

Miriam Patova And Her Family



This family picture was taken in Tallinn after the war. Sitting are my father Benjamin Patov and my mother Sheina Patova. My older sister Rachil and I are standing. This photo was taken in Tallinn in 1948.

During the war we were in evacuation in Cheliabinsk. When we returned to Tallinn we got to know about the horrific happenings during the war. Estonia was the first European country to report its territory Judenfrei, or Jew-free to Hitler. Thinking about it now, I'm trying to remember whether we were scared of living here after the war, what our neighbors thought about us and what we thought about them knowing about what was happening, but these issues never came up at that time. We got along well with our neighbors. We had good neighborly relations. You can say, 'What kind of people were you? How could you forgive this?' Then I would ask, 'And what kind of people are those who move to Germany nowadays? How can they walk the streets that had been flooded with blood? Why don't they move to Israel instead?' As for what I think about Estonians, I know these people aren't to blame for what had happened. Perhaps, a big part of the blame is on the Soviet regime.

Though my father was a deeply religious person, he must have been shocked with what was happening in Estonia during the German occupation. My father expressed rebellious ideas saying, 'What kind of God do we have? Is he deaf and blind allowing such horrors and crimes to be committed?'

We were very poor after the war. My mother did her best to feed us, but it was impossible to get shoes or clothes. Everybody wore white tennis shoes cleaning them with toothpaste. Also, if we could buy calico, we made calico dresses.

Shortly after the war, my older sister Rachil married Boris Kulman, a violinist of the Tallinn symphonic orchestra. In 1946 their first son Armir was born, and in 1951 Rafail, the second son was born. My sister was a housewife.

In 1948 the struggle against cosmopolitanism began in the USSR. I knew something was going on. My parents discussed something lowering their voices, but they didn't have any such discussions in my

presence. Our family wasn't involved in anything like this. My sister got married and had a son. We had to take care of our everyday routines and had no time for political issues.