Ivan Moshkovich

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Ivan Moshkovich and his wife Faina live in a private house in the center of Uzhgorod. His sister built this house after she returned from concentration camp in 1945. Ivan and his wife moved into this house after she left for Israel. Their house is well kept and cozy. There are two rooms, a spacious hallway and a kitchen. The furniture was bought in the 1980s. There is a flower garden in front of the house and a few trees. Ivan is a thin man of average height. He has swift movements. He is a reserved and kind man. Ivan's wife is confined to bed due to her illness. Ivan has to take care of all the house-chores. Nevertheless, he finds time for public activities. Ivan Moshkovich is chairman of the Jewish community of Uzhgorod. During the interview his son Dmitri and grandson Henrich came to see him. They stayed for the duration of the interview and listened to Ivan's story with great interest. One can tell that all members of the family love and care about each other. When Ivan was talking about his time in concentration camps he got very upset and couldn't talk. At his request we gave a brief description of this period without going into details. I saw how painful those recollections were for him.

I know little about my father's family. I didn't know my father's parents. My grandfather and grandmother died long before I was born. I don't even know their names. They were born and lived in the village of Volkovoye in Uzhgorod district in Subcarpathia 1. This area belonged to Hungary before 1945. I've never been in Volkovoye and there's nothing I can tell about it. After 1945, when Subcarpathia became a part of the Soviet Union, a few smaller neighboring villages merged to form a kolkhoz 2 and the bigger settlement was given a different name. Volkovoye also formed a part of a bigger settlement.

My grandfather was a farmer and my grandmother was a housewife. Their family was religious. They observed all Jewish traditions. They had many children. My father, Henrich Moshkovich, his Jewish name was Chaim, was born in Volkovoye in 1890. He was the middle son in the family. My father and his brothers studied in cheder. When they grew up my father and his brothers moved to Uzhgorod looking for a job. My father was a cattle dealer in Uzhgorod: he purchased and sold cattle. I don't know what his brothers did for a living. I don't remember their names either. I know that they were married and had children, but I don't know any details. I can't remember anything about my father's sisters. During the Great Patriotic War 3 we lost contact with my father's relatives and we've had no information about them since.

During World War I my father served in the Austrian army that fought on the side of Germany. [Editor's note: There was no separate Austrian and Hungarian army in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy but a common army called the KuK army.] 4 My father never told me any details of his military service. He was wounded at the front, demobilized after the war in 1919 and returned home.

My maternal grandfather and grandmother lived in the village of Dolgoye Pole, Uzhgorod district. My grandfather was born in Dolgoye Pole in the 1850s. His name was Eikef Yunger. I don't know my grandmother's name or her place of birth. I think she was the same age as my grandfather. We, her grandchildren, called her 'babika', Grandma in Hungarian [This was a form of address used in Subcarpathia].

Before 1919 Subcarpathia belonged to the Dual Monarchy [the Austro- Hungarian Monarchy] and then it became a part of Czechoslovakia. The Czechoslovak government was loyal to the Jews and stimulated their business activities. The Jews could do any business they wished: there were no restrictions in this regard. The Jews did their business and held official posts and the Czechoslovak authorities encouraged them in every way. The Czechs were intelligent and cultured people. Dolgoye Pole was a small village. There were ten to twelve Jewish families there that constituted about one third of the population. The Jews didn't have their separate neighborhood and mixed with Ukrainian, Hungarian and Czech families. The population spoke mainly Ukrainian and Hungarian. People got along well and there was no anti-Semitism before 1938. The only difference was that the Jews didn't work on Saturday and non-Jews didn't work on Sunday. The Jews celebrated their holidays and on other days worked in the fields like the rest of the population. Children also helped their parents.

There was an eight-year Hungarian school in the village. After finishing school children either learned a profession or went to town to continue their education. There was no synagogue or cheder in the village. There was a big synagogue in the neighboring village of Geivitza, about 1,5 kilometers from Dolgoye Pole. Jews from three villages - Geivitza, Velikaya Geivitza and Dolgoye Pole - went to the synagogue on Saturday and Jewish holidays and prayed at home on weekdays. There was a cheder at the synagogue. Parents and children went to the synagogue together. Newly born boys were circumcised on the eight day. When boys turned 13 they had their bar mitzvah at the synagogue. All Jewish families were very religious. They were all very close and, like in all villages, each person was aware of the situation in his neighbor's house. Every single Jew observed Jewish traditions. God forbid if somebody in the village found out that his neighbor violated Sabbath, smoked a cigarette, stroke a match or turned off the light. This was forbidden between Friday evening through Saturday evening. Our non-Jewish neighbors showed understanding of our Jewish traditions. On Saturday our Ukrainian neighbor came to our house to stoke the stove and light candles. Jews were respected and supported in the village.

My mother's family was wealthy by local standards. My grandfather owned a store selling alcoholic drinks and tobacco. This was the only store of this kind in the village. My grandfather also had a few threshing machines, which were used for threshing grain for the whole village after the harvest. My grandparents had a big long house. There was a store and living quarters in the house. There were four or five big rooms. All weddings and big celebrations in the village were arranged in my grandfather's house. The house had a tiled roof while most of the houses in the village had thatched roofs. There was an orchard and a kitchen garden near the house. They kept livestock: horses to work in the field and serve for transportation purposes, a cow and poultry - chickens, ducks and geese. The family had everything they needed. They farmed their fields themselves. All members of the family were used to work in the field. They grew grain and corn. Besides, my grandfather owned a plot in the forest. They stoked their stoves with wood and it was important to have wood of their own. My grandfather worked at the store and renewed the stocks. My

grandmother and the children did all the other work.

My mother's parents were very religious. My grandfather always observed Jewish customs and traditions. They had mezuzot on all the doors in the house. Every morning my grandfather put on his tallit and tefillin and prayed. He wore casual clothes like all other villagers. My grandfather had a black suit that he put on to go to the synagogue. He had a long beard and always wore a kippah. Nobody ever saw him without it, even at home. My grandfather even slept with his kippah on. My grandmother was a short thin woman. She didn't wear a wig. There were no wigs in the village. She always wore a kerchief and dark gathered skirts and long-sleeved high collar blouses. They celebrated Sabbath and all Jewish holidays at home. They spoke Yiddish and were fluent in Hungarian.

There were several children in the family. I remember three of them besides my mother. The oldest son, Ignas, was born around 1890. The next one was a daughter, born around 1894. I don't remember her name. My mother Bertha was born in 1897. The youngest daughter was born in 1900. I've forgotten her name. Ignas went to cheder in Geivitza and the girls studied at home with a teacher from cheder. He taught them how to read and write in Yiddish, prayers and everything a Jewish girl needed to know. At the age of 12 girls had their bat mitzvah, and my mother's brother had his bar mitzvah at the age of 13. My mother's older sister became an apprentice to a dressmaker. I don't remember what Ignas did for a living. My mother and her sister helped their mother about the house and worked in the field. They all lived in Dolgoye Pole. My grandmother died in Dolgoye Pole in 1940. She was buried in the Jewish section of the village cemetery in Dolgoye Pole. It was a Jewish funeral. The ritual was conducted by the rabbi of the synagogue in Geivitza. Ignas recited the Kaddish for her. I don't remember sitting shivah for my grandmother.

My parents met with the help of a shadkhan. They had a traditional Jewish wedding with a chuppah in my mother parents' house in Dolgoye Pole. It couldn't have been otherwise at that time. She was the daughter of a deeply religious man, my grandfather Eikef. After the wedding the newly-weds moved to Uzhgorod. I don't know why they decided to start their marital life in Uzhgorod. I remember a small house, but I don't know if it belonged to my father or if my parents rented it. There were four children born there. My older brother Herman, his Jewish name was Mayer, was born in 1922. My sister Olga, her Jewish name was Esther, followed in 1924. In 1926 Clara, her Jewish name was Hana-Gita, was born. I was the youngest. I was born in 1928 and named Ivan. My Jewish name is Moshe-Tzvi. My father was a cattle dealer. He traveled to villages purchasing cattle from farmers to sell it to butchers. He got preliminary orders from them for the kind of meat they wished to buy. He was very busy in winter and fall when he often left home for several days. He spent more time with his family at home in summer. My mother was a housewife after she got married.

Two years after I was born my parents moved to Dolgoye Pole. My mother's parents wanted their children to live near them. I don't know whether my father built a house or bought it, but we lived in our own house in Dolgoye Pole. It was near my grandparents' house. The village stood on a river and our house was on the opposite bank of the river from where my grandparents lived. This house was built from air bricks and it had a thatched roof like the majority of the houses in the village. [Editor's note: air bricks were made from cut straw and clay, dried in the sun.] There were two rooms and a kitchen in the house. The front door led to the kitchen and there were two doors to the rooms from the kitchen. There was a storeroom for food products. We had simple furniture made

from planks: tables, chairs, beds and wardrobes. There was a backyard with sheds for our cattle and a shed for storing hay for winter. There was also a wooden shed. There was a high fence around the area. There were apple, pear, plum and walnut trees in the orchard. We made jam for winter. We grew potatoes and other vegetables to last through the winter. We didn't buy anything and even grew grass to make hay for the cattle. We kept cows, horses and poultry.

My father made his living by farming until we moved to Dolgoye Pole. My mother did all the housework, helped my father in the field and worked in the orchard and kitchen garden. Children were used to work. Everybody had his chores. I was responsible for weeding and watering the kitchen garden. I also brought wood for the stove from the shed in the yard. I also did other chores about the house. We did all work by ourselves and didn't hire anyone. There was no electricity in the village. We lit kerosene lamps or candles in the evening. People used kerosene torches to walk in the streets in the evening. I would like to live in a village now. We had a quiet life.

We spoke Hungarian and Yiddish at home. I know these two languages well. After Subcarpathia became a part of Czechoslovakia [the First Czechoslovak Republic] 5 Czech became the official language. Children had no problem picking it up, but for the adults it wasn't that easy. The inhabitants of Subcarpathia speak four to five languages.

Our family was religious. My father put on his tallit and tefillin to pray every morning. We knew that we couldn't bother him during the prayer. Every Saturday he took his sons to the synagogue in Geivitza. We started going to synagogue when we turned five. Men and boys went to the synagogue every Saturday and women, including my mother, went to the synagogue on Jewish holidays. Even in summer, when it was hot, my father wore his black suit and a wide-brimmed black hat to the synagogue. He took my older brother Herman and me after I reached the age of five. We wore our fancy suits and hats. My mother wore a long dark dress and a dark kerchief to the synagogue. She always wore a kerchief, even at home.

There was no cheder in the village. Children went to cheder at the age of three. Since it was a problem to go to the cheder in the village of Geivitza every day the children studied at home before they turned six. Their parents hired a melamed who taught them at home every day. Each family had their own melamed. They taught Hebrew, Yiddish and the Torah. They also taught everything that Jewish children were supposed to know. They taught all the required prayers: over bread, milk and water, the kashrut and traditions. We knew the prayers for weekdays and holidays and we knew how to celebrate holidays and their history. At the age of six children went to the cheder in Geivitza. My father taught us at home, we didn't have a melamed. He taught my sisters, too. We could read and write in Yiddish and Hebrew. My father was a very religious man. He knew all prayers by heart. We observed all Jewish traditions in the family, celebrated Sabbath and all Jewish holidays. We went to cheder when we turned six.

On Friday my mother baked bread for a whole week and challah for Saturday. On Friday morning she cooked food for two days. No work was allowed on Saturday. She put the cholent - meat stew with potatoes and beans in ceramic pots - in the oven. On Saturday, before lunch, my mother took the pots out of the stove and the food in there was still hot. She told one of the children to take the chickens to the shochet on Friday. On Friday the whole family got together for dinner: we always had gefilte fish, chicken broth and boiled chicken. We prayed and then my mother, wearing her fancy dress and a silk shawl, lit the candles in a bronze candle stand. We prayed again, welcomed

Saturday and sat down for a festive dinner. My father blessed us. We sang together. Friday and Saturday were holy days in our family. On Saturday my father read out the appropriate section of the Torah. We didn't do any work until the first evening star on Saturday. We had a rest and went for walks outside. Sometimes we had guests on Saturday.

We strictly followed the kashrut in our family. My mother had kitchen utensils and crockery of three types for everyday use: for meat and dairy products and for uncooked products. We never used non-kosher utensils or crockery. Of course, we also had special crockery for Pesach, which was kept in a big box in the attic. It was taken down once a year, on Pesach. If everyday utensils were to be used on Pesach or if new ones were bought they were to be koshered. There was a special koshering spot near the houses in our street used by all Jews. There was a huge bowl with boiling water where all crockery was dumped to be koshered. They had water boiling on Friday morning and before holidays, but when a family bought new crockery or utensils or thought they needed to have their old utensils koshered they could do it any time.

There was a major cleaning of the house before Pesach. Everything had to be washed and cleaned. Chametz was swept onto a piece of paper with a goose feather and burned. All stocks of bread and grain were taken to non-Jewish neighbors. They gave us some change pretending that they bought it from us and after Pesach we took it back to the house. My mother sent us to take the chickens and geese to the shochet. She always melted plenty of chicken and goose fat that was used for cooking throughout Pesach. There was no bread in the house for the eight days of Pesach. We only ate matzah. Several Jewish women got together to make matzah for their families.

My mother made traditional Jewish food on Pesach: gefilte fish, chicken broth with dumplings made from matzah and boiled chicken. She also made pudding from matzah, eggs and potatoes. She baked strudels with jam, nuts and raisins, honey cakes from matzah flour and magen David shaped cookies. She made food for the first two days of the holiday. No cooking was allowed on these days. When the evening star appeared on the first night of Pesach my father conducted the seder. There was a big table with everything on it required for the seder. Besides the festive dishes there was a big plate with greeneries, horseradish and a boiled egg on it to symbolize the exodus of Jews from Egypt. There was also a saucer with salted water into which we dipped greeneries before eating. Every person was to drink four glasses of wine during the seder. The children got a glass of water slightly colored with a bit of wine poured into it. My father told us about the seder and my older brother asked him the traditional questions [the mah nishtanah] in Hebrew about this holiday. When I grew older it was my turn to pose these questions. The first prayer began when there were no stars in the sky yet, and the second prayer was said when there were stars. There was a special glass of wine for Elijah the Prophet 6. The front door was kept open for him to come in.

We celebrated Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. I prayed at the synagogue on that day. When we came home my mother put challah, honey and apples on the table. We had to eat this food to have a sweet and nice year ahead of us. Yom Kippur was the most holy day of the year. Even small children fasted all day. In the ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur everybody had to ask God forgiveness and ask other people to forgive them. My parents always went to our neighbors to ask to be forgiven. The ritual of kapores was conducted for each member of the family: with a white rooster for men and boys and a chicken for girls. One had to take a hen or rooster one's right hand and roll it over one's head saying, 'May you be my atonement'. I don't know what they did with the hen or rooster afterwards. Each of us had to say the prayer.

We also celebrated Chanukkah at home. We went to the synagogue in the morning and the celebration took place in the evening. The children got Chanukkah money and spinning tops on this holiday. The children were also allowed to make money stakes during the game with the spinning top. We usually bought sweets and sunflower seeds for the money we got. My mother lit one candle more every day. There was one shammash candle that was lit on the first day and the other candles were lit from it. Three prayers were said while lighting the candles. [Editor's note: It is only on the first day of Chanukkah that three prayers are recited, on the other days only two prayers are said.]

At Sukkot a sukkah was made in every Jewish yard. The roof was made from corn stems to see the sky through it. Jews had meals and prayed in their sukkot.

Purim was the merriest holiday. Women made pastries and the children took small treats and gifts to their friends and relatives. The adults gave children some money at Purim to give it to beggars. If a poor man came to a house on Purim evening the family had to accommodate him for the night, give him food and food or some money to go. Poor people usually visited wealthier homes on Purim. Purimshpilers also came to houses to give performances. They were usually adults and children from poorer families. They cut the performances short to be able to make the rounds of more houses. Our performers were a neighboring family and we, kids, waited for them to come from the early morning.

There was a Jewish community in every village. Wealthier people helped the poor giving them food or gifts on Saturday and Jewish holidays. They always provided help for the needy. At that time people had stronger bonds. My family always made charity contributions and my mother always took some food to poor families living in our street. Perhaps, the community organized more activities, but I don't know about it.

We went to study at the lower secondary state school in the village when we turned seven. I started school in 1935. In 1918 the language of teaching at school became Czech. There were 14 Jewish families in Dolgoye Pole at the most and there weren't many Jewish children at school. There were about 40 families in Dolgoye Pole. The village was small and there weren't many children in each class. It was a small school. There was no anti-Semitism and there couldn't be any. Children usually adopt their parents' attitudes and the adults treated the Jews with respect.

In 1938 the Hungarians returned to Subcarpathia. Only this was a fascist Hungary, an ally of Germany. The attitude of the Hungarians toward the Jews was dramatically different from the attitude of Czechs. It was calm at first, but then oppression began. The authorities began to introduce anti- Jewish laws 7 and passports. Jews had to submit documents confirming that their ancestors had been born and lived in this area and that they were not newcomers. People had to go to Budapest and pay a significant amount of money to obtain passports. The next step was that Jews were forbidden to do business. They had to give their stores and shops to non-Jews or they became state property.

My grandfather gave his store to a non-Jewish local resident. He became the owner and my grandfather continued working in the store. He received a salary as an employee and the owner got all the profit. The situation was getting worse and worse for the Jews. Later a law on residential restrictions was introduced. Jews weren't allowed to leave the settlements of their residence. We weren't even allowed to go to the synagogue in Geivitza. Jews were also obliged to wear the yellow

star on their chest. The Hungarian authorities appointed heads of village headquarters that were loyal to their regime to oppress the Jewish population. Some local Hungarians became fascists. The son of the local count in Geivitza sympathized with the fascists. His attitude towards Jews was brutal. Once he and his friends rode their horses into the synagogue. However, there were no Jewish pogroms. I need to say that the local villagers sympathized with the Jews and helped them. Governmental officials were anti-Semitic, but anti-Semitism didn't corrupt common people.

We began to learn Hungarian at school. It was no problem since we could speak Hungarian. The Hungarians introduced Christian religion classes at school. Jewish children didn't have to attend these classes. Jewish boys of ten years of age had to do mandatory work in Hungarian military barracks near the village: painting, cleaning and carrying bricks. We worked two to three hours every day. If the commanding officer disliked our job he could make us redo it.

We knew that the war began in 1939. We didn't have a radio, but some families bought newspapers. They shared what they read with other villagers and the news spread in the village. The Germans attacked Poland, and on 22nd June 1941 Germany also attacked the Soviet Union. There was a war all around, but there were no military actions in Subcarpathia. The Hungarians were allies of Germany. The Germans came to Subcarpathia at the end of 1943. There were Germans in our village. They gave orders and commands and oppressed the Jews, but there were no severe actions on their part before April 1944.

In April 1944 all Jews were ordered to take food to last for a week, clothes and come to the central square. Quite a few locals gave shelter to some Jews, though the Germans threatened to shoot for such attempts. All Jews were ordered to go to the school building. The Germans took away their gold and clothes that were in satisfactory condition. Then the Jews were taken to the brick factory in Uzhgorod. They made a ghetto in it. It was a huge factory. There were Jews from Uzhgorod town and region there. People from the villages had a certain area in the ghetto. They had to stay in the open air. There were no living arrangements. We ate what we had taken with us from home. Sometimes our neighbors or acquaintances came to throw some food for us over the fence. We had to go to work. We had to take everything there was in Jewish houses in Uzhgorod to a storage facility. My older brother Mayer served in the Hungarian army at that time as a private. The rest of us were in the ghetto: my parents and sisters, my mother's father and her sisters. We couldn't observe any Jewish traditions in the ghetto. We ate what we had without thinking about the rules of kashrut. The men got together for a minyan to pray in secret. The ghetto was guarded by Germans and Hungarians.

We stayed in the ghetto for a month. In May 1944 we were taken to Auschwitz. We took with us what we could. We were taken to the railway station where we boarded a train for cattle transportation. The railcars were stuffed with people. Many of them died on the way to Auschwitz. I can't remember how long the trip lasted. It seemed endless to me.

We arrived at Auschwitz on an early foggy morning. It was raining and we couldn't see anything. There were voices of German guards, dog barking, noises and women crying. Women, men, small children and old people were grouped separately. The Germans were taking smaller children away from their mothers. Old people and small children were sent to the crematorium. I stayed close to my father. Somebody advised me to stand on a few bricks in the line to look taller since I was short. The Germans looked past me. So I survived. After we were separated we didn't see my

mother and sisters again. We washed ourselves, put on striped uniforms and went to the barracks. There were bare two-tier wooden plank beds: there were no mattresses or pillows, to say nothing of bed sheets. We were woken up at dawn. There were too many inmates in the barrack and they jammed at the narrow door, while the Germans hurried us with lashes. It was raining outside. We got watery coffee with no sugar and 200 grams of bread. This made our meal for the day and every day we received this same portion. We stood in the rain the whole day until we were allowed to return to our barrack in the evening. The next day was the same. The area was fenced with electrified barbed wire. The voltage was so high that one couldn't come closer than five meters to the barbed fence. Every morning we saw dead bodies hanging on the wire: some inmates couldn't bear the hunger, beating and torture and jumped onto the wire.

We stayed in Auschwitz for five days. I didn't have my number tattooed on my arm, but I was given an eight-digit number. I don't remember it now. After five days we were sent to work in Erlenbusch. We were lucky to be sent to work. My father and I worked in a stone quarry. We learned to quarry and cut stone that was loaded on trolleys. Everybody had to work hard. There was no pity for anyone. It was hard work from morning till evening. We were guarded by German soldiers with machine guns and dogs. Every morning we were lined up and checked. Every inmate had a number. When they said the number the person had to step ahead. After this check-up we went to work. We lived in tents. Those inmates that went to work got food. It was little food, just enough to stay alive.

I learned in the camp that there are no bad nations there are only bad people. One German officer was sympathetic with me. I was the youngest and he felt sorry for me. He gave me a piece of bread every day. Later we were taken from one camp to another. Whatever the distance was we always walked. We walked at night and stayed in the woods until dark. The Germans shot those that couldn't move on, leaving the dead behind. It rained and we were wet. We didn't get any food on our way. I saved small pieces of bread that the German officer had given me in Erlenbusch. This bread saved me and my father. We traveled from one camp to another. It's difficult for me to recall our route. We stayed a few days in Birkenau and from there we moved to the last camp in Dachau, a death camp. My father and I were separated: old people and young people formed separate groups. We didn't get any food there. Hundreds of inmates were dying: every morning there were so many dead bodies that the others had to walk on them! All our emotions atrophied and we were indifferent to the surrounding. When I think about it now I'm horrified. Recollections of this time are unbearable for me.

We didn't get any news from the front. When we saw that the Germans were changing into dead inmates' clothes we wondered why they were doing this. The day when there was no guard left came. There were no Germans left in the camp. All inmates gathered. We didn't know what happened when we saw planes making rounds over the camp. We thought that they were going to drop bombs on the camp when we noticed red stars on their wings. The planes began to drop something that fell on the land, but didn't explode. We came closer and saw packages with bread, butter and chocolate. The starved people greedily grabbed the food. Somebody told me that we had starved too long and couldn't eat too much. I was angry with him at that moment, but later I understood that he was right. Many people died from eating too much. So much food happened to be deadly for people that had only eaten miserable stuff for so long. On the first days of May 1945 Soviet troops came to the camp. This was long waited for freedom. It was a happy day in my life

that I'll never forget. We cried out of joy and kissed our liberators.

After I was liberated I didn't have any information about my family. I didn't see my father and thought that he had perished. After the liberation I decided to go home. I didn't know the way and just followed other people. In a village I sat down on a bench to rest when somebody called my name. I looked up and saw my father! It was a happy reunion. We walked on together. We hoped that other members of our family had also survived. I don't know how long it took us to finally get to Dolgoye Pole. My older brother Mayer and my sister Clara were at home. They told us that my mother and younger sister Olga had perished in Auschwitz. My grandfather Eikef and my mother's sisters also perished in Auschwitz and so did my mother's older brother Ignas. He was the strongest man in the village. He could do any hard work. He would have survived in the camp, but when the Germans took his little son to the crematorium my uncle went there with him. They both perished.

Our house had been destroyed during the war. We lived in my grandfather Eikef's house. When my brother and sister came to the village our neighbors told us that they had our belongings. They took our things during the war and when we returned they brought them back to us. People sympathized with us and tried to help. They were kind and supportive. We knew that many former inmates of German camps were arrested in the USSR, but we didn't suffer any oppression. The Soviet power didn't change people's attitudes in our village. It remained a small and quiet village.

My father became a farmer again. My brother studied to be a joiner and then went to work. I was finishing lower secondary school and helped to do chores at home. My brother was very sickly and weak after he returned from the camp. There wasn't enough food or medication. The doctors couldn't help him and Mayer died in 1948. We buried him near our grandmother's grave in the cemetery in Dolgoye Pole. Unfortunately this cemetery was destroyed when a gas pipeline was installed in the 1960s.

After finishing school I became an apprentice to a mechanic in a car shop in Uzhgorod. It was the only car shop in town. After the war people spoke mostly Hungarian in Uzhgorod. We lived in Dolgoye Pole, but I studied and then worked in Uzhgorod. I got up at 3am, walked two kilometers to the railway station to take a train to Uzhgorod and returned home in the evening. Life was difficult. There wasn't enough food and it was hard to get a job. I wanted to have a profession that would enable me to support my family. I believed that the profession of a car mechanic was exactly what I needed. I tried to do my best to learn all I could from my skilled colleagues. I knew that I had to earn money. After finishing my training course I got a job at the car shop.

In 1949 I was recruited to the Soviet army. [Editor's note: Young men of 18 years of age were subject to mandatory military service. The term of service at the time that Ivan Moshkovich talks about was four years.] I started my service in Belarus and then I was sent to Vladivostok in the Far East where I served until the end of my term. I served in a construction battalion. The inhabitants of Subcarpathia weren't in big favor with the rest of the Soviet Union since Hungary had been an ally of Germany in World War II. Construction battalions were the least prestigious military units and the only military subdivisions where we could serve. We worked at the construction of an airfield. Later I became a driving instructor training soldiers. My service lasted for four years. When I came to the army I didn't face any anti-Semitism, but by the end of my term at the beginning of 1953 there were such signs. The newspapers published articles about doctors that plotted to poison Stalin. All the names they listed were Jewish. [Ivan Moshkovich is referring to the Doctors'

Plot.] 8

I remember 5th March 1953 when Stalin died. The soldiers and officers didn't hide their tears. Since I came from an area that had joined the USSR recently I didn't feel any grief. We weren't raised with the name of Stalin like those that were born during the Soviet regime, and didn't feel any love or devotion towards him. We, the residents of Subcarpathia, were constantly watched by KGB 9 agents, of whom there were many in the army. I remember I had a friend from Mukachevo. On 5th March when everybody else was crying he was lying under a car doing some repairs. A KGB agent approached him and asked if he knew who Stalin was. My friend said that he did and was sorry that he had died, but he was an old man. He was arrested at night and never returned. Many soldiers of our battalion were arrested that night and never returned. It was a terrifying time when one could pay the price of one's life for any word one said... I didn't join the Komsomol 10 or the Party and tried to stay away from politics.

In 1950 my sister Clara married a Jew from Uzhgorod, his last name was Weber. My sister's husband was a mechanic at the instrument manufacturing plant. Clara and her husband registered their marriage at a registry office and had a party with a chuppah at home. A rabbi from the synagogue in Uzhgorod conducted the wedding ceremony at home. My sister wrote me about her wedding, but I couldn't go there because of my duties. She moved to her husband in Uzhgorod.

My father married a very nice Jewish widow. They also had a Jewish wedding. My father's second wife had a house in Uzhgorod and my father moved in with her. After he moved to Uzhgorod my father didn't work: he became a pensioner and received an old age pension. I was happy for him. They were a loving and caring family. I often visited them when I returned from the army. My father was 95 when he died. He lived a hard life, but he was happy living through every single day. He remained religious: he prayed at home every day and observed all laws and traditions. My father went to the synagogue on Sabbath and Jewish holidays and later, when the Soviet authorities closed it he went to a prayer house. My father worked until the end of his days and could walk on his own. He died in Uzhgorod in 1985. We buried him in accordance with Jewish traditions in the Jewish cemetery. I recited the Kaddish for him. I couldn't sit shivah.

After demobilization I lived with my sister Clara. My sister and her husband received a plot of land to build a house. They constructed their own house. Then their son was born. I forgot his name. My sister worked at the garment factory. My sister and her husband observed Jewish traditions at home. It was difficult to follow the kashrut. Those were hard years when it was a problem to buy any food, not to mention kosher products. Of course, they didn't eat pork. On Friday evening my sister lit candles after she came from work and we celebrated Sabbath. My sister's husband and I went to the synagogue on holidays. My sister tried to cook traditional Jewish food for holidays. We always had matzah on Pesach. At first we bought it at the synagogue and when the synagogue was closed matzah was brought from Budapest or made at home. On Yom Kippur we all, except for Clara's little son, fasted.

Clara's family lived the life of a typical Soviet family. They worked six days a week with Sunday being the only day off. My sister took her son to the kindergarten on her way to work in the morning and in the evening the family got together for dinner. On Sunday my sister did the house chores and her husband took their son for a walk in the park or to the cinema. I usually prepared for my entrance exams to college on Sunday. My sister and her family usually spent their summer

vacation at home in Uzhgorod.

I got back to my work at the car shop. Later I entered an automobile college and after finishing it I returned to the car shop where I became an engineer. My car shop became the first car pool enterprise in town. There was no public transportation in Uzhgorod at that time. I was authorized to create a public transportation network for the town. We started with buses. People weren't used to going by bus and we had to convince them to start using it. I worked as a driver for some time on various routes and then became a foreman in the garage. I worked at the road traffic safety department before I retired, I taught driving rules and examined candidates in GAI [traffic police]. It was strenuous work, but I liked it. I retired last year after I had been working at the same enterprise for 54 years. I never faced any anti-Semitism, my colleagues always treated me with respect.

Some of my co-villagers also moved to Uzhgorod from Dolgoye Pole. They were my friends and some still are. I also had friends at work. I had both Jewish and non-Jewish friends. I've never had any prejudice against non- Jews, but I always remembered my Jewish identity. I couldn't celebrate Sabbath since Saturday was a working day, but I always celebrated all Jewish holidays with my sister's family. There was a significant Jewish population in Uzhgorod at that time and there were always many people at the synagogue on holidays.

We also celebrated Soviet holidays that were always days off. We had to attend parades from work and after parades we liked to get together and have fun - we sang and danced and told funny stories, although we didn't care about those holidays, except for Victory Day 11 on 9th May.

I only wanted to marry a Jewish girl, I couldn't imagine otherwise, but there were hardly any single girls in Uzhgorod. I was sent to work in the small town of Solotvin in Subcarpathia. There were some nice Jews that became my friends there. They said they knew a nice Jewish girl in Chernovtsy. I went to Chernovtsy and met my future wife Faina Shystman, Fania in Jewish. Faina was born in the village of Ozarintsy, Vinnitsa region, in 1937. My wife's father, Zamvel Shystman, was a shoemaker and her mother, Etia Shystman, was a dressmaker. They had five children. My wife was their third child. She has two older sisters, born in 1931 and 1933, a younger brother, born in 1940, and a younger sister, born in 1944. My wife's parents were religious and she was raised religiously, too.

Faina was four when the war began. The fascists occupied Ozarintsy and sent all Jews to the ghetto in Shargorod 12, Vinnitsa region. In March 1944 the Soviet army liberated the inmates of the ghetto in Shargorod and my wife's family returned home. My wife's uncle, her father's brother, lived in Chernovtsy. He took Faina there. He thought that it would be easier for Faina to find a job in a bigger town as well as accommodate her personal life. After finishing school at 16 Faina went to work at the glove factory. We met in Chernovtsy and got married on 7th December 1958. We had a traditional Jewish wedding in Solotvin. The rabbi conducted the ceremony and there was a chuppah. My wife and I lived in Solotvin for two years and then returned to Uzhgorod. I received an apartment from the enterprise where I worked.

We have two children: our son Dmitri, born in 1958, and our daughter Olga, born in 1962 who was named after my sister who perished in Auschwitz. Dmitri's Jewish name is Mayer after my elder brother. My son was circumcised as required by Jewish traditions. They are nice children. They helped my wife and me to do work about the house. They studied well at school. We tried to spend

as much time as possible with the children. On Sunday, our only day off, we took them for a walk in the park, to the cinema or theater. In the evening we read books to them and had discussions. My wife and I enjoyed spending time with the children. They told us about their hobbies and they often had friends visiting them. My children didn't face any anti-Semitism at school. Everybody was friendly there. Whenever I had my vacation in summer I took my family to a village in Subcarpathia for two weeks. We swam in the river and walked in the woods. Our children spent their summer vacations in children's camps. They liked it there. After my wife fell ill we couldn't go on vacation any longer and I had less free time in the evening and at weekends.

My wife and I observed Jewish traditions, but we didn't do it as openly as we used to before the war. We didn't go to the synagogue on Saturday. We both worked and couldn't miss work. We only went to the synagogue on Jewish holidays: Pesach, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Purim. There were more Jews in Uzhgorod at that time than now. There were many people at the synagogue and nearby on Jewish holidays. After the synagogue was closed I went to a prayer house alone. We had to do it in secret since the Soviet authorities did not really tolerate religion.

We made matzah for Pesach. It takes flour and water to make matzah. Also, one needs to know that it should take no longer than 18 minutes from the moment of making the dough to the time of putting it in the oven [otherwise it is not kosher]. We always fasted on Yom Kippur and raised our children according to Jewish traditions. It was difficult at that time since any demonstration of one's Jewish identity was regarded as Zionism. The Soviet authorities struggled against Zionism and even arrested people. My wife and I spoke Russian and Yiddish at home, and she learned Hungarian after some time. We spoke Russian and Hungarian with the children. It was hard to follow the kashrut at that time. To buy food was a problem. There were lines in stores. However, we did our best to at least stick to the rules of the kashrut whenever possible. We ate meat and dairy products separately. We bought chickens at the market and our son took them to the shochet. The shochet was working throughout all these years.

After finishing school our son entered the Technical Faculty of Lvov Polytechnic College, which had an affiliate in Uzhgorod. He completed his studies in Lvov. He is a radio engineer. After finishing college he returned to Uzhgorod. He worked at a design office. He was an industrious employee and received awards and incentives for his work. He has patent certificates for his own inventions. Dmitri is married and has a son, Henrich, born in 1986. My grandson was named after my father. My son married a Ukrainian girl called Maria. My wife and I had no objections to their marriage. They get along well and have no conflicts related to nationality. Our son supports and helps us.

Our daughter became a hairdresser. She married a young man called Berman from a nice family in Uzhgorod. They had a traditional Jewish wedding. We had a chuppah made for them at home. My daughter took her husband's last name of Berman. She has a son called Edward, born in 1985. In the 1990s my daughter, her husband and son moved to Israel and then to the USA and live in Brooklyn, New York. They have a good life there. They have their own house. Olga works in a Jewish organization. They observe all traditions. She is a hairdresser and makes wigs. My daughter and I correspond and she often calls me on the phone. Olga keeps me posted about her situation. Thank God my children are doing fine.

When Jews began to move to Israel my wife and I didn't have any opportunity to move there, too. My wife fell very ill and was confined to bed. So we didn't even consider leaving. My sister and her

family emigrated to the USA 15 years ago and also live in Brooklyn, New York. My sister and her husband are pensioners and Clara's son and his wife work. Their grandson goes to school. She left us the house that she and her husband built after the war. My son was already married and I gave him our apartment and we moved into my sister's house. That's where we live now.

We were enthusiastic about perestroika 13 initiated by Gorbachev 14. This was the first time in the history of the USSR when we got an opportunity to get in touch with our relatives and friends from abroad. The Iron Curtain 15, which separated the USSR from the rest of the world, fell. Of course, there were some negative things as well. Life became more difficult from a material point of view, but we felt free. Besides, perestroika gave a start to the revival of Jewish life in the USSR.

A Jewish community was formed in Uzhgorod in the late 1980s. My son and I began to go to the synagogue on a regular basis. My son knows the prayers and prays like I do. Jews have always had their own way of life in Uzhgorod, only during the Soviet regime they had to do it in secret [during the struggle against religion] 16. Later, when so many Jews were moving to Israel, there were hardly any left to go to the synagogue. There were times when there weren't even ten people at the synagogue and we had to go home. [A minyan, that is, ten male adults are needed in order to hold a prayer service.] After Ukraine gained independence Jewish life improved. I happened to be the only Jew that could say a prayer properly. I was always asked to say prayers. I refused since my ill wife was waiting for me at home. She needed me.

Then I was elected chairman of the Jewish community of Uzhgorod. Now I teach people to do things appropriately, how to pray and follow all Jewish rituals and traditions. We are all very close in our community. We had guests: rabbis from America and Israel. They liked the services in our synagogue. We are not concerned that a prayer would have to be cancelled: there are always many people at the synagogue. On Friday evening we give them two buns and challah to celebrate Sabbath at home. On Saturday we arrange for a meal. Women come to the synagogue on holidays, four times a year: on Pesach, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Purim.

Subcarpathian residents had a simplified procedure of traveling to Hungary. I took advantage of this fact and got in touch with a synagogue in Budapest. I asked for prayer books in Hebrew and Hungarian which is spoken by the majority of the inhabitants in Uzhgorod. When they notified me that the package was ready I drove to Budapest to pick up the prayer books in Hebrew, with a Russian and Hungarian translation, and take them to Uzhgorod. Now each person can read the prayers. I tell people about how they should celebrate holidays and about the history of the holidays. I teach them how to celebrate Sabbath and conduct the seder. I read the Torah to them and tell them what my father told me when I was a child. More and more people come to the synagogue. Young people or those that never came before come now.

I'm happy that Jewish life will continue when old people die. We invite children to the synagogue to teach them and give them gifts on holidays. Although my daughter-in-law is not a Jew, my grandson is raised in two cultural environments. I don't know whether he has ever been to church, but Henrich comes to the synagogue every Saturday with his father. My son has a 'Jewish corner' in his house where he keeps his accessories for praying and religious books. My son works in the Sochnut 17, a Jewish organization. Dmitri is the coordinator of the Sochnut in Subcarpathia. He replaced a former coordinator who emigrated in 1997. His change to this position took two days and since then my son has kept it.

In 1999 Hesed was established in our town. It provides big assistance to people. Hesed doesn't only support people in this hard time, but also gives them a chance to keep in touch and attend various clubs, get involved in Jewish culture that was outlawed for so long. People visit Hesed with their families and all generations can find what they are interested in there. The most important thing is that our children and grandchildren are raised as Jews and are proud to be Jews.

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 Uzhhorod, 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 Kolkhoz
In the Soviet Union the policy of gradual and voluntary collectivization of agriculture was adopted in 1927 to encourage food production while freeing labor and capital for industrial development. In 1929, with only 4% of farms in kolkhozes, Stalin ordered the confiscation of peasants' land, tools, and animals; the kolkhoz replaced the family farm.

3 Great Patriotic War
On 22nd June 1941 at 5 o'clock in the morning Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union without declaring war. This was the beginning of the so-called Great Patriotic War. The German blitzkrieg, known as Operation Barbarossa, nearly succeeded in breaking the Soviet Union in the months that followed. Caught unprepared, the Soviet forces lost whole armies and vast quantities of equipment to the German onslaught in the first weeks of the war. By November 1941 the German army had seized the Ukrainian Republic, besieged Leningrad, the Soviet Union's second largest city, and threatened Moscow itself. The war ended for the Soviet Union on 9th May 1945.

4 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'.

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 Elijah the Prophet

According to Jewish legend the prophet Elijah visits every home on the first day of Pesach and drinks from the cup that has been poured for him. He is invisible but he can see everything in the house. The door is kept open for the prophet to come in and honor the holiday with his presence.

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 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.

9 KGB

The KGB or Committee for State Security was the main Soviet external security and intelligence agency, as well as the main secret police agency from 1954 to 1991.

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 Victory Day in Russia (9th May)

National holiday to commemorate the defeat of Nazi Germany and the end of World War II and honor the Soviets who died in the war.

12 Shargorod

A town in the Ukraine, also known as Sharigrad. During World War II Jews from Romania were deported to various towns in Transnistria, which was then under German occupation. Large-scale deportations began in August 1941, after Romania and Germany occupied the previously Soviet territories of Bessarabia (today the Moldovan Republic) and Bukovina. Jews from the newly occupied Romanian lands (Bessarabia and Bukovina), as well as from Romania were sent over the Dniester river to Transnistria. The severe living conditions, the harsh winter and a typhus epidemic contributed to the large number of deaths in the camps established in many towns of Transnistria.

13 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.

14 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.

15 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.

16 Struggle against religion

The 1930s was a time of anti-religion struggle in the USSR. In those years it was not safe to go to synagogue or to church. Places of worship, statues of saints, etc. were removed; rabbis, Orthodox and Roman Catholic priests disappeared behind KGB walls.

17 Sochnut (Jewish Agency)

International NGO founded in 1929 with the aim of assisting and encouraging Jews throughout the world with the development and settlement of Israel. It played the main role in the relations between Palestine, then under British Mandate, the world Jewry and the Mandatory and other powers. In May 1948 the Sochnut relinquished many of its functions to the newly established government of Israel, but continued to be responsible for immigration, settlement, youth work, and other activities financed by voluntary Jewish contributions from abroad. Since the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989, the Sochnut has facilitated the aliyah and absorption in Israel for over one million new immigrants.