

Bernard Knezo Schönbrun In The Uniform Of The Sixth Labor Battalion



This photo was taken in Borkut in 1941 and shows me (on the left) and another boy from the battalion. I don't remember his name now. We nicknamed him Shmule. He was of smaller stature. In civilian life he was a housepainter.. In the beginning we only trained. We got old Austro-Hungarian army uniforms and sailor's caps. We of course didn't get weapons. In the beginning the uniforms were green, then blue, so we'd be easily distinguishable, and so that it would be immediately obvious who we are. Then they divided us up among various locations. Construction companies close to the army needed workers, so they asked the army for people, and thus work

groups were created. In the beginning I worked in Presov. In time they transferred me to the Borkut region, near Presov. In Borkut we first built ourselves barracks, in which we then lived. Then we were building roads into the forest, where there were army supply dumps. After a month I got home on leave, which I of course had to pay for. At that time my middle sister's husband asked me, "So, you're not in the office anymore?" [In those days and in that simple village environment, when someone had attended high school, it was naturally assumed that in the army he'd be working in an office, or would have an administrative function.] And I answered him that there were 600 such people there. If all 600 were in the office, they wouldn't have anyone to train. A naive idea and opinion, which I had at the time.