

Gutman Smerkovicus With Rochl Kamenman, Her Husband Alter Kamenman And Their Daughter Zelda



This is my family: my husband Gutman is sitting on the right, to the left is my sister Rochl Kamenman, her husband Alter Kamenman is standing and their daughter Zelda is sitting in the center. The picture was taken in Kaunas in 1946.

My sister Rochl married a local Jew, Alter Kamenman, and in 1939 their daughter Zelda was born.

I also started noticing pleasant young people. One of them had been my friend since my school years. He became the closest person to me. Gutman Shmerkovich was born in 1916. He came from a very poor family. Gutman proposed to me and on 31st December 1940 we got our marriage registered in the marriage registry office. My parents didn't even insist on a Jewish wedding as they clearly understood that we would be against it, so they let us do as we wished. My husband and I moved into our house. We were given a corner in the drawing-room. Our nook was behind a partition. Gutman was loved by my parents and my mother literally adored him. Soon I got pregnant, but I didn't stop working. In mid-June 1941 I went on a business trip to take care of the problems of the local Rokiskis newspaper. I felt anxious and there were talks that German troops were deployed at the border. Late in the evening on 21st June I came back to Kaunas. At 4am the war broke out.

When my mother died in evacuation, Father went to stay with Rochl, who lived in Tartar SSR. As soon as Lithuania was liberated, my sister Hanna was called there to be a manager of Party nationalized assets. Soon my father also came there. My daughter and I stayed in Konstantinovo till December 1944. It was a long trip. Everybody had his seat on the train. In general, our way home differed from the trip when we ran away from Lithuania in 1941. When we came back to Kaunas, it turned out that my daughter and I had no place to live. Hanna and her husband Fyodor moved to Vilnius. They didn't have children. Rochl, Alter and Zelda also settled in a poky room.

Our house in Zelyonaya Gora wasn't destroyed. It was occupied by a Lithuanian. She moved from Viliampol. Father got settled there as well and he waited for that Lithuanian to vacate it. I was offered a job, to be in charge of the Jewish kindergarten. It was established under the auspice of the Jewish orphanage. I went to work in the kindergarten and occupied a poky room on the premises with my daughter. It was hard work as I had never held an administrative job before. I had no other way out as I had no place to live. By that time our house in Zelyonaya Gora was unoccupied, but I couldn't live there as it took me too much time to get to work. We had no right to live in the kindergarten. In accordance with the law I wasn't entitled to live on the premises of the kindergarten and some commission had my daughter and me leave the place. I was in despair.