

## Zinoviya Rukingslaza's Wife Gitl Berman With Her Friends



My wife Gitl Berman photographed with her friends in the children's home in Lialia town in 1945. Gitl is the first from the right.

In 1947 I met a lovely Jewish girl. I liked her at once. She was Rosa's niece. The girl's name was Gitl Berman. Gitl's father Moisey Berman, born in Kherson in 1885, went to work in Moldova in 1914. He was a laborer there and married Fania, a local Jewish girl. After WWI in 1918 Moldova was annexed to Austro-Hungary, and Moisey and his family couldn't return to his home town. Moisey had savings and opened a small restaurant in Bendery town. Moisey and Fania had three children: Miron, born in 1920, Gitl, born in 1928, and Ziama, born in 1930. Fania died in 1940. When the soviet troops came to Bessarabia in 1940 Gitl's father Moisey was arrested under the charges that he housed the Romanian army headquarters in his restaurant. Miron's wife Anna Palker worked with communists in the underground and he didn't suffer the arrest. During the soviet regime Anna became a Minister in Moldova. Moisey, Gitl and Ziama were exiled to the Ural. Moisey was put in a camp, and the children were taken to different children's homes. Gitl was taken to the children's home in Lialia town near Cheliabinsk [3500 km from Kiev]. Moisey wasn't kept in the camp for long. In 1942 he was released and sent to work at a military plant in Sverdlovsk. Gitl also worked at a plant, when she was in the children's home. She was short and stood on boxes to reach her machine unit. She worked 12 hours per day and was given a loaf of bread and a meal per day for her work. Gitl was selling this bread to save money. When Kherson was liberated, Moisey and his children moved to Kherson where his sister Rosa, my uncle Ilia's wife, lived. They bought a very small room on Gitl's savings.

Gitl and I fell in love with each other and I proposed marriage to her. I bought a big bed on my savings. Grisha wife's brother gave Gitl a wedding ring. He was a dentist. We had a civil ceremony in a registry office in autumn 1947. We had guests in the evening: Rosa brought apples, Grunia

brought cookies, and I had tea and sugar. These made for our wedding party. Gitl had finished 5 forms in a Romanian school and 2 forms of a Soviet school. Uncle Ilia taught her accounting and in 1952 Gitl went to work at a storage facility. Her colleagues treated her well, even during the period of anti-Semitic campaigns in the early 1950s we didn't face any prejudiced attitudes, though there was terrible routinely anti-Semitism.