

Riva Smerkovicene And Her Family



This is our family picture, taken after my son was born. From left to right: my daughter Lena, my husband Gutman Shmerkovich, I, Riva Smerkovicene, holding the newly-born Ilia, my father Chaim Gersh Gershenovich. The picture was taken in Kaunas in November 1946.

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 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!