

# Judita Haikis

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Interviewer: Ella Levitskaya

Date of interview: May 2004

*Judita Haikis is a big woman with wise, understanding, a little said, but still smiling eyes. Judita is a wonderful and very hospitable lady. Though few weeks from now Judit is leaving for Germany to her grandchildren and is very busy in this regard, she keeps her two-bedroom apartment in a rather new building on the outskirts of Kiev clean and cozy and one can tell that its owner has made a great effort to make it comfortable through years. She has 1960s-style furniture, carefully maintained, pictures on the walls and flowers in vases. Judita welcomes me as if I were some she knows well and tells me about herself and her family in detail, though I can tell that any of her memories are hard for her.*

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## **My family background**

As for the beginnings of our family, I remember (from what my father told me) as far back as my paternal great grandfather Leopold Herman Edelmann. I need to emphasize here that all Edelmann folks have always tried to correspond to their surname that means a “noble man” in German. I mean, they were honest, decent, men of principle, - noble men, in short.

My great grandfather Leopold Herman Edelmann and my great grandmother Terez Edelmann, nee Peterfreind, lived in the small Slovak settlement of Hrachovo. [Editor’s note: During most of the life of the great grandparents today’s Hrachovo, Rimaraho at the time was in Northern Hungary. Today the village is in Slovakia.] They were farmers with an average income. They had 12 children: six sons and six daughters. I knew few of them and know what my father told about the others. I don’t know the years of birth of my grandfather’s brothers and sisters. My great grandfather’s older children were his sons Max and Moric, born one after another. The next was my grandfather’s sister Pepka. My grandfather Adolf, born in 1868, was the fourth child in the family. Then came my grandfather’s sister Regina, and the next were his sisters Betka and Relka. Then my grandfather’s brothers Sandor, Pal and Jozsef were born. The youngest were sisters Anna and Etelka. I know nothing about my grandfather’s childhood. My father told me about him that he was the smartest and the most talented of 12 children. He learned to read and showed interest in all kinds of studies. My grandfather didn’t have a higher education, but he read a lot and always wanted to learn more. He studied Talmud and Jewish history. He didn’t do anything else, but study. My great grandfather’s family spoke German. Yiddish was not spread in this part of Slovakia. Leopold

Herman and Terez wanted their sons to get a profession or education and their daughters to marry decently. I don't know how religious my great grandfather and my great grandmother were, but judging from my grandfather, religion played an important role in their family. When they grew up, the children moved to other towns across Slovakia. [Editor's note: Slovakia became independent as late as 1991, Czechoslovakia was created after the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1918. The interviewee probably means the towns that became parts of Czechoslovakia later, after WWI and finally Slovakia in 1991.]

My great grandfather's oldest sons Max and Moric Edelmann went to study in America in their teens at the age of 14 and 15 and stayed to live there. From what I know, my grandfather sent them to study in the USA after they finished the cheder. I don't know for sure what Max and Moric studied in the USA, but I think they studied in secular educational institutions, rather than in a yeshiva. Max was married, but I don't remember his wife's name. They had no children. Moric married Anna, who had moved from Czechoslovakia, at the age of 20. They had three sons: Harry, Richard and Alfred. In 1933 Max and Moric came to visit their relatives. This is all I know about them. Most of the children settled down in Kosice in Czechoslovakia. Kosice had more Hungarian residents, and the majority of its population spoke Hungarian. My grandfather's older sister Pepka was married to Singer, a Jewish man. I don't know his surname. They had four children: daughters Aranka and Regina and sons Nandor and Jenő. Pepka and her husband died at an early age, and my grandfather took their children into his family. Relka, called Relli [editors' note: The interviewee probably confused these names since neither Relka nor Relli are possible names in Hungarian.] in the family, was married to Bergman. During WWI Bergman perished at the front. His widow was to raise their four children: Mór, Albert and Alexander and daughter Ilona. Relly was my grandfather's favorite sister, and her nephews and nieces admired her beauty and intelligence. My grandfather took care of his sister and her children, and after his death his sons, including my father, supported their aunt and her children. Relly lived with her daughter Ilona, who dealt in embroidery making her living on it. Pal Edelmann owned an inn in the center of Kosice, There was a restaurant on the 21st floor of this inn. Pal wife's name was Betti, nee Deutsch. They had two children: older son Emil and younger daughter Terez, born in 1918. During WWI Pal was severely wounded at the front. He died from in 1926 and was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Kosice. His wife remarried. Her second husband loved his adoptive children and treated them like his own. My great grandfather's son Jozsef also settled down in Kosice. He owned a grocery store. His wife's name was Terez, nee Goldberger. They had five children: daughters Kato [Katalin], Magda, Judit, Eva and son Laszlo. Jozsef was also at the front during WWI and suffered from a splinter in his leg for the rest of his life. My grandfather's daughter Etelka married Jakab Blumenfeld, a Jewish man from Kosice. They had four children: daughters Edit, Izabella and Marta and son Erno. My grandfather's brother Sandor dealt in wholesale business and owned a wholesale store. Sandor was rather wealthy. He had two sons: son Ondrej (called Erno in Hungarian in the family) and daughter Magda, born in 1915. My grandfather's other sisters lived with their families in Presov. Regina married Berger, a Jewish man. They had two children: son Simon and daughter Terez. Betka was married to Moric Gerstl. They had three children: daughter Ilona and sons Herman and Armin. Anna was married to Moric Hertz. They had eleven children: sons Aladar, Tibor, Marcel, Earnest, Pal and Alexander and daughters Sarolta, Ilona, Terez, Edit and Ester. This is all I know about the life of our relatives from Presov at that period.

My grandfather's brothers and sisters were very close and kept in touch. Their children always visited their grandmother and grandfather in Hrachovo in summer. My father told me that the children always played in a big garden and three times a day their grandmother came onto the porch of the house shouting: 'Kinder, essen!' [German: children, to eat], and this whole bunch of them came for a meal. My grandmother cut freshly baked bread in big slices spreading butter on them and poured milk in mugs. My father liked these memories.

My grandfather Adolf Edelman also moved to Kosice. He married Amalia Polster from Kosice. She was born in the early 1870s. My grandfather and grandmother rented a small two-bedroom apartment, and across the street from there my grandmother's older sister Frieda lived. Frieda was my grandmother's only relative, whom I knew. My grandmother was short and plump, but Frieda was a tall slender woman with regular features. Frieda's husband was rather rich. They had a house and gave their children good education. Two of her sons were lawyers. I remember that we were invited to Frieda and her husband's golden wedding in the late 1930s. Regretfully, this is all I remember about my grandmother sister's family. My grandfather was a wise, kind, very honest and decent man, and many Jews asked his advice. Kosice residents believed my grandfather to be wiser and smarter than any rabbi. He tried to help all giving money or advice. My grandmother Amalia was a breadwinner in the family. She owned a small grocery store. Grandfather spent all his time reading books. He didn't help her in anything. My grandmother gave birth to 9 children, but only 7 of them survived. Two children died in infancy. I only know the dates of birth of my father David Edelman and his brother Mor. My father was born in 1905 and was the fourth child in the family. My father's older brothers were Izidor, Elemer and Jenö. My father's brother Mor was born in 1906. Then my father's only sister Etelka was born and the youngest brother was Armin. They must have had Jewish names, but I don't know them. Besides their own children, my grandfather and grandmother also raised my grandfather sister Pepka's children, who called my grandmother "Mama".

Between 1867 - 1918 Czechoslovakia belonged to Austro-Hungary. [Editor's note: Czechoslovakia was created on the ruins of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy after World War I. The new Czechoslovak state was made up of the Austrian provinces of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia as well as of parts of Northern Hungary (Slovakia and Subcarpathia).] It was divided into two parts: the Czech lands that belonged to Austria, and Slovakia that was Hungarian. This probably explains why Kosice was populated mainly by Hungarians. In 1918 the First Czechoslovakian Republic [1](#) was established, with Tomas Garrigue Masaryk [2](#) the first President of Czechoslovakia. Kosice was a small town. [Before World War I it had 44 211 inhabitants (1913), mostly Hungarians but also Slovaks, Germans, Poles, Czechs and Ruthenians.] There were bigger houses in the center and one-story houses on the outskirts. There was no anti-Semitism in Kosice during the Austro-Hungarian period. Jews were encouraged to take official posts. There were many Jews in Kosice. They were mainly craftsmen: some could hardly make ends meet and others owned shops and stores. There were Jewish doctors, teachers and lawyers. There were few synagogues in Kosice: for orthodox believers, neologs [4](#) and Hasidim [5](#). There were mikves and shochets and few cheder schools in the town.

My father's parents spoke Hungarian. My grandfather and grandmother were very religious. I never saw my grandfather and cannot describe his looks or manners. My grandfather spent almost all of his time reading religious books. My grandmother wore a wig and long dark dresses. She prayed a

lot at home. She took her book of prayers and when she was praying she paid no attention to anything else. My grandmother made charity contributions to the synagogue and Jewish hospital and to help the needy. My grandparents celebrated Sabbath and all Jewish holidays. On Friday my grandmother went to mikveh. On Sabbath and Jewish holidays my grandparents went to the synagogue. My father and his brothers studied in cheder. Of course, they had bar mitzvah as Jewish traditions required. As for my father's younger sister Etelka, I think her parents may have taught her at home. She knew Hebrew, could pray and knew Jewish history and traditions. My grandmother followed kashrut strictly and taught Etelka to know it. There was a Jewish housemaid in the house. My grandmother was not very fond of doing work about the house and in due time Etelka took over housekeeping. My father and I think all other children studied in a Czech school and later - in a grammar school.

My grandmother was hoping that her sons would grow up religious Jews, but her expectations were not to come true. They got fond of communist ideas. Only three of them - the oldest Izidor, Jenó and the youngest Armin, who was single and lived with his parents, were religious. My father and his brothers became atheists.

Grandfather Adolf died of his heart failure at the age of 52. This happened in 1920. My father was 15. My grandfather was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Kosice in accordance with the Jewish rituals. When I visit Kosice, I always visit my grandfather's grave and drop a little stone there according to Jewish rules.

My grandmother's older son Jenó helped my grandmother with her store. My father also began to help his mother, when his father died. My grandmother bought green coffee beans, and my father was responsible for roasting it. There was a notable difference in price of green and roast coffee. My father started roasting after he came home from school and kept reading doing his work. Reading was his lifelong passion. He also had to watch the beans to not overdo them. After my grandfather died my father had to give up school and help the family. Still, my father studied by correspondence and obtained a certificate upon finishing the grammar school. My father was very handsome: tall and slender with big dark eyes and handsome features. He was also a decent, honest and noble man of principles. He hated lies. He felt very uncomfortable having to conceal from grandmother that he didn't always go to the synagogue or follow Jewish traditions. At the age of 18 my father went to work for a confectionery company owned by two Jews. The owners valued my father well and employed him back after his service in the army. He got promotions and was paid well.

My father's brothers got married and had children. Izidor, a sales agent, married Gizi Katz, a Jewish girl from Vinogradovo. His wife was a seamstress. They had three children. Their daughters Lilia and Judita were older than me and their son Adolf, named after the grandfather, born in 1930, was the same age with me. My father's brother Elemer married Terez, a Jewish girl from Kosice. I don't remember what Elemer was doing for a living. Elemer and Terez had two children: Tomas, an older son, and daughter Julia. After my grandfather died, my grandmother left the store to Jenó. His wife's name was Adel, but I don't remember her maiden name. They had three children: sons Ervin and Karl and daughters Lilia and Stella. My father and his brother Mor had much in common. They were both very handsome. Uncle Mor was very cheerful, smart and kind. He owned a small store in the center of the town selling imported fruit, sweets and delicacies. He always treated his nieces and nephews to all kinds of delicious things. Mor married aunt Gizi's sister Eva Kaz from

Vinogradovo. They had two daughters: Vera and Livia. My father's sister Etelka didn't get married for a long time. Finally Armin Rosner, a Jew from Uzhgorod, proposed to her. She married him and moved to Uzhgorod. After getting married she became a housewife, like her brother's wives. Etelka had two daughters: Livia and Edit. My father's younger brother Armin was single.

My father was recruited to the Czech army at 19. He served near Prague and had good memories about his service in the army. It was democratic and orderly. For example, officers and soldiers had same meals. Why I mention this, because I remember my father telling me how he was surprised, when he saw that in the Soviet army officers had different meals at a different place from soldiers.

My father met my mother before he went to the army. My father's cousin sister Ilona, Relly's daughter, was my mother's best friend. She introduced them to one another. . My mother was 15. She was a pretty blonde with wavy hair, gray-greenish eyes, snow-white teeth and was lovely built. Her name was Szerena Klein. Since her childhood everybody called her 'Szöszi' [blondy in Hungarian] My parents fell in love once and for all.

My mother's parents came from Kosice; they were born in the early 1870s. They were a very beautiful couple. My grandfather Herman Klein was a raven-head man with tick moustache and my grandmother was a slim blonde with green eyes. Her name was Berta Klein, nee Liebermann. They were very much in love. They had two daughters. My mother's older sister Izabella, born in 1907, was very much like her father, and my mother Szerena, born in 1909, took after my grandmother. She was quiet and reserved.

My mother's parents were neologs. They went to the synagogue on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. My mother's father Herman Klein worked in a state-owned printing house. He went to work on Saturday and had a day off on Sunday. My grandmother was a housewife. My grandfather and grandmother wore casual clothes in fashion at the time. They didn't follow kashrut or paid much attention to their daughters' religious education. They were a common family, living in a small apartment. There wasn't even a bathroom. Both daughters finished a Czech general school. Izabella graduated from the Department of Economics of the University and became an accountant. As for my mother, her parents sent her to study dressmaking. She learned to make garments, but she was too vivid to like this job.

My father began to write before he went to the army. At first he wrote poems inspired by his love of my mother. I read these poems, when I was a child, and admired their lyrical nature and beauty. The first letters in lines composed my mother's name or declaration of his love of her. My father wrote my mother poems of letters from the army. Regretfully, they got lost during the war. My father became chief editor of the communist weekly 'Mai Nap' ('Today') published in Hungarian where his writer's talent was fully realized. My father had to work a lot to support the family. Besides, the newspaper was also funded by its employees. My father continued writing after the war. My brother Adolf keeps his stories and memoirs written in Hungarian in his archives.

My mother received the first awards at beauty contests in her town several times. She had many admirers, but my father became number one. My parents got married on 14 July 1929. He was 24 and my mother was 20 years old. They had a real Jewish wedding with a rabbi and a chuppah. My father was working for the company. He rented a two-room apartment and furnished it. My mother told me that her grandmother Amalia came to their apartment on the first day after the wedding and fixed a mezuzah on the front door. Before the wedding her grandmother gave my mother a

lovely wig of fair wavy hair, but my mother never wore it. Her mother Berta didn't wear any, either. Grandmother Amalia never forgave my mother.

## Growing up

I was born on 3 June 1930. In my birth certificate my Hungarian name Judit was indicated, and my Jewish name is Sima. My parents called a 'love child'. In April 1933 my sister was born. Father wanted to name her Katalin but I insisted on Klara, even though I was only 3 years old. I liked the name and they agreed to a compromise. My sister was named Klara in the documents, but nobody called her thus. Everybody called her Katalin, Kati in short. My sister's Jewish name was Laya. Our apartment became too small for the four of us, and we moved into half a mansion. The tenants of another half were the Rothman family, nice and wealthy Jews. They had no children. We had a three-bedroom apartment, spacious and cozy, with all comforts. There was a small garden where my sister and I liked playing. We had a happy and cloudless childhood before 1940. Even with our father having to go on business frequently. He even bought a small sporty car. My father spent Saturday and Sunday with the family. My sister and I always looked forward to weekends. On Saturday morning we jumped into our parents' bed. My mother went to make breakfast and our father told us everything that had happened to him through the week. He often told us about beautiful life in the Soviet Union. He told us there was no exploitation of workers in the USSR, that the power belonged to people and the people ruled their own country. My father said there were no poor or suppressed people in the USSR, that all people were equal and free. Soviet newspapers and radio programs stated the same. My father and all communists believed that the USSR was a country of equal opportunities for all people, the country of equality and brotherhood for all. Now I understand that even when people in the USSR believed this, it is no surprise that those who only heard about it from the Soviet propaganda believed the USSR to be an ideal. My father was a convinced communist, and it had nothing to do with his material situation.

Every Saturday my father and his brothers living in Kosice and their families went to visit grandmother. They got together after the morning prayer at the synagogue. Each time my father reminded me and my sister of replying positively if our grandmother asked us if he had been at the synagogue. Our father taught us to tell the truth and my sister and I were surprised at this request of his, but my father said that this was a holy lie since grandmother would be very upset if told the truth. My grandmother's numerous children and grandchildren got together in her small apartment. There was a Saturday meal: challah, chicken liver paste and cholnt made from beans, pearl barley, meat, fat and spices. On Friday a pot with cholnt was left in the oven to keep it hot for a Saturday meal. Adults discussed their subjects and children played and had fun. Since the family was big, everybody got just little food, and then all went to their homes for dinner. On Sunday my father took us and his nephews and nieces for a nice drive out of town. The Edelman family was very close and we, children, always looked forward to these outing. We still keep in touch with those who survived in the war, though many of our kin are scattered across the world.

My mother's older sister Izabella was a very pretty girl. When she was in university, she fell in love with a senior student from the Radio Engineering Faculty. His name was Andras Tamm. He was tall and slender and very handsome. He returned my aunt's feelings. The only obstacle was that he was Hungarian. Even though Izabella's parents were not so religious this marriage still seemed a disgrace to them. They could only get married six years later in 1933. They could not live without one another and my grandparents gave up. They just registered their marriage in the town hall and

had a wedding dinner in a restaurant in the evening. Andras rented a small facility in the central street in Kosice and open a radio store with a radio shop in it. Andras worked in the shop, and my aunt ran his store. Izabella and Andras were well-to-do and rented a nice apartment. In 1936 their son Gabor, my favorite cousin brother, was born.

My father and his brother Mor joined the Czechoslovakian communist party. They were convinced communists. The Czechoslovakian communist party was legal, though police had lists of its members, but this was a mere formality. My father began to work for 'Mai Nap'. Besides, my father worked for 'Munkas Ujsag' [Workers Paper] too, both of them are published in Kosice. Before 1938 these newspapers were issued legally and regularly. In 1938 when [Southern] Slovakia became Hungarian, both 'Mai Nap' and 'Munkas Ujsag' became underground newspapers, because the communist party became illegal in Hungary. In 1940 the newspapers were closed and most of their employees were arrested. My father made monthly contribution to the newspaper 'Mai Nap' from his earnings and so did other employees. The newspaper was distributed among communists for free and its editing office had no profits.

1938 brought changes into our life. Hungary received a major part of Czechoslovakia, a part of Romania (Transylvania) and Subcarpathia. [Editor's note: According to the First Vienna Decision the southern part of Slovakia was attached to Hungary in 1938, including Kosice/Kassa. In 1939 Hungary annexed Subcarpathia and in 1940, according to the Second Vienna Decision, Northern Transylvania was attached to Hungary.] Hungary actually [partly] restored its borders that existed before 1918. [Trianon Peace Treaty] [6](#) From the middle 1930s there were visitors in our houses staying for few days. They were emigrants from Germany: communists and Jews escaping from Hitler. They stayed openly during the Czech regime, but had to be quiet during the Hungarian rule. The communist party had to take up the status of underground. Since the police had lists of its members, they knew that arrests were inevitable. It was just the matter of time. Hungarian authorities began to gradually introduce anti-Jewish laws [7](#) significantly suppressing their rights in all spheres of life.

### **During the war**

In September 1939 WW2 began. Hitler was taking efforts to involve Hungary in the war, but it had no intention to get involved. Then Hitler undertook provocation: in June 1940 bombers without any identification signs dropped few bombs onto the central part of Kosice. The central post office and few building across the street from it were destroyed. This bombing was so unexpected that an air-raid alarm only raised a howl after the bombers were gone. They announced that those were Russian bombers attacking Kosice. The Hungarian authorities had to join Hitler in the war against the USSR. Few weeks later my father and all other members of the communist party, who were on the lists, were arrested and take to prison in Kosice. The trial against them began. They were charged in actions against the state. They were tortured and interrogated. The Hungarians wanted to know the names of those who joined the communist party during the Hungarian rule and whose names were not on the list. My mother was one of them. She joined the party under my father's influence in late 1938. My father was brutally beaten and taken to Budapest for interrogation where one policeman injured my father's kidney. My father suffered from pyelonephritis for the rest of his life and finally died of kidney failure. Of course, my father didn't tell them any names. The investigation lasted five and a half months and then there was a trial where my father spoke. He acknowledged his membership in the party. The trial sentenced him to 7 months in jail, but since

by the time of trial he had already served the sentence, he only had to stay in jail 40 days. During this period my grandfather Herman Klein fell ill with cancer and died. My mother requested the police management to let my father go to the funeral, but they refused. My grandfather Herman was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Kosice. After his death my grandmother Berta began to attend the synagogue every Saturday with other Orthodox Jews and began to pray at home. She moved in with us. Her older daughter Izabella wanted her to live with them, but grandmother Berta refused point-blank to live in the house with Izabella's non-Jewish husband. My grandmother loved my father dearly.

Before my father's arrest many of his comrades moved to the USSR. The Soviet government gave them this opportunity. At first they could move with their families, but when it was my father's turn, this opportunity was closed. Communists and their families were leaving Hungary illegally, by forged documents. My father refused to go without us. Perhaps, it was for the better since many of those who went to the USSR were sent to the GULAG [8](#) where most of them perished.

I remember the day, when my father's sentence was over. There was a crowd of those who sympathized with him meeting him at the gate, though this was early morning. They carried him along the street. My mother and sister also came to meet him, but we could hardly fight through the crowd to come closer. Those people followed us as far as our house. We were infinitely happy to reunite. Papa told us a lot about his imprisonment, but avoided the subject of tortures to save us from pain for him. My mother told me about it, when I grew up. She said father was continuously beat during interrogations till he fainted. They beat him on his head and vitally important parts of body where it was the most painful. They threatened him of arresting and torturing his family, if he didn't answer their questions and this was the harder for him than not answering their questions.

I was always a quiet and obedient child while my sister was very lively and my parents used to say she was supposed to have been born a boy. Mama and grandma often slapped her, but my father after what he had to go through at interrogations gave a vow that he would never raise his hand to hit one person and he never did. When my sister did something wrong, he made her sit beside him and said: 'You deserve a good flogging, so imagine you've had one from me'. My sister used to sob a while after this. My father had to make his appearance in the police office three times a week for them to make sure that he had not escaped. In 1939 my father got a job in a company in Budapest. I don't know what kind of company this was or what he was doing at work. Before his arrest he worked in Budapest on weekdays and returned home on weekends, but afterward he was to come to the police office on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. My father kept his job in Budapest, but he could not stay there a whole week and returned home on Friday. Of course, my sister and I were very happy about it.

Since 1939 grandma Amalia began to spend less time in Kosice. My father insisted that grandma lived with us, but my grandmother had solid principles. When she visited us, she never had anything to eat or even a cup of tea or coffee. Grandma knew that my mother did not follow kashrut and for this reason she did not eat anything. She spent more and more time with her daughter Etelka in Uzhgorod. Etelka and her husband were very religious and followed kashrut and Jewish traditions. My grandmother prayed few times a day. Religion was the most important part of her life. I still remember something that struck me once. When my father was released from prison, my grandmother was in Uzhgorod. 2-3 days after he returned home my father said he hadn't seen his mother for a long time and would go to visit her. He rushed in his car to Uzhgorod. Then my

father told my mother that when he came there he rushed into the room where my grandmother was praying, but she put her finger to her lips showing him to stop distracting her. And she only came to hug her son whom she hadn't seen for over 7 months after she finished praying. My father was so hurt that he had tears in his eyes. In 1941 my grandmother went to live with her daughter in Uzhgorod. Her son Armin to avoid service in the army, or it would be more correct to say - work battalion since Jews were not taken to regular army troops, also lived with grandmother in Uzhgorod since 1943. Jews, gypsy and communists were recruited to work battalions. They did not have weapons or wear military uniforms. They wore their own clothes and had yellow armbands. Work battalions were digging trenches for the frontlines troops. They were actually easy targets at the front line. However, the Soviets somehow got to know who they were and did not fire at them. [Editor's note: Most of the time the Soviets did not distinguished between regular Hungarian soldiers and members of the work battalion. Oftentimes they were treated as Hungarian POWs when falling captive.]

When the war with the Soviet Union began [9](#), my father was arrested again in July 1941 and taken to the Hungarian prison in the mountains near Garany town, in the former mansion of an Austrian lord. This area belonged to Slovakia before 1938. When Hungarians came to power, the owner of this mansion moved to Austria and his castle was converted into a prison. All prisoners were kept for political charges. My father became the leader of all prisoners. He prisoners had to cook and do all maintenance duties in the jail. My father organized courses and hobby clubs for prisoners. My father generated lists of attendants and also, made cleaning and cooking plans. He learned to cook in this camp. There was also a good library in the mansion and prisoners could use it. Relatives were allowed to visit twice a month. Two relatives could visit 2-3 days. My mother went there to visit my father and took either my sister or me with her. We rented a room from local farmers. My father made arrangements with the management of the camp for prisoners to be allowed to take some time off the camp to meet with their relatives. There were strict rules about the exact time for all of them to return to the camp. My father asked my mother to bring grandmother Amalia to see him, but my grandmother never came to see him. For her it was out of the question to stay in a goy's house and eat non-kosher food. My father was kept in the Garany prison for a year. In late 1942 it was closed and Jews were taken to work battalions while Jewish communists were sent to penal battalions to go to the frontline. They were to wear yellow armbands with a 10 cm in diameter black circle on it. The work battalion where my father was taken was following the frontline with Hungarian and German troops in the eastern direction. After defeat of Germans near Stalingrad they turned to go in the opposite direction, from east to west. My father kept thinking about how to cross the frontline and surrender to the Red Army. He organized a group of 50 people and managed to accomplish their well-considered plan near Zhytomyr. It's scaring to think what might have happened to them since the USSR did not trust deserters believing they were spies, but my father and his comrades were lucky. There was a Jewish communist, who lived in Hungary and emigrated to the USSR in the end of 1930th in the Red Army troop where they happened to get. He knew about my father's underground work in the communist organization in Kosice. He guaranteed for my father's trustworthiness. This group formed a group of prisoners-of-war following the Red Army troops liberating Ukraine. My father proved to be good at having a brigade under his command. The brigade consisted of Hungarians and Hungarian Jews. One of the commanders of a military division where they happened to come knew my father, and also considering that my father was a communist, this man appointed my father to command over this unit of the newcomers. This man also helped my father to improve his

Russian, but at the very start this man translated my father's commanders' orders from Russian into Hungarian for my father to understand and follow them. My father was promoted to the rank of an officer and moved with the troops as far as the Carpathians. When they were near Uzhgorod, the military were inoculated and they must have injected some infection in my father. He fell gravely ill. He developed abscess. My father was taken to a hospital in Uzhgorod. My father's comrades were working in the communist department in Uzhgorod and my father began to assist them even when he was in hospital. At their request my father was demobilized to establish the soviet power in Subcarpathia. He became 2nd secretary of the town party committee in 1945. We reunited with my father after the war.

One of anti-Jewish laws did not allow Jews to own stores, factories or anything that generated profit. They were supposed to give away their property or the state confiscated it. Many Jews fictitiously sold their property to non-Jewish owners, but actually things did not change. Or they entered into agreement of common ownership and became 'partners'. By late 1944 many Hungarians took advantage of such agreements and took over the new property. There were also honest Hungarians, who returned Jews their property after the war. My father's brothers lost their property. My father's brother Jenő was working for the new owner of his former store. My father's brother Mor, when suppression of Jews began in Hungary, sold his store and moved to Presov in Slovakia where our relatives lived. One of my grandfather's sister Relka's sons Albert was a talented artist. In the late 1930s he moved to USA with his family. Relka's other son Alexander was a communist. In 1939 he was recruited to the Hungarian army, but escaped to the USSR. Unfortunately, he became victim like many other young people who believed the USSR to be their ideal. He was sent to the GULAG where he perished. After the war his fiancé Božena searched for him. She found our family and my father began to look for Alexander. Of course, it was dangerous to search for a turncoat that was surely believed to have been a spy, but these considerations did not stop my father. He kept writing letters and requests, but never got a clear answer from them. Official authorities notified my father that Alexander Bergman was not on the lists of prisoners in the camps. So, we never got any information about him.

In 1936 I went to the first form of a Czech primary school. During Hungarian rule this school became a Hungarian one and I studied 2 of 4 years in the Hungarian school. I had all excellent marks at school and was allowed to go to a grammar school after the 4th form. For the rest of pupils could go to grammar school after the 5th form. I finished primary school in 1940. My father was in prison at that time. My mother's sister's husband András took me for an interview to the Hungarian grammar school for girls. There were restrictions already: only 2 Jewish girls were allowed for a class. My interview was successful and I was admitted to the first form. Few teachers were members of the Hungarian fascist party. They got to know that my father was a communist and was in prison. They kept finding faults with me and it caused me much distress. However, I did well at school. We had exams in summer. I remember the one in geography in early June 1941. There was an examination panel and its chairman was a teacher of mathematics, the most ardent fascist at school. As soon as I started answering she interrupted me with the question: 'Tell me where do our and the heroic German troops fight at the front'. I knew how fast Germans were moving in the direction of Moscow and this was bitter for those who sympathized with the USSR. I pretended to be naïve and said that I didn't know and could not be interested. The teacher shamed me for not knowing about the glorious victories of our and the German troops. My class tutor, a German teacher, who liked me came to my rescue. She asked me to go on answering my

examination question. I sighed with relief, but I could never forget about this exam. I also remember how unfair this teacher of mathematic was to me. Though I knew mathematics the best she never gave me an 'excellent' mark. I had the only 'good' mark in her subject. I remember dreaming about how I would take my revenge when the war was over. We were all sure that the USSR would win. There was one more Jewish girl in my class. We faced no anti-Semitism. My life would have been cloudless in the grammar school if it hadn't been for me being the daughter of a communist.

After my father was arrested again, there were four of us living together: my mother, my sister, grandmother Berta and I. My mother never went to work. My father's earnings were sufficient, though he gave away a significant portion of it for the party needs: for the newspaper, assistance to unemployed members of the party, immigrants, etc. I don't know how we managed through four years that my father was away. I only remember that the owner of my father's company in Budapest paid my father's salary to uncle Izidor, who probably did my father's job. He brought my mother this money. We had everything we needed. My mother regularly sent food parcels to my father every week.

In February-March 1943 Slovakian fascists began to persecute Jews. My father's brother Mor decided to leave Presov for Kosice. Many Jewish families were leaving Slovakia for Hungary. Somebody reported to the police that Mor was coming back. They told Izidor, the oldest of the brothers, that if one member of the Edelman family crossed the border, they would arrest the whole family in Kosice. Mor only got to know this after he moved to Kosice with his wife and two daughters and they settled down at my grandmother's. Mor went to the police office the following day and told them he came on his own will and asked them to leave his family alone. They never let him go from there. On the same day they arrested his wife and children. They were taken out of town and killed.

The situation with Jews in Kosice grew worse in the middle of 1943, when Germans were losing their positions in Stalingrad. Hungarian introduced many restrictions for Jews. [Editor's note: Mass persecutions started as late as after March 19th 1944, when Germany invaded Hungary.] Since 1944 all Jews had to wear 10-cm hexagonal yellow star on their chests. I went to school with this star, though it didn't last long. The academic year was reduced due to the wartime. In the middle of April the school closed for vacations. Jews were not allowed to come to public places or leave their homes after dusk.

In April [19th] 1944 [10](#) German troops occupied Hungary, though Hungarian fascists started outraging even before. I shall never forget the first evening on Pesach 1944. There was a synagogue across the street from our house where Jews got together for a prayer. All of a sudden we heard screams from the synagogue, curses and anti-Semitic shouts. This was a pogrom in the synagogue made by Hungarian fascists. During the war there were back-outs on the windows in all houses. My mother lost her temper, turned off the lights, open the window and began to shame the young people telling them to stop this disgrace. She didn't look like a Jewish woman and they were just laughing in her face, but did her no harm. My sister, grandmother and I sat in the corner of our children's room trembling of fear. The rascals pulled some older Jews by their payes and went away. In the morning we saw that all windows in the synagogue were broken and heard the rabbi's wife and children crying. Then German officers and soldiers came to Kosice. They ordered wealthy Jews to come to the central square and told them to give their money and valuables to the German

army voluntarily, and if they did not obey they would force them to do so and arrest them. Later Germans gathered Jews in the ghetto at the brick factory in Kosice. So the old couples, the owners of our house were arrested. There were air raids. Our house was near the railway station that was bombed most frequently. Germans also began to arrest communists and their families. We were scared. My mother was told that we had to stay elsewhere, but not at home. We separated: grandmother Berta and I stayed with my grandfather's sister Relka, and as for my mother and sister, only Liza, my father's cousin brother Nandor's wife, knew. Nandor died after an unsuccessful surgery in 1942. Liza and her two sons lived on the 3rd floor in the house in the end of our street. Liza was watching our house, when we were not at home and in case of danger was to notify us to stay away from coming home.

On 16 April 1944, on Friday, my grandmother decided to go home to clean the apartment before my mother and sister came home. We always cleaned the house on Friday. I stayed with aunt Relka. At that moment aunt Liza saw a car stop by our house. Few German officers went into the house. Liza went to tell my mother about what was going on. My grandmother came into the house. The Germans were searching the house. They showed grandma my parents' photograph called them 'Kommunisten', and asked where my mother was. My grandmother got very scared. Since she didn't know where my mother was they let her go and she returned to aunt Relka's home. A photographer, my father's acquaintance, gave us shelter in his laboratory. We didn't have any clothes. Liza found out that Germans left the house before night. My mother's sister Izabella was in her 7th month of pregnancy. She took two big bags and went to our house. She grabbed few photographs, some clothes and left the house.

At that time my father's cousin Ondrej Edelman, whom everybody called Erno [Ondrej is the Czech name, this is how he was registered in his documents, Erno is the Hungarian name, the language they used in the family.], grandpa's brother Sandor's brother, came from Czechoslovakia. He was a last-year student of the Medical College in Prague. He had secretly crossed the border. Erno lived through a tragedy. He had a fiancé, a daughter of poor Jews, who already worked as a teacher at the age of 19. They were going to get married after Erno finished his college, but this was not to be. In 1941 Hitler ordered to take all Jewish girls to work in Germany. Young girls were getting married in emergency to avoid this disaster. Erno and Anna also got married, but the order for Anna to go to Germany was signed before they registered their marriage. Anna was sent to Germany. Poor Erno almost lost his mind, when this happened. He wrote Hitler asking to send back his young wife, but surely he got no reply. Later he got to know that Anna was pregnant. She died at birth and so did the baby. When Erno got to know that all Jews were to be taken to concentration camps from Hungary, he decided to spend his money to save his relatives taking them to Czechoslovakia. [Czechoslovakia was dismembered in 1938. The interviewee is here refereeing to Slovakia.] It was decided that Erno and I would be the first to go to Slovakia. We had to decide about grandmother Berta. We had to cover 20 km in the mountains to get to Slovakia and my grandma could not do this with her unhealthy legs. My grandmother firmly said she was not going to hideaway and would be with other Jews. Very soon all Jews, and my grandmother too, were taken to the ghetto at the brick factory on the outskirts of Kosice. In late April they began to be taken to concentration camps where they were sorted out. The younger and stronger ones were taken to work. They lived in barracks with inhuman conditions. Old people and children were burnt in crematoria. My grandmothers and many relatives perished there. My mother, my sister and Erno on the evening of 22 April 1944 removed yellow stars from our clothing and went to a village near

Kosice where a guide was waiting for us to take us across the border. This was the night of 22 April, full of danger. The first risk was when we went across the town. At first everything was all right, but then we saw my sister's former teacher and his wife. He was wearing the uniform of a lieutenant of the Hungarian army. Of course, he recognized us. My mother was sure he would call the police, but there are decent people in this world. He greeted my mother politely, gave my sister and me a wink and moved on. When we came to the guide, Erno gave us some Slovakian money and went back to Kosice to take another group next night.

We stayed till dark in the guide's house without turning on the lights. The guide, his two brothers and sister, who spoke fluent Slovakian, came at midnight. We went a long way across the woods in the mountains. 3 hours later we stopped in a nice valley. The guide told us to stay there till morning, when we had to get to the railway station nearby. It was cold and the men made a fire. We had sandwiches. We tried to get a nap, but it was cold and we were worried, so we stayed wide awake. At dawn we saw a nice river in the valley, and got to the station along the rail tracks. My mother gave our companions money to buy tickets. When we were alone, a tall man in the hunter's outfit, with a rifle over his shoulder approached us. He said he knew my mother from Kosice and advised us to get in another carriage than our companions. He said they had typical Jewish appearance and this might attract the gendarmes' attention, but speaking good Slovakian, they would manage while for us it might be worse since Slovakian gendarmes were capturing those who crossed the border illegally. We did as he told us. It happened to be true. Gendarmes approached our companions demanding their documents and left them alone afterward. We were close to Presov, when the tall hunter told us to get off the train and walk to the town since there were many gendarmes at the station. We agreed with our companions to meet near the railway station square. They were to take us to the house where my father's cousin Terez, daughter of Anna Hertz, and her husband lived. They were aware that we were coming and were to give us forged documents. Everything went all right. Our relatives welcomed us and we could take a rest. On the following day our documents were ready. According to the legend, my mother was a widow of landlord Vitalishov from near Presov, and we were going to the Tatra Mountains since I had tuberculosis and had to breathe fresh air in the mountains. My sister and I had chains with crosses on our necks to prove our Christian origin. A week later, on 1 May 1944, Erno joined us. We didn't recognize him. He colored his hair to become fair and grew a beard and moustache. Erno told us he only managed to take one more group relatives across the border before Hungarian gendarmes started looking for him. Probably someone reported on him and why he was in the town. We took a train to a resort on a mountain in the Tatras. There were posh hotels for wealthiest people on the bank of a lake. At the bottom of the hill there was a small village where railroad people lived. There were also few inexpensive and cozy recreation centers. There was a cable way from the station to the lake. It didn't function since there were no tourists. We chose this place to be our escape. Erno rented a room on the 2nd floor in one recreation center. Downstairs the manager, his wife and their four children lived. In the morning and evening my mother boiled some milk in their kitchen and in the afternoon we had lunch at the restaurant on the station. They served good meals. My mother and I spoke German to the owner, and my sister, who didn't know a word in German or Slovakian, was ordered to keep silent pretending she was mute and deaf. Before 1938, when Hungarians came to power in the country, my sister didn't go to school, stayed at home and spent time with us and our parents friends' children. We spoke Hungarian at home and so did our friends, and my sister could only speak even a few words in Slovakian. Once a gendarme from a nearby village visited the area. He came to see us. My mother explained to him in poor Slovakian that she was German, but her

husband was Slovakian, that I was ill and she took my sister and me there to improve our health. The gendarme was satisfied with this story. There were few other Jewish families staying in the village and we met them. They were from Slovakia and this was good. In case we had to escape they knew where we might go. Erno visited us twice bringing us some money. We played with the children of the manager and picked Slovakian rather fast. Every other day we went to take milk at a farm in 2 km from the recreation center. These were lovely strolls. Days, weeks and months went by... In July a group of Hitler jugend boys, [10](#) Germans, came to stay in the neighboring recreation center for recreation and military training. Hitlerjugend boys were sent to Slovakia where they could have military training and rest. They marched in the morning and in the evening singing fascists songs. They also shouted patriotic slogans and trained shooting on the training ground. They were not allowed to have any contacts with the locals, but we were still of them anyway.

In early September we got to know that Germans started occupation of Slovakia. Our acquaintances decided to leave the place. We decided to join them. There were 3 other families, but only two men, with us. They found a place in the mountains and took a train carriage there. It arrived at the dead end where there was a small village. There was a windmill right by the station. We were starved and my mother went to the mill to buy a little flour. Our chains with crosses helped us there. The miller's wife felt sorry for us. She gave us food and sold some flour and bread. She thought we were Catholics and said she hated Jews and would never help one.

We stayed in a poor house whose owner was at the front. His wife had few children and was pregnant. They had a cow and the landlady gave us some milk every day. A short time later she started labor and my mother acted as a midwife. I remember how stunned my mother was that the woman got up on the same day to milk the cow and work in the garden. It was getting colder and we didn't have warm clothes. My mother went to the village store to buy some clothes. She bought us nice gray and black boots and some clothes. The men from other Jewish families were thinking where we could escape, if Germans came to this distant village. They discovered a path that led them to two houses where foresters with their families lived. They told the men that there was a partisan unit nearby and that partisans would mobilize men to their unit. There was one Jewish families staying in one of these houses: a husband, a wife and two adult sons. The foresters promised to give us shelter for a certain fee. They mentioned that the men would still have to hide from partisans unless they wanted to join them. The men didn't want this to happen. Nobody knew, which was worse: to be captured by Germans or partisans.

In early October we heard that Germans were coming to the village. We went to the foresters' houses. My sister and I liked staying there. It was still warm and there were many berries and mushrooms, particularly blackberries. We picked them and ate as much as we could. Our mother cooked mushrooms. The men were hiding in a shed in the daytime. Our mother and we had nobody to fear. One forester had a radio and we listened to news. When we heard that a part of Slovakia was liberated, we rushed to Brezno by train. From there we went to Banska Bystrica. The town celebrated liberation and there were crowds of people in the streets. We went to our relatives. Erno, his sister Magda and many relatives, whom Erno rescued, got together in his house. We met with Adolf, uncle Izodor's son, my cousin. We, children went to see the Soviet movie '6 am after the war'. It was in Russian and there was no translation, but we understood what it was about. It was a very touching movie. Next day we heard that one of the communist leaders of liberation of Czechoslovakia came to Banska Bystrica. I don't remember his name, but my mother knew him

well. He used to work with my father and often visited us at home in Kosice. He told my mother that Germans were bellicose about coming back to Slovakia and that my mother had to take a train to the town where this officer's unit was deployed. He wrote a letter for him to give us shelter in case Germans came back. He also comforted my mother by saying that the war was to be over soon and we would survive. I remember that we waited for my mother standing in an entrance of a building while she had this meeting. My mother came back in tears: we had to get wandering again. Erno was thinking how to help the family. He divided all relatives in groups. All of us had to go to the mountains and stay in earth huts or with partisans till the end of the war. Erno read the letter my mother had and approved it. He also gave us the address of one of former customers of his father. He lived in a village half way from the place we were heading to. We took a train and moved on. When we were in about 5 km from the place of departure we heard that there were Germans in the place we were heading to. We went to the man Erno told us to go to. When he heard who we were he offered his help. His son had contacts with partisans. He had just got married and was hiding with his wife in the woods. My mother and other women of this family were baking bread for the road all night through. Early in the morning our group - there were about 10 people - started on our way. My mother was carrying a heavy bag with our food stocks and clothes. She had tears of exhaustion and despair in her eyes, but to comfort us she tried to smile to us. We made short stops to rest before we continued climbing higher in the mountains. In the evening we reached two earth huts that were carefully camouflaged for outsiders not to discover them. There were 10-12 tenants in each hut located at 100 m from one another. There was a plank bed about 1 m above the floor with straw on it that made our 'bedroom'. There was a small stove with a smoke stack with its exhaust end outside. There was a toilet - a plank over a pit in the snow - between two pine trees near the hut. We also melted snow for water. We used a helmet as a wash basin. It was late October 1944, and we could never believe that we would have to stay there as long as March 1945, i.e., five months.

There was Mark, a Czech man, his young Jewish wife Sonia, their 6-month old son and Sonia's mother living with us in the hut. My mother happened to know Sonia's mother. Her husband Grunwald, a communist often visited Kosice on party business during the rule of Czechoslovakia before 1938, and knew my mother and father. Before 1939 Grunwald left his wife and daughter, crossed the border to the USSR, was kept in a camp two years, and then was sent to Moscow to take the responsibility for a radio program in Slovakian. Then he was mobilized to the Red Army, became an officer and married a Russian doctor. After the war Grunwald and his wife came to his homeland looking for his first family. My mother felt sorry for Sonia's mother. In 1941, when Jewish girls were forced to go to Germany, she arranged for her 15-year old daughter Sonia to marry a Czech engineer, who worked in a mine. He was about 15 years older than Sonia. At first there was no love between them, but when they got to know each other better living in one apartment, they consummated their marriage. They had a lovely boy, whom we all loved. Sonia didn't have breast milk, and Mark and other men went to buy milk and other food products in the village twice a week. They froze milk for the baby in the snow. We cooked peas, beans and sometimes baked potatoes, if we managed to get some from farmers. There was Kellerman, a 19-year old guy with us in the hut. He had a long nose and black bulging eyes. He was always hungry like my sister, and mad at the rest of the world. I remember the day, when my mother had to cut my wonderful long hair since we could not keep them clean considering our living conditions. In another hut there were Jews and the newly married couple of farmers, who had brought us there. There was a house nearby. It was probably a former forester's house, but now there were partisans accommodating in

it. They never left it to fight against Germans. They enjoyed themselves eating and drinking, listening to the radio and waiting for the war to come to an end. They didn't take one effort to expedite this end. Our men found a shelter in a rock nearby in case Germans discovered us. We used it several times, when Hungarian soldiers came close to our huts. They spoke Hungarian and we understood them and could talk to them. By the end of 1944 mainly Hungarian troops, faithful allies of Hitler, fought in Slovakia. They were even more formidable than German fascists. [editor's note: The Hungarian army did not enter the Slovak state in World War II. The soldiers were either not Hungarian or it took place in Hungarian territory, possibly in Southern Slovakia attached to Hungary as early as 1938.] We established security guards to watch the locality and inform us of danger, if there was any, but Hungarians never came up to the mountains this far.

One day in January we got terribly scared. When we went to bed, we heard shooting above us. We froze of fear, but then it turned out those were our neighbors shooting to salute the liberation of Kosice. They knew we came from Kosice and wanted to greet us. We invited them to the hut, they brought some wine with them, and we celebrated this wonderful event with tears in our eyes. It was more and more difficult for our men to descend from the mountains looking for food. The Hungarian troops were in rage executing partisans and the locals, who, they suspected, had contacts thereof. By end of February we ran out of food stocks and had no food whatsoever for our baby boy, who was 10 months old. His father and grandmother had to take a desperate step. Madam Grunwald spoke fluent Hungarian. She wanted to ask Hungarian troopers to give some food for her grandson or allow her to take him down to the village. Her son-in-law accompanied her. Since he didn't speak one word in Hungarian, he hid away to watch her. He saw her talking to a Hungarian officer, saw how soldiers tied her and took her to a house. He kept watching the house at night. In the morning the unfortunate woman was taken to the center of the village, she had a plank with "This is what will happen to all those who help partisans!" in Slovakian and Hungarian. There were signs of beating on her skin. The Hungarians made all residents of the village watch her execution. Her son-in-law watch it. She was on the gibbet for a whole week and nobody was allowed to take her down. Poor Mark returned to our hut half-dead. He had to tell Sonia everything. We bitterly mourned the poor grandma, who sacrificed her life to rescue her grandson.

In early March we saw that the house where the partisans used to be was deserted. They left without warning us or leaving any food or the radio. By that time there were three Polish Jewish refugees with us. They said that this part of Slovakia was liberated by the Romanian troops that were on the side of the USSR. These Polish Jews decided to move towards their liberators and save their lives by crossing the front line. They were sorry for Mark's family and agreed to take Mark and Sonia with them. Many years later we got to know that they had survived. Sonia met with her father, divorced Mark and left with her father and son.

We had to make a decision as well. We didn't have any food and didn't want to starve to death at the very end of the war. There was a group of 13 of us led by the young newly wed farmer, who had a compass and some food left. In early March 1945 we moved in the eastern direction across the mountains. We were hoping to cross the front line. We walked 6 days. There were two women with us: our 'commander's' mother and his young wife, the rest were men in our group. It was still cold in the mountains. There was waist-deep snow. We walked at night since we were afraid of being noticed in the daytime. We could see the road with German and Hungarian armies retreating. We managed to cross it on the third night. During the day we tried to rest a little digging pits in the

snow to sleep in them. Once we bumped into a tent on four posts. There was a little straw inside. We even dared to make a small fire and boil some water. On the first night my mother, sister and I lost the group. My sister got tired and we stopped. E were scared to be on our own, but the men noticed that we got lost and came back looking for us. The fourth day was the most difficult and scary. We crossed the road and started climbing the mountains on the opposite side of the road. We had to cross a mountainous river, wide and quick, but shallow. We had to cross it before the dawn. The men decided to carry the women and children across the river. My sister was the youngest in the group. She was 10 years old. The oldest man had to carry her across the river. I think he must have been about 45, but then he seemed an old man to me. I was the first one to be taken across the river. Then came a man with my mother on his back and beside him was this old man with my sister on his back. In the middle of the river he stumbled and my sister fell into the ice-cold water. When my mother saw it, she dropped her bag with our documents and money into the water. The bag was gone. My sister crawled out of the water onto the opposite bank. Her hands covered with ice crust instantly. Her feet in the boots were wet knee-high. She sat by a tree and said she had to sleep a while before she could move on. The rest of the group was climbing the mountain. They had to come onto another side of it before full dawn. My sister began to freeze. She closed her eyes and was falling asleep. My mother and I were shaking her by her shoulders begging her to hold on. At this time we saw two figures dressed in white climbing down the hill. My mother said this was the end, they were Germans and since we had lost our documents we would not be able to prove that we were not Jews or partisans. However, they were two men from our group. One of them poured a little alcohol and put a slice of pork fat into Kati's mouth, and another man began to hit Kati with a stick making her walk. My sister obeyed and went on. When we climbed the top of this hill, we saw that the others from our group made a fire. They took my sister closer to the fire, pulled off her boots and stockings and began to rub her hands and feet with snow. When they got warmer, they wrapped my sister in some cloth. A woman gave my sister her valenki boots [winter boots made from sheep felt wool] and borrowed somebody else's extra boots for herself. These valenki boots saved my sister's life, and we shall never forget this young woman's kindness. We fell asleep. I can hardly remember the next day. My sister's legs were aching, and my mother or one of the men had to carry her. She also had to walk at times. The men gave her a stick to walk with us. By the evening of the sixth day we saw a wonderful house in the forest. It was empty. There was wood in the yard. We got into the house, cooked whatever beans we had and were happy to have a roof over our heads. We went to sleep. Our leader ordered few men to investigate the situation in nearby settlements. The rest of the men took turns to guard our sleep. Early in the morning our guard saw a man and a woman nearby. They said that there was a village in about 4 km from our place. Romanian and German troops were fighting for it. There was a village in 8 km from there that was already liberated. We decided to go to this village. There was a road nearby and we saw German and Romanian troops moving along it. My mother saw an older Russian soldier following his wagon and smoking. She suffered from lack of cigarettes and approached him. By her greedy look he knew what she wanted and offered her a self-made cigarette. My mother almost got suffocated from strong tobacco particularly that she hadn't smoked for so long. The old soldier saw my sister limping and put her on his wagon and we took to our journey. We arrived at a village. There were mainly Romanian soldiers and officers in it. The Russian soldier took us to the military commandant, who accommodated us in a house. The owners of the house gave us some food, then we washed ourselves and went to sleep on the floor. In the morning my mother went to see the commandant again. She told him about us and he

arranged for us to go to the Soviet military hospital in Miskolc on one of his trucks. The driver dropped us in the town. We felt more at ease there. It was a Hungarian town where we could understand the language and explain what we needed. We went to the nearest snack bar. My mother said we had no money, but we were starved and needed a place to stay. The owner said there was a Jewish community functioning in the town. We went to its office. It was overcrowded, but one man offered us a place to stay and promised to help us. His family perished in a concentration camp. His housemaid stayed in his apartment during the war. There was a Soviet captain, a Jew, in this office. He was director of the macaroni factory. He told my mother to wait for him and brought us a big bag of macaroni. Our new landlord took us to his apartment. There were few girls, who had returned from a concentration camp, staying in his apartment. He let us his bedroom with two nice beds. We heated a big barrel of water to wash ourselves. We had veal stew with macaroni for dinner, but we were told to eat slowly and just a little. For the first time in a long time we fell asleep in a real bed. In the morning my mother carried my sister to the hospital where they amputated my sister's toe. The doctors told my mother to bring her to the hospital to change a bandage every day. One day my mother met our family dentist and his daughter. He told us that they survived in the basement of a house, whose owner supported them. He was eager to go to Kosice to find out about the rest of the family. He offered my mother to come with him and my mother was infinitely happy with his company. We finally got to our house. The windows were broken and it was empty inside. There was light in the neighboring apartment coming from behind the blackouts. My mother rang the bell to this apartment. We recognized the janitor from a neighboring house in the woman who opened the door. Her family lived in the basement of the house. She recognized my mother and let her in. Through the open door my mother saw few pieces of our furniture, our blankets and pillows, bed sheets with my mother's monograms on them embroidered by a craftswoman for my mother's wedding. The janitor was rather confused. She said she saved some of our belongings from Germans and would return them. However, this did not make us happy. The janitor said that our father had come by the night before. She told him she hadn't seen us and he went to Izabella without even coming into the house. We went to Izabella's house, when it got dark. My mother knocked on a window. A minute later we were hugging our dearest Izabella. Izabella was struck with how we looked. We had all possible clothes on since it was cold. My mother was wrapped in some blanket shreds. Our clothes were dirty, torn and smelly. Izabella heated some water and put my sister and me in the bathtub with hot water. Izabella burnt everything we had on in the oven. After we got washed we put on our aunts' pajamas, big, but homey and clean. When the bathtub was being filled for mama, the doorbell rang. What happened was that my father had really returned to Kosice the night before. The town party committee organized a banquet in his honor and now he returned from it. Izabella went to open the door to prepare my father to the surprise waiting for him, but my sister and I couldn't wait and threw ourselves on this tall lean man in a military uniform. While kissing us his eyes were searching for his beloved wife whom he hadn't seen in three years. When this strong and brave man, who had come through so many ordeals in recent years saw our mother, he couldn't stand the test of joy and fainted. My sister looked at him with horror and screamed: "Papa died!" He recovered his senses from her screaming. Izabella took us to the bedroom where her children were sleeping: my 8-year old cousin Gabor and his 8-months old sister Marina. My aunt put us to sleep in one bed and went to sleep on another and we fell asleep. One hour later I got high fever and began to talk deliriously. My screams woke Izabella and she gave me pills and applied compresses all night through. In the morning a doctor came and said this was a nervous breakdown. He prescribed me a

sedative. Our father told us how he came to Kosice from Uzhgorod. He was secretary of the regional party committee in Uzhgorod. He got a letter from his niece Judit, Izodor's daughter, who returned to Kosice from a concentration camp and met with her fiancé. Her parents perished in the concentration camp and since she hadn't reached the age of 18, her marriage could only be registered at her parents' consent. Judit asked my father to give his consent to her marriage and this was how my father came to Kosice. He got a 3-week leave and had a car to take him to Kosice. My father adopted Judit, and young people got married soon. We moved to Uzhgorod.

There was a surprise waiting for us there. My father's cousin Terez, grandfather brother Pal Edelmann's daughter and her two friends, our distant relatives. They had all returned from a concentration camp. Some time later my father's nephew Adolf joined us. His sisters Livia and Judit lived in Prague. It was hard for them to raise their younger brother and they sent him to us. Adolf was like one of us in the family.

We also got information about other members of the family. Grandfather Pal's widow Betti, her daughter Terez, and sons Emil and Jozsef were taken to Auschwitz in April 1944. Betti perished in a gas chamber, and the children were sent to a work camp. After liberation Terez returned to Kosice, got married and was manager of a canteen at school. She is 86 now. Emil also worked in a camp. After returning home he moved to Israel. He lived his life and died there. . His family lives in Israel. Jozsef returned to Kosice after the war. He died in the 1980s. Jozsef's family was also taken to a concentration camp. Jozsef and his wife perished in the crematorium. Their children survived. Laszlo moved to Australia in 1946, got married and owned a men's garments' factory. In late 1940s he helped his sisters Kato, Magda, Judit and Eva and their families to move to Australia. Laszlo has died, but his family and his sisters' families live in Sydney. My grandfather's sister Regina Berger, her husband and their son Simon also moved to Australia after returning from a concentration camp. Regina and her husband lived their life in Australia, died and were buried there. Their son Simon moved to Canada where he lives with his family. My father's cousin brothers, my grandfather sister Pepka's children, who were raised in my grandfather's family, were in a concentration camp. Only the middle daughter Regina (her family name was Muller) returned to Kosice. Aranka and Jenő perished in the camp. Vilmos, the son of Nandor, who died in 1942, survived. He told me that when his mother Liza, Vilmos and 7-year old Tamas arrived at Auschwitz, the sorting began. The younger son was taken to the group of inmates that were sent to a gas chamber. A German officer approached Liza and whispered into her ear, - Vilmos heard this discussion, - 'Gnädige Frau! - that was how he addressed Liza, - I advise you to follow your older son. Liza replied that her son could take care of himself while her younger son couldn't. The officer was convincing her telling her that the younger son would be taken care of and she would be able to see him, but Liza was inexorable. She took her younger son by his hand and went into the gas chamber with him. 14-year old Vilmos worked at a German plant. After the war he left for Israel, studied and became a lawyer. He changed his name to Zeev Singer. Since Israel was at war, Vilmos decided his place was in the army. He was promoted to the rank of colonel of the Israel army. He served in landing units and participated in all wars with Arabs. Vilmos was severely wounded, demobilized and worked as a lawyer in Tel Aviv. Zeev Singer is a national hero of Israel. He is a pensioner. He has two children and six grandchildren in Israel. My grandfather's sister Betka Gerstl and her husband and children were also taken to a concentration camp. Betka and her husband Moric Gerstl were exterminated immediately. Betka's daughter Ilona Zimmermann with her children and Betka's sons Jenő and David perished in the concentration camp. Only her son Armin

Gerstl survived and moved to Israel shortly after he returned. He has passed away. Mor Bergman, son of my father's favorite aunt Relka, married a girl from Zvolen before Hungarians came to power and moved to his wife's town. After 1938 Zvolen belonged to Slovakia and Kosice was Hungarian. When Jews began to be sent to Germany, Mor and his wife tried to cross the border and return to Kosice, but were captured and killed right there. Relka's daughter Ilona stayed with her mother. They both perished in a concentration camp. My father's sister Anna's family, the Hertz family, was also taken to Auschwitz. Anna and her husband Moric were exterminated immediately. Of their 10 children only two survived: son Aladar; he lives in Frankfurt in Germany, and daughter Terez - she emigrated to Israel after the war. Terez has passed away. Her children live in Israel. Anna's younger daughter Eszter also moved to Israel. She lives and works in a kibbutz. Sons Tibor, Marcel, Erno, Pal and Sandor and daughters Sarolta, Ilona and Edit and their families perished in the concentration camp. Grandfather's youngest sister Etelka and her husband Jakab Blumenfeld and their younger children - son Erno and daughter Marta also perished in the concentration camp. Older daughters Edit (Gerstl in marriage) and Izabella (Kovartovski in marriage) were in a work camp and survived. After the war they moved to Israel. They've both passed away.

My father's brothers and sisters also suffered. The Hungarian police arrested Izodor and his wife Gizi in 1944 and charged them with concealment of Mor and his wife who had illegally crossed the border from Slovakia to Hungary escaping from the deportation. Izodor and his wife were put to prison. In April 1944 Izodor and his wife Gizi were taken to Buchenwald. According to eye witnesses Izodor behaved heroically in the camp. He went on hunger strikes and called other prisoners to disobey the oppressors. Izodor was executed with an electric wire and his wife was exterminated in a gas chamber. Their three children survived. Their older daughter Livia was a serious and smart girl. She wanted to become a doctor. She finished a grammar school in 1943. This was at the time of fascist Hungary and Livia could not get a higher education. She finished a course of medical nurses in Budapest and went to work. She managed to avoid deportation to a concentration camp. Under a different name she went to work as a housemaid in a Czech village. After the war Livia moved to Prague where her dream came true. She finished a Medical College and became a children's doctor. She married a Czech man and had two daughters. Livia's husband has passed away. She is a pensioner. Her daughters are married. Izodor's second daughter Judit and her brother Adolf lived in the Tatras during German occupation where they stayed with other members of the Edelmann's family. They were in the 2nd group that Erno managed to take out of Kosice after us. After the war Judit returned to Kosice. After my father adopted her and gave his consent to her marriage she got married at the age of 17 and had a daughter. Shortly afterward Judit divorced her husband, left for Prague with her daughter and remarried. She became a widow recently. Her daughter Julia moved to Australia in 1968 where she lives with her family. Adolf finished a secondary school and we both went to Leningrad where he graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy of Leningrad University. He returned to Uzhgorod, finished a post-graduate institute. He was senior lecturer of the Faculty of Philosophy of Uzhgorod University. He got married and had two sons, Ilia and Andrey. When they grew up, they decided to move to Hungary. Adolf and his wife followed them there. They live in Szolnok. Adolf and his wife are pensioners. I believe Adolf to be my brother. We keep in touch writing letters, calling each other and visiting each other every now and then.

Jeno and his family was taken to Buchenwald. German executioners killed Jeno, and his wife Adel, sons Erno and Karoly and twin daughters Livia and Stella were burnt in the crematorium.

My father sister Etelka's family, grandmother Amalia and the youngest brother Armin were taken to Mauthausen. Only aunt Etelka survived. Grandmother and her two granddaughters Livia and Edit were burnt in the crematorium. Etelka's husband and brother perished in the camp. According to eye-witnesses they died of typhoid. Etelka worked at a factory. In May 1945 Americans liberated her and she returned to Uzhgorod. It was hard to look at her: a young woman turned into an old one. She weighed 37 kg. She lived with us in Uzhgood. My parents took every effort to bring her to recovery.

### After the war

Only two of 7 families survived in the war: our family and my father brother Elemer's family. Erno managed to take him, his wife, son Tamas and daughter Julia out of Kosice. They also took hiding in the woods living in an earth hut. After the war Terez divorced him and moved with their children to USA where her brother lived. Terez has passed away and Tamas and Julia and their families live in the States. Elemer moved to Israel where he died at the age of 70.

My mother's sister Izabella and her family stayed in Kosice. Her children and their families still live there. My cousin Gabor Tamm became a metallurgical engineer there. His younger sister Marina was an economist. They are pensioners. We visit each other and talk on the phone. When I went to Israel in 1989, I filled the forms and submitted the lists of the members of our family who perished during the war to the Yad Vashem [11](#) in Jerusalem.

My father received a wonderful 3-bedroom apartment. There were 6 of us living in it: our family, my cousin Adolf and aunt Etelka. My father became a secretary of the regional party committee. In 1945 my father's comrade Vinkler visited us. He was a member of the party like my father and was put in prison in 1940. When communists began to cross the border to the USSR, Vinkler went with them. He was arrested at the border and sent to thee GULAG where he spent two years. Then he was taken to Moscow where he was made responsible for a radio program in Hungarian. He worked there during the war, and in 1945 he decided to return to Kosice. On his way home he visited Uzhgorod to see my father. My father and mother were on vacation in a recreation center. Vinkler asked me to send them a message to come back home. Vinkler understood that life in the USSR was hard and it wasn't worth staying here, but he couldn't talk about it with me. When I told my father, he said: 'I've fought for the Soviet power and want to live where the Soviet power is. I've had enough of fighting'. My mother, though she was a communist, understood very soon what was going on and often spoke very emotionally about it. I think, in his heart, my father agreed with her, but he always told mother that this was the fault of some people, but not the regime. My father rarely criticized some officials, but if somebody in his presence expressed his concerns about the Soviet power, my father always spoke in its favor. Some people did it from fear: many people were afraid of speaking their mind in fear of arrests [12](#) that went on in the USSR. However, my father was a very brave man. When the Soviet power was established in Subcarpathia, they began to arrest the Hungarian officials for the charges of their service for fascists. They were innocent, but they were to go to prison anyway. In 1945 my father saved many of these people. He saved Laszlo Sandor, a free lance employee of the 'Mai Nap' newspaper, from the camp where he was taken just for being a Hungarian, which meant fascist for them. My father witnessed that Sandor had always sympathized with communists. There were other similar cases. Of course, later I realized that my father could not have kept his belief in communist ideas living in the USSR. He got disappointed and acknowledged it and suffered from it very much.

My father didn't work as secretary of the regional party committee for long. I understood later that they could not allow a Jew to hold this kind of position. My father was appointed logistics manager of the regional executive committee [Ispolkom] [13](#). He supported construction of two bridges in Uzhgorod: pedestrian and automobile. He was a born administrator and manager. However, in the opinion of authorities, a Jew was no good even for this position. There were two big plants in Uzhgorod: woodworking plant and plywood and furniture plant. Their directors were not very competent and the plants were in decay. Town authorities united these plants and appointed my father director. He was dedicated to his job, and soon the enterprise began to prosper. After the campaign against cosmopolites [14](#) during the postwar years, anti-Semitism in the USSR was growing stronger, and again danger hanged over my father.

In 1946 my aunt Etelka living with us after she returned from the concentration camp, married Ignac Bergida, who had also lost his family to the war. He lived in Uzhgorod before the war. He liked Etelka even then. His first marriage was prearranged. He was a decent, kind and honest man. He was an accountant. When my father became director of the plant, he employed Bergida. In 1947 Bergida and Etelka's daughter Vera was born. In 1945 the soviet regime began to struggle against religion [15](#). Most Jews in Subcarpathia were religious. All synagogues were closed in Uzhgorod. The biggest - the Hasidic - synagogue was given to the town Philharmonic. The Jewish community decided to send their representative to the Jewish Antifascist Committee [16](#) in Moscow for help. Bergida was not an activist in the community, but he was the only one who could speak Russian. Ukrainian Ivan Turianitza, the first secretary of the regional party committee, my father's close friend, issued a letter to Fefer, a member of the Committee, requesting him to support the community. Bergida went to Moscow. Shortly after he returned, the Antifascist Committee was liquidated and its members executed. The KGB [17](#) was aware of Bergida's trip to Moscow. He was arrested and sentenced to 25 years in the GULAG. The charges against him were treason and support of international Zionism and capitalism. This was nonsense and was not true, but at the beginning even my father believed he was guilty, so strong the Soviet propaganda was. However, my father was Bergida's relative. Somebody reported that my father went to the synagogue and for this reason refused to work on Saturday. This was wrong, of course: my father was an atheist even when religion was the way of life. KGB officers followed my father looking for a ground to arrest him. Stalin's death on 5 March 1953 saved my father from arrest. Bergida's sentence was reduced to 10 years. He had cancer at that time, and they released him from the GULAG. He died in 1956 and was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Uzhgorod. My parents supported Etelka and her daughter. Etelka has passed away. My cousin Vera Brown lives in the USA.

My sister and I went to the school for girls. When Subcarpathia became Soviet, the Russian language was introduced in all spheres of life. There were Russian schools, and only my father could speak the language. We still spoke Hungarian at home. However, children pick languages easily, and a year later my sister and I had no problems with speaking Russian. I had all excellent marks at school in all years. My sister had different marks. Our father was a patriot and raised us to love our Soviet Motherland. We became pioneers and then joined Komsomol [18](#). I didn't face any anti-Semitism at school, but I cannot say it did not exist in Uzhgorod. After the process against cosmopolites began to encourage anti-Semitic moods, as I understand now, but our father protected us from this information. He didn't want us to get disappointed in the Soviet power.

I finished school in 1949. I got to know that there was a faculty of eastern languages, and the Finnish-Hungarian department in it in Leningrad University. I wrote them and they replied they would be happy to admit me, particularly that Hungarian was my native language. Professor Bubrik, chief of this chair, wrote that I could work for him at the department. However, there were only 2 applications submitted to this Faculty while they needed at least 8, so they cancelled this admission. So, they suggested that I entered another department, passed academic exams during my first year and enter the 3rd year of the university. My father wanted me to return home, but I decided to stay in Leningrad. I passed exams to the French department of the College of Foreign languages. I was accommodated in a hostel and started my study on 1 September. I never went to study in the university, though: professor Bubrik died and they closed the Finnish-Hungarian department. I finished the College of Foreign languages successfully. I studied French and English, and also, passed exams in German, that I knew since childhood to obtain a certificate for teaching it.

I got to know what anti-Semitism is like in college. We had wonderful lecturers. During the process against cosmopolites wonderful lecturers and scientists were fired from the university and Academy. Rector of the College of Foreign languages employed them. Yefim Etkind, a brilliant scientist and a charming person, taught us stylistics and translation. Etkind brought me to understanding that not everything in the USSR was so great as we were used to thinking. I didn't face any anti-Semitism till early 1953, the disgraceful 'doctors' plot' [19](#). There were Jews in college and in our group. My closest friend was Rosa Fradkina, a Jewish girl from Leningrad, whose family perished during the blockade [20](#). She was taken out of the city by the 'Road of Life' [21](#), and was sent to a children's home. Rosa grew up there and returned to her home city. Rosa spent vacations at my home and became one of us in the family. Our friendship became a lifelong relation. We correspond and phone each other and sometimes Rosa visits me.

The 'doctors' plot' brought open anti-Semitism to life. People with typical Semitic appearance were abused publicly and there was nobody to stand for them. In polyclinics patients asked about doctors' nationality and refused to go to Jewish doctors. [Jewish was considered a nationally among many others in the Soviet Union and it was registered in peoples' passports.] This was hard and scary. When I heard that Stalin dead on 5 March 1953, I couldn't hold back my tears. There was a mourning meeting and we were all crying. There was one question: how do we go on living and what will happen to the country now that Stalin is dead. I can still remember this feeling of fear.

I met my future husband in Uzhgorod, when Rosa and I came home on vacation. There was an open-air swimming pool near the railway station. We spend much time there swimming and lying in the sun: Rosa, my sister and I. . Kati finished 8 forms and entered the Electric Engineering technical college in Vinogradovo, despite our parents' protests. She fell in love with a senior student of this college. My sister's friend was a sportsman. Once he injured his spine and the bruise developed into tumor. He was taken to a hospital in Uzhgorod. My sister gave up her studies and returned to Uzhgorod. She entered an evening school and spent days in the hospital. He died and it was very hard on my sister. We tried to support her and I always took my sister with us wherever we went. We met our future husbands by this swimming pool. My husband Adolf Haikis was a doctor in the Uzhgorod military hospital. He was born in Kiev in 1921. His father Solomon Haikis was an endocrinologist in the clinic for scientists in Kiev. He had finished the Medical Faculty of Berlin University before the revolution of 1917 [22](#). He had good memories about the years of his studies

and he gave his son the German name of Adolf. Back in 1921 it was not associated with Hitler. His mother Vera Haikis, nee Kozlova, came from the Jewish family of the Kozlovs, attorneys in Kiev. Adolf wanted to become a literarian, but there was no literature college in Kiev and he decided to become a doctor to follow into his father's steps. He entered Kiev Medical College. In 1944 Adolf finished college and went to the front. He was doctor in hospital. In 1947 he requested to demobilize from the army. He entered the residency department and specialized in neuropathology. After finishing the residency he returned to the army and became a military doctor, neuropathologist in the Uzhgorod hospital. Returned to Uzhgorod in 1956 after finishing my college and we got married. Of course, we didn't have a traditional Jewish wedding. We registered our marriage in a registry office and had a wedding dinner for our relatives and friends. We lived with my parents. I went to work as a French schoolteacher. In 1955 our only daughter Ludmila was born. My father loved her dearly. He called her 'the last love of his life'. At that time my parents lived in Velikaya Dobron [30 km from Uzhgorod, 680 km from Kiev] village, but they often came to Uzhgorod: my mother visited us more often than my father. My sister married Leopold Lowenberg, a Jew from Mukachevo [40 km from Uzhgorod, 650 km from Kiev] She moved to Mukachevo with her husband. She finished higher accounting courses and worked as an accountant and then chief accountant in a big store. Her husband was a shop superintendent at a factory. In 1953 their only daughter Julia was born. We didn't celebrate any Jewish holidays in our family even in my childhood. Since 1945 our family always celebrated Soviet holidays: 1 May, 7 November [23](#), Soviet army day [24](#), Victory Day [25](#) and the New Year, of course. We always had guests and lots of fun.

It was more and more difficult for my father to work as director of the plant. Workers liked him very much, but the pressure of party authorities was hard for him. When in 1954 General Secretary of the CC CPSU Nikita Khrushchev [26](#) appealed to communists to go to villages to improve the kolkhoses [27](#), my father was among the first ones to respond to this appeal. He went to Velikaya Dobron village in Uzhgorod district and became chairman of the kolkhoz. My mother followed him, of course. This was remote village, with no polyclinic or public baths. In one year my father turned this kolkhoz into a successful enterprises. Velikaya Dobron residents adored him for becoming wealthy. A school, a polyclinic, a public bath were built and villagers had new houses with all comforts. The villagers called my father 'our father'. However, not everything was well with his work. At that time local authorities demanded to show higher quantities in documents to pretend there were more successes than in reality and there was much pressure on my father in this regard. My father was an honest man and convinced communist and refused to do any falsifications. One day in June 1963 he was invited to another bureau of the district party committee. When he came home, he had an infarction. He survived, but he could work no longer. My parents returned to Uzhgorod. My father became a free lance correspondent for the 'Karpati Igaz Szo' newspaper. [Carpathian True Word, Hungarian language Soviet newspaper, issued in Uzhgorod.] My father suffered much than neither his daughters nor their husbands were members of the party. Though my husband was a military, he never joined the party and this had an impact on his career. Through 14 years of his work in Uzhgorod hospital he was in the rank of captain, though it was time for him to be promoted to the rank of major. They wouldn't have promoted a Jew, particularly that he was not a member of the party. My husband knew what the party policy was worth. After the 20th Congress of CPSU [28](#) we heard about Stalin and his regime's crimes from the speech of Nikita Khrushchev. My husband and I believed this to be true. The 20th Congress was followed by the so-called 'thaw'. We were hoping for improvements, but some time later we realized that these expectations were not to become true. The CPSU and KGB guided the

life in the country.

In late October 1956 my husband received an emergency call ordering him to come to his unit immediately. This was all he knew any relocation at that time was confidential. In the morning my husband called me to inform that he was leaving. The only point of contact was captain Ostapenko in his hospital. I put my 11-month old daughter into her pram and ran to the hospital. I got to know that they were sent to Hungary by train. I read about the events in Hungary [23rd October 1956] [29](#) in newspapers. It was scaring. I feared for my husband, was sorry for the actions of the Soviet government and sympathized with Hungary. My husband called me from Budapest: they deployed a hospital in the basement of the Parliament building. My husband met a telephone operator. Her name was Judit like mine. My husband didn't speak Hungarian, but he spoke German. He told Judit about me and our daughter and she allowed him to call me every evening. My husband's best friend Samuel Frek, a Jew, an endocrinologist from the Uzhgorod hospital was sent in his ambulance vehicle to Hungary. On their way they were halted by a group of Hungarian rebels, about 40 of them. They disarmed them and ordered our doctors to stand with their backs to trees, but they did not shoot them and let them go few minutes later. In these few minutes, Samuel Frek, a dark-haired handsome man of the same age as my husband, turned gray. Upon their return to Uzhgorod they began to have problems. The political department demanded that they explained why they gave away their weapons. They didn't want to understand that 3 doctors could not resist 40 armed men, even though the rebels returned their guns to the military commandant of Uzhgorod.

Few months later the military in Hungary were allowed to bring their families there. My daughter and I joined my husband in Hungary. I was happy to speak Hungarian and hear my native language around me. I served as interpreter for other militaries. In 1957 my husband's father died in Kiev. There were restrictions about traveling from Hungary and my husband was not allowed to go to his father's funeral. We received the notification about his death on Friday, but my husband had to wait for a permit for departure till Monday. My father went to the funeral from Uzhgorod. My husband went to Kiev later to support his mother after the funeral. My father-in-law was buried in the Baykovoye town cemetery in Kiev.

From Hungary we returned to Uzhgorod with my husband's division. In the early 1960s armed conflicts with the Chinese started on the Far Eastern border. Khrushchev began to send divisions from all over the USSR to the Far East. 1963 was a very hard year for our family. My father's health condition was very severe after the infarction, and he had to stay in Dobron. We had to look after my father. My husband's mother spent spring and summer with us, leaving for Kiev in early November. That year my husband was planning to take her to Kiev before 7 November. On 13 October she died suddenly of infarction. She was an atheist and we arranged a secular funeral. On 23 October my husband's hospital was given an order to send 4 people to the Far East. There were only 3 Jewish employees in the hospital: Haikis, Flek and Wasserman, and all of them were sent to the Far East. The 4th man was a Russian doctor. They went to the gathering point in Vladimir-Volynskiy. My husband asked the general to allow him 10 days to make arrangements for his mother's apartment in Kiev to be returned in the ownership of the state. The general gave him the leave. Then my husband in November 1963 moved on to my husband's point of destination. He got a job in a big hospital in the Primorskiy Kray, Kraskino village, on the very border with China, a district town of the Khasan district in 50 km from the Khasan Lake. I only managed to obtain a

permit in February 1964, I and our daughter came to Kraskino. We could see Chinese houses from our hut. I went to work in the only village school. My daughter also went to this school. We spent vacations with my parents in Uzhgorod every year. In 1968 we also planned to go there, but my husband fell ill and we had to stay home. When he got better, we went to the recreation house for high-rank officers near Vladivostok. This was August 1968, and we heard about the events in Czechoslovakia [Prague Spring] [30](#). I remember how shocked my husband and I were, when we heard about the invasion of Soviet armies of Czechoslovakia, the country that I believe to be my Motherland. I've always loved it. In this recreation house we met a lecturer from the Academy in Leningrad, a Jewish man. When we met after we heard about the events in Czechoslovakia, I remember how this Jewish colonel and my husband cursed the Soviet power for this invasion: 'How could we bring tanks to Prague? How could they allow it to happen?' When I returned to Uzhgorod later, I got to know that Erno, my father's cousin, when Soviet tanks invaded Prague in 1968, decided to leave the USSR for Israel. Erno was professor of Medicine lecturing in the Prague Medical University. He became a doctor in Israel. Erno has passed away, but his widow, son Karoly, a cardiologist, the father of four children, and his daughter Eva, an archeologist, live in Israel. She had two daughters.

The Far East promoted my husband's military career. This was a different world with no anti-Semitism where people were valued for their human merits rather than their nationality. My husband was appointed chief of department and promoted to the rank of major. 4 years later he became chief of the hospital and promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel. During military actions my husband worked in a field hospital. The term of service in the Far East was 5 years and we lived there 7 years. Upon completion of this term my husband was sent to the Carpathian military regiment. We moved to Uzhgorod, and settled down with my parents. My daughter went to the 8th form at school. My husband went to the regiment commander, a general, to report of his arrival. The general stared at him: lieutenant colonel, a Jew and chief of the medical department of hospital - how could this be true? It just could not happen in Ukraine. Commander of the regiment advised my husband to visit with the family in Uzhgorod since he was not ready yet to talk with him and hopefully, when Adolf came back, he would have a job to offer him. 10 days later my husband came back to Lvov. The general offered him the position of chief of the medical department of the hospital in Korosten, a small town in Zhytomyr region [85 km from Zhytomyr, 165 km from Kiev]. Before the revolution of 1917 Korosten was within the Jewish Pale of Settlement [31](#). There were many Jewish residents in the town. 80% of medical employees of the hospital were Jews. We were welcomed nicely. My daughter went to school and I went to work as a French teacher at school. After finishing school my daughter went to my parents in Uzhgorod and entered the English department of the Faculty of foreign languages of Uzhgorod University. My husband wanted to demobilize from the army and move to Kiev, his hometown. We did it in 1974. We received a 2-bedroom apartment in a new house near a lake in the Sviatoshino district in Kiev. My husband had a confirmation of his transfer of the parents' apartment to the state and this helped a lot. My husband worked as a neuropathologist in the polyclinic for scientists of the Academy of Scientists. I worked as a German and French teacher at school till I retired. I got along with my colleagues and my pupils liked me. My former pupils visit and call me. I am very glad that they do not forget me.

In the 1970s Jews began to move to Israel. My husband did not appreciate this process. He did not understand how they could leave their Motherland and their kin's graves. My father had the same attitude to emigration. Our close friend Tsympkin, a traumatologist from Uzhgorod, and his family left

the country. My husband was trying to convince them against doing it. I met with the TsyPKins in Berlin last year. They are doing very well. Their children are well. They have a decent living in their old age, which cannot be said about Ukrainian the Commonwealth of Independent States pensioners. Now I receive my husband's pension as his dependent, as I hadn't worked in my life. My own teacher's pension wouldn't even be enough to pay my monthly fees.

In 1975 my father died few months before he was to turn 70. We buried him in the town cemetery in Uzhgorod. He was an atheist and we arranged for a secular funeral. My daughter still lived with my mother, and my mother didn't feel complete loneliness. Upon graduation from the University Ludmila married Miloslav Goshovskiy and moved in with her husband. Their apartment faced the central synagogue that housed the Philharmonic during the Soviet power. Miloslav is a physicist. He graduated from the Lvov Polytechnic University and worked in the Uzhgorod affiliate of the institute of nuclear research. Since the head institute was in Kiev we were hoping that they would move to Kiev. Ludmila worked as an English teacher in the children's center at the gymnasium. My granddaughter Yekaterina was born in 1978. Two years later my grandson Mikhail was born. Ludmila and her husband decided to stay in Uzhgorod. My mother often visited us in Kiev staying with us for a long time. After our grandchildren were born, she began to spend more time in Uzhgorod helping Ludmila to take care of the children. My mother died in 1985 at the age of 76. She was buried beside my father.

My sister and her family lived in Mukachevo. Her daughter Julia finished school with a golden medal and entered the University. She got an offer to go to study at the Faculty of Hungarian Language and Literature of the Budapest University under a students' exchange program. Julia went to Budapest, and my sister and her husband wanted to live close to their daughter. They decided to move to Hungary, but they could not obtain the visa. After they had 3 refusals Klara and her husband decided to move to Israel for Julia to join them later. Of course, had my father been alive, he would have never allowed my sister to emigrate. They obtained a permit and left. They settled down in Netanya. My sister went to work as a cashier in a supermarket, and Leopold worked as a goods expert in a store. After finishing her study Julia worked in Budapest as an editor of Hebrew-Hungarian dictionaries in a dictionary publishing office. Julia had no chance to join her parents: Hungary did not allow emigration to Israel in 1970s. Julia undertook few efforts and then decided to trick the authorities: in 1978 she bought a tour to France and from there she left for Israel illegally. In Israel Julia married Boris Penson, an artist. He had come to Israel from the USSR. Julia and Boris have two wonderful sons. Max, the older one, born in 1981, served in the army and works for an army organization. Roy, the younger son, born in 1989, studied in high school and later at a higher education institution in Natanya. Now she owns a publishing house. They have a house in Netaniya. Klara and Leo are pensioners now.

In 1982 my husband died. On 30 April he was at work receiving patients and on 1 May he had an infarction. He died on 4 May 1982. We buried Adolf near his father in the Baykovoye cemetery in Kiev. Since then I've lived alone. I often visit my daughter's family in Uzhgorod and my grandchildren visit me. In 2002 a terrible tragedy happened in our family. My daughter fell severely ill. She had a malicious tumor in her brain. She had a surgery, but to no avail. Nobody told me my daughter's diagnosis, and when I heard about it, she was already dying. Despite a surgery and our efforts she died in 2002, so young that she was. There will be always pain of this loss with me.

After finishing school Yekaterina entered the Historical Faculty of Uzhgorod University. Mikhail studied at the Medical Faculty in the university. My granddaughter also taught history in the Jewish Sunday school and my grandson worked as a medical brother during studies. When she was a senior student in the university, my granddaughter. After finishing the 4th year of the university my granddaughter took an academic leave and went to work in Germany for a year, to Stuttgart. She met her future husband Michael Hertzog, a German man, there. They got married. A year later Yekaterina returned to Uzhgorod, finished her studies in the university and moved in with her husband in Germany. Now she studies at the Faculty of Economics in Osnabruck. My grandson Mikhail also moved to Germany after finishing his studies.

In the late 1980s General Secretary of the CPSY Mikhail Gorbachev [32](#) initiated perestroika [33](#) in the USSR. I was enthusiastic about it. Finally freedom came to the USSR that I believed to be y second Motherland. There were articles on various subjects that had been forbidden formerly, published. There were books by for example, those of Alexandr Solzhenitsyn [34](#) published that would have been judged as anti-Soviet propaganda in the past. The 'iron curtain' [35](#) that separated us from the rest of the world for many years, collapsed. Citizens of the USSR were allowed to communicate with people living abroad without fearing the KGB, correspond with relatives [36](#) and invite them home. There was no longer ban on religion that had been in place since the start of the soviet power. People were allowed to go to temples and celebrate religious holidays. Religious and everyday anti-Semitism was reducing. We, citizens of the USSR, were happy and full of hopes for a different life. I could finally travel to Israel to visit my sister and see my friends. I was happy about it. It's hard to say how much Israel impressed me. It's an amazingly beautiful country where the antiquity and modern life are in complete conformity. Unfortunately, this little country living in the encirclement of hostile neighbors, knows no peace. I wish Israel peace, quiet life and prosperity from the bottom of my heart.

When after the breakup of the USSR [1991] Ukraine gained independence, we were building up hopes for a better life, but many of us still live in the humiliating poverty. Ukraine is rich in natural resources, fruitful soils and hardworking people. I believe, we have such poor life due to our leaders who guided the country in the Soviet times. However, there has been some improvement. The Jewish life is reviving. There are many Jewish organizations and associations, and the most popular with old people is the Hesed [37](#), of course. The Hesed in Kiev provides food packages to us, delivers meals to elderly people and bring medications. This is significant assistance. We are in a better position than non-Jewish residents. Hesed is just great! It conducts a great job to recover Jewry in Ukraine, from nursery schools to old people helping them to study the Jewish history, history of religion, and learn more about Jewish traditions. There are various studios and clubs. I like our Sunday daytime center where we talk with other people – this is very important. Sometimes talking to others is more important than food. I have new friends in the daytime center and we enjoy spending time together. I read Hesed-delivered Jewish newspapers and magazines regularly. Soon I am moving to my grandchildren in Germany, my family. It's hard to live alone in my age. Of course, it's hard to leave everything here, it's been a big part of my life, hard to leave the graves of my dear ones and get adjusted to a different way of life, but I hope to able to visit Uzhgorod and Kiev, my two hometowns.

## GLOSSARY:

**1** 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.

## **2 Masaryk, Tomas Garrigue (1850-1937)**

Czechoslovak political leader and philosopher and chief founder of the First Czechoslovak Republic. He founded the Czech People's Party in 1900, which strove for Czech independence within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, for the protection of minorities and the unity of Czechs and Slovaks. After the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1918, Masaryk became the first president of Czechoslovakia. He was reelected in 1920, 1927, and 1934. Among the first acts of his government was an extensive land reform. He steered a moderate course on such sensitive issues as the status of minorities, especially the Slovaks and Germans, and the relations between the church and the state. Masaryk resigned in 1935 and Edvard Benes, his former foreign minister, succeeded him.

## **4 Neolog Jewry**

Following a Congress in 1868/69 in Budapest, where the Jewish community was supposed to discuss several issues on which the opinion of the traditionalists and the modernizers differed and which aimed at uniting Hungarian Jews, Hungarian Jewry was officially split into to (later three) communities, which all built up their own national community network. The Neologs were the modernizers, who opposed the Orthodox on various questions.

## **5 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.

**6** 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.

**6** 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.

**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** The Soviet system of forced labor camps in the remote regions of Siberia and the Far North, which was first established in 1919. However, it was not until the early 1930s that there was a significant number of inmates in the camps. By 1934 the Gulag, or the Main Directorate for Corrective Labor Camps, then under the Cheka's successor organization the NKVD, had several million inmates. The prisoners included murderers, thieves, and other common criminals, along with political and religious dissenters. The Gulag camps made significant contributions to the Soviet economy during the rule of Stalin. Conditions in the camps were extremely harsh. After Stalin died in 1953, the population of the camps was reduced significantly, and conditions for the

inmates improved somewhat.

## **9 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.

## **10 19th March 1944**

Hungary was occupied by the German forces on this day. Nazi Germany decided to take this step because it considered the reluctance of the Hungarian government to carry out the 'final solution of the Jewish question' and deport the Jewish population of Hungary to concentration camps as evidence of Hungary's determination to join forces with the Western Allies. By the time of the German occupation, close to 63,000 Jews (8% of the Jewish population) had already fallen victim to the persecution. On the German side special responsibility for Jewish affairs was assigned to Edmund Veessenmayer, the newly appointed minister and Reich plenipotentiary, and to Otto Winkelmann, higher S.S. and police leader and Himmler's representative in Hungary.

**10** Hitlerjugend: The youth organization of the German Nazi Party (NSDAP). In 1936 all other German youth organizations were abolished and the Hitlerjugend was the only legal state youth organization. From 1939 all young Germans between 10 and 18 were obliged to join the Hitlerjugend, which organized after-school activities and political education. Boys over 14 were also given pre-military training and girls over 14 were trained for motherhood and domestic duties. After reaching the age of 18, young people either joined the army or went to work.

## **11 Yad Vashem**

This museum, founded in 1953 in Jerusalem, honors both Holocaust martyrs and 'the Righteous Among the Nations', non-Jewish rescuers who have been recognized for their 'compassion, courage and morality'.

## **12 Great Terror (1934-1938)**

During the Great Terror, or Great Purges, which included the notorious show trials of Stalin's former Bolshevik opponents in 1936-1938 and reached its peak in 1937 and 1938, millions of innocent Soviet citizens were sent off to labor camps or killed in prison. The major targets of the Great Terror were communists. Over half of the people who were arrested were members of the party at the time of their arrest. The armed forces, the Communist Party, and the government in general were purged of all allegedly dissident persons; the victims were generally sentenced to death or to long terms of hard labor. Much of the purge was carried out in secret, and only a few cases were tried in public 'show trials'. By the time the terror subsided in 1939, Stalin had managed to bring

both the Party and the public to a state of complete submission to his rule. Soviet society was so atomized and the people so fearful of reprisals that mass arrests were no longer necessary. Stalin ruled as absolute dictator of the Soviet Union until his death in March 1953.

### **13 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.

### **14 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'.

### **15 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.

### **16 Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (JAC)**

formed in Kuibyshev in April 1942, the organization was meant to serve the interests of Soviet foreign policy and the Soviet military through media propaganda, as well as through personal contacts with Jews abroad, especially in Britain and the United States. The chairman of the JAC was Solomon Mikhoels, a famous actor and director of the Moscow Yiddish State Theater. A year after its establishment, the JAC was moved to Moscow and became one of the most important centers of Jewish culture and Yiddish literature until the German occupation. The JAC broadcast pro-Soviet propaganda to foreign audiences several times a week, telling them of the absence of anti-Semitism and of the great anti-Nazi efforts being made by the Soviet military. In 1948, Mikhoels was assassinated by Stalin's secret agents, and, as part of a newly-launched official anti-Semitic campaign, the JAC was disbanded in November and most of its members arrested.

## **17 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.

## **18 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.

## **19 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.

## **20 Blockade of Leningrad**

On September 8, 1941 the Germans fully encircled Leningrad and its siege began. It lasted until January 27, 1944. The blockade meant incredible hardships and privations for the population of the town. Hundreds of thousands died from hunger, cold and diseases during the almost 900 days of the blockade.

## **21 Road of Life**

It was a passage across Lake Ladoga in winter during the Blockade of Leningrad. It was due to the Road of Life that Leningrad survived in the terrible winter of 1941-42.

## **22 Russian Revolution of 1917**

Revolution in which the tsarist regime was overthrown in the Russian Empire and, under Lenin, was replaced by the Bolshevik rule. The two phases of the Revolution were: February Revolution, which came about due to food and fuel shortages during World War I, and during which the tsar abdicated and a provisional government took over. The second phase took place in the form of a coup led by Lenin in October/November (October Revolution) and saw the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks.

## **23 October Revolution Day**

October 25 (according to the old calendar), 1917 went down in history as victory day for the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia. This day is the most significant date in the history of the USSR. Today the anniversary is celebrated as 'Day of Accord and Reconciliation' on November 7.

#### **24 Soviet Army Day**

The Russian imperial army and navy disintegrated after the outbreak of the Revolution of 1917, so the Council of the People's Commissars created the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army on a voluntary basis. The first units distinguished themselves against the Germans on February 23, 1918. This day became the 'Day of the Soviet Army' and is nowadays celebrated as 'Army Day'.

#### **25 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.

#### **26 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.

#### **27 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.

#### **28 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.

#### **29 23rd October 1956**

It designates the Revolution, which started on 23rd October 1956 against Soviet rule and the communists in Hungary. It was started by student and worker demonstrations in Budapest started in which Stalin's gigantic statue was destroyed. Moderate communist leader Imre Nagy was appointed as prime minister and he promised reform and democratization. The Soviet Union withdrew its troops which had been stationing in Hungary since the end of World War II, but they returned after Nagy's announcement that Hungary would pull out of the Warsaw Pact to pursue a policy of neutrality. The Soviet army put an end to the rising on 4th November and mass repression and arrests started. About 200,000 Hungarians fled from the country. Nagy, and a number of his supporters were executed. Until 1989, the fall of the communist regime, the Revolution of 1956

was officially considered a counter-revolution.

### **30 Prague Spring**

The term Prague Spring designates the liberalization period in communist-ruled Czechoslovakia between 1967-1969. In 1967 Alexander Dubcek became the head of the Czech Communist Party and promoted ideas of 'socialism with a human face', i.e. with more personal freedom and freedom of the press, and the rehabilitation of victims of Stalinism. In August 1968 Soviet troops, along with contingents from Poland, East Germany, Hungary and Bulgaria, occupied Prague and put an end to the reforms.

### **31 Jewish Pale of Settlement**

Certain provinces in the Russian Empire were designated for permanent Jewish residence and the Jewish population was only allowed to live in these areas. The Pale was first established by a decree by Catherine II in 1791. The regulation was in force until the Russian Revolution of 1917, although the limits of the Pale were modified several times. The Pale stretched from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, and 94% of the total Jewish population of Russia, almost 5 million people, lived there. The overwhelming majority of the Jews lived in the towns and shtetls of the Pale. Certain privileged groups of Jews, such as certain merchants, university graduates and craftsmen working in certain branches, were granted to live outside the borders of the Pale of Settlement permanently.

### **32 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.

### **33 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.

### **34 Solzhenitsyn, Alexander (1918-)**

Russian novelist and publicist. He spent eight years in prisons and labor camps, and three more years in enforced exile. After the publication of a collection of his short stories in 1963, he was denied further official publication of his work, and so he circulated them clandestinely, in samizdat publications, and published them abroad. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1970 and was exiled from the Soviet Union in 1974 after publishing his famous book, *The Gulag Archipelago*, in which he describes Soviet labor camps.

### **35 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.

### **36 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.

### **36 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.

### **37 Hesed**

Meaning care and mercy in Hebrew, Hesed stands for the charity organization founded by Amos Avgar in the early 20th century. Supported by Claims Conference and Joint Hesed helps for Jews in need to have a decent life despite hard economic conditions and encourages development of their self-identity. Hesed provides a number of services aimed at supporting the needs of all, and particularly elderly members of the society. The major social services include: work in the center facilities (information, advertisement of the center activities, foreign ties and free lease of medical equipment); services at homes (care and help at home, food products delivery, delivery of hot meals, minor repairs); work in the community (clubs, meals together, day-time polyclinic, medical and legal consultations); service for volunteers (training programs). The Hesed centers have inspired a real revolution in the Jewish life in the FSU countries. People have seen and sensed the rebirth of the Jewish traditions of humanism. Currently over eighty Hesed centers exist in the FSU countries. Their activities cover the Jewish population of over eight hundred settlements.