

Faina Minkova



This is me, photographed in 2000 in Chernovtsy. In the past decade Jewish life in Ukraine changed dramatically. We began to identify ourselves as Jews. People of other nationalities respect our feelings. I can't imagine anybody calling me 'zhydovka' [kike], an expression I often heard when I was a child and a young girl. Many of our Jewish neighbors moved to other countries. We have more Ukrainian and Russian neighbors. We get along with them well. I believe the fact that they use the word 'Jew' without feeling embarrassed about it indicates a positive change. People tried to avoid saying this word in the past. My Ukrainian neighbor was appointed director of the Jewish school. Her grandson goes to this school and studies Jewish religion and traditions. His favorite subject is Hebrew. When he comes to see us and finds that I do something wrong, that is, non-compliant with Jewish traditions, like cooking meat with cheese he points out to me, 'We, Jews, do it in a different way'. In recent years I've never heard anything bad being said about our family, or Jews in general. I believe that the situation is stable, although who knows? If there were a pogrom I don't know who of our neighbors would come first to rob us, if not kill us. There are such people,

although they belong to an older generation. Young people aren't anti-Semitic. We read Jewish newspapers regularly. My granddaughter goes to the dancing and art club of Hesed. I attend lectures on the history of Jewish people and religion. Regretfully, I don't have time to attend all Hesed events. I've never been interested in politics and never belonged to any party or movement. All I wanted was to have a peaceful and quiet life. We don't go to the synagogue, don't know any prayers and thus don't pray. I believe it's characteristic for most Jews that grew up during the Soviet regime. But we celebrate Jewish holidays at home. We observe traditions and cook traditional food. I make hamantashen at Purim. We cook traditional food at Pesach and make many things from matzah. Unfortunately, there isn't much that we can afford, but we make the best of what we have. Of course, it would be good to have a table laid in accordance with all Jewish traditions, but we think it more important to feed our souls.