

Rahmil Shmushkevich's Daughter Julia Shmushkevich



My daughter Julia Shmushkevich, is 5 years old. Photo made in Kiev in 1952. My wife sent it to me when I was in the GULAG camp in Vorkuta.

My mother introduced me to a young nurse Ida Gurevich, a Jewish girl. They became friends during evacuation. Ida was born in 1927. Her father perished at the front and her mother (I shall not call her by her name) was such a quarrelsome and hysterical person that Ida could only find warmth and sympathy from my mother and her sister. Ida was a very nice and kind girl. We got married in 1946. We had no wedding party. We rented an apartment in a small house in Goloseyevo.

In 1947 our daughter Julia was born. This happened on 10 May 1949. On this day I was arrested at night in the street. I had written an article about achievements in labor of the Soviet working people for the "Stalinskoye plemia" newspaper. I submitted it to the office and was walking back home. A car stopped near me and a group of KGB guys encircled me. They showed me their IDs in the car. I was sentenced to 25 years for espionage in favor of the American and German intelligence forces. Their main evidence was a photograph of 1945 from the French communist newspaper "L'Humanite" where I was photographed standing beside de Gaulle's wife. Many Jewish writers and activists of culture were arrested at that period. My investigation officer said to me smiling that I was lucky to have been accused of espionage and that things could have been much worse if I had been accused of Zionism like many other people. They interrogated me for 170 nights. I signed under all their idiotic accusations or otherwise I would have been destroyed in that prison.

I had my left hand and my left leg paralyzed because of the tortures, and I could hardly move when I reached the camp. I traveled to the camp in a "Stolypinsky" railcar (Editor's note: special railcars for prisoners in Russia since 1906) and at the destination point they carried me from the railcar on

a stretcher. I was at the Vorkuta Camp, I got into hospital and 3 people rescued me from death. I had seen many interesting people before, but I was tremendously impressed by those I met in the Vorkuta camp. It was Professor Turkevich, Doctor of Sciences from Leningrad, - he was innocent, too, Alexei Kapler a famous producer, that got into a camp for having an affair with Stalin's daughter Svetlana, and Sasha Savich, a poet from Kiev. The 3 of them helped me to survive. I stayed in hospital for over 5 months. Kapler managed to have his friends in Moscow send us some Nobocain. It helped me a lot. Later I work at the wood cutting site. We lived in barracks, 150-200 people in one. We lived in terrible conditions. We were starved and could wash ourselves only once per month.

My family waited for me. I returned in 1956. My daughter Julia was in the 3rd form already. She didn't know where her father had been. If they found out at school she would have been treated with suspicion. My wife Ida was a nurse in the polyclinic and my mother and sister were living in my old apartment.