya Dobron. My mother was a housewife. We were not wealthy. My parents were saving some of my father's earnings to build a house. Their dream came true in 1936, when they started construction, and we moved into our new house in 1937. This house was also made from air bricks. There was one bigger room in it, two smaller rooms and a kitchen. The house was built not far from where my mother's parents lived.

My parents were religious and observed Jewish traditions. My mother wore a wig to go out after she got married. All married Jewish women wore wigs. At home my mother wore a kerchief. My father had a big beard, but no payes. He wore a kippah at home and a dark hat to go out. We, boys, wore caps to go out and kippahs at home and in cheder. We celebrated Sabbath and Jewish holidays at home and my mother followed kashrut. She kept special crockery for dairy and meat products and she taught us to follow the rules as well. I was the oldest, and my mother always sent me to take a chicken or a goose to the shochet to slaughter. The shochet also determined whether the poultry was kosher. If he said that it was not kosher it had to be given to non-Jews. On weekdays my father prayed at home. He had a tallit, a tefillin and a prayer book. When my father was praying he was not to be distracted. He explained that when he was talking to God he didn't care about anything else. All Jews in Malaya Dobron prayed at home. When a Jewish man, for example, was not at home, when it was time for a prayer, he had his tefillin and tallit with him to stop and pray. Nobody was surprised, when a Jew put on his tefillin or tallit to pray in a train or at a railway station. They were so used to it that nobody paid any attention.

On Friday morning my mother started preparations for Sabbath. She made dough for to bake bread. On Friday my mother made bread for a week and challah bread for Sabbath. There was a

Jewish bakery nearby. My mother formed bread and challot, put them in a big basket and I took the basket to the bakery. Later in the afternoon I went back there to pick the order. Meanwhile my mother made chicken broth, made noodles for the broth and for puddings and made gefilte fish. When it was ready, she put a pot of cholnt into the oven for the next day and went to the mikveh.

There was one mikveh in Malaya Dobron. Women went there in the afternoon, when men were still at work, and men went to the mikveh in the evening. When my mother returned from the mikveh she set the table. My father came back from the mikveh, put on his fancy suit and went to the synagogue with his sons over 3 years of age. Boys went to cheder at this age and were big enough to go to the synagogue. When we returned from the synagogue, my mother lit candles. She had her fancy dress on. She covered her face with her hands to not see the candle light and prayed over the candles. Then we all sat down to festive dinner. Once a funny incident happened: my father and the children returned from the synagogue, and only at the table we discovered that my younger brother Sandor was not there. He happened to fall asleep during the prayer at the synagogue. The synagogue was already closed, and my brother slept there all night. Early in the morning my father went to the synagogue and brought Sandor home. After the candles were lit no work was allowed to be done. Our Ukrainian [Ruthenian] neighbor came to our home to light the lamps and start the oven. She also took out the cholnt from the oven. [shabesgoy] Next day we all went to the synagogue, but my sisters. My mother was upstairs, and my father and the boys were downstairs with other men. Then we returned home and had dinner, and after dinner my father read a Saturday section of the Torah to us and told us stories of Jewish history. The children visited our grandmother and grandfather on Saturdays. All of my mother's brothers and sisters lived in Malaya Dobron. On Saturday about 40 grandchildren got together at my grandmother's house and she had a chocolate or a kind word for each of us. In the evening my father conducted the Havdalah ritual, separation of Saturday from weekdays. The family got together at the table. My father lit candles and said a blessing. Each of us had wine. The children had a little wine, just enough to wet their lip. Everybody sipped some wine, then my father poured some wine into a saucer and put down the candle in it. This was the end of Sabbath and another week began.

Preparation to Pesach began long before the holiday. There was a general clean up of the house, everything was cleaned and washed. The rabbi inspected the Jewish bakery for chametz. After such inspection the rabbi gave his permission to bake matzah. Each family ordered as much matzah as they needed. Matzah was delivered to homes. My mother took boxes with matzah to the attic where she kept our Pesach crockery. It was not allowed to keep matzah in the kitchen till there was any chametz or even bread crumbs left. On the eve of Pesach all bread was removed from the house. The house was searched even for the smallest pieces of bread and bread crumbs that were burnt then. Then my father continued a symbolic search for chametz. We washed our everyday crockery, packed it in boxes and stored in the storeroom, and then it was time to take down matzah and fancy crockery from the attic. My mother started cooking for Pesach. We always looked forward to holidays. We were poor, and the children never had too much food, except on Sabbath and holidays, when we had sufficient delicious food. My mother cooked traditional food: chicken broth with dumplings, stuffed chicken neck, gefilte fish, potato puddings, baked strudels from matzah flour with jam, raisins and nuts. My mother cooked everything on goose fat. This fat was also prepared separately, when there was to be no bread in the kitchen. My mother began to prepare it long before the holiday and stored it in a can in the attic where the Pesach crockery was kept. She had to cook food for two days before Pesach. Then Hol Amoed started. No work was allowed to do on the last two days of Pesach. In the morning all went to the synagogue. On the

first day of Pesach my father conducted seder. Besides everything else, there were greeneries, horseradish, ground apples with honey and cinnamon, hard-boiled eggs and a saucer with salty water. And there was also matzah. We bought red wine at the synagogue for Pesach. On the first seder all, including the children, were to drink four glasses of wine. There was a big and fanciest wineglass for Prophet Elijah in the center of the table. The front door was kept open for Elijah to come into the house. My father wearing white clothing was sitting at the head of the table. This outfit is called kippur. Men wear it on Pesach and Yom Kippur. My father reclined on cushions supporting his back and the sides. We ate greeneries dipping then in salty water. Then my father broke matzah into three pieces and hid the middle side under the cushions. This piece of matzah was called afikoman. One of the children was to find it and then my father offered redemption for it. I asked my father traditional questions. When my brothers began to attend the cheder, they also asked my father questions. We posed questions in Hebrew and my father answered in Hebrew. Then my father started telling us about Exodus of Jews from Egypt. This story he told in Hebrew [haggadah], and then repeated each phrase in Yiddish. When he was telling about the retributions that God sent on Egypt, we were to drop wine on the saucer after he mentioned retributions. Then my father gave each of us a piece of afikoman. We all sang Pesach songs. Younger children fell asleep at the table before the seder was over. I was older and next morning, when they woke up I teased them a little saying that while they were asleep Elijah came in and I saw him. On Pesach we visited my mother's relatives and invited them to visit us.

A month before Rosh Hashanah, New Year, they blew the shofar at the synagogue. The shofar is very loud and strident and it was heard across the village. We went to the synagogue and when we returned home, we ate apples and challah dipping them in honey.

Yom Kippur started with the Kapores ritual on the eve of Yom Kippur. There were white rosters bought for the father and the sons and white hens for the mother and sisters. The rosters were to be turned around the head saying in Hebrew: 'May you be my atonement'. Then the chickens were slaughtered and my mother cooked them in the morning. Before Yom Kippur we only ate chicken broth and chicken meat a whole day. It was the rule to have 3 meals cooked from these Kapores chickens. The dinner was over before the first star appeared in the sky. From this moment and until the next evening the family fasted. Children fasted half a day after they turned 8 and after bar mitzvah - a whole day like adults. In the morning all went to the synagogue. Men wore white kittel outfits and women wore their fancy dresses. Everybody brought a candle. People stayed at the synagogue a whole day. When the first star appeared in the sky, all went to their homes to have dinner.

After Yom Kippur children began to make decorations for the sukkah. They made them from color paper and everybody tried to make the best decoration. The sukkah was placed in the yard. There was a frame made from pre-manufactured lath planks, then branches were entwined in it and the roof was also covered with branches. The sukkah was decorated with flowers and paper decorations and ribbons. There was a table taken into the sukkah and we had meals and prayed in the sukkah through all days of the holiday. It was customary to eat fruit on Sukkot. Children had the 'rozhok' -fruit that grow in Israel [etrog]. They were flat, brown and very sweet. The children bit on them and then played with stones that these fruit had inside.

For Purim children rehearsed songs, dances and little performances. Children, and sometimes adults, went from one house to other showing their performances and for this they were given

small change. The more houses you visited the more coins you got. I remember a joke of this time. A rich Jew wanted his daughter to get married. He talked to shadkhan who said that there was a bridegroom, who could earn 10 pengos [Hungarian currency in the interwar period] per day. 10 pengos was a lot of money at that time. The rich man was very happy, and the wedding took place. A month passed. The rich man came to the shadkhan and said that this guy hadn't worked a day and hadn't earned a single coin. The shadkhan convinced him to wait another month. Nothing changed a month later. Another month passed, and the rich man came to the shadkhan again. The shadkhan said: "Be patient, there is not long to wait until Purim, and then your daughter's husband will earn this 10 pengos". There was also shelakhmones taken to houses at Purim. It was taken to relatives, friends and neighbors. Children ran from one house to another with trays with sweets on them. Returning the tray, the mistress of the house put coins on it for the children. After Purim children bought toys, sweets or something else.

We, children, also liked Chanukkah. On this holiday every guest gave children money. This money was supposed to be spent on gambling, but we preferred to spend it on what we believed was right. On Chanukkah children traditionally played with whipping tops that we made ourselves. There were wooden forms with carved letters where we poured melted lead and waited till it solidified. The top was divided into four sectors with a letter in each sector. Winning depended on the letter that the top fell on. On Chanukkah my mother lit a candle each day. Actually, there were no candles since they were very expensive. My mother cut off the bottom of a potato and cut out its inside, poured in oil and put a wick inside. These candles lasted a while. My mother added another potato on each day of Chanukkah.

I went to cheder at the age of 3. My younger brothers also went to cheder at this age. In the 1st and 2nd forms there was a rebe and he had an assistant, who was like a nanny for the kids, but in the 3rd form we were quite handy to manage ourselves. Our classes started at 7 o'clock in the morning. In winter and autumn we got up, when it was still dark outside. My mother woke me up and I cried and wanted to stay home. We had classes till lunch. Then the rebe let us go home for lunch and then we came back to cheder. Our classes ended at 7. We had to do homework at home. I went to school at the age of 8 and had no free time left, whatsoever. There were 2 general schools in Malaya Dobron: a Czech and Hungarian one. My parents sent me to the Hungarian school for some reason, though the state language was Czech at the time. My brothers and sisters went to the Czech school. There were more Jewish children in the Hungarian school than in the Czech one. This was a school for boys and girls. I went to cheder in the morning. We prayed and had classes. Then I ran home for breakfast and ran to the Hungarian school. After classes I went home for lunch and then went back to cheder where we studied till 8-9 o'clock in the evening. When we returned home, we had to do the homework for school and for cheder. Some parents only cared about their children's successes at the cheder, but my father believed that I had to be good at both. This was a difficult task and I often studied till late at night.

In 1935 my grandmother Etel, my mother's mother, fell severely ill. She was taken to the Jewish hospital in Uzhgorod where she died. This happened before Rosh Hashanah. I still remember how my mother cried and lamented for her. My grandmother was only 60 years old, while at that time it was quite common that people lived to be 80-90 years old. She was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Uzhgorod in accordance with Jewish traditions. My mother's brother Pinchas recited the Kaddish after my grandmother. My mother and her sisters sat shivah after my grandmother since my

mother's brothers had to go back to work to support their families. My mother's younger sister Riva and her family moved in with my grandfather.

Boys studied at cheder till the age of 13. The rebe prepared them for bar mitzvah. In 1937 I became of age according to Jewish traditions. I turned 13 years old. On Saturday the rabbi called me to the torah to read a section from it. I had a tallit on for the first time in my life. My parents brought honey cakes and vodka to the synagogue. After the bar mitzvah all attendants of the synagogue had treatments. In the evening my mother made a dinner for the family and relatives. They greeted me and it was quite a holiday for me. After finishing cheder those parents who could afford it sent their children to yeshivah, but I couldn't even dream about it. We were poor and since I was the oldest son I had to support the family. My father began to have health problems – he happened to have a serious heart disease. It was hard for him to work and he needed money to buy medications. From time to time he had to stay in hospital in Uzhgorod where he had medical treatment and received some medications to take home with him, but when he ran out of them, he had to buy them. I finished school in 1938. My brothers were still at school and I became the only breadwinner in the family. I didn't have a profession, but I couldn't go to study since there was nobody to support the family through this time. I began to sell food products to Jewish families in Uzhgorod and soon I had my clients there. My mother kept poultry: chickens, ducks and geese. I bought eggs, chickens and veal from other villagers to sell them in Uzhgorod and later I also took my mother's poultry to sell there. The shochet slaughtered them and on Monday I took 20-25 chickens to Uzhgorod. My clients ordered about 50-60 chickens for Sabbath. Later Jewish café owners began to order chicken from me. My father had a horse that he used to ride to his calls when he was working. I harnessed the horse to ride to Uzhgorod. So I earned our living. Of course, this was hard work, but we were not starving and managed to buy everything necessary for the family. Many other villagers earned their living in this way. There were also wealthy Jews in our village. One Jew whose last name was Weinberger had 300 hectares of land, many cows and horses. He also had equipment and tractors. Those who had land could feed their families by farming.

During the war

In 1938 Subcarpathia became Hungarian again. [Hungarian troops occupied Subcarpathia in March 1939. The western part where Malaya Dobron/Kisdobrony is was attached to Hungary as early as the 2nd November 1938, together with Southern Slovakia as a result of the First Vienna Decesion.] Though we had a good life during the Czech rule, many were happy that the Hungarians were back, especially older people. All children spoke fluent Czech, but older people didn't know it. My mother, despite living 20 years under the Czech rule, never learned this language. She spoke Yiddish and Hungarian. At the beginning everything went well, but in 1938 persecution of Jews began, though we didn't suffer from it since it was directed on wealthier people. In 1939 anti-Jewish laws [4](#) were issued. Under these laws wealthier Jews were to give away their shops, farms or stores to non-Jews or the state expropriated their property, if they didn't. One way or another, Jewish owners didn't get any compensation, but when they left their property with non-Jewish owners, they could at least keep the job, though their new masters paid them little. When the state expropriated the property, their former owners lost everything and were thrown into the street. Jews were not allowed to study in higher educational institutions [Numerus Clausus in Hungary] [5](#) or serve in the army. This was open state-level anti-Semitism and they didn't even make an effort to camouflage

it. When Germany started a war in 1939, life became even more difficult. Hungary was Germany's ally in this war. There were food cards introduced. People in towns were starving. We didn't suffer so much in villages. There were bread and sugar cards and what we got per cards was sufficient. However strange it may seem, my life became easier when Subcarpathia became Hungarian. I could do my business in Uzhgorod and in Hungarian towns. I took my products to the Hungarian town of Kisvarda, 30 km from Malaya Dobron. I brought back salt, sugar and spirit that people drank with water. When drought happened in Velikiy Bereznyy [35 km from Uzhgorod, 650 km from Kiev] in summer farmers failed to make hay stocks and my acquaintance offered me to buy cows from them. We went there and bought cows for 40 pengos. We sold these cows in Kisvarda 100-120 pengos each. We had 3 cows left that we had to take them back. On our way back I got very hungry. My parents taught us that we couldn't eat anything from non-Jews. I remembered this well and when I went into a farmer's house and asked him to sell me some food I didn't even want to buy bread from him. I bought 3 apples and this was all I had till we reached Chop where my mother's sister Elka and her family lived. They moved to Chop in 1939, when Elka husband's trade business was expropriated. So only at my aunt's house I finally had a meal. We made few more trips to Velikiy Bereznyy to buy cows to sell them in Kisvarda. This was a long trip. From Velikiy Bereznyy we went to Perechin, 25 km from Velikiy Bereznyy. There we took a rest and then walked 20 km to Uzhgorod. From there we walked 30 km to Chop and from there - 25 km to Kisvarda. This trip took us about a week. We also had to let the cows pasture so they didn't have exhausted looks, when we reached Kisvarda or we wouldn't have sold them. From Kisvarda we brought home 2-3 bags of flour, kosher goose fat and cereals.

Jews served in Hungarian work battalions. In March 1942 I was to turn 18, but already in January 1942 I was called to the draft board examining recruits for work battalions. However, they released guys of 1923 - 1924 from service. They began to recruit my year of birth, when we were taken to ghettos, but I was not allowed to leave the ghetto.

Before Pesach in 1944 I was in Uzhgorod, but I came home for the holiday. I always celebrated all Jewish holidays at home and couldn't imagine otherwise. I was planning to go back to Uzhgorod after the holiday. On the last day of Pesach they placed a poster on the building of the village council announcing that all Jews were to come to the village council on Sunday. We were to have food and clothing not to exceed 10 kg of weight with us. All Jews of Malaya Dobron came there. Our family, my mother's sisters with their families and grandfather Moishe, my mother's father, went there, too. We were taken to Uzhgorod on horse-driven wagons. The ghetto in Uzhgorod was at the former brick factory owned by Jew Moshkovich formerly. There were 16 thousand Jews from Uzhgorod district in the ghetto. There were also people taken from villages and few days later they began to take people from Uzhgorod to the ghetto. Since there was no space left, they were taken to another ghetto in a big timber storage facility owned by Jew Blick before the Hungarian rule. We lived in the open air, though it was still rather cold at night. Some families tried to stay in brick sections with furnaces for brick baking, but there was no ventilation and it was stuffy. So they couldn't stay there whatsoever and had to stay in the open air with their small children. When we ran out of food that we took from home we began to starve. Then younger Jews were ordered to work. We sorted out furniture, household goods, clothing and shoes in the Jewish houses whose owners were taken to the ghetto. All Jewish houses were sealed. There were many valuable things left in the houses: pictures, china, and jewelry. Gendarmes broke the seals and we came into the houses to sort out everything there was there. The gendarmes searched the walls for money in

hiding place. We loaded the things on trucks that drove the loads to the Hasidic [6](#) synagogue on the embankment of the Uzh River. This synagogue houses a Philharmonic now. I don't know what happened to these loads. When we found food in the houses, the gendarmes allowed us to take it with us, but when we came to the ghetto they took it away and sent it to the kitchen that made food for inmates of the ghetto. There was also a Jewish kitchen on the embankment near the Hasidic synagogue where they also made food for inmates of the ghetto, but was it possible to feed 16 thousand people?! Those who had money could buy food. There was the family of Weinberger, a rich Jew from Malaya Dobron in the ghetto. I knew the town well and went to work every day. Weinberger gave me money to buy cookies and sausage for them. I remember bringing him sausage once and he invited me to eat with his family. I thanked him and said I wasn't hungry, but the reason was that I didn't want to eat non-kosher sausage, just couldn't force myself to take a bite. This was how we were raised at home.

There were no Germans in the ghetto. Once some Germans came to the ghetto to do some inspection. There were Hungarian gendarmes in the ghetto and they were very rude with the inmates, but not all of them. I witnessed one incident that happened to my uncle, my mother's brother Bernat. Once we were at work sorting out things, when my uncle found vodka. He gave us a little and drank the rest of it. He got drunk. The Hungarian soldier who convoyed us to this house saw my uncle. He silently picked some things and took my uncle to a tavern in the end of the street. The soldier gave the owner of this tavern those things he took from the house and asked him to put my uncle to sleep. When it was time for us to go to the ghetto in the evening, he went to the tavern to pick my uncle who had sobered by then. So they happened to be human to Jews, but rarely, of course.

On 24 May 1944 we were ordered to gather near the gate to the ghetto. There was a railroad spur to the brick factory. There was a train with open platforms for brick transportation taken to the spur and gendarmes ordered us to board those platforms. They were narrow platforms. There were 100-120 people on each of them. Many were standing close to one another. When we reached a station we changed a train, but this was not a passenger train, but one with freight railcars, there were only small barred windows near the ceilings, but after those platforms these railcars seemed heaven to us. It was warm already and the steel railcars were overheated. The windows were closed and there was no air to breathe. We didn't have water. There were no toilets. There were holes in the floors. At first people endured it as long as they could, but then we stopped caring. At first there were talks that they were going to keep us in those railcars till we died from the heat and thirst, but others said that we were moving to work camps. Then these talks faded out, we were all in a half-fainted state. The heat and stinking was the hardest on older people and children. The train stopped at a station and we were given one bucket of water for all of us. Everybody ran to the bucket trying to drink without thinking about the others. Thinking about it now I don't believe this was happening to us. People just couldn't turn into animals so fast, but this happened indeed. We arrived at Auschwitz. The train stopped at the platform where there were German soldiers and people in white robes, doctors, as we got to know later. They sorted us out sending old people and children to one side and those who were stronger - to another. Mothers were told to give their children to grandmothers and grandfathers and step to another side. Many women didn't want to leave their children and went with them to the gas chamber, as we learned later. My brothers Dezso, Marton and Sandor were sent to the right where other young men and women gathered. My father, grandfather and younger sister Helena were sent to the left. I left the train after my father

and wanted to follow him, but the officer pulled me by my sleeve and told me to step to the side where young people gathered. My mother held Hermina by her shoulders and they were sent to the women's group. When we were separated, my mother shouted to me: 'Don't forget, you are the oldest and you are responsible for your brothers!'. Later I got to know that my father and grandfather were exterminated right away. I stood beside my brothers. Dezso and Marton were standing beside and I was holding Sandor, the youngest, by his hand. A soldier told me to let go of my brother's hand. I didn't and he hit me on my head with his gun butt so hard that I fell and fainted. When I recovered my senses, a man of average age, whose face was familiar to me from the ghetto in Uzhgorod approached me and said: 'Sonny, you are not at home, you have to obey here'. We marched to the bathroom. When we finished washing and came outside, our clothes were gone and there were striped robes waiting for us. We got dressed and then a barber shaved our heads. My brothers and I tried to stay together. We lined up and marched to the Auschwitz work camp in 5-6 km from the central camp. There were big barracks with two-tier plank beds in them. We were given thin striped blankets from the same fabric as our robes. We were also given pieces of cloth with numbers imprinted on them. We were to see them on our clothes on the chest and on the back. My camp number was 66, Dezso's - 67, Marton - 68. We were ordered to line up in front of the barrack and they gave each of us a piece of bread and sausage. My brother Dezso was the biggest of us. He went in for sports, track-and-field events. In 1942 he won the first place in a district contest. Dezso was always hungry and pounced on the food. I only ate bread and couldn't even look at the sausage. It was disgusting: there were pieces of pork fat in it. The same man, who talked to me in the central camp, approached us again and said that we had to eat what we were given here. God will forgive me this sin and I will need all my strength in the camp. I still couldn't force myself at that moment and gave my piece of sausage to my brother, but some time later I really began to eat anything eatable without thinking whether the food was kosher or not.

There were Jews from Hungary, Poland, France, Italy, Greece and Yugoslavia in our barrack. Almost all of them spoke Yiddish so we could understand each other well. There were also few German criminals in the barrack. We were taken to the camp just for being Jews, but they were taken to court and sentenced to different terms of imprisonment. The senior man of our barrack was a German man sentenced to 25 years of imprisonment for killing a whole family. He was a murderer, but he was a senior man and he did whatever he wanted and there was nobody to complain to. He hit one Jewish man so hard that he died. We met my mother's brother Pinchas in the camp. His situation was a little better than of the rest of us. He didn't have to go to work. The Germans got to know that he was a shoemaker and gave him a place to work in the camp. He fixed and made boots for Germans. The Germans liked what he did and began to bring him leather to make shoes and boots for their wives and daughters in Germany. Sometimes Pinchas shared some food with us, when Germans gave him food for his work.

Then we began to go to work. We were to arrange road beds for construction of new roads: we did wood cutting and grubbing, grading with spades and placing gravel. Our morning started with breakfast. We got a piece of bread and a mug of surrogate black without sugar. Then we lined up, they counted us and convoyed to work. In the afternoon we had lunch break. Thermos bottles with soup and bread were delivered from the camp. Of course, it's hard to call this turbid liquid with half-rotten potato pieces in it soup. Sometimes we could pick a piece of carrot or a cabbage leaf there. We got 300 grams bread for lunch. After lunch we went back to work and in the evening we were convoyed back to the camp. When Germans saw that somebody was too exhausted to work

they killed him right there. In the evening the 'funeral crew', as we called them, they were also Jews, came to bury the dead in the wood. When back in the camp, we got our dinner: same soup as in the afternoon, but no bread. After dinner we went to sleep. We got so tired during the day that we fell asleep and had no dreams. We worked every day. We were not allowed to leave the barrack after retreat. There were armed guards of the camp and at night there were strong patrol dogs let loose in the camp. They were trained to attack people in striped robes.

My brother Dezso was gone in the camp. He was always hungry. We were not allowed to come to the kitchen. Once Dezso said that he couldn't believe there was no food in the camp and left the barrack. My brothers and I tried to tell him to stay and that it could end up in something bad, but he left anyway. He never came back and we never found out what happened to him.

In January 1945 American troops began to attack. Krakow was liberated and the front was on the right from Krakow. [Krakow was liberated by the Soviet Army. He probably refers to the American bombardment of Krakow.] There was a road sign near our camp and there was an inscription in German: '90 km - Krakow'. In late January evacuation of the camp began. There were 100 thousand of those who could walk. They shot all those who were weak and ill. My brothers, uncle Pinchas and I were among those, who could walk. The frost was severe. We were ordered to board the open platforms of a train. My brother Marton happened to be in another railcar. Only my younger brother Sandor was with me in the railcar. We could only stand close to one another in the railcar, so overcrowded it was. People were dying, but there wasn't even space to fall and they remained standing supported by the others. We were starved and suffered from thirst. If somebody peed the others put their mugs to him to have at least something to drink. My brother Sandor died in this railcar. I didn't notice when it happened, but one morning he was not there any longer. Probably somebody pushed him off the railcar, when the train stopped. 9 days later we finally arrived at the Gleiwitz camp. When we got off the train, many of us began to pounce on the snow - so dehydrated we were. I saw my brother Marton there. He was swollen and dark blue - it was horrifying to look at him. I, probably, looked no better. We were sorted out on the platform. The weaker and older inmates were exterminated. My uncle Pinchas perished there. My brother and I went to a barrack. The next morning we were taken to a hospital barrack. Three days later my brother died in this barrack. I was recovering. Our senior man in this barrack was good. He told me to be in no hurry to leave this barrack. I was afraid of staying in this barrack. Many patients were dying every day. We had sufficient bread and food, but people were still dying. The patients were saying that doctors were using people for their medical experiments. I didn't know whether this was true, but I was scared. When I felt better, I asked them to discharge me. The senior man told me to take food and bread with me. I thought there was food in the camp. When I came out of the hospital barrack I bumped into starved inmates begging for food. Before I reached my barrack, my food that I had with me was all gone and there were only two slices of bread left. I put them under my mattress, but in the morning they were gone.

We didn't have to go to work any longer. We were allowed to lie on our plank beds all day long. Each of us got 2 potatoes boiled in their jackets and 100 grams tea with no sugar. Every day inmates were dying and the others managed to receive their ration of food. Later Germans discovered what was happening and before giving food to us they ordered us to go outside and gave us food letting us inside one after another. We knew that if we were not sent to work this meant that this was a death camp. We were waiting for the end of it. My birthday was on 2 March.

Early in the morning a German officer came into our barrack and asked who wanted to go to work. He selected 40 stronger men. We lined up on the square yard and they told us that we would go to a very good camp where work was not too hard and we would get more food. We were given 200 grams bread and 20 g margarine and told us that we would not get any food on the way and we had to keep this piece of bread till we got to the place, but what was this 200 grams of bread? An hour later nobody had even a bread crumb left. We walked to this camp. It was a small camp. There were few barracks for 400 people. Later we got to know that this was just one sector of the camp and there were two other sectors for 400 inmates each. One was a central sector and another one was about 15 km from our camp. There was a kitchen there and a tractor delivered food to us in our sector. We were given half loaf of bread and a jar of soup each. They told us to find vacant beds and take them. We got up at 5 in the morning. There was no breakfast. We went to work. We had to walk for about 8 km and we walked to work every day. We worked at the construction of the railroad connecting the central camp with two others. People were exhausted. We had one meal after we returned to the camp in the evening. We were given one liter of soup per day and twice a week we got a little piece of bread to have with soup. We understood that Germans calculated everything. They knew that we wouldn't have to work long and there was no need for us to keep strong. We worked very hard and had to cover 16 km each day. Since about 5 April English and American planes began to fly over our work site. On the next day we didn't go to work. We were taken to the central camp. There was also another column marching there – 400 inmates from another camp. The central camp had barracks for 400 inmates, when there were already 1200 of us. We had to find a place to sleep at night. We were not allowed to come into the yard due to air raids and bombings. 2-3 inmates slept on one bed, the others slept on the floor and in the aisles. A bomb hit one barrack. Many inmates perished. 2 days passed. On the 3rd day they ordered us to line up in the yard. The Germans sorted out stronger inmates from weaker ones. There were trucks near the gate. We were ordered to go through the gate one after another. Each was given 2 cigarettes. This was like a miracle for us. When I came to the gate they ran out of cigarettes. I said that since there were no cigarettes left, I wasn't going. I decided: be what might, and returned to the camp where weaker inmates stayed. There were about 200 of us. I understood they were going to be shot, but I also knew it was going to happen to me sooner or later. So why wait?... We waited standing. The trucks left. We talked among ourselves that now there was more space in the barracks, but deep in our hearts we didn't believe that there was hope for us to survive left. However, we were ordered to go back to the camp. There were few German military left in the camp. We were ordered to take food from the storeroom and cook by ourselves. We stayed in the camp few days and then we were taken to the railway station where we were ordered to board a train. The railcars were stuffed with people. Our trip lasted about 2 days. Then the train stopped, but the doors were kept closed. Through small windows near the ceiling we could see barracks and people walking. 4 or 5 we were kept in those closed railcars. Only when those, who were taken from our camp in trucks, arrived, the doors were opened. We ran to barrels with water to drink. Then we were ordered to line up again and board railcars again. There were more railcars now and there was more space inside. There was an armed German guard in every railcar. The door of our railcar was kept open. The guard sat by the door. He put his gun on his side and said that we would be all right soon, but that Germans would not be doing so well since American and Soviet troops were close. We didn't talk back to him, but we liked what we heard. We arrived at a station. A German officer ordered everybody to get off the train since Americans were to start bombing soon. We were ordered to go to the wood near the station, as if to hide from bombing

there. Soldiers with automatic guns convoyed us, but we were so used to armed convoys that we paid no attention to them. We were ordered to line up in the woods. German soldiers walked along the line shooting at people. I don't know how I happened to survive. I don't remember soldiers approaching me or how I fell into the pit from a bomb. I probably fainted from fear. When I recovered my consciousness I was in the pit wet from the rain and somebody else's blood. There were corpses on top of me and underneath. I got out of the pit and ran away. I didn't know where I was running. Then I heard somebody calling me in Yiddish. A guy in a camp robe came out of the bushes. I recognized him. He was a Polish Jew; we were in the same railcar. His name was Janec, but I don't know his surname. He said he was waiting for a survivor for about half hour. He didn't see where the Germans went. We didn't have anywhere to go so we went through the wood till we came to the edge. We saw a village in about 2-3 km from there and there was a battle going on there. There were explosions and firing and we were scared. We went back to the wood. It was rather warm and there was grass growing. We walked in the wood and ate grass and roots. Few days later we bumped into four Germans running from the edge of the wood. Janec told me to keep my mouth shut and remember the only thing that we were not Jews. He was Polish and I was Hungarian. He spoke German and English. The Germans asked us what we were doing in the wood. Janec replied that we worked for Germans and then they let us go and that we had nowhere to go and kept wondering in the woods. The Germans began to discuss what to do with us. One said that we had to be shot. Another replied that we were still children and why should they kill us. We were short and thin and looked young for our years. The Germans went away, but the one who suggested to shoot us kept looking back. We were so scared that we couldn't walk. We stayed in the wood a whole day and at night it began to rain. We decided to get to the village for any price. We ran across the field. There was a road behind the fields and we saw military trucks driving there. We hid away not seeing whose trucks they were. When they passed we ran to the village. We came into the first house. There were no villagers left. I saw some military through the window and told Janec that Russians were coming. He replied that there could be no Russians there and that this was an American front. I came out of the house and the soldiers saw me. I didn't know who they were. One of them asked me in German how many of us were there. I said there was another man in the house and they told me to come inside with them. I went first and they followed me. I spoke louder when we came nearer to the house for Janec to hear me and run away, but he heard them speaking English, came out of the house and spoke English to them. They were American soldiers. They gave us tinned meat and bread. When we finished eating they took us to the commander's office in a village house on their truck. There were German prisoners in the house. The Americans took us to the cow shed. There was an attic with straw in the shed and they left us there. They gave us cigarettes, cookies and cocoa. We were both exhausted. I weighed 32 kg. Americans kept us there few days. We washed ourselves and they gave us clean American uniforms and took us to a hospital. They cordially bid 'good bye' to us and gave us cookies and chocolate. I was unconscious for few days. When I recovered my consciousness I discovered that I had no clothes or food left. Everything was gone. I stayed in hospital for about a month. The doctors said I had severe dystrophy and I had to be patient. When the doctor came to examine me, he asked me in German where I came from. I said I was from Subcarpathia and he began to smile and spoke Hungarian to me. I was shocked: an American speaking Hungarian! He explained that he was born in the USA, but his Jewish parents moved there from Subcarpathia and they spoke Hungarian at home. This doctor treated me as one of his family. He brought me food and medications. Most patients were Ukrainian, all from one camp. There were wooden barrels with

technical spirit left in the camp and its inmates drank it when Germans left the camp. They were severely poisoned. Every day 50-60 patients died in the hospital. I stayed there for a month and then was taken to a recreation center near Berlin.

When I recovered, I was sent to a camp in about 100 km from Berlin. I don't remember the name of the town. There were about 2000 young girls and 15 guys in the camp. I met my cousin Moishe there, my mother sister Elka's son. We were given good food: meat, butter and chocolate every day. We were allowed to go to the town. When we went to the town, we got 30 marks each. It was a lot of money in Germany. A jar of jam cost 5-10 marks and a loaf of bread cost 2 marks. Americans were making the lists of those who wanted to move to USA, Palestine, or any other country of the world. They promised assistance to those who wanted to move to USA: with studies, employment and material assistance for the beginning. They also offered contracts for military service to those who wanted to go to the army. I didn't want to go back home. I understood that my family must have perished and that I was alone. I thought there was nobody to help me at home and that if I went to USA I would have assistance at least at the beginning. They explained that we would stay in a camp for about half a year to learn the language. If we had relatives in USA they would help to find them. And they also promised vocational training and support to become rightful citizens. Then an American officer came to tell us that we had to be ready to depart the following day. He explained when the truck would be there to pick us up. On the morning of departure my cousin offered me to go to the town to buy some food for the road. We had fresh memories about the concentration camp and knew it was better to have some food with us that hope for somebody else to provide food. We bought some bread and sausage and when we returned to the camp it turned out that the transport with those moving to USA had left already. So the two of us stayed in the camp. We registered as Czech citizens. We really believed we were Czech citizens and thought the Hungarians were the occupants. We were sure that Subcarpathia was to become Czechoslovakian after the war. Few days later we were transferred to Russians and they took us to a Russian camp. The food we got there was no different from what we got in the concentration camp. We were kept there for 2 weeks. One night they woke us up and ordered to board trucks. We were taken to a war prisoners' camp. The majority of prisoners were German SS officers. From their talks I understood that all inmates of this camp were to be taken to Siberia. I told Moishe about it in Yiddish saying that this was the end and that we should have better perished in the concentration camp. I didn't notice that chief of the camp was listening to us. He asked us in Yiddish who we were and where we came from. We replied that we were Jews from Subcarpathia and that we came from Subcarpathia. The next morning our senior man brought us an assignment to work in the sugar factory in another end of the town. It was written there that we were Czechoslovakian citizens. We were accommodated in the hostel of this sugar factory and some time later we were sent to Prague in Czechoslovakia. We were accommodated in the former military barracks. There was a Red Cross canteen at the railway station where former prisoners of concentration camps had meals. There were many from Subcarpathia, particularly from Uzhgorod there and I soon got new friends. Once I was going back to the barrack from the canteen, when I saw few Czech military. One of them looked at me closely and asked me whether I was Faige Preis's son. I said that I was, but I didn't know him. He said he was Mayer, my mother's cousin. I heard about him that he married a beauty of a Gypsy woman and the family refused from him. Mayer lived in Chop before the war where he owned few cabs. He drove one cab and hired drivers for the rest. In 1937 Mayer moved to Bohemia and went to the Czech army. He had the rank of major. Mayer said that he was in Uzhgorod and heard that my mother and my sister Hermina

returned home from Auschwitz. He didn't see them, but he heard this from reliable people. We said "good byes" and I returned to the camp. Few days later we were told that we could go wherever we wished. I decided to go to Budapest, before making a final decision. I didn't know that Subcarpathia became Soviet. We were given tickets, food and money to go. There were few of us from Subcarpathia. When we came to Budapest I met my cousin Dezso, my mother's younger brother Pinchas' son, at the railway station. He began to talk me into going home, but I didn't agree. I didn't quite believe that my mother and sister were back home: Mayer didn't see them and people might have been misunderstood something. In Budapest we were accommodated in the Jewish girls' school building, near the railway station. I registered for departure to Palestine. Of course, I wanted the USA more, but Palestine was all right too. Anywhere, but home. There were lists of those who returned from concentration camps updated every day and I went there to check the lists hoping to find my family or acquaintances. I met a girl from Malay Dobron. I didn't recognize her at once, but she ran to hug me. She asked me at once why I was still in Budapest, when my mother was home. I asked her how she knew it and she said she was in the concentration camp with my mother and sister. I went back to the hostel and told my cousin that I was going back with him. We got tickets to Subcarpathia. There were 6 of us. We got to Chop by train. I got off the train and saw a man and a woman standing nearby. The woman looked like mother from distance, but when I came closer, I understood this was not my Mama, but the man hugged me all of a sudden. I asked him to leave me alone, but he didn't let go of me. He turned out to be my father's younger brother Mendl. Of course, I didn't recognize him. He had no beard, wore a short haircut and no head covering. Mendl said he was taking me to my mother right away. We came to a small house and Mendl shouted: 'Faige, your son is back!' My mother ran out of the house, pressed me to her chest weeping bitter tears. I shall never forget this meeting. Somebody had told my mother that I was back to Budapest and that I didn't want to come home. She was afraid we would never see each other again. My younger sister Hermina returned with my mother. They temporarily stayed in Chop. When I returned we moved to Uzhgorod. Mendl told me that his wife and four sons perished in the concentration camp. My grandfather and grandmother, my father and Mendl's parents, perished in the ghetto in Dubovoye in 1944. Mendl didn't know anything about his sisters living in Hungary before the war. Haskl perished in a work battalion and his family perished in a concentration camp. Mendl heard that older brother Moric returned to Kosice, but there was no connection with him. We were Mendl's closest relatives and he got very attached to us and took care of us.

After the war

The Soviet rule was already established in Subcarpathia. Our hopes that Subcarpathia would be returned to Czechoslovakia failed. We knew very little about the USSR. What we heard was that there were no goods in stores and there were lines in shops to buy anything, but we never gave it a thought before we saw it with our own eyes. Anyway, we couldn't even imagine anything like that before, but soon we learned what the soviet power was about. Mendl was a wealthy man. When in 1939 suppression of Jews began he spent all his money to buy gold that he buried in the garden near his house in Dubovoye. When he returned home, there was a Hutsul [Ruthenians living in the Carpathian Mountains, traditionally dealing with livestock breeding.] He refused to let Mendl into the house and said he would kill him if Mendl tried to go in. Mendl left and stayed with his acquaintances. At night he went to dig up his valuables in the garden, but the Hutsul saw him and reported to authorities. Mendl was arrested and kept in prison in Uzhgorod for a month without any

charges against him. Then he was released and when he came home, he said to my mother that we had to escape since this country was not for us. Mendl was saying that we would not be able to live with the Soviet regime, but my mother was saying that we would get adjusted somehow and that she had no strength to start anew somewhere else. Mendl said that my mother could stay, if she thought so, but that she should give the children, i.e., my sister and me, in his care. My mother began to cry saying that uncle Mendl wanted to take away her children from her, whom the God saved in the concentration camp and that she couldn't part with us. Mendl felt hurt and left. He never contacted us again. From our common acquaintances we heard that he secretly crossed to Romania and from there left for Israel. For a long time all we knew about Mendl was what his friend from Dubovoye, with whom he corresponded told us. It was not safe for Soviet citizens to correspond with relatives abroad [7](#). All correspondence was censored and everybody knew this. KGB [8](#) was watching the whole process, but this wouldn't have stopped my mother if Mendl had written us, but there were no contacts with him. Only after my mother moved to Israel in the 1970s, our contacts revived. Mendl was doing well in Israel. He got married and had two daughters.

We got information about my mother's brothers and sisters. My mother's older sister Elka and her husband Gersch Scher perished in Auschwitz during sorting out. Of their 8 children four perished in Auschwitz, 2 moved to USA after the camp was liberated by Americans. [Auschwitz was liberated by the Soviet Army.] There is no information about the other two children. Uncle Pinchas was with us in Auschwitz and Gleiwitz. His wife Baila and four younger children were exterminated in the Auschwitz concentration camp. Of four other children only their daughter Zsuzsa [Diminutive of the Hungarian name Zsuzsanna.] returned to Subcarpathia. She lived in Uzhgorod and died in the 1980s. After Americans liberated the camp, one daughter moved to USA and 2 sons moved to Palestine. My mother's brother Lajos and his wife Blanka and Lipe with his wife Lea were exterminated in Auschwitz. Lipe's two younger sons perished with their parents. His two older sons perished in a work battalion in Ukraine. My mother younger sister Riva's husband Wolf Steinberg perished in a work battalion in 1942. Riva and her four younger children were in concentration camps. Riva perished in Auschwitz in 1944 and the younger children perished, too. Of her two older sons, who were in a work battalion one perished and one returned to Subcarpathia after the war. In the 1970s he and his family moved to Israel. My mother's youngest brother Bernat survived in the camps and returned to Subcarpathia. His wife and two children perished in the concentration camp. Bernat married a Jewish woman and they had two daughters. When Jews were allowed to emigrate from the USSR, Bernat and his family moved to Israel. Bernat died in Israel in the 1980s. His wife also passed away. His daughters and their families live in Israel.

We settled down in Uzhgorod. When we came there, we were told to find a dwelling from where Jews had been taken to a concentration camp and move in there. We found a one-bedroom apartment: one big room, a kitchen and a toilet. The three of us moved in there. I became an apprentice of a tailor in a garment store. I had to support my mother and sister, being the only man in the family. It stimulated me to study well and two years later I became a good tailor. Many people ordered their clothes at garment shops since it was hard to buy anything in shops. I could make any clothes, but I was good at making men's suits. The town and region's top men were my clients. Besides my salary I got good tips from my clients, and they also brought me food products that were hard to buy.

Though the soviet power struggled against religion [9](#) my mother and we observed Jewish traditions after we returned to Subcarpathia. I didn't go to the synagogue, though, in fear of having problems at work, but my mother went to the synagogue on Sabbath and Jewish holidays. On Sabbath evening my mother lit candles and made a festive dinner. I worked on Saturday, but my mother tried to do no work on Saturday. We celebrated holidays according to the rules. We always had matzah on Pesach. My mother baked it at first, but later matzah was brought from Budapest and we could buy it. On all holidays we had chicken broth with dumplings from matzah flour, gefilte fish, puddings and strudels from matzah flour. Of course, kosher food was out of question, there was nowhere to get it, but my mother followed kashrut. She didn't mix dairy and meat products, didn't eat pork or sausage and didn't allow us to have any.

My mother was relatively young. She dedicated her love and care to my sister and me. We understood that it would have been better for our mother to meet a decent man and get married. My mother's close friend introduced my mother to her distant relative Gedale Fixler, a Jew from Subcarpathia. He was born in 1900 and was the same age with my mother. During WWII he was in a work battalion. He returned to Subcarpathia after the war hoping that at least some of his family had survived, but they all perished in Auschwitz. Gedale finished the Trade Academy in Mukachevo. He worked in trade. He liked my mother and my mother was not indifferent to him. My sister and I kept telling our mother that we were going to have our families soon and it would be good for her to have a caring husband. They got married in 1947. My stepfather had an apartment and my mother moved in with him. Gedale worked and my mother was a housewife. Gedale was religious. He was a very good man, kind and honest. We liked him and he treated us as his own children. My sister and I visited them on Sabbath and all holidays, but also often just dropped by to see them. My mother and he were very happy to see us. My sister and I spent all Jewish holidays with them. We didn't celebrate Soviet holidays, but there were banquets at work and I attended them since it would have been defiant on my part if I missed them. Of all Soviet holidays the only one that I believed was truly mine was Victory Day [10](#), 9 May.

Anti-Semitism emerged in Subcarpathia with the soviet rule. Of course, it was there since 1938, when Hungarians came to power, but at least the situation was clear: Hungary was a fascist country allied to Hitler's Germany, but the Soviet Union struggling against fascism seemed to be the country where anti-Semitism was impossible. We realized soon that we were wrong about it. When newcomers from the USSR arrived, we could often hear the word 'zhyd' [kike] in public transport and in the streets. Nobody had ever been surprised before hearing Jews speaking Yiddish, but it made the newcomers so indignant that they demanded that we spoke Russian, but the biggest surprise for me was that the majority of Jews from the USSR looked at local Jews as if we were enemies and this demand to speak Russian often came from them. (I didn't study the Russian language, I just listened to others speaking it and gradually began to speak and then read and write in it.) This was terrible and hard to understand. I was surprised since even in the concentration camp we spoke Yiddish to Jews from other countries and German guards didn't mind it. Jews were always friendly and supported each other, but these Jews from the USSR kind of wanted to separate from us and demonstrate that we had nothing in common. Campaign against cosmopolites [11](#) that began in the USSR in 1948 were almost unnoticed in our area. The newcomers discussed them, but we had nothing to do with them. We also thought that the 'doctors' plot' [12](#) that began in January 1953 was a lie. The majority of doctors in Subcarpathia were Jews and we trusted them, but those newcomers could say in a polyclinic: 'I shall not have a

Jewish doctor'. My wife's sister, a children's doctor, also said that the newcomers didn't want her to treat their children. . In some cases, when she came to a house on call, the child's parents closed the door before her saying: 'Let them not send a Jewish woman again'. Anti-Semites raised their heads again. There were always meetings at work where employees had to speak against Jewish poisoners, the doctors. It was compulsory for members of the Party and desirable for others.

In March 1953 Stalin died. I remember well how grown-up men cried in the streets and were not ashamed of their tears. I didn't have tears or grief for him, though I didn't know the truth about Stalin's crimes that Nikita Khrushchev [13](#) spoke about at the 20th Congress of the Party [14](#), but I already knew that those Jews who risked their lives to escape from the fascist Hungary to the USSR were sent to the GULAG [15](#) without trial or investigation. Some of them returned to Subcarpathia after Stalin died, but not all of them. I knew that those Jews who were liberated from concentration camps by Soviet troops were sent to camps for prisoners-of-war or GULAG. Besides, I couldn't understand why newcomers were saying that the world was going to collapse after Stalin's death and life was impossible without him. We lived in Subcarpathia without Stalin for many years and without the USSR and it was a good life. Leaders of the state come and go, but life goes on. Actually, I didn't bother about the life in the USSR. However, 2 events stirred up my senses. This was invasion of Soviet troops to Hungary in 1956 [16](#) and Czechoslovakia in 1968 [Prague Spring] [17](#). These were my countries and I was very concerned about the invasion. I understood that it was the policy of the USSR to suppress freedom and exterminate those who wanted changes in the existing regime in the USSR and socialist countries. Subcarpathian troops also took part in those events and people coming back from there told us that it was different from what newspapers wrote about them. The official version was that the government and people of these countries requested the USSR for military assistance, but if it had been true would the people meet their liberators with the slogans 'Ivan, go back home', and likewise? Of course, I didn't speak my mind: I didn't want to be sent to GULAG after I was in a concentration camp. I knew many people sentenced to 10 to 25 years of imprisonment for expressing their unhappiness or telling an anecdote, therefore. I tried to keep my tongue behind my teeth.

My sister married Ernest Spiegel from Subcarpathia in 1950. During the war her husband was in a concentration camp. After the war he returned to Subcarpathia and settled down in Uzhgorod. His family had perished. We arranged a real Jewish wedding for my sister. Of course, we had to do it in secret. We had a chuppah in the room at home. After the war the soviet power closed most of synagogues in Uzhgorod, but there was one working. My mother asked the rabbi to conduct the wedding ceremony for my sister. We invited few friends and closed ones to the chuppah and my mother cooked a wedding dinner. My sister and her husband lived in the room and I had a bed in the kitchen. My mother's husband built an annex to the apartment, a small room and I moved in there in due time. In 1951 Yudita, my sister's first daughter, was born and in 1958 – her second daughter Erika. My sister and her husband spoke Russian at home. The girls spoke Hungarian and Russian at home, in the street and at school.

We spent time with other Jewish young people from Subcarpathia. Some of my friends were Hungarians, Ruthenians, Slovaks, all born in Subcarpathia. I had no friends among the newcomers from the USSR. Our views on life were too different. There were many girls in our garment store. They often invited me for a walk or to the cinema. I refused referring to the lack of time. My mother tried to introduce me to Jewish girls, but I didn't think about marriage. Once a young woman, one

of the newcomers, came to our garment shop. We could distinguish them by their pure language. Subcarpathians spoke Russian with an accent. She asked the tailor to fix something in her dress. He replied with a joke and everybody laughed. I looked at her and she asked me in Yiddish: 'Why are you laughing, brunette?' Later we often met in the street and said 'hello' to each other. She arrived in Uzhgorod from Savran town in Odessa region [615 km from Uzhgorod, 270 km from Kiev], on her job assignment [18](#) after finishing the Pharmaceutical Faculty of Odessa Medical College. There were special permits to travel to Subcarpathia at that time since it was near the borders. People living in the USSR thought there were gangs and anti-Semites all around in Subcarpathia. Her father even wanted to bribe some officials to prevent them from sending his daughter to this terrible place. When Anna came to Uzhgorod she saw it was different and she liked it. Even during the Soviet regime the life in Subcarpathia was easier than everywhere else. In 1946-47 – famine in the USSR, she sent her family parcels from here. Then her middle sister Donia finished the Pediatrics Faculty of Odessa Medical College. She got a job assignment to the children's home for orphan children who had lost their parents during the war in Brest in Belarus. She completed her 3-year assignment and her older sister convinced her to settle down in Uzhgorod. Donia worked as a children's doctor in the polyclinic. Then her younger sister Lubov Kerzhner finished a Pedagogical College and got a job assignment to a Ukrainian village. Finishing her 3-year assignment Lubov arrived in Uzhgorod. She worked as elementary school teacher not far from my shop. We met every morning on our way to work. At first we just said 'hello' to one another, then we stopped to talk once and then began to see each other. The sisters were very close and always listen to one another. The older sister spoke well of me. Lubov was 8 years younger than me. She was born in Savran in 1932. Her Jewish name was Liebe. Her father Moisey Kerzhner and her mother Meita Kerzhner were religious. They observed Jewish traditions. Their daughters of course, were no longer religious, but they remained Jewish. They knew Jewish traditions, Jewish culture and spoke Yiddish to one another and to their parents.

My wife's older sister Anna married a military man who had also arrived from the USSR. In 1948 their daughter was born. In 1955 he died. She never remarried. She worked and raised her daughter. Their sister Donia was beautiful, but she couldn't find a husband. She couldn't choose for a long time and lived her life single.

We got married in 1957. We had a civil ceremony in a registry office on 18 June and when vacations began at school and teachers went on vacation we had a Jewish wedding. We had to keep it a secret. My wife was a teacher, and authorities watched teachers' ideology very strictly. If her management knew that we had a Jewish wedding she might have been fired with the comment that she 'was not fit to raise the young generation in the spirit of communism'. It happened so at the time. With this entry in her employment records book she wouldn't have found another job as a teacher, or even as a cleaning woman. Therefore, we secretly had a chuppah at home. My relatives and Lubov's sister were with us. Her parents also arrived at the wedding. My mother was very happy that I finally got married and that I had a Jewish wife. They got along well. My mother made challah bread and honey cakes for Sabbath for our family as well. Lubov and I always celebrated Sabbath and Jewish holidays visiting with my mother and stepfather. My mother also often visited us. There was a market, the only one in town, near our house. My mother came by every time she went to the market. In 1959 our first baby was born. We named our son Avrum after my father. We had a brit milah ritual for him. Of course, this was also done secretly, but one of my wife's colleagues heard about it and my wife had problems. Her director and the town educational

department called her and asked her one question: 'How could you do this?' Fortunately, it ended just with a reprimand. In 1968 our daughter Marina was born. We gave her the Jewish name of Meita after my wife's mother, who had died one year before our daughter was born.

My wife and I spoke Yiddish for the most part. She never learned Hungarian. She thought she didn't need it. Russian was a state language during the soviet regime. I spoke poor Russian. I still have an accent. Our children knew Yiddish and Russian. My mother helped us to raise our son, but when our daughter was born she was severely ill and our son and my wife's sisters were helping us with the baby. Our children studied at school and were pioneers and Komsomol [19](#) members. I didn't mind this. They were growing up in this country and it was better for them to be no different from others. Still my wife and I told our children about Jewish traditions and Jewish history, but we also told them to not discuss this with anybody else. We celebrated Jewish holidays at home. I didn't go to the synagogue, but I prayed at home. I had a tallit, a tefillin and a prayer book.

The longer I lived in the soviet regime, the more I hated it. There was no freedom in the USSR and we got used to freedoms in Subcarpathia, particularly during the Czech rule. We could speak our minds without suspecting KGB informers in everybody else. Besides, we lived near the border and to travel to another town we had to obtain a permit from militia and have our passports stamped. We couldn't buy train tickets if we didn't have a stamp; and there was another stamp to be obtained for each trip. We could only walk in the town with our passport. Before I got married my friends and I often accompanied girls home in the evening. There were frontier guard patrols walking the town. They checked our documents and if the girl lived nearby they let her go home, but we couldn't walk with her. Even to go to the woods we needed passports. In 1951 I went to get some wood for stoves in the forest and left my passport at home. In the woods a patrol stopped me. I had no documents, so they put me in their vehicle and took me to the militia office. They reported of having captured a spy. I was lucky that their commander was my client who had picked his new suit just the day before. We said 'hello' and laughed. He released the soldier. But how was I to go home without documents? I asked him to issue a card stating that they detained me, checked and released me. He said he didn't have the right to issue such paper, but he promised to call all posts to tell them to let me go. There were other incidents; it's hard to name them all. Could one live in this country? It was also hard from the material point of view. There were lines in stores and one had to stand for hours before buying a thing. What is this country like where people are not free and also, are miserably poor! For me to love this country, the country had to love me, but we lived like it was a prison. Sometimes it seemed to me that we had more freedom in the concentration camp.

When in the 1970s Jews began to move to Israel, I thought about it like it was a miraculous escape from everything I hated that the God sent me. My relatives also decided to emigrate. My mother and stepfather were the first to go. They were pensioners at that time. My mother was severely ill and her doctors were talking her out of emigration telling her that she was not fit for traveling and that the climate in Israel was not good for her, but my mother decided to move there, nevertheless. She lived 7 years in Israel: good medications and qualified doctors... They lived in Bnei Brak. When my father's brother Mendl got to know that she was in Israel he visited her right away. Mendl supported and visited my mother. My mother died in 1977. Mendl died in the middle 1980s. My mother's husband Gedale never remarried. He lived in Bnei Brak and died in 1988. He was buried near my mother. In 1972 my sister Hermina and her family moved to Qiriat Ono. I was

eager to go to Israel, but my wife was against emigration. Her sisters supported her. They lived their lives in the USSR and were patriots of their country. They blindly believed the propaganda on the radio and in publications. They never gave it a deeper thought; they just believed what they heard. Their middle sister Donia, the children's doctor, was particularly stubborn about it. She was telling me that Israel is a capitalist country and capitalists were exploiters and working people had a very hard life there. I was trying to tell her that she had never practiced capitalism while I lived during capitalism and those were the best years of my life, that if a person had a good job, he could make his living and support his family well while with socialism it didn't matter whether one worked or he didn't, didn't matter – he will be miserably poor anyways. Besides, one feels a fool, when working hard he earns the same wages as lazy bones doing nothing. However, these were mere words for my wife and her sisters that they didn't make an effort to think about. So it happened that we stayed in the USSR. I didn't have much choice: emigration or the family and I chose the family.

After finishing school my son entered the Faculty of Biology of Uzhgorod University. He was fond of biology at school, took part in the Olympiads [There were school Olympiads where children competed in their knowledge of school subjects. The first round was at school, then in the district, region and the final was in the Republican level] and won prizes. Of course, this helped him during admission. Only 1-2 Jews were admitted at one faculty at the University. My son was admitted at his first try. We were happy about it since if he hadn't succeeded he would have been taken to the army and being a Jew he wouldn't have had an easy life there. My son didn't face any anti-Semitism at the university. His lecturers were good to him: my son was a good student. When he was the last year student, my son got married. His wife Maria, a Jew, had finished the Medical Faculty of the university by that time and was working, which helped my son to obtain a free assignment diploma instead of a fixed job assignment upon graduation. However, he couldn't get a job by his specialty and went to work as a lab assistant. His wife was appointed chief of department in her hospital, but she received a low salary and my son didn't earn much. Avrum went to work as a taxi driver. He lives with his wife, but we often see each other. On weekend they always come to see me. Unfortunately, they have no children.

After finishing school my daughter entered the Faculty of Russian Philology of Uzhgorod University. Upon graduation she failed to find a job by her specialty. This didn't have anything to do with her being a Jew. This was during the period of perestroika [20](#), when anti-Semitism receded. It was just that there were not so many schools in Uzhgorod and there were no job vacancies. During her studies Marina got married. Her husband Leonid Shyfris, a Jewish man, also works as a cabdriver like my son. Leonid was born in Uzhgorod in 1953, his parents moved to Subcarpathia from the USSR after the war. The only language they knew was Russian. Marina and Leonid speak Russian at home. He graduated from the Lvov Polytechnic University, but an engineer's salary was too low to support the family. In 1988 my grandson Robert, Marina's son, was born. Marina and her family live with me. When in 1999 Hesed was established in Uzhgorod, Marina went to work there. She was chief of literature studio there. Now Marina is expecting the second baby. She doesn't work.

I saw my sister again in 1983, before perestroika began. I could never imagine having an opportunity to visit her in Israel at that time and my sister couldn't obtain an entry visa to the USSR. We met in Budapest. It was easier for Subcarpathians to travel to Hungary than for other citizens of the USSR. We spent two weeks in Budapest and talked a lot. I was surprised that

Hermine became such a patriot of Israel. I asked her whether it was possible to take to loving the country for such short period of time and my sister replied that it was natural for Jews moving to Israel. After we met in Budapest we began to correspond regularly. Before this meeting we wrote each other occasionally. Unfortunately, I never saw my sister again. She died in 1986. In 1987 we had a family reunion with her older daughter Yudit, my niece. She also traveled to Budapest and my wife, my son and daughter and I went there to meet with her. We rented an apartment for two weeks. We took walks in Budapest and I showed them the places I remembered. When it was time for us to go home, I told my niece to send me an invitation to visit them. Of course, I had little belief that it might happen. In 1987 she sent me an invitation, but I managed to use it only a year later.

My initial attitude to perestroika that started in the late 1980s was the same as to everything else in the USSR – indifferent, but a short time later I realized that I was wrong. Gorbachev [21](#) truly wanted a democratic society with freedom of speech and press. Gorbachev allowed private businesses, though there were those who didn't like it. Many of those who had come here from the USSR were saying that we were going to capitalism. For them this word was a curse word, but for me it meant a society where an individual could work to support his family and make a good living. Religion was allowed. People could go to synagogues and celebrate religious holidays openly. But unfortunately, the Soviet regime broke people of the habit to religion so much that at the beginning we couldn't even gather 10 men for a minyan. For me it was very important that during perestroika people at last got an opportunity to correspond with their relatives or friends abroad, visit them and invite them to visit them back. In 1988 I submitted my documents for a trip to Israel. At first they refused to accept my documents and I only managed in early 1989. They accepted my documents, but said that they didn't guarantee that I would have a permission to visit Israel. However, few months later they issued a permit and I spent four months in Israel. I visited the graves of my mother, my sister and uncle Mendel and recited the Kaddish. I have many relatives, friends and acquaintances in Israel and I was happy to see them. Of course, Israel is a wonderful country. I admired patriotism of its people. They love their country and are proud of it. Service in the army of Israel is not a burdensome necessity that they try to avoid, but an honorary right of an individual. I spoke to young people and they are proud of the possibility to serve in the army and defend their country. Hermine's older daughter Yudit has two children: son Elan, born in 1977, and daughter Mikhalka, born in 1980. My younger niece Erika has three sons: Galiz, born in 1977, Afir, born in 1982, and Cham, born in 1985. I traveled across the country and they wanted to show me the most interesting places. I was sorry to leave Israel, but I understood that at my age it was too late to move to Israel to start a new life. I keep in touch with my relatives in Israel. My niece has been here several times and my children traveled to Israel.

When after the breakup of the USSR [1991] Ukraine gained independence I was hoping for a better life. Ukraine is a rich country: it has fruitful lands and natural deposits. There are good reserves requiring effective management, but I don't see it happening. Life is more difficult than it was during the Soviet rule. My heart squeezes when I see comely old women digging in garbage pans looking for food leftovers. Fortunately, Hesed provides assistance to us, Jews. Old people can have free meals in the Hesed canteen and Hesed delivers meals to those who cannot leave their homes. We also receive food packages and clothes. I've been invited to this canteen many times, but I prefer my own cooking. It's not bragging on my part, but many housewives ask me for my recipes of traditional Jewish cuisine. My daughter's family likes my cooking as well. I've had two infarctions

and several serious surgeries. Hesed helps me with medications and I can consult a doctor from Hesed. When my wife was ill, Hesed also helped us. A visiting nurse from Hesed came to look after her and we received all necessary medications. Lubov died in 2003. Hesed helped us with funeral arrangements. My wife was buried in the Jewish sector of the town cemetery in Uzhgorod. There was a Jewish funeral. The rabbi of the Uzhgorod synagogue conducted the ceremony. Hesed takes great efforts to revive the Jewry of Subcarpathia. There clubs where Jews of all ages study Hebrew and Jewish religion and traditions. My grandson also studies there. Besides, he is a member of the club for Jewish youngsters in Hesed. There are clubs of foreign languages, la literature studio, a choir and dance studio. There is a club for older people in Hesed where they can talk, listen to music or watch a film having a cup of tea. This is so wonderful since older people suffer more from solitude than diseases. Besides, there is a Jewish community and I have been chairman at the synagogue for 8 years. I know Yiddishkeit and can help those who are just coming to the religion of his ancestors. We go to the synagogue 4 times a week and people got used to this. Now we finally have a rabbi and this is a big relief for us. Young people begin to attend the synagogue and we are very happy about it. However, there is still anti-Semitism in Ukraine. Actually, it exists on everyday life level, but it is still there. It is possible to fight open anti-Semitism through court or state authorities, but when a young guy in the street yelled 'Heil Hitler!' seeing me, this means that fascism is alive and it can come back in Ukraine. Only if everybody stands against it there can be hope that all those horrors it brought to our country once would never recur.

Glossary:

1 Subcarpathia (also known as Ruthenia, Russian and Ukrainian name Zakarpatie)

Region situated on the border of the Carpathian Mountains with the Middle Danube lowland. The regional capitals are Uzhhorod, 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 First Czechoslovak Republic (1918-1938)

The First Czechoslovak Republic was created after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy following World War I. The union of the Czech lands and Slovakia was officially proclaimed in Prague in 1918, and formally recognized by the Treaty of St. Germain in 1919. Ruthenia was added by the Treaty of Trianon in 1920. Czechoslovakia inherited the greater part of the industries of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the new government carried out an extensive land reform, as a

result of which the living conditions of the peasantry increasingly improved. However, the constitution of 1920 set up a highly centralized state and failed to take into account the issue of national minorities, and thus internal political life was dominated by the struggle of national minorities (especially the Hungarians and the Germans) against Czech rule. In foreign policy Czechoslovakia kept close contacts with France and initiated the foundation of the Little Entente in 1921.

3 Russian stove

Big stone stove stoked with wood. They were usually built in a corner of the kitchen and served to heat the house and cook food. It had a bench that made a comfortable bed for children and adults in wintertime.

4 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.

5 Numerus clausus in Hungary

The general meaning of the term is restriction of admission to secondary school or university for economic and/or political reasons. The Numerus Clausus Act passed in Hungary in 1920 was the first anti-Jewish law in Europe. It regulated the admission of students to higher educational institutions by stating that aside from the applicants' national loyalty and moral reliability, their origin had to be taken into account as well. The number of students of the various ethnic and national minorities had to correspond to their proportion in the population of Hungary. After the introduction of this act the number of students of Jewish origin at Hungarian universities declined dramatically.

6 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.

7 Keep in touch with relatives abroad

The authorities could arrest an individual corresponding with his/her relatives abroad and charge him/her with espionage, send them to concentration camp or even sentence them to death.

8 KGB

The KGB or Committee for State Security was the main Soviet external security and intelligence agency, as well as the main secret police agency from 1954 to 1991.

9 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.

10 Victory Day in Russia (9th May)

National holiday to commemorate the defeat of Nazi Germany and the end of World War II and honor the Soviets who died in the war.

11 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'.

12 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.

13 Khrushchev, Nikita (1894-1971)

Soviet communist leader. After Stalin's death in 1953, he became first secretary of the Central Committee, in effect the head of the Communist Party of the USSR. In 1956, during the 20th Party Congress, Khrushchev took an unprecedented step and denounced Stalin and his methods. He was deposed as premier and party head in October 1964. In 1966 he was dropped from the Party's Central Committee.

14 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.

15 Gulag

The Soviet system of forced labor camps in the remote regions of Siberia and the Far North, which was first established in 1919. However, it was not until the early 1930s that there was a significant number of inmates in the camps. By 1934 the Gulag, or the Main Directorate for Corrective Labor Camps, then under the Cheka's successor organization the NKVD, had several million inmates. The prisoners included murderers, thieves, and other common criminals, along with political and religious dissenters. The Gulag camps made significant contributions to the Soviet economy during the rule of Stalin. Conditions in the camps were extremely harsh. After Stalin died in 1953, the population of the camps was reduced significantly, and conditions for the inmates improved somewhat.

16 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.

17 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.

18 Mandatory job assignment in the USSR

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

19 Komsomol

Communist youth political organization created in 1918. The task of the Komsomol was to spread of the ideas of communism and involve the worker and peasant youth in building the Soviet Union. The Komsomol also aimed at giving a communist upbringing by involving the worker youth in the political struggle, supplemented by theoretical education. The Komsomol was more popular than the Communist Party because with its aim of education people could accept uninitiated young proletarians, whereas party members had to have at least a minimal political qualification.

20 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.

21 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.