

Sheindlia Krishtal



Me, Sheindlia Krishtal, at the republican meeting of journalists at the Continental hotel. Kiev, 1947.

In 1944 I finished the university in Alma-Ata and continued my work at the radio committee until re-evacuation was announced in 1945. How happy we were to come back home. There were fire-works on Victory Day of 9 May 1945 - people came out into the streets congratulating each other on victory, crying, and laughing. We - my father and I, Fira, Faina, Riva, Lilia and Samuel with his family - returned to Kiev.

Our house was destroyed. My father found a small room in a basement in 9, Vorovskogo Street. It was an awful dwelling, but we were glad to have a roof over our heads.

I went to the radio committee - I thought I was a good journalist and my materials were valued highly in Moscow radio agency. However, it was difficult for a Jew to get an employment - I was rejected. I addressed this issue to the Communist party Central Committee - how naive I was thinking that they might help. I heard that the Regional Police agency was looking for a teacher of the Russian language. I submitted my documents and in some time they sent me their request to visit them regarding my employment issue. I became a Russian teacher and, as it usually happens I also had a job offer from a popular Ukrainian newspaper 'Youth of Ukraine'. I began to work in newspaper.

There was little food after the war, but we were young and took it easy. In 1947 we received food coupons and rationed food, but it was all right with us.

I went on business trips as correspondent and then I got an offer to go to Chernovtsy as correspondent [400 km from Kiev]. I made tours of Stanislavskaya and Chernovitskaya region. There were Jews in these villages and I didn't face any anti-Semitism. I lived in a rabbi's house in Chernovtsy. He was in the ghetto during the Holocaust with his wife and daughter. They had to go

through terrible hardships, but they survived. I lived in the room that formerly belonged to the rabbi's family and they were not happy to have another tenant. The rabbi was a short man wearing a yarmulke, his wife was a short woman, too. The synagogue was closed and they constantly prayed at home. I viewed them as vestige of the past. I met with Tania - my former roommate in Alma-Ata. She lived nearby. She knew the rabbi's family and told them that they didn't have to fear anything and that I was a Jew - how happy they were. They began to treat me in a different way. I had a telephone installed in my room and got an opportunity to transmit my materials to editor's office in Kiev.

I didn't stay in Kiev long. I replaced Irina Shkarovskaya, head of the department of studying young people. Irina got a new job at the "Barvinok" magazine in Kiev and recommended me to her former position. This position had to be approved by the Komsomol Central Committee. I was a Komsomol leader and had a good reputation. I was approved and began head of the department: I wrote about schools and higher educational institutions.

At the end of 1947 Shabsai Khandros, (he was generally called Sasha) returned from the construction of automobile factory. He became head of the department of propaganda in the "Youth of Ukraine" newspaper. I transmitted my materials to him by phone. This was how we met. We had food coupons and went together to have meals at the canteen in 22, Vorovskogo Street. He began to court me - he brought me a little food to the train when I was going on business one day. Or he would put an orange into my desk when oranges were hard to get. Sasha was a taciturn man and when he said something it was interesting and smart. We began to date and built up very warm relationships.

In 1949 we got married. Since we were both journalists I decided against changing my last name to my husband's and remained Krishtal. After the civil ceremony our colleagues arranged a wedding party for us in the office. They bought a bottle of champagne and changed the sign "Champagne" to Komsomol youth wedding #1" and also glued our photos on the label. They also gave us a beautiful set of dishes made in Czechoslovakia - I still have 3 pieces from it. So, we celebrated our Komsomol youth wedding in our basement in Vorovskogo Street.

This was the period of persecution of Jews, but we couldn't speak our mind, even though we understood that there was much injustice.