Yacob Hollander

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Ukraine
Interviewer: Ella Levitskaya
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Yacob Hollander is a stout man of average height. He is growing bold, and there are red hairs with streaks of gray around his bald patch. Yacob is very reserved. He speaks quietly and slowly considering every word. His memories are very hard for him, but he is determined to tell everything that happened to him and his family. Yacob lives in a two-bedroom apartment in a modern building in an old district of Uzhgorod. He lives with his second wife Svetlana. They don't have any children. They have modern furniture in their apartment. There are many books, mostly in Yiddish and Hungarian. Reading is Yacob's favorite pastime. He and his wife get along very well and care for each other. They are very friendly and hospitable and are happy to have guests.

My father's family lived in Dorobratovo village of Irshava district in Subcarpathia [1]. This village doesn't exist now. Irshava town [70 km from Uzhgorod, 640 km from Kiev] was spreading after WWII over the territory of adjoining villages, including Dorobratovo. I've never been to Dorobratovo and know only what my father told me about this village. In the 19th – early 20th centuries it was a small Ukrainian village. [editor's note: Most probably it was a Ruthenian village.] There were about 150 families living in it. Among them there were 15-20 Jewish families. The Jews living in Dorobratovo dealt in crafts and farming. There was no synagogue in the village and Jews got together in a prayer house for a minyan. Only men were allowed to attend it. Women were not allowed to go to the prayer house. On big holidays they went to the synagogue in Belki, nearly 2 km from Dorobratovo.

My grandfather Yankl Hollander came from Subcarpathia. I don't know where exactly he was born. My grandfather was born in the 1850s. My grandmother's name was Ella. I don't know the place of her birth or her maiden name. I think my grandmother was about the same age as my grandfather. My grandfather was a shoemaker. He had a small shop in the house where the family lived. My grandfather made and fixed shoes. My grandmother was a housewife like all married Jewish women at the time. Jewish families had many children, and it was necessary to take care of them. Women cooked and washed, looked after livestock and worked in the field. Of course, the family dealt in farming. I don't know whether they grew things for sale, but they certainly grew vegetables to feed the family. My grandfather had about 10 hectares of land.

There were six children in the family: 4 sons and 2 daughters. My father Shloime Hollander was born in 1899. Of all his brothers and sisters I only knew his younger brother Berko, born in 1903. When I was born, Berko lived in Kamyanske village [65 km from Uzhgorod, 645 km from Kiev], where our family also lived. I also dimly remember my father's sister living with her family in Mukachevo [40 km from Uzhgorod, 660 km from Kiev]. I don't remember her first name, but her marital name was Itzkovich. Her husband was a cabman and had a cab and horses. I only saw my father's sister, her husband and children, when I was a child, and this is all I remember about them. One of my father's brothers, whose name I don't remember, served in the Hungarian Army during World War I. [Editor's note: In the Austro-Hungarian double monarchy (1867-1918) there was no separate Hungarian military; the two states had three areas that they managed together: foreign affairs, finance and military. Therefore his uncle must have served in the KuK army [2].] He lost his both legs to the war. He had so many combat awards that they were crowding on his military jacket. Being a hero and invalid of the war he had a big pension and privileges awarded by the state. After World War I he lived in Budapest. [Trianon Peace Treaty] [3] I've never seen any others and don't know their names.

My father studied in a general Ukrainian school, the only school in Dorobratovo. [Editor's note: It must have been a Ruthenian school. Ukrainian and Ruthenian are similar languages and the official Soviet policy after 1945 was the denial of the separate Ruthenian identity; they were regarded Ukrainian and the Ruthenian language a Ukrainian dialect.] There was no cheder in the village. My grandfather taught his children to read and write in Hebrew and taught them prayers. They only spoke Yiddish in my father's family. They spoke the Subcarpathian dialect of the Ukrainian language called Ruthenian with their non-Jewish neighbors.

I remember my grandfather Yankl a little. He was a short and stout man and had a thick beard and payes. My grandfather always covered his head. He wore a kippah at home and a hat to go out. Probably, at that time all Jews had their heads covered. Even in the morning, when a Jewish man got up, he could only make 3 steps without a head covering. On weekdays my grandfather wore his work clothes. He had a long black jacket to wear on Sabbath and Jewish holidays, when he went to the prayer house or synagogue. All I remember about my grandmother is that she was a short and thin old woman wearing a black kerchief as low as her brows and black clothing.

My mother's family lived in Kamyanske village of Irshava district. My grandfather Isroel Klein was born in Kamyanske in 1852. My grandmother Ghita was born in a village near Kamyanske in 1854. I don't remember which one it was. My grandfather was a cabman transporting people and loads. He had beautiful horses and a phaeton decorated with carvings.

Kamyanske was a big village of about 350 houses. There were about 150 Jewish families. It was a wealthy village: families had a lot of land and kept livestock. Jews dealt in crafts and trade. Jews also owned taverns and inns. There were wealthier Jews who owned bigger stores selling fabrics, shoes and more expensive food products, but most of them were selling consumer goods: flour, butter, cereals, herring, sugar, matches, kerosene and whatever else villagers needed. There were Jewish shoemakers and tailors. They owned small shops. They didn't hire employees preferring apprentices and this was beneficial to both sides. Parents didn't pay for their children's training. Each craftsman had 4-5 apprentices. It took 3 years to become a shoemaker or a tailor. In the first year of training apprentices helped their masters about the house fetching water or cutting wood –

whatever errands their masters gave them to do. When the first year was over, apprentices began to do simple work and in the third year apprentices started working, but their masters didn't pay them for work. Tailors received orders and did measurements and their apprentices made garments. Christians dealt in farming in Kamyanske farming the lands and keeping livestock.

About one third of all Jewish families in Kamyanske were Hasidim [4]. There were two big synagogues in Kamyanske: one Hasidic and one for all other Jews. Hasidim also had a shochet that only did slaughtering for them. Hasidim had their own life staying aside from other Jews. Women went to the synagogue on Sabbath and other Jewish holidays. They had seats on the 2nd floor.

There was no anti-Semitism in Subcarpathia and in Kamyanske in particular, during the Austro-Hungarian and the Czechoslovakian rule. [First Czechoslovak Republic] [5] Generations of people of different nationalities were living side by side learning to be tolerant and respect each other's faith and religion. Jews were treated with special respect. People believed them to be smart and close to God. Occasionally Ukrainians addressed a rabbi to solve their disputes. The rabbi never refused to provide assistance, and his advice was valued and followed. Once our neighbors addressed the rabbi to advise them on a balk between their fields that they kept arguing about. Another time four brothers asked the rabbi to teach them to share their father's heritage. They had argued for months before they turned to the rabbi for advice. I don't know what the rabbi decided, but the brothers never lived peacefully from then on. They lived in our street and so I know about this case. Of course, there were other cases, but I only remember these two cases after so many years.

I remember my grandfather's and grandmother's house very well. It was a solid spacious village house, 2 rooms and a big kitchen. It was built from air bricks: mixture of clay and cut straw dried in the sun. Standard bricks were expensive and were only used to build official buildings. There were air brick and wooden houses in the village. My grandparents' house had tile roofing. Poorer people had straw and reed mat roofs in their houses. My grandfather and grandmother were quite wealthy and had sufficient land.

In the Klein family there were probably the most children of all families. I don't know how many children died in infancy and childhood, but 14 survived. Unfortunately, I can't remember their names. I know that there were three sons, and the rest were daughters. My mother, born in 1898, was the youngest. She had the name of Hanna registered in her birth certificate issued by Austro-Hungarian authorities, but my mother was called Hincha in the Jewish manner.

My grandfather and grandmother were religious and observed Jewish traditions. They raised their children religious. My grandfather was short and had a big beard with streaks of gray and payes. My grandmother was short, fatty and cheerful. She had her hair cut. When going to the synagogue on Sabbath or on holidays, my grandmother wore a wig, but at home she covered her head with a black kerchief. My grandmother always wore black clothes. My mother wore clothes of different, though, dark colors, but not my grandmother. She wore ankle-long skirts and long-sleeved shirts. The only difference of my grandmother's clothes was that they were woolen in winter and cotton in summer. She had a fancy black silk outfit for the synagogue. My grandfather only wore black clothes too. On weekdays he wore a black suit with a jacket and put on a long jacket and a long coat to go to the synagogue. He wore a kippah at home and a black hat to go out.

My parents met each other in a traditional manner: through matchmakers, shadkhanim. It was not necessary for a couple to see each other before their wedding. Shadkhanim got information about families with young maids and young men of marrying age. Only rich boys matched rich girls. Wealthy young men never married beautiful, but poor girls. A shadkhan would have never made any arrangements for of this kind. Shadkhanim informed families when they had a match for their children. If both families came to an agreement, a shadkhan introduced the parents and they negotiated and arranged a wedding. As a rule, a bridegroom saw his bride only after the wedding ceremony. After a rabbi conducted a wedding ceremony under the chuppah, the newly weds were to sip wine from one glass. The young husband sipped the wine and then gave the glass to his wife. She lifted her veil to sip her wine and it was only then that the man saw his wife's face. It was forbidden to see her face before this moment. Perhaps, this rule was not always followed, but that's how it was in my childhood. Jewish traditions were observed more strictly in villages than in towns. In towns young people could meet and walk hand in hand before their wedding, but this was unimaginable in villages. If people didn't have a traditional wedding, but registered their marriage in the mayor's office, the public didn't recognize this marriage. They believed those young people to be living in sin.

My parents got married in 1919. Of course, I don't know what kind of wedding my parents had, but I presume it was a traditional Jewish wedding. Though my mother was the youngest daughter and the last one to get married in the family, she received a good dowry. My grandfather gave her a house where we lived before World War II and 8 hectares of land. My grandfather provided dwelling to all of his daughters. My mother's 2 sisters and 2 brothers lived in Kamyanske besides my mother. Two other sisters and a brother lived in Shalanki village [66 km from Uzhgorod, 650 km from Kiev], near Kamyanske. One of my mother's sisters moved to live with her husband in Michalovce not far from Uzhgorod but already in Czechoslovakia [today Slovakia]. The rest of my mother's sisters emigrated to America in the 1910s. They stayed in touch with the family and sent money and parcels to their parents.

The house my grandfather gave to my mother as dowry was made from air bricks. There were 2 rooms, a fore room and a big kitchen in this spacious house. There was a big yard with a shed, a chicken house and a cowshed. We had cows, bulls and horses. My mother kept chicken and geese. There was an orchard and a small vegetable garden where we grew greeneries. My father built an annex to the house where he opened a small store selling goods from salt to kerosene, everything people needed in their everyday life. Our customers lived in our and neighboring streets. This store didn't bring much money, but still it added to the family budget. My father worked in the store alone and my mother helped him every now and then.

We didn't farm all land that we had. It was too much. We only farmed a part of it to grow everything we needed. My father leased plots of land to Ukrainian farmers. There was little land in villages in the mountains and villagers from there willingly rented land. My father leased his land and gave framers seeds and after harvesting the villagers working on the land could have 20% crops and gave my father 80%. Everybody was happy.

There were five children in our family. We all had Czech names in our birth certificates and all of us had Jewish names. The oldest daughter Roza, Ruhl in Jewish, was born in 1924. I, Yacob (Jacub in the Czechoslovak documents) was the second child. I was born on 17 July 1927. In 1929 my brother

was born. He had the name of Avrum (Arnucht written in his Czechoslovak birth certificate). His Jewish name was Abraham. My sister Gizella was born in 1935. Her Jewish name was Ghindl. The youngest brother Mikhal was born in 1937. His Jewish name was Mendl All sons were circumcised according to the Jewish tradition.

We spoke Yiddish and sometimes Hungarian at home. We spoke only Yiddish to our parents and between us and outside we spoke more Hungarian. We also knew the Subcarpathian dialect of the Ukrainian language called Ruthenian. Most Ukrainians in Kamyanske spoke Ruthenian.

My parents were religious and observed Jewish traditions. My father had a big beard and payes. On weekdays my father wore a black suit and had a long black jacket for the synagogue. My father always covered his head. He wore a kippah at home and in the store and a hat to go out. My mother wore a wig to go to the synagogue on Sabbath and Jewish holidays, to brit milah celebrations or weddings. Women didn't wear wigs at home. My mother wore a kerchief at home. Girls had their hair cut before going under the chuppah. Married women didn't wear their hair long. Many of them like my mother ordered wigs to be made from their own hair. My mother's sisters and her brothers' wives wore wigs.

We lived near my grandmother and grandfather and all grandchildren spent a lot of time with them. My grandmother and grandfather loved their numerous grandchildren dearly and we enjoyed spending time with them. Sometimes my grandfather picked up his grandchildren from his daughters' homes riding his cab. He gave us a ride and when we began fighting and were naughty grandfather threatened to take us to our homes and of course, we stopped the mess at once. These rides were eventful for us and we remembered them until another ride.

My grandfather went to the synagogue 3 times a day. He was very strong physically. Even at the age of 90 he didn't change the routines of his life and attended the synagogue three times a day without escort. He didn't have breakfast before going to the synagogue in the morning, but he drank a shot of self-made plum brandy of about, called Palinka in Hungarian. A bottle of it lasted for about two months. When he came home from his morning visit of the synagogue he had a mug of fresh milk. In the afternoon he spent 2-3 hours at the synagogue again. Then he had dinner. My grandfather cared for me a lot. I escorted him to the synagogue on Saturday. I carried his book of prayers and a tallit, and on Sunday he gave me some change for helping him. My mother's sister owned a confectionery store and I ran to buy sweets in her store.

There was a big Jewish community in Kamyanske. Every Thursday members of the community made the rounds of wealthier Jewish families collecting money for the needy. They bought fish and chicken to give them to poor Jews to celebrate Sabbath decently. They also collected money for the poor before holidays. My grandmother also patronized 10 poor Jewish families. She kept oxen and their milk is delicious and very healthy. At least, there was a belief that it was. My grandmother milked the buffalo and I delivered this milk to these families for their children. My grandmother gave me some change for this errand. On Friday morning she sent me to take flour for Saturday challah bread to these families. My parents also supported a poor Jewish family who were our neighbors. My mother always sent one of us to take milk to this family after she milked cows in the morning. My parents provided to them few bags of potatoes and onions for winter. Of course, I felt sorry for these poor hungry children and their mothers, who worked themselves to the bones to feed their numerous offspring, but I felt neither sorry nor sympathetic with the fathers of these

families. I was perplexed by their conduct. They didn't want to work believing that it was indecent. They stayed at home studying the Torah and reading religious books. This was their pastime. They felt content with the food and worn clothes they got from the community. Their children were hungry and slovenly, but they believed that their fathers were doing an important thing reading. Their sons also grew up with the conviction that there was no need to work. It was necessary to read the Torah and the God would take care of their food and clothes. I thought and think now that it is wrong. Only those who cannot work due to their health condition or age must have support, but there is no need to support idlers.

I remember that there were few Jewish communists in Kamyanske. I saw two of them. They were no different from other Jews having beards and wearing black clothes. Once they began to argue about a book by Lenin [6] at the synagogue. They attended at the synagogue and it didn't contradict their reading of Lenin's books and grow fond of communist ideas. Adults said that they wanted Subcarpathia to join the USSR. I don't remember any details. I was just a boy and took no interest in politics. In general, Jews were not interested in politics, except for few of them. Religion was the Jewish policy and this was all they cared about. There were no Zionist organizations or Zionist clubs for children and youngsters in the village. Rabbis governed all Jewish activities and they would have never tolerated such things. Rabbis would have closed any Zionist club, even if it was opened in the village.

We followed kashrut strictly at home. My mother had special crockery, utensils and tableware for meat and milk products. One could not even imagine having a glass of milk after a meat dish before 6 hours passed while it was allowed to have meat one our after a milk dish. Meat was bought only from shochet. When a Jew was going to slaughter a cow, a rabbi came to inspect the cow and recite a prayer. Then a shochet came and conducted quite a ritual to make the meat kosher. Only after a prayer and begging pardon for sins he slaughtered the cow. Jews were only allowed to eat the front part of the cow. The rear part was not kosher and the meat was sold to Christians. Shochet had a special facility where he slaughtered chicken. It was always overcrowded and there was a lot of noise: the chickens cackled and their owners spoke loudly to one another. The shochet also identified whether a chicken was kosher or not. If he said that the chicken was not kosher, it had to be given to non-Jews. Not even the poorest Jew would have eaten this chicken.

Housewives made bread at home once or twice a week depending on how big the family was. In each house there was a big Russian stove [7] with an oven. Every housewife knew how long she had to stoke her stove and how long it took for her bread to bake through. Most housewives baked bread on Friday morning since they had to bake challah bread for Sabbath as well. On Friday morning my mother always baked corn bread: it is delicious only while it's fresh. She baked challah bread from the highest quality flour and bread for every day from lower quality flour. She pushed a baking tray with bread inside the oven and closed the door with clay. My mother always knew when she had to take the bread out: it was covered with crispy goldish crust. She kept it covered with flax cloth during a week and it never grew stale or mould. There were few wind and water mills on the Borzhava River in the village and there was a mill where grain was ground for Jews. Its owners were two Jewish brothers. Few Jewish families got together to grind the grain and there was at least 300 kg flour ground for a family. When Jews made an agreement to go to the mill they notified the rabbi. He came to inspect the grinding stone and the mill for cleanness and gave his permission, if everything was fine. People came to the mill, as if it were a club. There was the only

radio in the village, a black box on the wall. Men listened to the radio and discussed what they heard. There was also a Jewish buttery in the village.

After baking bread my mother started cooking. First she made food for Friday: gefilte fish, chicken broth, potato pancakes and carrot tsimes. My mother kept geese and we always had a roasted goose for Sabbath. Then she put a pot of cholnt into the oven for the next day. She also closed the door to the oven with clay and the stew was kept there until the next day.

On weekdays my mother did all housework herself, but on Friday she always invited a Ukrainian woman to help her with washing. On Friday she always changed bed sheets. My mother had a lot of work to do before Sabbath. Se had to go to the mikveh before the first star appeared in the sky. On weekdays we washed in a basin at home, but on Friday all went to the mikveh. In small villages men and women took turns to get washed. Our village was big and there was a big mikveh. There were two buildings, one for men and one for women. There were 4 bathtubs and a swimming pool in each building. At first it was necessary to get washed in the bath and then dip into the swimming pool three times. On Friday morning all water was drained from the swimming pools. The swimming pools and bathtubs were washed with milk. The rabbi watched the process. Then the rabbi said a blessing and it was allowed to fill the swimming pools with water. There were steel stoves plunged into the swimming pools to heat water. They started the stoves and added wood from above. I went to the mikveh with my father and brothers. Before going there my mother washed us in a basin, but we still had to wash with soap in a bathtub before jumping into the swimming pool. There were bath house attendants in the mikveh watching the order. When the boys became naughty the attendant threatened to throw us out. Of course, it never came to that. After the swimming pool we had to get dressed quickly since my father didn’t like waiting.

When we came home from the mikveh, my mother had everything ready for us. She had also returned from the mikveh and wore her fanciest dress. Then we sat at the table, my mother lit candles and recited a prayer over them. Then we prayed together and started dinner. When the candles were lit, it was not allowed to do any work until the evening of the next day when the first star appeared in the sky. It was not allowed to put down the candles they were to burn down. There was a poor Ukrainian family living nearby. The mother of this family came after dinner to clean the table and light the lamps. [shabesgoy] On the next day she came several times to start the stove, take out the pot with cholnt and milk the cows and oxen. My mother always gave this neighbor this Saturday milk. On Saturday morning we went to the synagogue. The boys under 8 years of age went to the synagogue with the mother and then, when they grew older, they went with the father. The adults were not allowed to eat till they came from the synagogue, but the children did not have to follow this rule. The adults had to start praying in the morning. They stayed at the synagogue till late afternoon. It was not allowed to do any work on this day. If one touched anything, but the book of prayers, he had to wash his hands three times. On Saturday it was not allowed to eat alone, apart from the family. Everybody sat together at the round table and took to dinner after a prayer. After dinner the family sat around the father and he read the Saturday section from the torah to us explaining it or told us something of the Jewish history. Then he went to the synagogue. When he returned home, the family sat down to supper. My father conducted the Havdalah service: Havdalah means “separation” and is a service used to separate the holiness of the Sabbath from the rest of the week. There was a glass of wine on a plate and everybody had his own glass for wine. Everybody drank wine; even younger children got a little to wet their lips. My father lit a

candle, poured some wine into his glass and said a blessing over the wine. Everybody had to sip wine and pray. Then my father poured wine into a saucer and put down the candle in wine. Then everybody wished each other a good week. Only kosher wine made by Jews was good for Havdalah. Subcarpathia is the country of vineyards, and almost every family made wine, but one had to make sure of its kosher compliance before buying it even from a neighbor. Therefore, Jews either made their own wine or bought it from others Jews who made kosher wine and whose wineries were inspected by a rabbi who issued permits for wine making.

Of course, Pesach was a favorite holiday. Preparations started approximately a month in advance from making matzah. It was a big village and it took this long to make matzah for all Jewish families. There was a house with few big stoves near the synagogue. Few women were hired to make matzah. The rabbi checked them for cleanness. They had to cut their nails short. They got clean robes and everything necessary for making matzah. The rabbi watched the process of matzah making. They made dough, rolled it and put in the oven quickly within maximum 15 minutes from the moment of making dough to putting it into the oven, or else the dough became no good for making matzah. Each family brought flour and ordered how much matzah they wanted. My father ordered 50 kg matzah for our big family. It was only allowed to store matzah in a locked wooden box. The box was taken to the attic where our special crockery for Pesach was stored. It was not allowed to take matzah to the houses where there was still bread. Then the house was thoroughly cleaned. On the eve of Pesach all bread was removed from the house. If there was a lot of bread left it was given to non-Jews. Then a symbolic check up was done: my mother placed pieces of bread into different spots and my father searched for chametz everywhere in the house. He swept each piece into a paper bag with a chicken feather. It was important for my mother to remember where she placed each piece of bread so that none was left in the house. When all of them were found my father took the bag into the yard where it was burnt. Then it was allowed to take matzah into the house and take down the Pesach dishes and crockery. Everyday dishes were taken away for the whole duration of Pesach. It was not allowed to store it in the attic since it was the place for Pesach dishes and matzah. We had a storeroom where we stored our everyday dishes and utensils. Nobody could enter this room during Pesach. It was locked for this purpose. My mother used special dishes at Pesach, we had enough of it. If a family didn’t have enough dishes or utensils they had to kosher their everyday kitchenware. There was a big fire made near the synagogue with a big bowl with boiling water. Everybody could bring their kitchenware and kosher it in the bowl. A shochet watched the process telling people when they could take their utensils out of the bowl.

My mother started cooking in advance. She fed geese for Pesach and they were called Pesach geese. They were kept in a small cage so that they couldn’t move around to grow fat. My mother stuffed them with food several times a day. When my mother roasted a goose for Sabbath, she removed the fat, melted it and poured it in a can. This fat was stored for Pesach and it was called Pesach fat. There were about 2 liters of fat from each goose. The can was stored in cool temperature in the attic. For Pesach my mother always made chicken broth with dumplings from matzah flour and eggs, gefilte fish and cholnt with meat, potatoes and beans. Every day we had roasted goose for dinner. Everything was cooked in goose fat. On the first 3 days of Pesach my mother made potato puddings. It was not allowed to have matzah pudding that we liked a lot before the fourth day of Pesach. On the first 3 days of Pesach even a drop of water shouldn’t have

fallen on matzah. When 3 days were over we enjoyed eating matzah with milk. We also liked onions with hard-boiled eggs and goose fat and had this dish every day. My mother didn't bake much. She made strudels from matzah flour with jam, raisins and nuts. She cooked for the first and last two days of Pesach. No work was allowed to do on the first and last two days. It's the same as with Sabbath. Between the 3rd and 6th days it was allowed to do work about the house.

When everything at home was ready for the holiday we went to the mikveh and changed into fancy clothes. Even the poorest families tried to buy something new for their children. My mother covered the table with a white tablecloth with quotations from the torah embroidered on it. Besides traditional food there were hard-boiled eggs, a piece of roasted meat with a bone, kharoises – ground apples with honey and spices, horseradish, bitter greeneries and a saucer with salty water on the table. In the middle of the table there was the fanciest wine glass for Elijah [the prophet]. Father had the biggest wine glass and the children had smaller ones. Everybody had a wine glass and during the first seder was supposed to drink four glasses of wine. It had to be kosher wine that was usually bought at the synagogue. It was allowed to drink vodka: all vodka is kosher. For seder my father put on a long white overall called kippur. The head of the family, the one conducting the seder, They wore this kippur to the synagogue at Yom Kippur. My father reclined on a cushion and there were cushions on his back and on the sides. We all sat at the table. My father recited a prayer and said a blessing over the food. At first we ate greeneries dipping them into water with salt. My father took matzah and broke it to 3 pieces hiding the middle piece under a cushion. This piece of matzah was called afikoman. One of the children was to steal, hide it and then give it back to the father for redemption. One couldn't end seder without this piece. Usually I managed to steal this piece from my father. My mother always told me to ask money for redemption and then she would help me to buy what I liked. After afikoman I posed my father 4 traditional questions. I said then in Hebrew and my father replied in Hebrew. Then my father told us the history of this holiday, how Prophet Moshe led Jews from Egypt and they wondered in a desert. My father told us how they made dough and flat cookies and baked them in the sun putting them on their shoulders. Then my father said a prayer and we started a meal. Younger children sometimes fell asleep at the table and my mother whispered to my father to hurry up since the children were sleepy. My father couldn't talk and he only pressed his finger to his lips asking the mother to keep silent. During seder at Pesach the front door was kept open for Prophet Elijah to come in.

If a beggar came into the house the hosts would have never let him go without alms. If the family was about to have a meal, he was asked to join them. If a beggar came in between meals, he was given some food and tea and got some money and food to go. Beggars, who came in, also stayed for seder. There were many poor people in the mountainous areas of Subcarpathia and they often came to Kamyanske begging for money. They were Jewish beggars that came on Jewish holidays.

At Pesach Jews went to the synagogue every day. Everybody had a seat of his own paying an annual fee for it. My grandfather had the most expensive seat near the Torah and my father had a less expensive one in a middle row. When a boy grew up and was to attend the synagogue with his father after bar mitzvah, his parents also paid for his seat. Younger children who attended the synagogue with their mothers could go there for free.

From the second day of Pesach we visited my mother's parents every day. They had a big yard, but when their nearly 60 grandchildren got together, it became overcrowded. My mother's sisters and

brother also visited their parents. They had big families, many children. There were tables with Pesach delicacies on them in the yard. My grandmother emanated happiness looking at her big family. This was the biggest family in the village.

One month before Rosh Hashannah the shofar was played after a morning prayer at the synagogue. It produced loud sounds heard at quite a distance. On this holiday families went to the synagogue in the morning and had a meal when coming home. There were apples and a bowl of honey to be on the table. We dipped apples into honey and ate them. We also dipped challah into honey on this day. Rosh Hashannah is a joyful holiday.

Yom Kippur came after Rosh Hashannah. Before the holiday it was necessary to visit all acquaintances asking their forgiveness and pay back all debts, get rid of all sins, basically. In the morning the Kapores ritual was conducted. A white roster was used for men and boys and girls and women were to have a white hen. Its legs were to be washed and tied. Then a prayer was said and the hen was turned over the head with words: ‘May you be my atonement’ in Hebrew. Then this hen was to be slaughtered. Its head was cut, then one had to take this head and say: ‘Death for you and life for me’. Then these hens were given to the poor. Nowadays they conduct Kapores with money at the synagogue. They turn money above the heads and then give this money to the poor. Yom Kippur started when the first evening star appeared in the sky. It was necessary to have a substantial meal before since at Yom Kippur it was necessary to fast. Children started to fast after they had bar mitzvah. In the next morning people went to the synagogue. Men wore their white kippurs. People took candles with them. They were burning a whole day and they produced fumes and people even fainted occasionally. When the first evening star appeared in the sky, the prayer was over and people went home. The fast was over and they could have a meal.

The next holiday was Sukkot. Preparations began after Yom Kippur. There was a sukkah built in every Jewish yard in Kamyanske. We had pre-cast panels and it was easy to assemble a sukkah for us. There were branches placed on the roof of the sukkah. There was not to be too many branches. When the sukkah was ready its roof and walls were decorated with branches and flowers. Children made decorations from color paper. We learned it at home and at school. Decorations were placed inside. It looked very nice. A table and chairs were brought into the sukkah. People had meals and prayed in the sukkah during this holiday.

Chanukkah was children’s favorite holiday. My mother lit another candle every day. There were no candles sold in the village and they were to be brought from Irshava or Mukachevo. Candles were sold at Yom Kippur, but at other times only wealthier people could afford to use them. My mother used a potato. She cut its bottom to make it solid, made a hole, poured some oil into it and placed a little wick. It worked for a candle. Every day mother added another potato. All relatives and acquaintances visiting us gave us Chanukkah gelt. This money was supposed to be spent for gambling, but we saved the gelt and gambled with nuts or candy. We bought sweets or toys for this money we got. When I was about 12, I bought a cigarette for this money and smoked it in the attic. This was the only cigarette in my life. Besides my feeling giddy and dizzy, my younger brother Avrum smelled the tobacco and reported to my father. Though my father didn’t often beat us, this time he beat me with his belt so hard that I never felt like smoking again. My father beat me again, when my mother sent me on errand to our Ukrainian neighbors. They were sitting at the table eating pork fat and bread. I couldn’t resist the temptation, asked them for a slice of bread

and fat and ate it. Probably this pork fat tasted even more delicious to me for being a forbidden thing. I don't know how my father got to know about it, but he tied me to a table leg and beat me with his belt. My mother was screaming and yelling that he would kill me. So I remember these 2 incidents. In general, we had a strict father and preferred our mother to hear about our misconduct.

Before Purim we started making masks from soft paper for Purimspiels. We glue together few layers of paper to make it take the shape of a face. Coloring the mask was most important. We keep it a secret what kind of masks we were to have at Purim. Everybody also prepared a piece to perform at Purim. Children traveled from one house to another with their performances. They got some change or sweets for their performance. My mother changed her paper money for Purim and had a plate full of change at home. Older children made bigger performances and younger children sang or danced. Of course, we didn't go to poor houses and didn't stay long in a house. Sometimes it happened that 10-12 children came to a house at the same time. It resulted in fighting. Or older boys asked me to show how much money I'd collected and when I did they took it away from me. So there was nothing left, but crying and reprobate myself for being stupid. Then shelakhmones was taken to houses. There was a nice napkin on a tray and sweets on it: pies, honey cake, nuts, candy and another napkin to cover it. Shelakhmones was taken to relatives, friends, and neighbors. Children also got some change for bringing shelakhmones. We had many relatives and I preferred to visit wealthier relatives with shelakhmones. Once I got enough money at Purim to make my dream come true and buy a ball. We usually played with a ball that we made from cloth.

There were other celebrations in Kamyanske not specified in Jewish calendars. Those were weddings. I often attended weddings. I had many older cousin brothers and sisters and my parents took me and my older to their weddings. There was a chuppah installed in the yard of a bride's house. Chuppah took place before dinner on Friday and wedding celebrations usually started on Saturday evening to last all night through. On Friday morning women got together in the bride's house and men went to the bridegroom's house. If a bridegroom was from another village young guys went to the suburb of the village to meet him there. They captured the bridegroom and demanded ransom for him. The bride's mother was to pay ransom. It was usually a bottle of wine or vodka. The bridegroom was not supposed to see the bride before chuppah. He was taken to one of his bride's relatives. Men got together and drank to health and wealth of a future family. Then the bride and bridegroom's fathers took the bridegroom to the chuppah and the mothers took the bride. The bride was wearing a long veil covering her face. Guests came and women gave them honey cake, lekakh. The rabbi conducted the wedding ceremony and the newly weds drank some wine and broke the glass. According to Jewish traditions after the chuppah women throw nuts, sweets and whet over the newly weds. After the chuppah the guests went home and on Saturday after Havdalah the guests came for a party. Wedding parties took place in bigger houses or in a tavern. Guests ate and danced. There were also Mitzvah dances, when guests paid for a dance with the bride putting money into a big dish on the table. Except for the husband nobody could hold the girl's hand and they held to the ends of a handkerchief. There were separate tables for men and women and children. Boys could sit with men after bar mitzvah, but before they had it they sat with their mothers.

In 1933 my paternal grandfather Yankl died. He was buried in the Jewish sector of Dorobratovo cemetery according to Jewish customs. We, children, didn't attend the funeral. My grandmother sat

shivah according to the rules. We stayed at home with grandmother Ghita, my mother's mother. From then on we went to the Dorobratovo cemetery on chol hamoed every year. Sometimes we took a bus there and sometimes grandfather Isroel, my mother's father, took us there in his phaeton. We stayed there for a day and returned home on the next morning.

At the age of 5 I went to cheder. There were about 10 cheders in Kamyanske: for Hasidic children, for wealthier and poorer families. There were cheder schools for girls where they learned to read and write in Yiddish, studied the Hebrew alphabet and prayers. Every Jewish woman was to know prayers and be able to read them. They didn't learn to translate prayers from Hebrew into Yiddish and they didn't understand what they were reading.

Of course, my parents weren't rich and I went to a middle class cheder. There was a melamed in each class. There were 15 boys in my class. We started studying the alphabet and then in the 2nd grade we started reading prayers. In the 3rd grade we were reading Torah and translated into Yiddish what we read. In the 4th grade we started to have discussions on the Torah. Melamed was paid for his work. Every day he came to one of his pupils to have breakfast, lunch and dinner with the family. There was a 'stick' order in cheder. Melameds had bamboo sticks and if a melamed thought that a pupil hadn't done his homework, he put him on his lap and hit him on his back as many times as he thought proper. It didn't make sense to argue with him. If one of us did, the rebe complained to parents and then the boy got his portion from his father at home for daring to argue with the rebe. Classes started at 7 am. My mother woke me up at 6. It was dark in winter and I begged my mother to let me stay at home, but my mother still made me get up crying from feeling sorry for having to send her 5-year-old boy to school. We stayed in cheder till afternoon, then came home for lunch and went back to school to have classes till evening. I didn't have time left to play with other boys. My life became even more difficult when I went to a Czech school at the age of 6.

It was a state school for boys and girls from different families. There were Jewish, Ukrainian and Hungarian children at school. Czech children went to a grammar school where their parents paid for their education. There were two of my cousins going to this same school. We had classes in Czech. There were religious classes for Christian children and Jewish children were allowed to miss these classes. Our Christian schoolmates were envious of such privilege that we had. I didn't get along with Ukrainian boys and often fought with them. I had payes. My mother wanted to cut them shorter, but my father didn't allow it. Other boys often pulled me by my payes at school. Once they drove me mad and I threw a stone hitting my offender on his head. He started bleeding and the teacher who rushed to the scene called my father to school. When my father heard about the reason of this conflict he said it wasn't my fault and that he would not make me apologize. The teacher told this boy to apologize and from then on nobody pestered me again.

We had conflicts with Ukrainian boys beyond school as well. The village stood on the Borzhava River. It was a small river with clean water where we bathed in summer. Adults didn't often come to the river. We baked potatoes in the ashes of a fire that we made on the bank. Sometimes Ukrainian boys captured us. They kept us for a while and one of them used to apply pork fat on our lips.

At 7 o'clock in the morning our class in cheder began. It lasted one hour and then I ran to school. We had classes till lunch time, then I had lunch at home and ran back to cheder. When I came back home in the evening I had to do my homework. Our teachers at school tried to give us less

homework, but our rebe never cared about such things. He checked our homework every morning and if he thought there was something wrong about it he gave us a good beating. My father didn't care much about my successes at school, but he cared about cheder. My father always checked my homework from cheder and my mother checked my homework for the Czech school. She was tired I the evening and didn't bother to explain my mistakes, so she just corrected them. Our schoolteachers were not too strict to Jewish children. They liked it that we all went to school since many Ukrainian children didn't attend school. There was no law on mandatory education and parents often made their children help them at home or with cattle. [Editor's note: There was a law on mandatory education in fact; it was probably not obeyed very strictly.] Jews took school seriously and never missed classes without valid excuses.

There was flu epidemic in Kamyanske in 1935. My uncle and aunt, my mother's brother and his wife died then. They had six children. Grandmother Ghita had two grandchildren stay with her and the rest of the children came to her children's families. My cousin sister Serena, Sarrah in her Jewish name, lived with us. She was the same age as I. My grandmother leased her son's house. It was a big house. Half of it was rented for a post office and another half went to a Czech man, chief of police and his family. My grandmother was saving half of rental fees for the orphans and took the rest of the sum to the synagogue for the needy.

Chief of police was a very nice man and so were his wife and their two daughters. My older sister Roza became friends with their daughters. Their older daughter was Roza's classmate in the Czech school. Both girls often came to our home and learned to speak Yiddish. They often asked Roza about Jewish traditions. My father didn't approve of this friendship. It wasn't that he didn't like the girls, but he didn't like it that they were not Jews. My mother liked them and often invited them to dinner. The girls did their homework together. My sister also visited them and their parents were glad that she was their daughters' friend. They invited Roza and me at Christmas. My mother allowed us to go there, but she only asked that we kept it a secret from my father and didn't eat anything there. They had a big Christmas tree decorated with toys and chocolate figures. My sister and I were allowed to take anything from the tree. They gave us sweets to go, but since we couldn't bring them home we ate them on the way.

I studied in the Czech school for three years. In 1938 Subcarpathia became Hungarian. [The Western part of Subcarpathia, together with Southern Slovakia, was attached to Hungary in November 1938, according to the First Vienna Decision. The Hungarian Army occupied the rest of Subcarpathia in March 1939.] It was a quiet process. The Czechs left the village few days before Hungarians came. Chief of police and his family left too, and my sister was missing her friends. I remember how we went to the suburb of the village to meet the Hungarians. There were 3 Hungarian families in the village and they came with Hungarian flags. All villagers came to meet the Hungarians. They drove in few vehicles and we sang the Hungarian anthem. There were tables with homemade wine, pies and snacks on them in the central square. The Hungarians and villagers ate and sang Hungarian songs. Almost all villagers knew Hungarian. Of course, nobody thought about Hungary being a fascist state. People were thinking: it was good under the Austro-Hungarian rule, it became even better under the Czech rule so everything was going to be fine under Hungary too. Only later it became clear how wrong they were.

I went to the 4th grade of Hungarian school. Few subjects were taught in Hungarian and the rest of them were taught in Ukrainian, the language of the majority of villagers. There was no anti-Semitism at the beginning of the Hungarian rule, but already in 1938 the first anti-Jewish law [7] appeared. According to this law, any enterprise with over 10 employees could employ maximum 20% Jews. [In 1938 the 'First Jewish Law' was accepted by the Parliament and introduced in Hungary; it restricted the number of Jews in the liberal professions, in the administration, and in commercial and industrial enterprises to 20%.] Next year suppression began. Authorities expropriated Jewish shops, stores and factories. They were either to be transferred to non-Jewish owners or given to the state without compensation. Though my father had a small store and he was the only employee there, he had to give it away. There were rough restrictions for Jews in higher educational institutions. There were work battalions organized: Jews were not recruited to the army. There were also other anti-Jewish laws. In 1939, when anti-Jewish moods grew stronger, my parents decided it would be better for my sister to leave. My father's brother, a Hero World War I, lived in Budapest. He was an invalid of the war. My parents wrote him about what was going on and he requested the military authorities of Hungary to allow Roza to come and look after him. When Roza came to Budapest, my uncle registered her as his daughter, they had the same surname. When Roza left the rabbi invited my father for s discussion three times. He was angry that my father sent Roza to Budapest where she was not going to be raised Jewish.

The Hungarian authorities introduced mandatory military subjects at schools. All boys turning 12 had to take up military training. [Mandatory military training for boys between 13 and 21, called Levente movement, was introduced in Hungary.] There was training three times a week after classes. We marched, sang military songs, learned to shoot and maintain weapons. It was not allowed to miss these classes. A Hungarian lieutenant was our tutor.

I turned 13 in 1940. The rebe began to prepare me for bar mitzvah. I had to prepare a short report on the Torah and learn the 54th article of the torah that each boy had to recite at his bar mitzvah. Besides, the rebe taught me to put the tefillin on my hand and head. The training took three months. I was an industrious pupil for my father to not feel ashamed for me. The bar mitzvah took place at the synagogue on the first Saturday after my birthday. My parents brought treatments. There was a table and some vodka and snacks on it at the synagogue. I had a tallit put on me for the first time in my life at my bar mitzvah and I became of age.

I finished school in 1942. My father decided that I had to learn a profession and I became a shoemaker's apprentice. My training lasted 3 years. In my first year I made wooden nails for fixing shoes, washed the shoes to be repaired and helped the shoemaker's wife about the house. She told me to fetch water, cut wood and start the stove. I also had to look after the baby. I helped her to do washing and sweep the floors. My father didn't pay for my training. I had meals with my master, and came home in the evening. In my 2nd year I began to learn the shoemaker's business. However, my mother kept insisting that my father took me back home and he gave up finally. He decided that I had to go to yeshivah, a higher Talmudic school. Yeshivas trained rabbis and melameds for cheder schools. There was no yeshivah in the village and I entered one in Munkacs. I lived in a hostel sharing a room with 3 guys. We had free clothing and meals. We studied all day long and did homework in the evening.

Since 1941 the anti-Jewish laws grew stronger. [The Third Jewish Law, introduced in 1941, was based on the Nuremberg laws, and defined the term 'Jew' on radical racist principles. It placed Hungarian Jewry in a most disadvantageous position in every sphere of political, economic, cultural, and social life.] Jews were recruited to work battalions to do the hardest work. [When Hungary entered WWII in 1941 Jews, together with others considered as political enemy, were recruited to special labor battalions that were not given arms.] Many work battalions were sent to the front line to dig trenches and construct defense facilities. There were hardly any survivors in such battalions. In 1943 Jews were ordered to wear yellow badges on the chest and the back. Shortly afterward they were replaced with yellow stars. It was not allowed to go out without them. Any soldier could shoot a Jews who were not wearing their badges. The Hungarians behaved outrageously. They could chase the Jews out of the synagogue or enter the mikveh and chase people away without letting them to get dressed.

I studied in the yeshivah for a year. It was closed in 1944 and I returned home to Kamyanske. In late 1944 Hungarian gendarmes came to every Jewish house ordering Jews to get packed for the road. They allowed taking 10 kg of luggage, food and clothing, per person. The Jewish gendarmes convoyed us to the station where we boarded railcars for cattle transportation. There were 70 of us in each railcar. We were taken to a ghetto in Beregovo. There were Hungarian gendarmes to meet the train in Beregovo. We were convoyed to the ghetto. Our family was taken to the ghetto in a brick factory formerly owned by Wais, a rich Jewish man. There were my parents and brothers and sisters, except my sister Roza who was with my uncle in Budapest. My grandmother and grandfather Klein, my mother's parents, were with us. Life conditions in the ghetto were terrible. There were big barracks made from planks with 2-tier wooden beds for the people. There were 2-3 individuals on each bed. Those who didn't fit in the barracks were accommodated in big tents for soldiers where they had to sleep on the ground. There were no toilets and there was sewage around the barracks. There was a terrible smell. My mother's father, my grandfather Isroel, died in the ghetto. Unfortunately, we were not allowed to leave the ghetto and my father made arrangements with local villagers and gave them his and my mother's wedding rings and they took the corpse of my grandfather to Kamyanske where my grandfather's Ukrainian neighbors buried him. Of course, they didn't bury him according to the Jewish ritual, but they buried him in the Jewish sector of the cemetery. They showed me his grave when I returned to Kamyanske after WWII. I visit his grave every year.

We stayed 3 weeks in the ghetto and then the Hungarian gendarmes put us on a train taking us across Slovakia to Poland, to the Auschwitz concentration camp. We knew where we were going, but we didn't know that Auschwitz was an extermination camp. There were talks among people in the train. We were told that they were taking us to work. When the train arrived at Auschwitz we were getting off the train one after another. There were German soldiers and doctors in white robes near each railcar. My mother, my two brothers, my younger sister and grandmother Ghita were taken to the side where there were women with children. My father was told to go to another side and I was told to go with my mother, but I grabbed my father and went with him. The doctor who was sorting people out looked at me and waved his hand letting me go. Later I got to know that my mother, the children and grandmother Ghita were exterminated in a gas chamber on tat same day. They told people they were going to the bathroom, ordered them to undress and gave them soap and towels. They left their things behind and went in to wash. The doors were locked and then let

the gas in. There were Jewish inmates working in gas chambers. When they got exhausted they were also exterminated in gas chambers. Those inmates searched people's clothing for money and jewelry. The doors of gas chambers were opened 10 minutes later to make sure there were no survivors. Then a crew of inmates loaded corpses onto platforms to take them to the crematorium.

My father and I were also taken to the bathroom. While we were washing they took away our clothing and didn't give us any in return. They kept us naked for 3 days. We already knew that our family had perished. Other inmates told us that Germans exterminated those who couldn't work immediately. I was lying on a plank bed sobbing. My father couldn't hold back his tears. We had some thin soup three times a day and no bread. On the 4th day we were given striped robes and caps. We were taken to work in Vossberg, near Berlin. On 28 April 1944 we arrived at the Gross Rosen camp. We were given camp numbers, pieces of white cloth approximately 20x20 cm with numbers inscribed in black paint. We were to sew them on to the front and the back on our robes. My number was 37488. They didn't cut our hair, but they shaved off a streak in the middle of the head from forehead to the nape of the neck. Every 4 days a barber came in to shave this streak. They did this to make inmates of the camp easily recognizable. Each of us got a thin blanket. We slept on 2-tier plank beds. There were no pillows or bed sheets. There were Hungarian and Polish Jews in our barrack. There were few barracks in the camp. There were Germans imprisoned for anti-fascist activities in one barrack and there were also few German criminals. There was a Czech barrack and a French barrack. The guards were a bit softer with the French. They allowed them to receive parcels from home once a month. We didn't communicate with inmates in other barracks. We were not allowed to walk from one barrack to another. All inmates were taken to work separately.

There were German guards in the camp. There were guards with weapons on towers and guard dogs patrolled the camp. The camp was surrounded with a wall with powered wires. It was a work camp and we went to work every day. We were digging underground tunnels in a forest and cut wood. My father spoke German and somehow made friends with our German supervisor. A month later I fell ill. I had fever and hallucinated. I had to stay away from hospital – nobody returned from there. They said German doctors were using patients to experiment on them. I couldn't stay in the barrack when everybody else went to work either. Soldiers shot those who stayed in barracks. We got a slice of bread and cheese for breakfast. It tasted delicious to me. Every morning my father held me by my elbow to take me out of the barrack and in the woods he covered me with branches somewhere in the bushes. Our German supervisor sympathized with us. When he got to know that I was ill, he allowed my father to work for the two of us. My father managed to complete his and my workload and the supervisor registered me at work. In the afternoon they delivered hot thick soup and 300 grams of bread per each. The supervisor watched the process of food distribution. When there was a piece of bread left he brought it to my father. In the evening my father took me back to the barrack. There was one inmate with us who knew about healing herbs. He brought me some herbs to chew. I don't know what helped me to recover, but a month later I could already get back to work.

In February 1945 American troops began their attack. Every day bombers flew to drop bombs on Berlin. In March 1945 we were lined up and moved to Austria. About 6 thousand inmates left the camp and only a little over a thousand reached the destination point. We wore our camp robes and had blankets with us. They were thin cotton blankets of the similar fabric as our robes and didn't

warm up. We didn’t get any food on the way. People were getting exhausted. There were guards every 5 meters of our column. When they saw that somebody couldn’t move on they shot them on the head from their guns. There was a crew of inmates behind us. They were to remove the corpses into ditches on the sides of the road. We stayed overnight in abandoned stables or sheds sleeping on the ground. Many people froze to death. We often slept in the open air and when we woke up in the morning there were snowdrifts on top of us. I don’t know how long we walked till we arrived in Ebensee, one of the camps in Mauthausen, 3 km from there. We were given new numbers there. My number was 136803. We didn’t go to work from this camp. We stayed in barracks. There were 120 inmates in our barrack. We were starved and suffered from cold. We were lying on plank beds all day long trying to save the energy. Those who couldn’t move were put on the 2nd tier beds. They were candidates to the crematorium. In the morning and in the evening we got a cup of tea without sugar and 100 grams of heavy bread with sawdust once per day. At lunch we got one bowl, 300 grams of soup with frost-bitten potatoes and soldier’s left over food. The inmates became brutal from hunger. They sometimes took away bread from their weaker fellow inmates who couldn’t defend themselves. They even killed a person for a piece of bread. We stopped being afraid of dying. When I saw a dead inmate in the morning, I would search his pockets searching for bread or even breadcrumbs. In the morning guards with specially trained dogs searched the barracks for dead people pulling them down onto the ground. Then a crew took corpses to the crematorium.

My father was murdered on 28 April 1945. He had few golden crowns on his teeth that he camouflaged with clay. Probably somebody said a word about them. There were two barrels with water in our barrack. Somebody drowned my father in a barrel at night and left his body on the floor. In the morning the dogs found him. There were no crowns left in his mouth. I never got to know who did it.

There was tunnel under the camp where Czech inmates were working. Once there was a rumor spread that they were going to let people into this tunnel to blast it. People refused to go into the tunnel. The guards began shooting. Many inmates were killed. On the next day somebody ran into our barrack shouting that German guards were taking off their shoulder straps. This was on 5 May 1945. The Germans left quietly and many inmates didn’t even know that they did. On 6 May 1945 American troops came into the camp. I was lying on the 2nd tier. I didn’t get up or move. Being 1.8 m tall I weighed 34 kg. This was dystrophy and if it hadn’t been for American troops I would have been taken to the crematorium 2-3 days later.

Americans arrived in Studebecker vehicles. There were food packages in their vehicles with canned meat and fish, white bread, chocolate, smoked sausage and butter. Starved people pounced on the food. Nobody knew that their stomachs could not digest rich food. They had to start eating gradually. Even if they knew they couldn’t hold back. Few hours later their condition was terrible. It must have been coma: they were unconscious and only their hard breathing and groans indicated that they were still alive. Many people died then. I was lucky. An American doctor took me to the hospital in Vienna. From there they sent me to a recreation center in Prague where I stayed for three months.

When they discharged me from the recreation center I decided to go to Budapest. I was almost sure that my sister and my uncle were taken to a concentration camp from Budapest, but I was

hoping to get some information about them. There was a committee issuing documents and food to concentration camp survivors. There were few others from Subcarpathia and Hungary with me. We were accommodated in a hospital in Budapest. I didn't know my uncle's address, but I was hoping to manage somehow. Once an American officer came in asking whether there was somebody from Subcarpathia there. Somebody pointed at me and he asked whether my last name was Hollander. I asked him how he knew and he replied that there was probably nobody else with such red hair as I had. He told me to follow him. I didn't understand what it was about and he said he was taking me to my sister. So I found my sister and uncle. Hungarian Jews were also taken to concentration camps, but my sister and uncle were not. [Deportations in Hungary stated in 1944; they were the latest in Europe and on the other hand the fastest among all. All together close to 600 thousand people were murdered. While most of Hungarian Jews from the countryside – including the occupied Yugoslav territories as well as Subcarpathia together with Southern Slovakia and Northern Transylvania (then parts of Hungary) – were exterminated many of the Budapest Jewry survived as deportations were stopped in July 1944.] While Jews from the countryside were deported from almost everywhere many of the Budaperst Jews were not. The Hungarians didn't betray their heroes of war to Germans and there were only 15 or 20 cavaliers of so many orders as my uncle. My uncle and Roza stayed in their house in Budapest. They didn't have any information about my family and I was the first one they saw. This American officer happened to be Roza's fiancé. Sam Adler lived with his parents and his older brother in Texas, USA. His grandfather, a Jew from Russia, emigrated to USA in the late 19th century. In 1944 Sam volunteered to the US army and came to the front. He met Roza when he came to Budapest. There were small groups of American and British military stationed in Budapest. They fell in love and in September 1945 they registered their marriage in the US military commandant's office. They were going to USA and my uncle was going with them. Roza was trying to convince me to go with them saying that there were only two of us left and we had to be together. I hesitated. I knew that Subcarpathia became Soviet. When we were in the hostel, there were officers making the lists of former inmates of concentration camps. They were asking where we wanted to move and allowed us to choose any country promising help with accommodation, clothes, studies and jobs. They were telling us that former inmates were maltreated in the USSR. They said that Soviet citizens returning from concentration camps were immediately sent to the camps in the north of the USSR and that they were called traitors. They did the same to Soviet prisoners-of-war, particularly with communists. I said it was a lie and it couldn't have been like that. People couldn't be punished for being in concentration camps or prisoners-of-war. Regretfully, later I knew that it was true.

My cousin Sarrah, my mother's sister, living in Shalanki before WWII, resolved my hesitation. She also was in a concentration camp and came to Budapest after liberation. Sam found few of my cousins, my mother brothers and sisters' children, in Budapest and Romania. Sarrah firmly decided to go home. She told me that life could be good in Subcarpathia regardless regimes. I had a house and land in Kamyanske and I thought I could live there. Why go to another country? Of course, it was what I thought and I allowed her to convince me. My cousin and I spoke to the commandant office about returning to Subcarpathia. Most of my cousins moved to Israel, USA, Argentina or stayed in Czechoslovakia. My aunt, my mother's sister living in Michalovce, before the war moved to Bratislava. Her husband perished during the war and she and their two daughters survived. My aunt died in the 1970s and her daughters live in Bratislava.

My sister Roza, her husband and my uncle moved to USA. Sam's family liked Roza. Sam's father and older brother had a family business. Sam's father had estate in Australia and Sam decided to move to live there. My uncle died in USA in 1947 and Sam and Roza moved to Australia. They were young and ambitious. They purchased a building where they organized a garment factory. Their business progressed well and expanded. About 10 years later they had a big factory and garment shops. They became rich. They have two children: son Ernest and daughter Nina. They have families. Roza has 3 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren. They live in Sydney.

Sarrah and I returned to Subcarpathia. I lived with her in Shalanki for few days before I went home to Kamyanske. Our house was not ruined, but it was devastated. Some of my school friends were at home already. Some of them had been in work battalions and the rest were in concentration camps. None of our family returned to Kamyanske. My father's younger brother Berko found me. He was in a work battalion during World War II and returned to Kamyanske after the war. His family perished in a concentration camp. Berko told me that his brothers and sisters and their families and grandmother Ella perished in a gas chamber in Auschwitz. Berko married a young girl from Kamyanske whose family also perished. Berko's second wife was born in 1924 and he was born in 1903. In 1950 their daughter was born. They named her Ella after Berko's mother. Berko was to turn 50 then. He died in Kamyanske in 1968 and was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Kamyanske. Ella graduated from the Dnepropetrovsk Medical University and returned to Kamyanske. She never married and lived with her mother. In 1976 I convinced them to move to Beregovo [60 km from Uzhgorod, 670 km from Kiev], since it was easier for me to support them when they lived close by. Berko's wife died in 2000. She was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Kamyanske according to Jewish traditions. Ella lives in Beregovo alone and I try to support her.

I lived in my house for some time, but I didn't feel well living there. I kept thinking about the time when we lived with my family there thinking about my parents, sisters and brothers. Finally my friend and his wife talked me into moving in with them. I stayed with them about two months. Then I fell ill and they took me to a hospital in Beregovo where I stayed over three months. My mother's distant relative lived in Beregovo. She visited me in hospital and when I was discharged she convinced me to stay with her. I was 17 years old. I helped them about the house and worked in the garden and in the field. I lived in Beregovo till 1947, when I went to serve in the Soviet Army.

There were many Jews in Beregovo after World War II. They returned from concentration camps or work battalions and moved from other places when they couldn't stay in their homes like me. There were abandoned houses where they could live. In 1945 all synagogues in Beregovo were still operating. There were 8 synagogues in Beregovo. Hasidim had 3 synagogues and the Jewish community had 5. In 1946 Soviet authorities started their struggle against religion closing the synagogues. They gave the biggest synagogue to the Philharmonics. They made a store in another synagogue where there was a building of the shochet and a market in the yard. The mikveh became a public bathroom. So they closed 7 synagogues and there was only one big central synagogue operating in Beregovo. At first the authorities wanted to turn it into a storage facility like they often did with synagogues and churches. The Jews of Beregovo guarded it on the 24-hour basis. They made the schedule for guarding it. My relatives and I also went there. Probably the local authorities decided to avoid open confrontation and left the synagogue alone. All Jews of Beregovo except those who moved there after World War II from the USSR went to the synagogue on Sabbath and Jewish holidays. The synagogue operated until the middle of the 1960s. There were

3 Jewish communists holding high official posts in Beregovo. They were director of the meat factory, director of public bathroom and director of the town trade department. They wrote a letter to the town executive committee [Ispolkom] [8] asking permission to use the synagogue for the needs of residents of the town. The town executive committee opened a town house of culture in the synagogue.

In 1947 I was recruited to the army to serve my mandatory term. All recruits were taken to Svaliava [50 km from Uzhgorod, 625 km from Kiev] where we boarded a train. The railcars were very much like the ones in which we were taken to Auschwitz. The recruits got into railcars and the doors were locked from the outside. I feared that they were taking us to a camp. Then our commanding officer came. He said we were going to Moscow, our point of destination. Our trip lasted several days. There was an iron cast stove in the train. We got coals and took turns to stoke it. In Moscow we were sent to a division that arrived from Germany. They had many trophy vehicles. I took a 3-month driving course. Then they invited me to the headquarters of the division and asked me whether I spoke German. I had a good conduct of German. Besides, I spoke Ukrainian and understood Russian. It was rare for Subcarpathia since the majority of its residents spoke Hungarian and Czech. I and another Subcarpathian Jew Miklos Farkas were sent to NKVD troops [9]. The regiment where I was sent worked in a camp for German prisoners-of-war where there were 40 thousand of them. They needed German interpreters. I had a driving license and besides working as an interpreter I also drove an NKVD colonel. I was responsible for 3 vehicles: 2 BMWs and a Mercedes. I was accommodated in a small room at the logistic department. There was a phone in the room so that my chief could call me at any time. He usually called at night telling me at what time I had to be in the garage. When I came to the garage he called again to tell me what vehicle I was to drive. He never told me the route in advance. All vehicles were armored and passengers' seats were separated from the driver with thick glass. There was a telephone on the back seat and I had a receiver. When he got into a car he told me where to drive. 2 months later I was promoted to the rank of private first class, though I didn't have secondary military education. Privates first class wore the same uniform as soldiers, but I received an officer's uniform and officer's boots of soft leather. I had meals in the officer's canteen. At first I couldn't understand why soldiers and officers became watchful in my presence. They stopped talking when I came in and there was tension in the air. I didn't know that in the USSR NKVD had such enormous authority that it was hard to imagine it. Since I was an NKVD employee people avoided me. I didn't face any anti-Semitism, probably for the same reason. The only person feeling friendly toward me was Miklos Farkas who came to NKVD with me.

Though I had been in a German concentration camp, was a Jew and had lived in fascists Hungary I didn't feel any prejudiced attitudes of my bosses toward me. I joined Komsomol [10] in the army. Nobody asked my consent. Political officer of our unit called me and asked me 3 questions: whether I know what Komsomol was and who were Lenin and Stalin. Of course, I knew the answers. He told me to obtain my Komsomol membership card from the Komsomol committee on the following day. I wouldn't say I was an active Komsomol member. I didn't even attend meetings having to work at the time they were conducted.

My boss developed trust in me in due time. At first I had to wait for him near the gate of his destination, but then he started to tell me at what time I had to be there. I had a lot of spare time and spare money. While waiting for my boss I began to make some money as a cab driver. There

were few cabs in Moscow and there were always many people willing to get a drive in my car. I only had to be at the right place on time. My boss never asked me what I was doing in his absence. I was free to leave my military unit or come back any time I wanted. I was young and Miklos and I often took advantage of this privilege to meet with girls. I wasn't thinking of marriage. I wanted to marry a girl in Subcarpathia. Miklos was seeing a girl from Moscow. Her name was Yekaterina. She was Russian. They got married before Miklos demobilized from the army and after demobilization he stayed in Moscow. They have three children. Miklos still lives there. We correspond and visit each other.

I demobilized in 1951. I decided to live in Beregovo, but I didn't want to stay with my distant relative. Our house in Kamyanske was empty. I sold it and bought a house in Beregovo for this money. I had to find a job. My old acquaintance, whose last name was Yakubovich, a Jew, was chairman of the consumer union. When I returned I arranged a party at a restaurant to celebrate my coming back. Yakubovich came to this party. He said that I didn't have anything and didn't know anything about work, but since he knew me as a decent and honest man he offered me a job of director of a store in Mochola village, near Beregovo. I lived in Beregovo and bought a bicycle. That same year of 1951 I entered the extramural department of the Kiev Trade College. I studied by correspondence and twice a year I went to take exams in Kiev. I worked in Mochola for two years. Then Yakubovich offered me a job in Beregovo to become deputy director of food supplies. It was a promotion to me. In 1953 I came to work in this office.

I got married in December 1951 after I returned from the army. My wife wasn't a Jew. She was born in Beregovo in 1928. Magdalena was Hungarian. Her father perished at the front and her mother died in 1944. I don't remember Magdalena's maiden name. We were orphans and I thought that we would be able to save one another from solitude. We had a civil ceremony at the registry office and a small dinner party in a restaurant for our close ones. Our son Alexandr was born in 1952. I insisted on his having brit milah according to Jewish traditions. My wife didn't mind it. It goes without saying that we couldn't do it openly in the synagogue. I brought a rabbi from Uzhgorod and we had the ritual at home. I invited my two cousins and my closest friend. We gave my son the Jewish name of Shloime after my deceased father.

Those events that residents of the USSR were concerned about went past Beregovo: campaign against cosmopolites [11], and doctors' plot [12]. The majority of doctors were Jews in Beregovo, but they kept their jobs and were never subject of discussions at meetings. Thus, those people who moved to Subcarpathia from the USSR after World War II chatted about doctors poisoners, but Subcarpathian residents never shared this opinion with them. I remember 5th March 1953, the day when Stalin died. I was director of a store in Mochola. There were few villagers who had moved from the USSR. I remember them sobbing as if their relative had died: 'Our father died, how are we going to live without him?' It seemed absurd to me. Didn't they understand that it was not the end of the world and that the world might even become better without Stalin? I invited them to the storeroom to have a drink of mourning for his soul. I thought to myself that he might have died earlier, but of course, I understood that I couldn't say such things aloud.

After the 20th Party congress [13], where Nikita Khrushchev [14] denounced the crimes of Stalin I was amazed. Of course, I believed Khrushchev, but I couldn't understand another thing: Khrushchev and other politicians adamantly condemning Stalin after his death were working with

him following all of his orders. Didn't they understand that they were taking part in his crimes? I couldn't believe it. I came to the conclusion that politics was a dirty thing and it was an indecent business for a normal purpose.

In Mochola I was elected secretary of the Komsomol organization of the village. I was to conduct Komsomol meetings and take reports of our Komsomol activities to the district Komsomol committee in Beregovo. When I returned to Beregovo I joined the party in 1954. It wasn't my initiative and nobody asked me about it. My friend Yakubovich just told me that it was a necessary step or they wouldn't keep me in my position if I didn't do it. Our bosses could close their eyes on the fact that I was a Jew, but a non-partisan Jew in the position of deputy director was too much. I submitted my application and obtained recommendations. When my candidateship term was over a general meeting admitted me to the Party. I didn't feel that I was honored. I just needed it to be able to keep my job. This had its effect: in 1956 I was appointed director of food stocks and in 1957 I was elected a member of the district party committee in Beregovo.

I never faced anti-Semitism, but this doesn't mean that it did not exist. When Subcarpathia was annexed to the USSR, the word 'zhid' [kike] became common. Of course, those newcomers from the USSR brought it into life since it was absurd for Subcarpathians. Of course, there was anti-Semitism during the Hungarian rule, but then it was during the fascist regime. It was strange to hear the word 'zhid' from the people who had lived under the soviet order all their life, where nations were equal and where people were friends to one another as Soviet propaganda kept stating. Nobody ever said anything about my nationality in my presence, but behind my back they called me 'zhid'. I didn't understand those people and tried to stay away from them. My friends were Jews for the most part and they came from Subcarpathia. I avoided the newcomers from the USSR not only for the reason of anti-Semitism, but because if they heard something about a person that was wrong in their opinion they reported immediately to Party officials to militia, particularly about those who was openly religious and observed traditions. Only elderly people who had nothing to lose could afford going to the synagogue. I faced this once when one of my friends asked me to be a kvatter at his son's brit milah. He secretly invited a rabbi from Ivano-Frankovsk [185 km from Uzhgorod, 485 km from Kiev]. The ceremony took place at his home. However, few days later the district Party committee invited me for a discussion. They wrote in my personal files that I took part in a religious ceremony. For a communist it was a stain on my biography.

Religion has been a significant part of my life since childhood. I didn't believe that it was vestige of the past, as the Soviets constantly stated, but I couldn't openly observe Jewish traditions during the Soviet rule. They would have expelled me from the Party and fired at best. I prayed at home. I had a tallit, Tefillin and a book of prayers. I found these in my house in Kamyanske when I came back there. My deputy Aron Katz was also religious. He had a house of prayer at his home. Jews got together for a minyan there. We secretly celebrated Jewish holidays. Couldn't celebrate Sabbath at home: Saturday was a working day. Soviet authorities didn't only struggle against religion. The Soviets were intolerant to those who had relatives abroad, especially in capitalist countries. [keep in touch with relatives abroad] [15] They might fire or imprison a person by charges in espionage for correspondence with relatives. I had to stop correspondence with my sister in Australia. I didn't know anything about them for a long time.

The food stocks office where I was director purchased food products from kolkhozes and supplied to stores. Subcarpathia grew fruit and vegetables, grapes and there was a lot of cattle. I had to work a lot, but there were good results. I organized a meat factory to process meat supplies. In summer I involved school children in work. Soviet children anyway worked in kolkhozes in summer, but they never paid them while we entered into employment agreements with them and paid them the same rates as we did to adults. I always checked their wages. Unfortunately, it was not always possible to work honestly. It was a common practice in the USSR to bribe local authorities, or they would have tormented enterprises with continuous inspections and audits. Of course, nobody called these bribes. This could be a truck full of grapes, apples, few boxes of good sausage or wine. Nobody paid back for the products. We just left them in a district committee, executive committee or prosecutor's office and left. Chairmen of kolkhozes and managers of other enterprises did the same. Since we couldn't include these 'gifts' into our accounting records we had to plot something like writing them off as waste or whatever. At first I was concerned about it, but when I saw that everybody was doing the same I got used to it. This was the only violation. I was a member of the district committee. For Beregovo district committee it was very important that Beregovo district was the leader of agricultural product supplies. If actual numbers didn't allow it to become number one, our leaders forced me and other manufacturer to add numbers that didn't exist to our records. Here is how we did it: a kolkhoz registered bigger quantities of products and issued a deed of transfer of these products to my office for sale. I signed this deed for receiving bigger quantities than I did actually and then I gradually wrote off these quantities for waste of vegetables and fruit, natural losses, etc. When they offered it to me for the first time and I refused they blamed me that I, being a member of the district committee, didn't care about the reputation of the district committee. They explained that everybody was doing the same for the sake of reputation of the district. I had to give up. I didn't do it for the sake of my personal earnings. I received a good salary. They paid me 30% of the total amount of food stocks, so I didn't need all this upward distortion, but I couldn't refuse from doing it.

I didn't have vacations for few years. Work occupied all my time. In 1959 I decided to go on vacation. At first I went to Kiev where my childhood friend lived. I stayed with him few days and then went to Miklos Farkas in Moscow. When I returned I was arrested and taken to a bull-pen cell. There were no charges brought against me. Only few days later my attorney told me what I was charged with. So I was charged with those upward distortion quantities that I made to write off presents to my management. They demanded that I gave them information about my companion fellows. They kept me in this cell for about a year. Long before the court they expelled me from the Party for 'blackening the name of communist'. My investigation officer humiliated and beat me. I always heard the words 'smelly zhid' from him, this was the only way he addressed me. He got irritated at my silence, but I decided to be silent. I would have had to betray my friend Yakubovich and many other people involved in this process. They would have been imprisoned, but this would not have made them release me. So I decided that if I had to be in jail I was to be there alone. There was a court in Uzhgorod and every time I was taken there from Beregovo. The prosecutor was from Beregovo. He accepted my gifts like all other bosses. When he demanded death sentence for me I asked him: 'For what? For what I've given you?' They didn't allow me to say another word. My charges were based on two articles: theft of cooperative property and the biggest sentence here was 7 years of imprisonment, and theft of the state property where the sentence was not to exceed 8 years. According to the law I was to serve one sentence, a longer one, but they summed

up these terms and sentenced me to 15 years in jail. Many residents of Beregovo came to the court. They sympathized with me. They knew that I didn't steal money. When the judge announced my sentence, many of them cried.

After the court I was kept in jail in Beregovo few days before I was taken to Nikolaev of Lvov region [40 km from Lvov, 540 km from Kiev]. I was there for a short time and then taken to jail in Drogobych Lvov region [75 km from Lvov, 560 km from Kiev]. There were 8 thousand prisoners in this jail. There were 3-8 inmates in each cell. Prisoners formed groups of 150-200 inmates in each group. A captain or major was chief of a group. There were two zones: a work zone and living quarters in this jail. There was a work colony in jail. There was an affiliate of the Lvov plant of electrotechnical units in this jail where prisoners worked. Every group had an area of responsibility. I was in group 7. We worked in the galvanic and painting shops. There were 6 inmates in my cell. We tried to get along well and be friendly. Our life was hard anyway so why make it more complicated? Other inmates treated me with respect. There was a system of values in the jail. The inmates sentenced for the theft of state property were respected for being business like and decent people. The next under these rules of rank were professional thieves. Those sentenced for robbery were treated worse, but the worst were rapists and there was a lot of violence toward them in jail. There was no anti-Semitism in jail.

I was an industrious worker and was interested in learning new professions. My performance was noted. They appointed me a crew leader and two years later – assistant superintendent of the galvanic shop. Other inmates members of crews and 3 civilian foremen reported to me. This was a big plant supplying electrotechnical devices to 50 countries around the world. We received wages for our work. Of course, it was lower than civilian workers', but we could afford to buy food products in the store in jail. It was important for prisoners since we had very poor food in prison. I never had breakfast. There was soup and bread for breakfast. They made soup with the cheapest fish and there were fish eyes sailing on the surface. I couldn't eat it and gave away my breakfast. I learned to be ascetic in food. My ration often consisted of 200 grams of bread that we received. They boiled beef legs and heads for meat. There was a military division nearby and they gave the prison frost-bitten potatoes or rotten vegetables. Food was the subject of discussion for many inmates. They recalled what they had at home and what they would eat when released from jail. They couldn't think about anything else. I found it strange. After the concentration camp I thought that the most important thing was to not starve to death and the rest was not so important. I worked in the shop during the day and in the evening I helped accountants of the plant to develop reports. They asked me for help and brought me food from home for my assistance. I was free to go to the plant from the living quarters and could come to the plant in the evening. Every 6 months the inmates were allowed to receive parcels from home. Chief of our group, a major, was good to me. He even gave me the key to the safe with documents. He always emphasized that we could be friends, if we were both free. His friendly attitude ended when he offered me to report on my fellow inmates and I refused. However, he never did me any harm. If I had accepted his offer I might have been discharged before term. I knew about it, but I couldn't have acted differently. I spent 15 years in prison and was released in 1975. These years crippled me physically and morally more than the concentration camp ever did.

I returned to Beregovo to face a lonely life in an empty house. My wife divorced me a year after I got in jail. The law allowed for divorcing me in my absence. We had money, a car and good

furniture in the house. She took it all. Of course, she had my son with her. In 1973 Magdalena moved to Budapest and I didn't see her. We didn't have contacts. I don't even know whether she is still living. My son stayed in Beregovo. He could hardly finish the 10th grade of a secondary school and didn't want to continue his studies. He went to work in a store where he was a worker and married Anna, a very nice Jewish girl, the daughter of logistics manager of this store. Unfortunately, my son took to drinking. He didn't like to work. All he wanted was drinking and fishing with friends. Anna suffered from it. Their son Ernest was born in 1974. I supported my daughter-in-law as much as I could, but I thought that I had no right to interfere into my son's private life considering that he grew up without me by his side. Anna divorced Alexandr and moved to Budapest, with their son. Alexandr stayed in Beregovo. He didn't change his way of life. It ended tragically. He stabbed his friend being drunk and hanged himself in 1997. My grandson lives in Budapest. He has a family. He married a Jewish girl from Budapest. They have two children: a 7-year-old son and a 3-year-old daughter. My grandson has his business and is doing well. Every summer he visits us with his family. I am always happy to see my grandchildren. My wife loves them as if they were her own.

After returning home I had to register in the militia office. Chief of militia of Beregovo was somebody who moved there from the USSR. My childhood friend Leizer, chief of militia in Kamyanske went there with me. The first thing that chief asked me was: 'Why did you come here?' Leizer didn't allow me to open my mouth retorting: 'He came home and why did you come here?' They told me in the militia office that I had to find a job immediately. There was a law on idleness according to which all citizens of the USSR under the pension age had to work. There was an exception for invalids and women having children. They could send away those who didn't want to work, or send to penitentiary institution to work there. In those 15 years in prison I came to hate the Soviet power that forced me to cheat and then took away everything I had. Back in prison I decided that I would not work one day for them. Chief of militia gave me a letter to the brick plant for them to employ me as a worker. He said that if I didn't come to work they would send me back to prison for idleness. Again my friends helped me. One of my childhood friends was chief doctor of a psychiatric clinic in Beregovo. He employed me as an attendant. I didn't go to work, but I was registered as their employee. Other attendants did my portion of work and shared my wages. I didn't have to work for a living. When I returned to Beregovo, a woman whom I didn't know approached me saying that my sister Roza had sent me a big amount of money and asked me to notify her when I was in need of money again. I bought a car and furniture. My sister kept sending me money regularly and we resumed our correspondence.

When I was in jail, Jews began moving to Israel. Many of my friends and distant relatives who survived WWII left. It was a happy opportunity for me to stop living in the country that I hated. I applied for emigration to Israel, but they rejected to accept my documents. They explained that those who were imprisoned could move abroad 15 years after they were released. I was to stay 15 long years in the USSR. Twice I tried to submit my documents, but they were rejected.

I met my second wife by chance. Svetlana Pogoreliy was chief of department in the psychiatric clinic. We met when I was employed to work there. We started seeing each other and then decided to live together. Svetlana moved in with me. A year later her mother began telling me that this was not a decent life and in 1977 we registered our marriage. We didn't have a wedding since we had lived together before marriage. Svetlana is Ukrainian. She was born in Chernigov [145 km from Kiev] in 1938. After WWII her family moved to Beregovo. Svetlana's mother Natalia Pogoreliy was

chief of the passport office in the militia department and her father Anton Pogoreliy was an engineer. Svetlana has a younger sister and brother. Her sister Lubov was born in 1939 and her brother Eduard was born in 1941. They were poor trying to make ends meet. After school Svetlana finished Medical School in Beregovo and worked as a medical nurse several years. She wanted to continue her studies, but she had to work to support her family. Her sister finished Kiev Conservatory ad her brother finished Lvov Polytechnic College. Svetlana entered the Medical Faculty of Uzhgorod University. Upon graduation she received a job assignment [16] to Siberia where she worked 3 years and returned to Beregovo. She went to work in the psychiatric hospital. Svetlana's brother and sister got job assignments to Uzhgorod. Lubov worked as a teacher of music school and Eduard was an engineer at the machine building plant 'Motor'. When we got married, Svetlana's parents moved to live with us. Svetlana's father died at the age of 85 in 1989, and Svetlana's mother died 3 years later in 1992.

After the army I celebrated Soviet holidays. They didn't mean anything to me, but they always celebrated them at work and I couldn't ignore them. After returning from prison I never celebrated a single Soviet holiday. Since I was not a party member any longer I had nothing to lose and began to attend the synagogue regularly. I knew Jewish traditions well, could read in Hebrew and pray. Soon I took responsibility for the financial life of the community. The rabbi didn't take over it and somebody had to be responsible for the funds. Some Jews left their houses to the community moving to Israel. We sold these houses and used the costs to support the poor. There were many of them in the Soviet times. I registered all expenses and every single item we bought for this money. Every three months I conducted a meeting to report on where the money went. Everybody could check these expenses. We supported people like Hesed supports them now.

When in the late 1980s perestroika [17] began in the USSR, I didn't believe Gorbachev [18] at once. I was used to not trust anything initiated by the Soviet power, but later I believed that it was true. We sensed freedom. There were articles published in magazines and newspapers disclosing the facts that people never knew. The 'iron curtain' [19], separating the USSR from the rest of the world fell. It was allowed to correspond with relatives and friends abroad and invite them to visit. Suppression of religion stopped. People could openly go to synagogues and churches without fearing oppression. The rebirth of the Jewish life began. Jewish authors were published and Jewish plays were staged. Of course, Gorbachev's initiatives met confrontation with not only state officials, but also common people who were used to living in a closed society without glasnost and freedom. It turned out that there were people who believed that it was right and that Gorbachev allowed the situation to get out of hand and that the people needed a 'firm hand'. I applied for permission to visit my sister and obtained it though 15 years after my release from jail were not over yet. This convinced me better than anything else that there were changes to better.

In 1987 my wife and I went to visit my sister in Sydney. It was a happy reunion. We never thought we would see each other again. I met my nephews and nieces and their children. Roza, her husband and children observed Jewish traditions. They went to the synagogue on Sabbath and Jewish holidays and celebrated Jewish holidays at home. The husband of my niece Nina is a rabbi. My nephew is also married to a Jewish woman. His son's name is John, Nina son's name is Jake and she has a daughter named Hanna. They are married. Jake has a son and Hanna has a daughter and she expects a baby.

My sister and her husband insisted that Svetlana and I moved to Sydney, but it's impossible to live in a country not knowing the language. My wife and I went to school. Our classes lasted 8 hours every day. I was no good at learning the language. Probably, it had to do with my age. My wife made successes, but she didn't want to stay in Australia. Svetlana missed her job and her parents. Sometimes I woke up at night because she was crying. The climate didn't agree with us either: it was too hot. We lived with Roza for a year and then returned to Beregovo. Then we visited Roza three more times. Recently my niece and her husband visited us. Nina's husband visited synagogues in Lvov region and Subcarpathia. Nina followed him. My sister and nieces call me and we keep in touch.

After returning home I got closely involved with the activities of the community in Beregovo. There was an order of the government about returning of temples and facilities to religious people and communities. Of course, they didn't return all of it. Before World War II only Jews lived in the central street of Beregovo. This was the most beautiful street in the town. There were synagogues, a cheder and beautiful houses in it. There are still state institutions in those buildings: militia, prosecutor's office, kindergartens, school and hostels. I began to work on returning the synagogue to the community. It took a long time, but one day the mayor handed me the executive committee decision to transfer the building of the synagogue to the Jewish community. However, this was not the end of it. The building was in terrible condition. It was used for storage. It needed repairs and we needed money for repairing it. Jews of Beregovo and Subcarpathia were collecting money for the synagogue. Rich Jews made their contribution. Perestroika made it possible to do business. It turned out that the Soviet power didn't eliminate those who can and want to work. There were few of them in Beregovo. One of them whose last name was Gutman opened a wine factory. The Jewish community helped him with a building. We received the former building of mikveh from the executive committee and transferred it to Gutman. He paid us well for this building. Gutman modified it and the factory began to operate. At first people didn't quite believe it would work, but in a short time many wanted to get a job there: it was clean and orderly and there were good salaries. When the factory began to give profit Gutman made contribution to the Beregovo community funds. Other businessmen also helped. So we managed to repair the building of the synagogue: we replaced the roof and restored the inside of the building and bought furniture. Now one can enjoy the synagogue inside and from the outside. Unfortunately, there are few Jews left in Beregovo who really need it. Most of Subcarpathia Jews emigrated in the 1970-1990s. The remaining Jews are Soviet people and the Jewish religion is strange to them. They do not know how to pray and do not feel the need in it. Gutman brought the Jewish cemetery of Beregovo to order. It was decayed. He gives money and workers to do this work. There are 5 employees working in the cemetery for 5 years already. Every gravestone was restored, trees planted and the territory cleaned up. Now the Jewish cemetery in Beregovo is the cleanest and most beautiful in Subcarpathia. Many Jews who had emigrated to other countries send money for maintenance of the cemetery and graves of their relatives. The community hired a person to look after those graves.

When after the breakup of the Soviet union [1991] Ukraine gained independence, many things have changed, and the improvements of Jewish life that started during perestroika were progressing. Many Jewish organizations emerged and the Jewish community became stronger.

In 1993 my wife retired. I insisted on it since she didn't want to leave her job. She did housework, but she missed communicating with people. We decided to move to Uzhgorod closer to her sister

and brother. I sold my house in Beregovo and bought an apartment in Uzhgorod. It's a good apartment and I tried to make it comfortable and cozy. However, I do not have communications in Uzhgorod. It's hard to make new friends at my age. In Beregovo there were people with whom I spoke Yiddish and Hungarian, and we visited one another. We always had guests. Everybody knew me and I knew everybody, but I am alone here. Of course, there is a Jewish community here and I am acquainted with its members, but our relationships are not as close as the ones that we entered into when we were young.

In 1999 Hesed was established in Uzhgorod. This organization does not only help Jews to survive providing food and hot meals to them and paying for medications or medical treatment to those who need them. Hesed pays much attention to the rebirth of the Jewish life in Ukraine. It's a big and important effort. Hesed teaches Jewish traditions to young people and children. When I see young girls and boys at the synagogue who do not go there to receive something, but want to be fair Jews, I feel happy. I go to the synagogue three times a week: on Monday, when they read the torah, Thursday and Saturday. I used to go there on Friday, but now it's hard to walk that far in the evening. I celebrate all Jewish holidays in Hesed. It's good to have this opportunity. Not because I cannot make a celebration at home. I have enough money. My sister takes care of it. I've even refused from their food provisions: there are others who need them more. Its most important that I can talk to people and not stay alone. Of course, I am not saying that I am lonely. I have a wonderful wife and we've never had one argument, but a person needs to communicate with other people, not only with books, even if they are his favorite. And Hesed gives me these contacts.

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 Uzhgorod, 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] KuK (Kaiserlich und Koeniglich) army: The name 'Imperial and Royal' was used for the army of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, as well as for other state institutions of the Monarchy originated from the dual political system. Following the Compromise of 1867, which established the Dual Monarchy, Austrian emperor and Hungarian King Franz Joseph was the head of the state and also commander-in-chief of the army. Hence the name 'Imperial and Royal'.

[3] Trianon Peace Treaty: Trianon is a palace in Versailles where, as part of the Paris Peace Conference, the peace treaty was signed with Hungary on 4th June 1920. It was the official end of World War I for the countries concerned. The Trianon Peace Treaty validated the annexation of huge parts of pre-war Hungary by the states of Austria (the province of Burgenland) and Romania (Transylvania, and parts of Eastern Hungary). The northern part of pre-war Hungary was attached to the newly created Czechoslovak state (Slovakia and Subcarpathia) while Croatia-Slavonia as well as parts of Southern Hungary (Voivodina, Baranja, Medjumurje and Prekmurje) were to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians (later Yugoslavia). Hungary lost 67.3% of its pre-war territory, including huge areas populated mostly or mainly by Hungarians, and 58.4% of its population. As a result approximately one third of the Hungarians became an - often oppressed - ethnic minority in some of the predominantly hostile neighboring countries. Trianon became the major point of reference of interwar nationalistic and anti-Semitic Hungarian regimes.

[4] Hasid: 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.

[5] 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.

[6] Lenin (1870-1924): Pseudonym of Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, the Russian Communist leader. A profound student of Marxism, and a revolutionary in the 1890s. He became the leader of the Bolshevik faction of the Social Democratic Party, whom he led to power in the coup d’état of 25th October 1917. Lenin became head of the Soviet state and retained this post until his death.

[7] 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.

[8] Ispolkom: After the tsar's abdication (March, 1917), power passed to a Provisional Government appointed by a temporary committee of the Duma, which proposed to share power to some extent with councils of workers and soldiers known as 'soviets'. Following a brief and chaotic period of fairly democratic procedures, a mixed body of socialist intellectuals known as the Ispolkom secured the right to 'represent' the soviets. The democratic credentials of the soviets were highly imperfect to begin with: peasants - the overwhelming majority of the Russian population - had virtually no say, and soldiers were grossly over-represented. The Ispolkom's assumption of power turned this highly imperfect democracy into an intellectuals' oligarchy.

[9] NKVD: People's Committee of Internal Affairs; it took over from the GPU, the state security agency, in 1934.

[10] 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.

[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] 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.

[14] 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.

[15] 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.

[16] 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.

[17] 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.

[18] 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.

[19] Iron Curtain: A term popularized by Sir Winston Churchill in a speech in 1946. He used it to designate the Soviet Union's consolidation of its grip over Eastern Europe. The phrase denoted the separation of East and West during the Cold War, which placed the totalitarian states of the Soviet bloc behind an 'Iron Curtain'. The fall of the Iron Curtain corresponds to the period of perestroika in the former Soviet Union, the reunification of Germany, and the democratization of Eastern Europe beginning in the late 1980s and early 1990s.