

Sophia Belotserkovskaya



This is a picture of me as a student. I was photographed for my student's identity card in Kiev in 1946. On 12th July 1944 my parents, Lev Belotserkovski and Rachil Belotserkovskaya (nee Shukhman) made our way back from evacuation in Kazakhstan to Kiev with the theater where my father worked. Kreschatik and many historical monuments had been ruined. We got accommodation in a hotel. Our apartment was occupied by other tenants. After a month we received a room in a communal apartment in the city center. My father walked to the theater through piles of bricks on Kreschatik. Employees of the theater and I worked at voskresniks cleaning up the debris. We worked hard cleaning up the city. In September 1944 I went to study at the Faculty of Philology at Kiev State University. I became a 2nd-year student. I graduated in 1948. Many Jews, including our family, remember the period in the history of the Soviet Union known as a

state campaign of anti-Semitism called 'campaign against cosmopolitans'. Jews were declared to be cosmopolitans. They were fired and many of them arrested. Some were even executed. Vatulia and Kosheski, honored actors of the USSR who worked in the theater, helped me to get a job. I was employed as an editor at a publishing house called Soviet School. In 1949 I got an invitation to a plenary meeting of Soviet writers because I was interested in the development of Ukrainian literature. I was very proud to represent our publishing house. This plenary meeting made a terrible and oppressive impression on me. It was conducted under the slogan 'Down with cosmopolitans and anti-patriots' [meaning 'down with the kikes']. Well-known Soviet writers made aggressive speeches. This anti-Semitic campaign reached its height in early 1953. This was the period of the so-called Doctors' Plot. I was on a business trip in Moscow and remember a woman in a tram, shouting that a man with Semitic appearance had pricked her with a syringe. Later, in the 1980s, newspapers wrote that KGB [State Security Committee] agents in disguise commuted in public transportation to provoke people. But back then people seriously believed in Jewish murderers in white cloaks. It was no surprise: there were massive articles about doctor being poisoners. I don't know what happened to this woman: she just got off, but other people in the tram continued shouting curses addressed to Jews.