

Yakov Honiksmann



That's what I look like now. This photo of me was taken in Lvov in 2000. When perestroika began, Jewish life began to revive in the town. In 1985 we celebrated the jubilee of Sholem Aleichem. I was there, of course. I attended other meetings of Jewish intellectuals. The party leadership of the college reacted immediately. They were all informed promptly. The secretary of the party unit asked me, 'Have you become a Zionist? You demonstrate too much interest in Jewish life.' However, the flow of time changed all attitudes. The attitude toward Jews changed in society. I was glad about such great progress in Jewish life. I believed that Ukraine had to be an independent country to progress in its development. In 1990 I submitted my request to quit the Party. They asked me, 'Why?', and I replied, 'I disagree with the policy of the Party'. But more and more often I recall the words of my teacher Aizezian that people that make history have no idea about it. In 1989 I became one of the founders of the Jewish Sholem Aleichem Society. I began to work on Jewish subjects. I didn't write about Jewish subjects before 1992, but now I have six books, about ten brochures and over 200 articles. My books were published and became popular. The books published by the Lvov Jewish Sholem Aleichem Society are: 'Catastrophe of Jews in Western Ukraine', 300 pages, published in 1998, 5,000 copies; 'Jews of Brody Town 1584-1944', 2001, 2,000 copies; 'Yanovskiy camp', 1996, 3,000 copies; 'People, years, events. From our ancient history', 1998, 3,000 copies; '600 years and two years', about the history of Jews in Drohobych and Boryslav, 1999, 2,000 copies, and others. I have come to the end of my life - my 80th birthday, with significant accomplishments. I visit the Sholem Aleichem Society and Hesed - these institutions are housed in the same building. Many people are interested in Jewish subjects, even those that didn't disclose their Jewish identity in the past years. My daughter Victoria Venediktova is one of such people. She works as a teacher and I have no contact with her. My wife and I never considered departing for Israel. I have a lot of things to do here while there I would be merely a pensioner. I am a Polish - a European Jew and I belong here. I've always remembered that being a Jew is a great responsibility. If anybody accepts a bribe, large or small, he would be called corrupt, but if I accept one people would say 'all zhydy are the same.' I must think not only about myself, but also about my people.