

Valeria Boguslavskaya



This is a picture of me, taken in Kiev in 1965 before my first book of poems was published. I'm an engineer. A long time ago I began to write poems. At school I translated from Ukrainian into Russian and sometimes from English into Russian. The first poetess that I translated into Ukrainian was Veronika Tushnova. Later I got fond of Marina Tsvetaeva. My first book of poems was published in 1965. The publishing house kept my manuscript for a long time until an acquaintance of mine called them and, introducing herself as a high official, told them to publish my book. She did it as a joke but it worked and my first book of poems was published. Then I couldn't publish a line until the middle of the 1990s. They just didn't publish any Jewish writers at all at the time. All

publishing houses were state owned and there was a tough censorship. It was impossible to publish a single line. I write poems in Ukrainian. In Kherson I had wonderful Ukrainian teachers and I learned the language to perfection. I love this language and I believe it to be my mother tongue. I don't know Yiddish. When my grandmother was alive I asked her to teach me Yiddish. She said, 'You won't need it'. A few years ago I entered an evening school to study Yiddish. Now I have a good conduct of Yiddish and translate Jewish poets. Recently a book of my poems and translations was published: they are translations of poems by Peretz Markish and others. My interest in the Jewish language and traditions is based on literature. I don't observe Jewish traditions or celebrate holidays. I don't even know them. Israel is just another country for me. I do sympathize with its people but I simply don't agree with many things happening there. I don't think that one should respond to murder and terrorism with similar methods. I love Ukraine and, frankly speaking, I don't know who I am: a Jewish Ukrainian or a Ukrainian Jew.