

Ernest Galpert



This is a picture of me taken on the day of my recruitment to a battalion in the Hungarian forced labor. The photo was taken in Mukachevo in 1944. In April 1944 I was taken to forced labor to Hungary. Tilda and I didn't know what was ahead of us. We agreed that we would keep in touch through my father's sister, who lived in Switzerland. We learned her address by heart: Lugano, Bella Visari, 10. I worked in Budapest and then in other places. We dug trenches and constructed defense lines. We stayed in a big barrack with no heating and got little food that barely kept us alive. My friend Voita and cousin Aron, my mother's sister's son, were in the camp with me. We worked from 6am till it got dark. There was a lunch break in the afternoon. When we got to our barrack in the evening we fell asleep immediately. There were guards in the camp, but it wasn't as bad as a concentration camp in general. We could talk in Hungarian with the local residents that told us about what was happening. In summer 1944 Jews from Hungarian towns and villages began to be taken to concentration camps. We were aware of it. We also knew that all our relatives living in Mukachevo were taken to a concentration camp, but we had no idea about gas chambers or the

extermination of Jews in camps. There were cases when inmates of our camp died from hunger or a disease, but this wasn't a death camp. My cousin Aron heard from locomotive operators that drove trains to Auschwitz that this was a death camp, but we just couldn't believe that people could be taken to gas chambers. We just didn't believe it. Only after the war did we get to know what was happening in Auschwitz and that our relatives perished there and how they perished. Both my father and my mother were taken to the gas chambers right away.