

Susanna Sirota



Here you can see me with my joy and consolation: my cat whom I found when he was small, thin, dirty and miserable. This photo was taken in Kiev in 1997.

We had a quiet life. We worked, went to the cinema and theaters. My husband was a football fan and often went to the stadium in summer. In summer we spent vacations at the seashore. We liked cruising down the Dnieper to the Crimea. It didn't cost much. In the evening we enjoyed having a stroll in the park.

We were horrified about perestroika. We couldn't believe that this avalanche of things published in newspapers and spoken on TV could have been possibly happening in our quiet lives. We felt some uncertainty. We, dedicated communists in the past, felt like criminals, but we didn't know anything like this and lived a common life like everybody else. Big shots of party officials found their way promptly and became millionaires and the majority of the population became poor in a jiffy. They lost their savings. Our pension is not enough to pay for utility services, not to mention medications. When I see intelligent people searching for food leftovers in the garbage and eating whatever they find, I feel terrible. It was out of the question in the USSR.

A good thing about this period is the rebirth of the Jewish life. I never felt anything Jewish about myself, but when in the 1990s I heard songs in Yiddish for the first time I understood. I had spontaneous tears in my eyes. I recalled that my father used to sing them in my childhood, but then he probably forgot them all.