

Boris Dorfman



This is me at the opening ceremony of the memorial in the woods near the village of Rudno, Lvov region, the scene of mass shootings of Jews in 1941. The photo was taken in 1998. I took a lot of effort to have this memorial installed. I've always been involved in Jewish public activities. During the Soviet regime I distributed Jewish publications and books. An underground Jewish printing house published Zionist flyers and books from America and Israel that we translated into Russian. I delivered those publications to houses offering them to people. Some people bought them and others were even afraid of opening their doors to a stranger. I knew all Jews in town who weren't ashamed of revealing their Jewish identity and who attended the synagogue. My colleagues knew that I was religious and went to the synagogue. I delivered matzah to Jews who were afraid of being noticed by their neighbors. We received matzah from Odessa where it was delivered to from Moscow. The New Hasidic Synagogue, the only operating synagogue in Lvov, was closed in 1963. The building was given to a sports club. It was a shock, of course. The main reason for this act was that the best hotel in Lvov was built in this part of town. Diplomats and journalists stayed there and

the town authorities thought that Jews passing by would spoil the impression. They collected signatures against the synagogue. By the way, many 'decent' Jews signed this paper. Religious Jews began to get together for a prayer in private houses. There were gatherings of 10-15 Jewish men. I put pressure on the town authorities to return the synagogue to Jews, but they refused. I continued to pursue my Jewish activities and became the fund keeper of our small Jewish community. Every member of this community made a contribution and I put this money into my account. We distributed the only Jewish magazine published in the Soviet Union, Sovyetishe Heymland [Yiddish paper called Soviet Motherland]. A secretary of the Jewish Publishing House came to our meeting and said: 'If we have no readers the magazine will cease publication. Each of you must find five subscribers'. I decided to use my position. I was the chief engineer of the Regional Pharmacy Department, which was a big organization. Whenever a Jew came to my office with a request I said: 'Here is the subscription receipt for a Jewish magazine - if you subscribe to it I shall do as you want'. We managed to convince 140 Jews to subscribe to the magazine, while there were only 20 previously. Many Jews refused to read the magazine. All of those who didn't want to reveal their identity back then are in Israel today. I retired about 16 years ago. I was happy to resign. I have all my time for myself now and can spend more time promoting the Jewish movement. I was a member of the board of the Sholem Aleichem Society for six years. I attended conferences in Kiev and studied at the Moscow affiliate of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. I attended a number of congresses as a Jewish representative from Ukraine. My wife Betia became a teacher of Hebrew. She is the director of a Jewish Sunday school, which has been operating in Lvov for twelve years. Our family takes an active part in the work at this school. Of course, most of our students come from mixed marriages, but we have a curriculum and teach Hebrew, Jewish traditions, holidays, songs and dances.