

Boris Dorfman



This is me at the age of 16, after finishing the first year at the Assistant Engineer School. I am wearing my first suit on this picture. The photo was taken in Studio Bella in Kishinev in 1939. When World War II began in Poland in 1939 large numbers of Jewish refugees arrived in our area. They had hope in the Soviet Union. The Soviet troops came to this territory in 1940 and many believed this was an escape from the horrors of fascism. In our family we didn't put all our trust into the Soviets, but we chose the less of the two evils - fascism or the Soviet Union - and turned to the latter, of course. We didn't know they were bandits and would kill, rob and put people into prison. On 7th July 1940 my parents and uncles, as well as many other people were arrested on charges of anti-Soviet behavior and Zionism. In 1940 I was 17 and a student at the Assistant Engineer School. My parents wanted me to get a technical education. The Soviet authorities gave our school the status of a college. I was on vacation when my parents were arrested. Our neighbors sent me a message saying that I shouldn't show up at home since I might be arrested, too. I watched from a distance how they loaded money, gold, furniture and pictures onto trucks. They were communist officials who arrived in the area along with the Soviet army. They were traditionally called 'Easteners'. [Editor's note: the Soviet Union was east of Kishinev.] They moved into our houses. I

was allowed to take my warm clothes when winter approached. When I returned in 1947 I found many houses, including ours, ruined. There were many Jewish bosses that had just arrived from the East and many of the local communists also became big bosses. I stayed with my grandfather, Aunt Liya or Aunt Chiza, or at a friend's home. I didn't tell anyone at school that my parents had been arrested so that I could continue my studies. I only told a few of my closest friends. I was allowed to bring some food to my parents, but I couldn't see them and they weren't allowed to have an attorney. Shortly before the Great Patriotic War, in late May 1941, eleven months after they had been arrested, I received a statement from a special meeting of the NKVD about preventive punishment of particularly dangerous 'enemies' of the Soviet power. My parents were sentenced to 15 years of imprisonment and deprived of their right to correspond with their families. My mother was sentenced on the charges of being a Zionist and bourgeois chauvinist and my father was sentenced for being a capitalist. My father was sent to Karaganda camp [on the Gulag], in Kazakhstan and my mother was sent to Solikamsk camp in the Ural. I wasn't allowed to visit my father and never saw him again. He died in 1942, but we only got to know this after we received his rehabilitation papers some time after 1956. It was stated that he had cardiac insufficiency and tuberculosis and that he was buried in grave #31 at a certain location. We looked it up on a map, but couldn't find it. I was allowed to see my mother before her departure to Solikamsk. She looked exhausted, but she didn't lose her spirits. We promised each other to keep in touch.