

Michael Kotliar's Family



My family. From left to right: my wife Polina Kotliar [nee Trachtenberg], my son Jacob Kotliar; Ana Kotliar, the wife of my brother Shoil, my brother Shoil Kotliar and his son Boris Kotliar in our home in Chernovtsy in 1989. I got married in 1969 when I was a student. My wife was born in Mogilyov-Podoskiy, Vinnitsa region, in 1931. Her parents were assimilated Soviet Jews. Polina doesn't know Yiddish or any Jewish traditions. Her mother was a housewife, and her father was a wine-merchant. After the war the family moved to Chernovtsy. Polina is a poor housewife because her mother didn't teach her how to do things around the house. Her mother wanted Polina to get a higher education. Polina graduated from the Faculty of History of Chernovtsy University and worked as a history teacher at a Russian secondary school. We didn't have a traditional Jewish wedding. I was a communist and didn't want to have a chuppah. I didn't want to hide things from my comrades. My wife didn't want a religious wedding either. We had a civil ceremony and a wedding dinner with members of the family. My father was angry that we didn't have a chuppah and didn't attend the wedding. My mother came to the wedding, but my father didn't even congratulate me. He never came to visit us. When my wife and I went to visit my parents my father didn't say a word of reproach, but he never came to see us in our house. My son, Jacob, was born in 1970. He wasn't circumcised and doesn't know a word of Yiddish. Polina is a typical Soviet person. She took no interest in Jewish traditions or anything around her. All she cared about was herself and her health condition. Our son takes after her. He didn't want to continue his education after finishing school. Jacob works as a locksmith at a plant and watches football matches on TV - that's all he likes. He was married for a short time and has a son. His wife divorced him. He doesn't even feel an urge to communicate with his son. He believes that giving his son some money is sufficient. Jacob has no future. I felt very sorry for him until I realized that I wouldn't be able to change his life. The daughter of my younger brother Shoil, and her husband moved to the US, too, at the end of the 1980s. Shoil and his son, Boris, followed them some time later. He was chief engineer at a design institute here, but he didn't find a job in the US because he was already over 50 years old when he moved there. He lives an isolated life.