

Ernest Galpert



This is a picture of me taken during my service in the Soviet army. I sent this photo to my future wife Tilda Galpert, nee Akerman in Uzhgorod. The photo was taken in Khmel'nitskiy in 1946. 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. When the Soviet

troops came to Hungary in January 1945 we were transferred to the Germans. We were under Hungarian rule, but after the transfer to the Germans we were taken to a German concentration camp in Zachersdorf near the Austrian border. However, it was a work camp, too. We worked in groups of 100 inmates constructing defense lines and anti-tank trenches for the Germans. This was in March when the snow was melting and we worked in knee-deep slush. The soil was damp and we had to throw it onto the surface with spades. It was hard work, but fortunately, it only lasted about two months. There were only six survivors in our group of 100 people. After the war we decided to go to the Soviet army. We wanted the fascists to pay their price for what they had done. We hoped to liberate our relatives. We went to a registry office to volunteer to the army. When officers there looked at us they said we needed to go to a hospital rather than to the army. I was as thin as a rake and my companions looked no better. The officer that talked to us refused to accept Voita, but Aron and I kept begging him to recruit us. We were sent to a training battalion in Poland. At that time the war was over. So I happened to serve in the army, but not at the front. Subcarpathia belonged to the Soviet Union and I was subject to mandatory military service. I served in Poland for about a year and then I was sent to Khmel'nitskiy, Vinnitsa region, Ukraine. I demobilized in 1947.