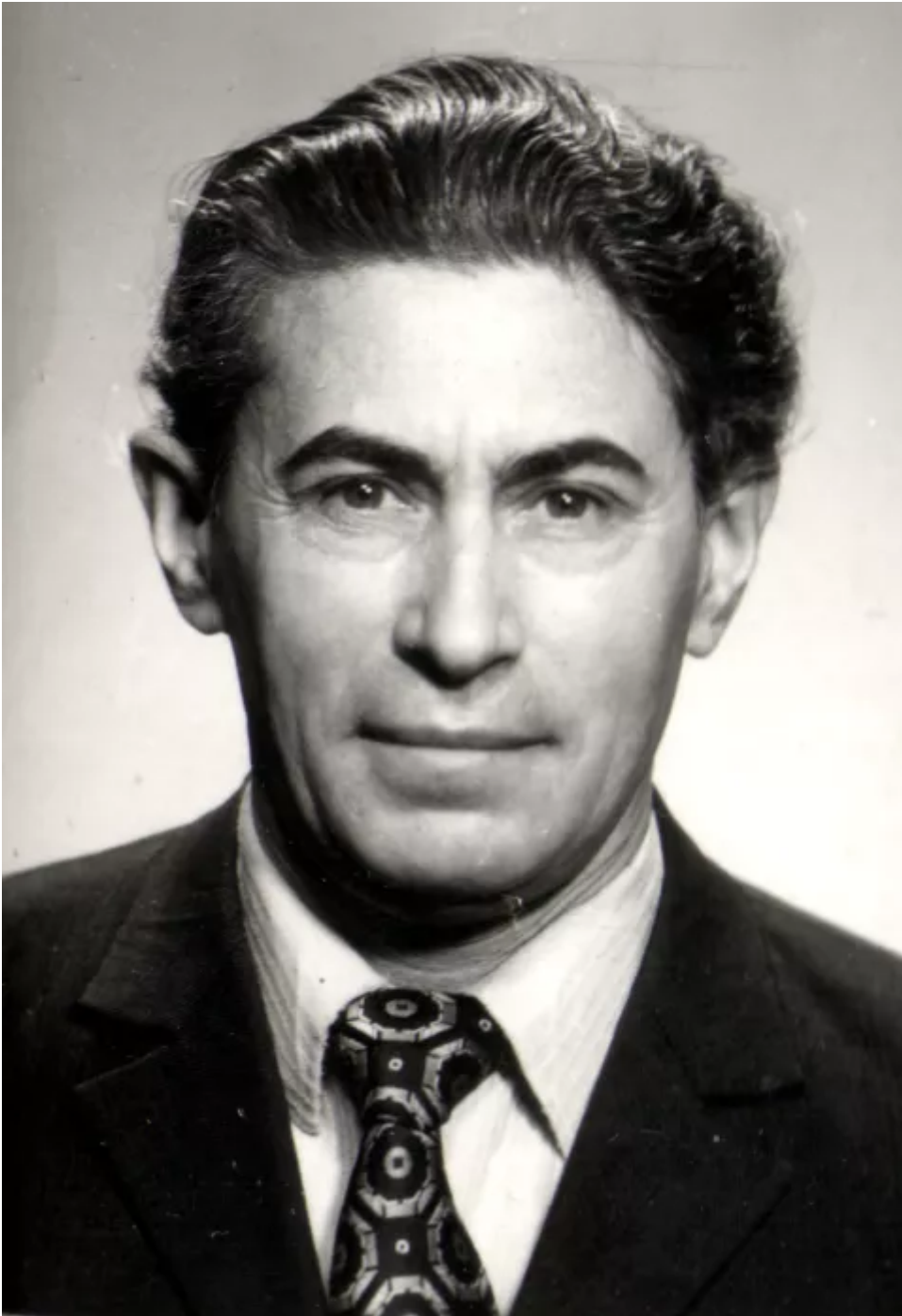


## Ignac Neubauer



This is me. This photograph was taken for my passport in Uzhgorod, 1974.

In 1946 I became an apprentice of a tailor in a garment store. I had to support my mother and sister, being the only man in the family. It stimulated me to study well and two years later I became a good tailor. Many people ordered their clothes at garment shops since it was hard to buy anything in shops. I could make any clothes, but I was good at making men's suits. The town and region's top men were my clients. Besides my salary I got good tips from my clients, and they also brought me food products that were hard to buy. I retired only in 1988.

I got married in 1957. In 1959 our first baby was born. We named our son Avrum after my father. In 1968 our daughter Marina was born. We gave her the Jewish name of Meita after my wife's mother, who had died one year before our daughter was born. My wife and I spoke Yiddish for the most part. Our children studied at school and were pioneers and Komsomol members. I didn't mind this. They were growing up in this country and it was better for them to be no different from others. Still my wife and I told our children about Jewish traditions and Jewish history, but we also told them to not discuss this with anybody else. We celebrated Jewish holidays at home. I didn't go to the synagogue, but I prayed at home. I had a tallit, a tefillin and a prayer book.

The longer I lived in the soviet regime, the more I hated it. There was no freedom in the USSR and we got used to freedoms in Subcarpathia, particularly during the Czech rule. We could speak our minds without suspecting KGB informers in everybody else. Besides, we lived near the border and to travel to another town we had to obtain a permit from militia and have our passports stamped. We couldn't buy train tickets if we didn't have a stamp; and there was another stamp to be obtained for each trip. We could only walk in the town with our passport. It was also hard from the material point of view. There were lines in stores and one had to stand for hours before buying a thing. What is this country like where people are not free and also, are miserably poor! For me to love this country, the country had to love me, but we lived like it was a prison. Sometimes it seemed to me that we had more freedom in the concentration camp.

When in the 1970s Jews began to move to Israel, I thought about it like it was a miraculous escape from everything I hated that the God sent me. My relatives also decided to emigrate. My mother and stepfather were the first to go. In 1972 my sister Hermina and her family moved to Kiriat Ono. I was eager to go to Israel, but my wife was against emigration. Her sisters supported her. They lived their lives in the USSR and were patriots of their country. They blindly believed the propaganda on the radio and in publications. They never gave it a deeper thought; they just believed what they heard. Their middle sister Donia, the children's doctor, was particularly stubborn about it. She was telling me that Israel is a capitalist country and capitalists were exploiters and working people had a very hard life there. I was trying to tell her that she had never practiced capitalism while I lived during capitalism and those were the best years of my life, that if a person had a good job, he could make his living and support his family well while with socialism it didn't matter whether one worked or he didn't, didn't matter - he will be miserably poor anyways. Besides, one feels a fool, when working hard he earns the same wages as lazy bones doing nothing. However, these were mere words for my wife and her sisters that they didn't make an effort to think about. So it happened that we stayed in the USSR. I didn't have much choice: emigration or the family and I chose the family.