

Riva Smerkovicene And Her Family



This is our family - I, Riva Smerkovicene, my husband, Gutman Smerkovicius, and our children Lena and Ilia and the baby-sitter, the Lithuanian Aldona (on the left). She worked for us for less than a year and left. I don't know what happened to her. The picture was taken in Kaunas in 1949 during a stroll in the park.

In early 1946 my husband Gutman was demobilized. I was so happy to see him again. Towards the end of the war he served in the summer unit of the Lithuanian division, which was located in the Romanian town of Constanta. Gutman was involved in technical maintenance of aircraft. Upon arrival in Kaunas, Gutman found out that his loved ones had perished in occupation. My daughter and I were the only joy he had.

Upon our return we moved into our apartment. We rented a dark room in an old house. In October 1946 I gave birth to a son and called him Ilia - my husband's brother's name also began with an 'I'. Our life was getting gradually better. Gutman found a job. First he was a staff journalist, then he became the director of the Communist paper 'Communism Banner.' It was a party paper, meant for the denizens of rural areas. My husband worked really hard, went on frequent trips. Right upon his return, we addressed the municipal Ispolkom with the request to provide us with an apartment. First, we were given a room in a communal apartment on Donelavichus Street. We lived there for two years. Then we received a small isolated apartment on Laivess Lane. We celebrated New Year 1959 in our new apartment. I am still living in that apartment. The house on Nemanas Street was built for party activists and leaders. Part of the apartments was given to people like us, former underground members. We got a wonderful three-room apartment.

The first postwar years were hard on us. I kept on working at the kindergarten. I came back to work right after Ilia was born. The boy was feeble and he couldn't go to a nursery, so we hired a baby-sitter. A Lithuanian peasant girl, Aldona, started living with us. These were the times of starvation

and our scarce food cards were to be shared with five people. I was used to famine, but I was so sorry for my children!