

Basya Chaika With Her Granddaughter Katya



That's me, Basya Chaika, with my granddaughter Katya, who is 5 years old. The photo was made in 1990 in Primorsk. Since 1955, I have been living in Kiev again. When I look back at my life in various military camps while my husband was in the Soviet Army, I always remember a cold and almost always hungry existence, crowded houses with cockroaches everywhere and huge rats active at night. Once, a rat bit my young Tanya, so the whole house ran after this rat to show it to the medics and free the child from shots. But I also remember that we were all friends in these

towns and villages, the team was always international, and all the holidays were cheerful and long, even though there was not enough food. We could not imagine somebody saying anything negative or irrespective about Jews. Having finally completed my secondary education at the age of 40, I went to work at the Education Ministry. I worked there till 1985. By the end of the 1980's, there were fewer Jews in Kiev, but my family increased: in 1985, my long-awaited granddaughter Katya was born. Her father, Tatyana's husband, is Viktor Malakhov, a son of famous sculptor, Aaron Foterman, and Belarussian doctor Tamara Malakhova. When he finished school and could not enter the medical institute after having passed practically all exams with excellent marks, he changed his last name for his mother's. Then he entered the philosophy department of the University, where he studied together with my daughter. They have been living and working together for the past 20 years. My husband and I doted upon our granddaughter. His last words before he died in 1991 were also concerning her. Unfortunately, he did not live to see her as a student and did not know that in the third grade her parents transferred Katya to the first Jewish national school of Kiev, which she finished with honors this year. My granddaughter Katya is a person of the new world and a new era that began for us in 1991. She is absolutely free in her political thinking, her religion and her ethnicity. This year, Katya passed exams with a very high rating and entered two universities at once: the National 'Kyiv-Mohyla Academy' University and the State Jewish Solomon University. She studies at the philosophy department. Even now she speaks fluent Russian, Ukrainian, English, and Hebrew. She knows Jewish traditions well. She loves reading the Torah and Talmud in their original. It was through her that the Jewish tradition came back to our home. Katya tells me that the most valuable thing in life is free choice. She is probably right. It is not easy for me to understand her. Neither in my childhood nor in the rest of my life did I have such freedom, but I also understand what a dear price was paid for this freedom. I am very glad that my beloved city of Kiev is becoming not only proudly Ukrainian, but also Jewish: Jewish schools, synagogues, theaters, 'Khesed Avot' - this is all very good; I just pray and wish that people will finally be able to live in peace. That's because there is probably no greater evil than mutual hatred. I am especially afraid of national and religious hatred. And if religions or nationalities are able to separate people and make them hate one another, then something is wrong in this world. Because the most important thing is for people to get along, to accept the differences of others. . And they need very little to make this happen: a little kindness is a very good thing.