

Tilda Galpert

Tilda Galpert

Uzhgorod

Ukraine

Interviewer: Inna Galina

Date of interview: April 2003

Tilda Galpert is a short elderly lady, but it's difficult to call her old. She has a straight posture and a nice face. Tilda has a vivid look in her eyes and a smiling face. She speaks Russian with a Hungarian accent, which is not surprising since her family speaks Hungarian for the most part. She has fluent Czech, Yiddish and Ukrainian. She is used to the typical Hungarian habit of having a cup of coffee in the morning. This is more like a ritual. She is very accurate and tidy in her conduct and with her apartment. She lives in a spacious apartment in a house built in the 1930s. There is heavy old furniture: armchairs, sofas and wardrobes. The family has lived here for over half a century and they guard their home thoroughly. The story of Tilda is entwined into her husband Ernest's life story. They are very close. They treat each other with warmth and tenderness and care about one another.

[My family background](#)

[Growing up](#)

[During the war](#)

[Post-war](#)

[Perestroika](#)

[Glossary](#)

My family background

My maternal and paternal grandparents came from Palanok, a suburb of Mukachevo before the Great Patriotic War [1](#). After the war Mukachevo spread over Palanok and it became part of the town.

Subcarpathia [2](#) belonged to Austro-Hungary before 1918. In 1918 it was given to Czechoslovakia. This was the period of its prosperity. The Czechs were very loyal and cultured people and patronized Jews. The Jews were given the right to hold official posts and have private businesses. My parents told me about it. In 1938 the Hungarians came to power in Subcarpathia again, only it was a fascist Hungary that was an ally of Germany. After World War II Subcarpathia became part of the USSR, based on decisions of the Yalta Conference [3](#) in 1945.

Mukachevo is located in a very picturesque area at the southwestern foot of the Carpathian Mountains. The town stands on the Latoritza River, 40 kilometers northwest of Uzhhorod. Mukachevo was rather big according to Subcarpathian standards. At the beginning of the 20th century its population constituted 32,000 people. Half the population was Jewish. There were also Hutsuls [Ukrainians in Subcarpathia], Hungarians, Czechs, Slovaks and other nationalities. People were friendly, tolerant and respectful toward each other's customs and religion. There were never any Jewish pogroms [4](#) in this area.

There were at least twelve synagogues and about ten prayer houses and a yeshivah in Mukachevo. There was a Jewish school and a Jewish grammar school. The Jewish school gave religious and general education and the grammar school only provided general education and quite a lot of Jews weren't very happy about it. There was a house where two shochetim worked. There were always bunches of children there, whose mothers sent them to have their chickens or geese slaughtered.

On Saturday all Jews went to the synagogue. All stores were closed. The local non-Jewish population knew that they had to do their shopping on Thursdays and Fridays. Jews owned almost all trading business in town. There were a few non-Jewish stores on the outskirts of the town, but it was inconvenient to do the shopping there because of the distance. There were Jewish farmers and entrepreneurs, doctors, teachers and lawyers, but there weren't so many of them. Subcarpathia is the place of woodcutters. The majority of the residents of Subcarpathia were involved in the wood industry. The Jews owned the majority of timber storage facilities. However, most of the Jewish families were poor like everywhere else. Many Jews were craftsmen: tailors, shoemakers, tinsmiths, carpenters; there were also Jewish women who made wigs. The craftsmen worked very hard to provide for their families. They lived in the center of the town for the most part. Land was less expensive on the outskirts and it mainly belonged to farmers. The craftsmen had to live in more populated areas to have more clients.

There was a big Jewish community in Mukachevo. The members of the community supported and helped each other. Every family was supposed to have matzah, chicken and gefilte fish on holidays and the community made sure that every family had these. They made contributions to buy medications for the poor and dowry for girls from poor families. They did much more than was necessary to help people.

It wasn't a habit in our family to talk about the history of the family or the life of our grandfathers and grandmothers. Therefore, I know very little about them.

My father's parents were born and lived in the village of Palanok near Mukachevo. The population of Palanok was 50% German and 50% Jewish. My grandfather's name was Volf Akerman. I don't know my grandmother's name. We called her babika [granny]. My grandparents were born around the 1850s. I have no information about their families. My grandmother died when I was a child, and I cannot remember her well. She visited us in Mukachevo once. She came on a horse-driven cart and we found it very strange that she was wearing a black gown and black kerchief in summer. My grandfather wore black clothes and a round-shaped hat. My grandparents were very religious. They wore traditional Jewish clothes and led a traditional Jewish life. My grandfather was very strict about observing Jewish traditions in the family. My father's parents celebrated Sabbath and Jewish holidays in accordance with traditions. On Sabbath and on Jewish holidays they went to the synagogue. They had seats of their own in the synagogue. They spoke Yiddish at home and Hungarian and Czech with their non-Jewish neighbors. Many non-Jewish residents in Mukachevo could understand and speak Yiddish.

There were five children in my father's family. I don't know when they were born. The oldest was David. My father Ignatz was the next child, born in 1885. His Jewish name was Aizik. The third child in the family was Isroel. Then their sister Miriam was born and the youngest in the family was Yankel. All of them grew up religious and had religious families. They strictly observed all traditions and celebrated holidays.

I know that my father and his brothers attended a German school in Palanok. They spoke fluent German. Besides going to school all the boys studied in cheder and the girls received Jewish education at home. They had classes with a private teacher. The girls studied Hebrew to be able to read the prayers. They learned Jewish traditions and religion.

Palanok was located at the very foot of a mountain. There were vines growing around the mountain. My grandfather made wine and had a tavern. My grandparents weren't rich, but they had enough for a living. They had a big family and spent much to raise and educate their children. They had a big house. I've been there. The tavern occupied half of the house on the side of the street. It was a hall with tables for customers and an adjoining kitchen. My grandmother did the cooking. There were only a few items on the menu. The customers drank the young wine that grandfather made. Palanok inhabitants rented the tavern for wedding parties. There were four or five rooms in the part of the house where my grandmother, my grandfather, David and Isroel and their families lived. This house is still there and there's a German community in it today. We traveled to our grandparents on foot. They always had nuts and pastries to give us. They died in the 1930s. I was a small child then and cannot remember any details.

My father's oldest brother David owned the tavern. He inherited it after my grandfather died. As a rule, a father left his business to his oldest son at that time. David was married and had a son. During the Great Patriotic War David was sent to Auschwitz where he perished. His wife and son stayed in Mukachevo. They also perished during the Holocaust. I don't know any details. David and Isroel and their families lived with my grandparents. Isroel owned a brewery. He was married and had two sons: Zvi, born in 1925, and Chaim. They moved to Israel right after the war. Zvi Akerman still lives there in Petach-Tikvah. We visit him when we travel to Israel. Chaim perished in Israel during the Six-Day-War [5](#). Isroel perished in Auschwitz in 1944.

I remember my father's sister Miriam. She married a trader. He was a Jew. His last name was Feuerstein. Miriam's husband had a store in Mukachevo. They had many children. I think, there were ten of them. I cannot remember their names now. We were friends. We visited one another often. We played together. Miriam's family was religious. My father's youngest brother, Yankel, had a glass polishing shop. He had many children. They came one after another every year. My father helped my grandfather to make wine before he got married.

My mother's parents lived in Mukachevo. My grandfather, Samuel Weiss, born in the 1850s, died before I was born, in the early 1920s. My grandmother was about the same age as my grandfather. I don't know my grandmother's first or maiden name. She was babika for us, kids, and the adults also called her grandmother. After my grandfather died our great-grandmother lived with our grandmother. I don't know whether she was my maternal or paternal great-grandmother. She died in the 1930s at the age of 94. My grandmother died shortly afterwards.

My grandfather Weiss was a wealthy man. He had a wholesale store in the center of Mukachevo. My grandmother was a housewife. My grandparents were very religious. They observed all Jewish traditions and raised their children religiously. My grandfather had a beard and payes. He wore a hat and a long jacket. My grandmother wore dark clothes and a wig according to Jewish traditions.

My grandparents had a nice big house. I believe there were at least six rooms in it. They lived in the Jewish street – this was a typically Jewish neighborhood. There was a Jewish community building and a mikveh in this street.

There were seven children in my mother's family. I don't know when they were born but I know who was older and who was younger. My mother's brother Meyer was the oldest. Then came Izidor, his Jewish name was Srul. Izidor was deaf and dumb. After Izidor came Moshe. Then three daughters were born. My mother was born in 1885. Her Jewish name was Hinde and in her passport she was Helena. Then came Hana, Janka, as was written in her passport, and Perl, Piroska in her passport. The youngest was Fishl, Fulop in his passport. They had Hungarian names written in their passports. I don't know why, probably, it was common practice at that time. All the boys studied in cheder and the girls had classes at home with a teacher. Afterwards they studied in a Hungarian secondary school. My mother's sisters and brothers were deeply religious and observed all Jewish traditions.

After my grandfather died his oldest son Meyer inherited his business. His other son Izidor was a typesetter in a printing house. He was the most handsome of all brothers. In the 1920s Izidor and his brother Moshe moved to Budapest. Moshe married a Jewish girl from Budapest. He had a business in Budapest. His only daughter moved to England before 1940. I saw Moshe after the war when I was going home from the concentration camp in 1945. He was still religious at that time. Moshe died in 1947. After he died his wife went to England to live with her daughter. I didn't know Moshe's wife or daughter. Izidor was single. He perished in the ghetto in Budapest in 1944.

Hana got married. Her husband's last name was Ostreicher. I have no information about her husband. Perl got married, too. Her husband's last name was Rot. Her husband owned a paper factory. He was a rich man. Perl had a daughter, Ilus, who lives in Israel now. Her last name in marriage was Shronek. When we travel to Israel we meet with her. Ilus lives in Jerusalem with her family. She is very religious. Hana and Perl were housewives. Perl, her husband and Hana perished in a concentration camp [Auschwitz] in 1944. Well, if one started counting how many of our people died! I'd rather switch to a different subject. This one is too hard to talk about. My mother's youngest brother Fulop didn't work. He was very ill. He died of tuberculosis when he was young, in 1932.

Growing up

I don't know where or how my parents met. They got married in 1908 or 1909. Of course, they had a Jewish wedding. They didn't tell me any details. After the wedding they began to live with my mother's parents in Mukachevo. We had three rooms and a kitchen in this house. There were no comforts. We fetched water from a pump tank in the yard. There was a big stove in the kitchen where my mother cooked. There were smaller stoves to heat the rooms. The stoves were stoked with wood. We didn't have a garden. We bought food at the market.

We had heavy old oak furniture in the house. There was a mezuzah on each door post. In the morning and in the evening men wearing traditional Jewish clothing – a black jacket and a hat – went past our house to pray at the synagogue. I don't think there were non-religious Jews in Mukachevo when I was a child or in my teens. All the Jews in our street celebrated Sabbath and the women lit candles on Friday and everybody followed the kashrut. They celebrated all Jewish holidays in accordance with Jewish traditions.

My father was a short man with payes and a beard. He wore a hat and a long jacket to go out and a kippah at home. My mother wore elegant black clothes and a wig. My parents were wealthy. They had seats of their own in the synagogue that they could afford to pay for. My mother went to the

synagogue on Sabbath and on Jewish holidays and my father went there every morning and evening.

My father made and sold wine. He learned this from his father in Palanok. My father brought grapes for wine from my grandfather and also bought some in the neighboring village of Beregovo [40 km from Mukachevo]. He bought a basement in Mukachevo. He had a big pressing machine in this basement for making wine. My father made kosher wine. His clients were Jews that bought wine for Sabbath. He had quite a few clients that knew that he made good wine and came to buy it from him.

My mother was a housewife. They had many children and had to hire a housemaid to help with the children. She was a Ukrainian girl and lived with us as a member of the family. She did our laundry, cleaned the house and helped my mother to get everything ready for the cooking. My mother did the cooking herself. It wasn't allowed to let anybody else cook since the food might turn out non-kosher. They always watched that the housemaid didn't touch the wine since my father sold kosher wine. If she had touched it it wouldn't have been kosher any longer.

My sister Margarita, Gitl was her Jewish name, was born in 1909, my oldest brother David in 1911 and Fishl, Fulop in his documents, in 1912. In 1914 my sister Szerena followed. Her Jewish name was Surah. My brother Gershy was born in 1916. In his documents his name was given as Hugo. Aron followed in 1918. Then came Perl. She died in infancy. I was born in 1923. My Jewish name is Toby. I was the seventh child in the family. My youngest brother, Samuel, followed in 1925. His Jewish name was Shmil. This was our family. I'm the only one left.

Of course, our parents were religious and observed all Jewish rituals. On the eight day after they were born the boys had their brit milah. We celebrated Sabbath and all Jewish holidays at home.

On Friday morning my mother made challah and cooked for two days. She usually made boiled chicken and gefilte fish. To keep it warm for Saturday lunch she left a pot of cholent in the oven. On Friday evening she lit candles and said a prayer over them. During the prayer she covered her face with her hands. Then we all prayed and greeted Sabbath, saying 'Shabbat, shalom'. My father said a blessing over the food and we sat down for dinner. On Saturday my father went to the synagogue. When he returned he read the Torah. He read a Saturday section of the Torah to us. Nobody did any work on that day. It wasn't allowed to even light a lamp or stoke the stove. Our Ukrainian neighbor came to do this for us.

I remember a general clean up of the house before Pesach. There wasn't a single breadcrumb to be ignored. A day before the seder our father checked the whole apartment. My mother gave him a goose feather and a little shovel and he walked all corners pretending that he was sweeping them. Pretending, since all corner were shining so clean they were. My father did this symbolic sweeping. There was some chametz hidden for him to find. My parents put this chametz into an old wooden spoon, tied it with a piece of cloth and burned it in the oven. This was the ritual in all Jewish families in Mukachevo. My brother did it after my father died. There was a Jewish bakery in Mukachevo. They started making matzah about a month before Pesach. The bakery was cleaned from chametz, then a rabbi inspected it and issued a certificate confirming that the bakery was clean. The bakery delivered matzah to Jewish homes. The Jewish community provided poor Jews with a bit of free matzah. My mother made traditional Jewish food on Pesach: chicken broth with matzah, gefilte fish, tsimes, strudels and cookies. On the first evening of Pesach my father

conducted the seder. He sat at the head of the table and one of his youngest sons asked him the traditional questions [the mah nishtanah]. We prayed and sang songs. I don't remember the lyrics, but I remember the tunes. We had no guests for the seder, but on the next day our parents' relatives visited us.

I also remember Sukkot well. A sukkah was built from the same panels every year and reed was bought for the roof. We had meals in the sukkah throughout the eight days of the holiday. Before each meal my father said a prayer. The food was handed through a window. There was a traditional nut game during Sukkot. Children piled up three to four nuts and threw a bigger nut into the pile. The one that managed to hit the pile took all the nuts.

On Rosh Hashanah my parents went to the synagogue. When they returned my mother put a plate with apple pieces and a saucer with honey on the table wishing for a sweet and happy year to come. Before Yom Kippur we had the kapores ritual with a white hen for women and a white roaster for men. On Yom Kippur we all went to the synagogue. There was shofar blowing. All members of the family fasted. Children began fasting at the age of five. After the first star the fast was over and the family sat down for dinner. At Chanukkah guests gave children some money.

We spoke Yiddish at home. It was our mother tongue. When I went to school I spoke Czech with my friends. It was the state language.

Perhaps, there was anti-Semitism somewhere before the war, but not in Mukachevo. This was a Jewish town and if somebody had dared to demonstrate anti-Semitism he would have been killed by the Jews. The Jewish community in Mukachevo was very strong. Here's what happened once: a Jewish man was going home from a party. He was wearing a fur brimmed hat. Some Czech soldiers passing by grabbed his hat and ran away. The Jew told the rabbi about what had happened. On the next day all Jews of Mukachevo went on a march past the Czech barracks. Those soldiers were identified. They returned the hat and apologized to the man and the rabbi. This was the only incident of this kind, but it probably happened because those soldiers were young and probably just felt like having a bit of fun.

The Jews celebrated holidays in accordance with the laws. We lived about 50 meters from the synagogue. It was a big choral synagogue. It was beautiful. The women stayed on the second floor. My parents began to take us to the synagogue when we turned seven. My father went to pray at the synagogue every morning. Most Jewish men went to the synagogue every morning and evening. Some Jews prayed at home and this was no contradiction to the laws. All boys had to go to pray at the synagogue every day. Everybody was religious. My mother watched even more strictly that all boys put on their tefillin in the morning and prayed at home. I don't know why they stayed at home on weekdays rather than going to the synagogue with my father. When they reached the age of 13 my brothers had their bar mitzvah. They had to prepare a report about a section of the Talmud and speak in front of guests at home. It was quite a remarkable ceremony. It never happened that somebody smoked on Saturday. All Jewish families watched that all laws were followed. Everybody was afraid of being a cause of an unpleasant rumor. Everybody knew each other and one couldn't do something wrong without being noticed. Everybody had to follow Jewish laws, traditions and religious rituals. All families followed the kashrut. The children took poultry to a shochet to have it slaughtered.

My parents took no interest in politics. They only worked hard. My father sympathized with the communists, but he didn't live to find out what it was like in reality. He said that he was for communism or socialism if they didn't touch religion. My mother sometimes read books that I borrowed to read; Gorky [6](#), for example, they were classic books. She said that it was good how they described it, but why did the communists want to destroy religion? Religion was their life. This was a religious family that I grew up in.

The children weren't as religious as their parents. All the children got Jewish education. Boys went to cheder at the age of five. When I turned six my mother sent me to a cheder for girls [7](#). She wanted me to learn to pray and read in Hebrew. The cheder where I studied was called Beyt Yakov. I studied there for three months until the Hungarians came to power and closed it.

At the age of six I went to a Czech public elementary school. There was a Jewish school in Mukachevo, but our parents sent us to a Czech school since it prepared for entrance to commercial academy. The next stage was lower secondary school where I studied four years and then I took a one-year training course preparing students to enter commercial academy. In general, we studied nine years. My brothers and sisters also went to this school. This was at the time of the Czechoslovak Republic [First Czechoslovak Republic] [8](#). There were many Jews in Mukachevo. There was no segregation and other children or teachers made no difference in their attitudes. There were Zionist organizations for young people in Mukachevo. In the People's House there was a Zionist club for children and teenagers. There were various clubs there. I sang in the choir and went in for gymnastics. I took an active part in public activities.

The commercial academy was a prestigious educational institution. The building of this academy has been preserved. It's a beautiful building. This academy provided a good education and its graduates had no problems finding a job. There were quite a few lecturers from Ukraine working there. They escaped from Ukraine after the Revolution of 1917 [9](#). Besides special subjects we studied foreign languages, shorthand and typing. My sisters Margarita and Szerena and my brother Fishl finished commercial academy during the time of the Czechoslovak Republic.

My brothers and sisters had a difficult life. My oldest sister Margarita was the first to get married. After finishing commercial academy she worked as a lawyer in an insurance company. Her husband whose last name was Weiss was her cousin. His father was my father's cousin. They were fond of revolutionary ideas and rejected any religion. They got married in 1932. Regardless of their convictions they had a religious wedding with a chuppah. They agreed to have a chuppah to please our parents, but for them it was a formality. My mother said she wouldn't bear it if my sister didn't have a chuppah at her wedding. We had a wedding photo of Margarita: they both wore leather jackets and Margarita wore a white beret. They were both laughing while a Jewish bride was supposed to be crying at her wedding.

Their son Alexandr was born in 1935 and our parents insisted that the boy had his brit milah on the eighth day. So Alexandr had it. In 1938, when fascist Hungary came to power in Subcarpathia Margarita's husband emigrated to the Soviet Union and she stayed in Mukachevo. My sister obtained a passport to follow her husband when World War II began. She stayed in Mukachevo. Her husband couldn't return to Hungary since citizens of the USSR weren't allowed to leave the country. We couldn't correspond with residents of the USSR since they were persecuted for corresponding with foreigners [for keeping in touch with relatives abroad] [10](#), and they asked us to

stop writing them. After the war, when I lived in Uzhhorod that belonged to the USSR, I tried to find Margarita's husband, but I failed. He probably perished in the Gulag [11](#) like my brother did.

My older brother David served in the Czechoslovak army. His service lasted two years and when he returned he worked as a shop assistant in a store. He married a Jewish girl, whose last name was Fridman, in 1937. Her parents were also religious. David had a Jewish wedding in summer. He lived in Mukachevo until 1942, then he was taken to a labor camp in Ukraine. He perished that same year.

My brother Fulop also served in the Czechoslovak army. He had many friends in the army. They were Jewish and non-Jewish men. He often came home on leave with his Czech friend. This was in 1933. When the Hungarians came to power and began to persecute Jews, Fulop joined a group of Jews that crossed the Polish border moving to the Polish town of Katowice [300 km from Mukachevo] in 1939. Many emigrants from Subcarpathia moved to Katowice. From there they were sent to England. In England David joined the Czech Corps. Two of my cousins on my mother's side served there, too. During World War II Fulop was at the Western front.

My older sister Szerena's wedding turned our family life upside down. After finishing commercial academy Szerena went to work in an insurance company. She was a well respected and dedicated employee. Szerena got fond of socialist ideas. A legal communist newspaper was published in Mukachevo: Zakarpatskaya Pravda. It was published by Oleksa Borkanyuk, deputy of the Czechoslovak Government from the Czechoslovak Communist Party. There was no ban on the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia. Szerena offered her help with the publishing of this newspaper. This was how she met Oleksa Borkanyuk. They fell in love with each other. In 1936 they began to live together. Of course, there was no religious wedding.

That my sister married a non-Jewish man was a huge blow to my parents. Our mother sat shivah for Szerena for a week like Jews do for someone who died. When this was over she refused to see Szerena ever again. Szerena's husband was a very nice person and a good husband, but he wasn't a Jew. They rented an apartment in Mukachevo where I visited them several times. Other brothers and my sister also visited Szerena. I didn't tell my mother that I went to see Szerena. My mother didn't bear the mentioning of Szerena's name and never saw her again. Szerena and her husband had to move to Uzhhorod to cut off people's discussions and rumors. Later, on our way to Auschwitz, I said, 'I wish we knew about Tsyka' – we called Szerena Tsyka at home. My mother replied, 'I don't want to hear about her again'. That's how religious education works: it was planted so deep in my mother's conscience that she even rejected her own daughter. My mother was ashamed of Szerena's marriage. I think that probably if it hadn't been for the Jewish surrounding my mother would have forgiven Szerena. She couldn't do it since other people would have condemned her.

Szerena's husband moved to Moscow in 1938. When the Hungarians came to power in Subcarpathia the Communist Party still existed in Khust. Borkanyuk was secretary of the Communist Party of Subcarpathia. When the Hungarians came to Khust he had to emigrate to the USSR since the Hungarians banned the Communist Party. Szerena went to Moscow in 1939. During World War II she lived in Moscow. Borkanyuk became a founder of a partisan movement in Subcarpathia in 1942. He perished in a fascist prison in 1942.

Jews in Mukachevo were indignant about Szerena's marriage. It was considered to be a serious misconduct. This was the reason of my father's death. He was killed at the synagogue in spring 1937. There was a psycho living in a village near Mukachevo. He occasionally came to the synagogue in Mukachevo. People told him that Aizik Akerman's daughter had married a goy. They actually set him against my father. This psycho took a log from near the stove at the synagogue and hit my father on his temple. My father died that very night. It was a horrible tragedy for all of us and the town was stirring up with the news that a man had been killed at the synagogue. My father was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Mukachevo in accordance with the Jewish tradition. My elder brother David recited the Kaddish. After this calamity my mother had to sell everything we had. We also fired our housemaid. We had a very hard time. The children were too young to go to work. My older sister Margarita had to take care of her own family. Due to this hard situation I had to go to work at the age of 15.

In November 1938 the Hungarians came back to Mukachevo after they had been away for 20 years. I quit school since my mother couldn't afford to pay the fees. In April 1939 I became a worker at the factory of my uncle Rot, Aunt Perl's husband. This factory manufactured stationery: notebooks, accounting books, packages, etc. I worked at this factory for five years until April 1944 when the Germans came. I worked ten and a half hours a day. It was hard work. Most of the employees were Jews. I met a girl at the factory and we became best friends. Her name was Frida. My brother Aron worked at the glass polishing shop of my mother's brother Yankel. After finishing commercial academy my brother Fulop was a teacher in the village of Zagatiye in Mukachevo district. Hugo was at first an apprentice to a tailor in Mukachevo and after finishing his training he became a tailor. Samuel studied at school.

Before 1918, during the period of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the laws were loyal. They acknowledged the equality of all people. Therefore, people weren't concerned when they heard that the Hungarians were coming back. Some people like my mother, for example, were glad that it was going to happen. She couldn't learn Czech in 20 years and we even teased her a little about it. As for Hungarian, she knew it well. She went to a Hungarian school in her childhood. However, we forgot that this time it was going to be a fascist Hungary. We didn't have information about the situation in Hungary. Newspapers didn't cover any details of this aspect. When we got to know about what Hungarian fascism was like we were horrified. Hungarians began to persecute Jews as soon as they came to power [through the anti-Jewish laws in Hungary] [12](#). They expropriated stores and enterprises from Jews. Jews could transfer their property to a goy and they had to pay for this procedure or otherwise they had to give up what they had for good. There were terrible problems. The local population tried to speak Czech after 1939 in protest against the Hungarian policy.

I met my future husband Ernest Galpert at the factory. We call him Ari.. His Jewish name is Aron. Ari was born in Mukachevo in 1923. We are the same age. His father, Ishiya Galpert, was a Hasid [13](#). He finished school in Nitra, a town in Slovakia not far from Bratislava. Ishiya owned a food store in Mukachevo. Ari's mother's name was Perl [nee Kalush]. She was a housewife and helped her husband in the store. There were three children in the family: Ari had a younger and an older sister. He studied in cheder and in a Czech secondary school. After finishing school he became an apprentice to a joiner. When the Hungarians came to power the owner of this shop had to transfer it to somebody else and Ari lost his job. In 1941 he became a mechanic at the Rot factory. We became friends in 1943. We were 20. This was the time of the German occupation. Ari visited me

at home and I went to see him in his home. Our families were religious. Ari and I met after work every day. We went for a walk. At that time we were required to wear yellow stars on our clothes. We decided to be together, but this was no time to think about life arrangements. We decided to wait and see how the situation would develop.

During the war

In 1939 the war in Poland began. We were almost starving. In 1941 Germany attacked the USSR. Hungary was an ally of Germany. A food coupon system was introduced. Jews didn't receive any coupons. We could buy food at the 'black market', but it was way too expensive. We starved. We would have died from hunger if it hadn't been for my older sister Margarita who worked at home. She had a good education and knew French and German. She translated documents and wrote requests and application forms. She took any work she was offered. She was like an 'underground attorney'. She played the violin beautifully. God, she had so many talents! She earned well and sometimes gave me some work to do. Villagers who didn't know where to submit their documents paid me some small change for taking their documents to the reception in the Town Hall. 1943 was the most difficult year. We bought corn flour that was less expensive than bread. We made corn cookies. Margarita's son was a lovely boy. I was his baby-sitter since my sister was always busy.

In 1942 the Hungarians began to take young men into forced labor battalions to support the front. The forced laborers excavated trenches and constructed defense lines. My brothers David and Hugo were recruited to a labor battalion. They perished in 1942. We know that David perished somewhere in Ukraine, but we have no information about where Hugo died. Aron, who was a worker in Yankel's shop, decided to escape to the USSR in 1942. He crossed the border and the Soviet border officials arrested him for illegal crossing of the border. He was sent to the Gulag. They didn't care that he was a Jew escaping from the fascists. Aron perished in the Gulag in 1943.

In April 1944 Rot's factory where I worked was closed. All the Jews of Mukachevo were taken to the ghetto. We didn't have to move since our street formed the center of the two ghettos organized in Mukachevo because there were so many Jews. My older sister Margarita and her son, who was nine years old, happened to be in the other ghetto. We couldn't communicate since both ghettos were fenced and there was patrol watching the fence. My mother, my younger brother Shmil and I stayed in our house. We didn't know that our three brothers had perished. My sister Szerena was in Moscow and my brother Fishl was in England. I don't remember how long we stayed in the ghetto - probably a few weeks. We weren't allowed to leave the ghetto, but there were no other restrictions. We starved. We had no food in the ghetto. Occasionally villagers who knew our family brought us some food.

After some time we heard rumors that we were going to be taken to a concentration camp. Then we were told to prepare some food and clothes to take with us. Then all inmates were ordered to come to the territory of the brick factory. We spent I don't know how many days in the open air on the factory territory. From there we were taken to the railway station and went to Auschwitz by train. We traveled in an overcrowded train for about a week. We didn't get any food on the way. This happened in April 1944. When we came to the concentration camp we didn't know what kind of place it was. Later I got to know that this was Auschwitz.

I wasn't even in the same carriage with my brother. I wanted to go with my friend Frida and my brother wanted to be with his friends. In Auschwitz my mother and I got separated. The guard

shouted that older and younger people should stand in separate lines. They said that they were going to take the older ones on a truck. I hugged my mother and said, 'I'll see you soon!'. We were not meant to see each other ever again. My mother perished in the gas chamber in Auschwitz on the day of our arrival.

I saw my brother in the concentration camp when we were going to the washing facility. The boys were standing in a separate group and he was shouting something to me. I replied that we would talk later. I thought that our family would get together – we didn't know what kind of place this was. We didn't know it was a death camp. We thought it was a labor camp. This was the last time I saw my brother. My younger brother Shmil died from diarrhea caused by hunger. My cousin Zvi Akerman, Uncle Izidor's son, held him when he was dying. Zvi told me about it later. My sister Margarita also perished. She was young and strong and could have survived. The Germans didn't exterminate those that could work, but she was there with her son, and the children were sent to the gas chamber immediately. She probably didn't want to leave her son behind – of course she didn't, she was his mother and she went there with him.

We stayed in Auschwitz for three months, three months of hard exhausting work and hunger. This was a very hard period. I told this story in my interview to the Spielberg Foundation [Survivors of the Shoah Foundation]. I can't bring back these memories again. Later my friend and I were taken to a labor camp in Reichenbach [600 km from Auschwitz, Germany]. After 1945 this town belonged to eastern Germany. Life was relatively better there. We put together radio parts. It wasn't very hard work, but we were starved and exhausted.

On 8th May 1945 we saw that the guards of the camp were gone. Soviet tanks moved along the streets of the town and we got to know that the war was over. It's hard to find words to describe how happy we were. We didn't get any information in all those years. We were released on that day.

Post-war

My friend Frida and I set out on our way home. We went to the concentration camp together, were together in the camp, worked together, shared a bed and we were also on our way to Mukachevo together. We stayed in an abandoned apartment in Reichenbach for two weeks. Frida and I were waiting for some opportunity to go home when Red Cross representatives came looking for Czech citizens. We believed we were Czech citizens since Hungary had occupied Subcarpathia temporarily. We spoke Czech and thought this was sufficient proof that we came from Czechoslovakia. We were taken to the town of Trutnov in Czechoslovakia, the first town near the border. From there we were sent to Moravska Ostrava and then to Bratislava. From Bratislava we went home via Budapest. We didn't have to pay anywhere: we just said that we were going home from a concentration camp and were given way. In Budapest we went to a synagogue. We stayed in a big building that must have been a yeshivah. Doctors examined us. We received three meals a day and didn't have to do any work. We stayed there for a few days and then moved on. There was a group of young people that we went with.

When we arrived in Mukachevo we met Frida's friend Voita. He had been in a forced labor battalion in Austria with Ari. They returned to Mukachevo together. When they returned to Mukachevo there were no Jews back from the concentration camps yet, and Ari volunteered to the Soviet army. He said he wanted a revenge for what the fascists had done. He went to the army in April 1945 not

knowing that the war was going to be over soon. When the war was over he couldn't be demobilized since he came of age for mandatory service in the army. Subcarpathia became a part of the USSR and Ari was subject to service in the army as a Soviet citizen. I waited for him for three years: one year in the camp and two years after the war. He was demobilized in March 1947.

Voita, Frida's boyfriend, gave me the number of Ari's field mailbox. This was in 1945. I wrote letters, but it took some time before I received his response. His first letter reached me on 6th November 1945. This was when he got to know that I had survived. I sent him my photograph, which was taken after I returned home. I signed it with the words, 'To my beloved Ari'. Ari has kept it and we have this photograph in our family album now.

At home I heard that my sister Szerena lived in Uzhhorod. I went to the town party committee that had the only telephone in town and asked them to call Szerena and tell her that I was there. In June 1945 my sister took me to Uzhhorod. She had a six-bedroom apartment. Szerena worked at the regional party committee where she was head of department for work with women. She was wealthy and had plenty of food. This was the first time in many years that I had enough food.

In 1945 my brother Fulop returned from England. In England Fulop was in the Czech Corps. He didn't want to stay in England after the war. Fascism was done away with and the war was over. He decided he could go home. He didn't know what the Soviet regime was like. He also came to Szerena's. He married a Jewish girl from Uzhhorod in 1946. Her name was Shura Lebi. Fulop and Shura had a traditional Jewish wedding with a chuppah. After some time, they received an apartment. Fulop and Shura had two children: a son, Alexandr, and a daughter, Vera. Fulop was an engineer at the machine building plant. He died from a severe disease in Uzhhorod in 1987. He was buried in the Jewish section of the town cemetery. It was a Jewish funeral. His wife and children emigrated to Canada where his wife's sister lived.

I was eager to join the Communist Party. I believed it was my duty to do so. Since I didn't quite understand what the Soviet power was about I believed in my ideals. I believed the Soviet propaganda stating that all people were equal in the USSR and that there was no oppression or national segregation that we had since 1938. The ideas of communism are very attractive actually, but what they called communism in the USSR had nothing to do with communism. Only I didn't understand it then. An old friend of our family was the secretary of the district party committee. He came from Mukachevo. Old communist members from Mukachevo that knew Szerena and me gave me a recommendation to the Party. I became a party member within a day. My sister made arrangements for me to attend a three-month party training course to at least learn Ukrainian. It wasn't a problem for me. After finishing this course I went to work. At first I worked at the regional food department: I was responsible for the distribution of food products to stores. I had to go on business trips across the region, but there was no transportation. I didn't like this job. Braun, a Jewish man, was head of the town trade department. He offered me a job and I went to work at the public meals sector in the town trade department. I worked there until 1948.

In March 1947 Ari demobilized from the army. He came to meet me in Uzhhorod. Ari and I lived in Szerena's apartment. In late April Ari began to work as mechanic at a waste salvage shop called Utilptom. On 30th April he and I went for a walk to watch how they decorated the town for 1st May. We were walking when it suddenly occurred to us to go register our marriage at the registry office. We had our passports with us and the director of the office registered our marriage. We received

our certificate, had our photograph taken by a street photographer and each went to our offices to celebrate 1st May. Ari was back home before I returned from the party. He told my sister that we were married. That was it. Soon my friend Frida married Voita. They moved to Israel in the 1970s. They still live there. They are both old like we are.

Ari went to study in an evening school. He joined the Party at work. After finishing school he entered the Machine Building Faculty of Odessa Machine Building College. He was an extramural student. Later the shop where he worked became the Bolshevik Plant. There were 800 employees there and it was a big plant for Uzhhorod standards. Ari was the deputy technical director before he retired. He and I always identified ourselves as Jews. We didn't observe any Jewish traditions. We always wrote in application forms that our mother tongue was Yiddish. We also wrote that I was in a concentration camp during the war and Ari in a forced labor battalion. Other Soviet citizens tried to keep quiet about such facts in their biography.

In 1948 I attended a nine-month party training course. Then I went to work at the regional executive committee [Ispolkom] [14](#). I worked there in the food department from 1949 to 1985. There were good times and bad times. In 1948 the struggle against 'cosmopolitans' [15](#) began. I read a lot about it in the newspapers, but I never faced any negative attitude directed towards me. I remember January 1953, the time of the Doctors' Plot [16](#), a horrible time. Some people were forced to speak against doctors, saying they were poisoners. A friend of our family, the communist Rotman, a Jew, was forced to make a speech. He refused and was fired immediately. As for me, nobody forced me to say anything. I was kind of born with a silver spoon in my mouth.

How hard was Stalin's death for us! How I cried! My God, it was hard! All people cried. Then after Nikita Khrushchev [17](#) spoke at the Twentieth Party Congress [18](#) we heard what Stalin had done. Only when Khrushchev told us what Stalin had done did we see things clearly. We believed everything without second thought. We did see what was happening. We knew everything, but we didn't want to believe that it was true. We didn't want to give it a thought. We were like ostriches hiding their heads in the sand.

When in 1956 the Soviet troops came to Hungary we believed the Soviet propaganda telling us that the Germans wanted to invade Hungary and that it was necessary to rescue the Hungarians. [The interviewee is referring to the 1956 Revolution in Hungary.] [19](#) However, when the Soviet troops came to Czechoslovakia in 1968 [to put down the so-called Prague Spring] [20](#) we were indignant. We sympathized with the Czechs. We were upset when the Soviet troops destroyed democracy in Czechoslovakia. But what could we do? Some people in Moscow openly demonstrated their disagreement with the party policy in Czechoslovakia. We were no heroes here. We expressed our indignation in whispers sitting in the kitchen with our family. We were afraid of being arrested. Anyone that dared to disagree with the party policy had to be punished and we knew this but too well.

Life went on. We received an apartment. Life settled down a little. Our son Pyotr was born in 1951. His Jewish name is Pinchas. He was named after my husband's paternal grandfather. Our second son Yuri was born in 1955. Both our sons were circumcised. It was a tribute of respect to our parents and members of the family that perished. We hired a nanny for our children. Her name was Palania. She was an old Christian woman and very religious. She always reproached us, 'Why are you not teaching your children to have faith in God? I would baptize Pyotr.' We laughed at hearing

this. Frankly speaking, we weren't religious people. We didn't go to the synagogue, not even on Jewish holidays. The Soviet power struggled against religion. My husband and I held official posts in governmental offices and were party members. We couldn't afford to demonstrate any sign of religiosity. Besides, during the war, when we saw that Jews were exterminated only due to the fact that they were Jews, our faith in God who allowed this to happen was shattered.

We raised our sons like common Soviet children. They were Young Octobrists [21](#), pioneers and Komsomol [22](#) members. They studied in a Russian school. We spoke Hungarian at home, but they have very poor Hungarian. However, they can speak it when necessary. They also studied English. Our family doesn't actually use Yiddish. Not at all! Our children knew about Jewish traditions. We always remembered about Jewish holidays. We didn't celebrate them, though. We told our children about these holidays. We showed them what games we played when we were children. I also cooked traditional Jewish food. I often made gefilte fish – this was their favorite food. On Saturday I made chicken broth. I also used to make cholent, they still like it. So, we tried to teach our children. My children knew very well what Rosh Hashanah was and that one had to fast before Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and that God would forgive all sins. Although we didn't actually fast. We told our children how the seder at Pesach is conducted. We knew this all since we grew up in this religious environment. When they grew older I made a Rosh Hashanah meal for them: tsimes and fish and all traditional food. My conscience is clear: I taught my sons what they had to know about Jewish traditions. And they will live their life to their liking... I'm not saying that we inspired them to religious thoughts, but we tried to teach them traditions. Most important is that they like it all.

After finishing school Pyotr went to Leningrad to enter a college. Anti-Semitism was at its height and I didn't want it to have an impact on my son. Anti-Semitism in Russia wasn't as strong as in Ukraine. Pyotr finished school with a silver medal and was a winner of school Olympiads many times. He entered the Faculty of Physics and Engineering of Optic Mechanic College in Leningrad. He was very fond of reading books by Jewish writers. We collected works by Sholem Aleichem [23](#) that he enjoyed reading very much. Pyotr is very knowledgeable. Upon graduation he received a mandatory job assignment [24](#) to the instrument manufacture plant in Uzhhorod. In the late 1980s the plant was closed. Our son went to work with an Internet company. Pyotr married a colleague of his. She is an electronic engineer. They have no children. My son's friend emigrated to Germany and talked my son into moving there. Of course we wish our son was somewhere near, but he must live his own life. Pyotr and his wife live in Frankfurt am Main, our son studies at Siemens. After he finishes a training course the company will employ him.

Our younger son, Yuri, finished the Electrotechnical Faculty of Lvov Polytechnic College. He worked at the instrument manufacturing plant for some time. Now he works at HESD. Yuri is married. He has a son named Fulop after my brother, born in 1976. Our sons have non-Jewish wives, but they have happy marriages and that's what matters for a mother.

We had many friends. Most of them were Jews. Our closest friends were Frida and her husband Voita. Our house was open to all friends. We celebrated birthdays and Soviet holidays and enjoyed getting together to party. We had discussions, sang and danced. Now our home is quiet. Many of our friends live in other countries and we rarely get a chance to meet. Many have passed away. My sister Szerena died in Uzhhorod in 1971. She was buried in the central cemetery. Szerena was an atheist and we didn't arrange a Jewish funeral for her.

In the evening after work we liked to get together with the family to share the news of the day. At weekends we went for long walks. Our sons joined us willingly. In summer we spent our vacation together. We went to the seashore or rented a house in a village in Subcarpathia. We liked walking in the woods or swimming in a river. Sometimes our friends joined us. In the early 1970s my husband got an opportunity to rent a plot of land. We built a small hut and it became our favorite pastime to stay there. We planted fruit trees, berries and many flowers. We enjoyed working in our garden, but now we are too old and our son Yuri does it.

When Jews began to move to Israel in the 1980s we didn't quite want to move there. We weren't young any longer and we didn't know the language. It's hard to start a new life or make new friends at this age. We didn't condemn those that decided otherwise – it's their life. If our sons decided to go there we would have followed them, but they weren't enthusiastic about this idea. So we stayed here.

Perestroika

We were enthusiastic about perestroika [24](#) and it couldn't have been otherwise. My husband's two sisters and our friends lived in Israel, but we didn't dare to correspond with them. My husband and I held official positions and were party members and we might have been punished for corresponding with citizens of capitalist countries. We both left the Party in 1991. At best we would have been expelled from the Party and fired from work. We could only meet our relatives in Hungary since Soviet citizens were allowed to visit Hungary without much bureaucracy.

When we met my husband's sisters in Budapest in 1987 we told them that if things kept moving in this direction we would be able to visit them in Israel the following year. They burst into laughter and said it couldn't be true. A year later we visited Israel for the first time. The whole family got together and we said our first toast to Gorbachev [25](#) for getting this opportunity. It was incredible. It was a miracle that we could travel to Israel from the Soviet Union. We've been in Israel four times. It's a wonderful country. Its residents made this country and are proud of their home country: both younger and older people. Young Jews there are patriots. They are proud to fulfill their military duty rather than trying to avoid it like here. Ancient and modern history is harmonically entwined in Israel. People cherish their history. It's a pity there's no peace on this beautiful land. God tests Jews sending trying circumstances of life like He did during World War II. I wish the people of Israel peace and prosperity.

Yuri's son, our only grandson, went to study in Israel in 1994, at the age of 18. He studied sports medicine at Wingate College in Netanya. He is a 4th-year student. He is doing well there. We are happy that he is there.

Perestroika brought many changes into Jewish life in Uzhhorod. Jews began to get together. They are glad to attend Jewish events. The synagogue was half-empty before perestroika. In 1995 Ari began to go to the synagogue on Sabbath, not because he is religious, but to socialize. He didn't go to the synagogue before. Hesed was established in 1999. Ari always says: 'However they curse the government my position never changes – if they do not disturb Jewish life they are good enough'.

Hesed supports us a lot. We were rather hard up and when the director of Hesed offered us free meals in their canteen I felt quite awkward about it and didn't quite wish to go there, but now I'm so happy about those meals. I've become quite lazy. I don't have to cook now. Of course, I cook on

Saturday and Sunday. Perhaps, I feel tired of cooking because I've grown older, but we are glad to have meals and get clothes every now and then. But the main thing about Hesed is that they've revived our cultural life. We attend wonderful literature and music parties. We like going to Hesed. We already have acquaintances there. Women bring what they cook there. It's nice to try and compliment one another on this. We are happy about communicating with Jews. Our friends are gone, but we need to socialize. We go to concerts and meet people. I like it a lot. We also speak Yiddish. Ari and I also exchange phrases in Yiddish. I've always missed this. Ari is fond of computers and studies computer at Hesed. It's not just a hobby for him, but also an opportunity to exchange e-mails with his grandson.

We've never left this area, but we've kind of lived in a few countries. Now we live in independent Ukraine. May there be peace in Ukraine and may there be peace in Israel. I hope so that nobody on earth has to live through the horrors of war again.

Glossary

1 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.

2 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.

3 Reparation Agreement at the Yalta Conference

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, US President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin met at Yalta, Crimea, USSR, in February 1945 to adopt a common policy.

Most of the important decisions made remained secret until the end of World War II for military or political reasons. The main demand of the 'Big Three' was Germany's unconditional surrender. As part of the Yalta Conference an agreement was concluded, the main goal of which was to compensate Germany's war enemies, and to destroy Germany's war potential. The countries that received the most reparation were those that had borne the main burden of the war (i.e. the Soviet Union). The agreement contained the following: within two years, removal of all potential war-producing materials from German possession, annual deliveries of German goods for a designated amount of time, and the use of German labor. Fifty per cent of the twenty billion dollars that Germany had to pay in reparation damages was to go to the Soviet Union.

4 Pogroms in Ukraine

In the 1920s there were many anti-Semitic gangs in Ukraine. They killed Jews and burnt their houses, they robbed their houses, raped women and killed children.

5 Six-Day-War

The first strikes of the Six-Day-War happened on 5th June 1967 by the Israeli Air Force. The entire war only lasted 132 hours and 30 minutes. The fighting on the Egyptian side only lasted four days, while fighting on the Jordanian side lasted three. Despite the short length of the war, this was one of the most dramatic and devastating wars ever fought between Israel and all of the Arab nations. This war resulted in a depression that lasted for many years after it ended. The Six-Day-War increased tension between the Arab nations and the Western World because of the change in mentalities and political orientations of the Arab nations.

6 Gorky, Maxim (born Alexei Peshkov) (1868-1936)

Russian writer, publicist and revolutionary.

7 Cheder for girls

Model cheders were set up in Russia where girls studied reading and writing.

8 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.

9 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.

10 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.

11 Gulag

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.

12 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.

13 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.

14 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.

15 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'.

16 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.

17 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.

18 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.

19 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.

20 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.

21 Young Octobrist

In Russian Oktyabrenok, or 'pre-pioneer', designates Soviet children of seven years or over preparing for entry into the pioneer organization.

22 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.

23 Sholem Aleichem (pen name of Shalom Rabinovich (1859-1916))

Yiddish author and humorist, a prolific writer of novels, stories, feuilletons, critical reviews, and poem in Yiddish, Hebrew and Russian. He also contributed regularly to Yiddish dailies and weeklies. In his writings he described the life of Jews in Russia, creating a gallery of bright characters. His

creative work is an alloy of humor and lyricism, accurate psychological and details of everyday life. He founded a literary Yiddish annual called *Di Yidishe Folksbibliotek* (The Popular Jewish Library), with which he wanted to raise the despised Yiddish literature from its mean status and at the same time to fight authors of trash literature, who dragged Yiddish literature to the lowest popular level. The first volume was a turning point in the history of modern Yiddish literature. Sholem Aleichem died in New York in 1916. His popularity increased beyond the Yiddish-speaking public after his death. Some of his writings have been translated into most European languages and his plays and dramatic versions of his stories have been performed in many countries. The dramatic version of *Tevye the Dairyman* became an international hit as a musical (*Fiddler on the Roof*) in the 1960s.

24 Mandatory job assignment in the USSR

Graduates of higher educational institutions had to complete a mandatory 2-year job assignment issued by the institution from which they graduated. After finishing this assignment young people were allowed to get employment at their discretion in any town or organization.

25 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.

26 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.