

Vladimir Olgart



This is me during my summer vacation at the sanatorium in Nemirov in 1951. [During the war] I didn't have any information about my family. In autumn 1945 the war was over and we got on our way back. [Through] the evacuation agency I learnt that my wife and daughter were in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. I wrote to my wife and got a response from her, in which she said that she had married another man. She probably thought that I had perished having had no information about me for almost six years. My wife and daughter didn't want to come back. It was a blow to me. I returned to Kiev in 1946. My house hadn't been destroyed, but it was housing a kindergarten. I rented the same room in Podol where my first wife and I used to live after we got married and got a job as a barber. However, everything in Kiev reminded me of my family life, and I decided to start my life anew. I moved to Leningrad in 1953 and lived there until 1956. I rented a room and got a job as a

barber. But I didn't feel at home in Leningrad. I felt homesick and returned to Kiev. After the war there was only one operating synagogue in Podol. I went there on Pesach, Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah. There were so many people that many of them had to stay outside the synagogue, and the whole street was crowded on holidays. Going to the synagogue became a need to me. My mother brought Jewish traditions back into my life. We all got together on Sabbath. My mother always cooked for Jewish holidays. We couldn't get all the necessary products, and our dinners were much poorer than before the war. It wasn't kosher food, but there was always stuffed fish. My mother also got matzah for Pesach. My brother Mikhail and my sister Riva came with their families; I was on my own. I was introduced to Jewish women, but I didn't think of marriage. My wife's betrayal hurt me deeply, and I was afraid of being hurt again.