

Eta Gurvich With Her Pal Haele Fisherman



It's 1981. This is me with my pal Haele Fisherman. Our picture was taken accidentally by a street photographer during our walk in Vilnius park.

In 1949 I was offered a job in the economy department of one of suppliers. I worked in a wonderful team and made many good friends there. We marked Jewish holidays. A lot of people got together on Chanukkah, Purim and Pesach. We open spoke Yiddish at work, which was common in Lithuania. I was not affected by anti-Semitism campaigns of the beginning of the 1950s, [Campaign against 'cosmopolitans'], even doctors' plot. Of course, we were very worried thinking that Jews were dissolved, even arrested, but it went past my friends and I. I was crying along with many other people, when Stalin died in 1953. I wore a mourning band and was on the sentry by his portrait. With time I leant more and more about Stalin, so the resolutions of ŐŐ Communist Party Congress were not unexpected for me, on the contrary it seemed to me that the justice prevailed.

There was a great computer center in our company I was employed by. I was a computer operator. The computer machine I was working on in the early 1960s covered half of my office. I understood that it was necessary to have a higher education and I entered extramural Economic Department of Vilnius University. Of course, it was hard for me to study. In the daytime I was at work. Besides, I had to find time to buy some products, cook food, do the cleaning, look after my son. I did pretty well at the university and passed my exams. I was fond of reading. It was hard to get books. Usually people gave people to one another and they became dog-eared. We were subscribed to magazines, got some novices. Later on independent publishes appeared, where we could read the books censored by Soviet regime and information about Israel. I started retyping the books illegitimately brought from abroad. I made one copy for me and for my friends. I was mostly interested in the objective information about Israel as it was the period of six-day war, and Soviet mass media stigmatized Israel. Besides, I collected quotations of great people about Jews. It was the period when I had to take my final exams in the University and write my diploma paper. I took a vacation for students and got ready for the exams with my Lithuanian friend. Suddenly, somebody ran on the door and I saw two men on the threshold who showed me their KGB IDs. They rather politely invited me to come with them. My friend was shocked. I had been interrogated for

couple of hours. It turned out that there was a stooge from one the arrested readers. Since adolescence I had known the word 'no'. I persistently denied that I was not involved in dissemination of anti-Soviet literature. I confirmed that I collected the quotations of famous people about Jews as I being a true Jew was interested in everything connected with my nature. I was lucky that there was no search at home. I stored a lot of banned literature. If it was found, neither I nor my son would be spared. I was taken home in the morning. Then I had no wish to study and take final exams. Thus, five years of studies were futile - I had not defended my thesis.

People still treated me good at work making it look like they had no idea about my detainment. I was always good to people and they were reciprocal. Almost every year I got a trip vouchers to the spa Druskeninkai or Palanga, which was paid by the trade union, son always went on vacation to the pioneer camps at the cost of trade-union. I had worked there until retirement.