

Frida Muchnik



This is me. This photo was taken in a photo shop in Bershad in 1956. I was photographed for the memory for the family album.

In 1944 I still studied in the 10th form, when I became an apprentice in the bank where my cousin sister worked as a cashier. Director of the school did not know I was working. After finishing school I entered an extramural Bank Technical school in Vinnitsa. I worked diligently and was a smart

employee, when in 1947 the bank received a direction to have no related employees in the bank. Though a nephew of the manager of the bank worked in this bank, and chief accountant had her niece working in this same bank, they fired me since I was the poorest and had no rights. So I lost my job in this hard and hungry year of 1947. Life was very hard, and again my father's Ukrainian friends helped us. Shortly afterward I went to work as a cashier to the 'New life' cooperative of invalids. I worked there a little over one year. The members of this cooperative happened to distort their documents, speculated, produced many products without registering them in production lists, and in 1949 an assize court took place in Bershad. All employees, but me, went to trial. They were sentenced to imprisonment. I went to work in the 'Trud' [labor] cooperative. I worked there for many years. There were many Jews in Bershad in the early 1950s - almost all those who survived the Great Patriotic War returned home. Probably for this reason there was no such adamant anti-Semitism here in the late 1940s-early 1950s, the period of 'rootless cosmopolitans' and the 'doctors' plot' went past us. We didn't read newspapers and had no interest in politics. The main thing then was to survive and the rest seemed insufficient. I didn't hear about these campaigns till the 1990s. I remember a meeting in the central square, when Stalin died: all people were crying and so was I.

I can say that I sacrificed my life to my parents. I realized I would never be able to leave them. If my brothers had survived, my life might have been different: I would have got education and arranged my personal life. I had friends, but I did not meet with young men. We lived in a small room and I knew I would have no place for my own family, if I wanted one. In 1952 I went to see my cousin sister in Donetsk. I met a young Jewish man there. His name was David. We saw each other for few days and then registered our marriage in a district registry office. There was the first night and there few days of closeness, but this was all there was. He did not want to go to Bershad, and I could not leave my parents. I returned to my parents, but I did not say a word to my parents. Some time later my acquaintance working in the passport office helped me to obtain another passport with no trace of my short and unhappy marriage. I don't even remember David's surname. I've never seen him again. Later I met a very good man, but my parents did not give their consent to our marriage, because he was Ukrainian. This was the end of my personal life. I have no children. My parents were not feeling well and I could not even afford to spend my vacations elsewhere. I only took 10 days off every year to go to Odessa to take treatment for my back: I had osteochondrosis due to the lack of movement, I had to sit at my desk at work. We didn't have an apartment of our own for many years. I kept writing letters to the district executive committee requesting an apartment, but each time they gave apartments to somebody else, who could afford to bribe them. In 1971 we finally received an apartment - a little two bedroom apartment on the first floor. Papa died five months after we moved into it. He died on 2 July 1971. My mother passed away one year later.