

Maya Kaganskaya With Her Family



This is a picture of me, my husband Israel Geller and our older son Michael Geller. The photo was taken near our house in Kiev in 1954. I got married that year. I married my distant relative, Israel Geller, a son of my grandfather's sister Beshyva. He was 16 years older than I. Israel defended his candidate of sciences thesis in biology before the war. He lived in a civil marriage before the war. They weren't happy together and when Israel was recruited to the army during the Great Patriotic War they made an agreement that if he survived they would split up. After the war Israel returned to Kiev. His ex-wife got married and lived in Sverdlovsk. When I was a child Israel and his wife were my idols. I just adored Israel. Therefore, when he began to court me and then proposed to me I gave my consent at once. His mother Beshyva and he had a room in a communal apartment in the center of Kiev where I moved to. Our co-tenants were a very nice Ukrainian family. Their only son

perished at the front. We were friends and often had tea in the kitchen until late in the evening. In 1960 our co-tenants received an apartment and we became the owners of a three-bedroom apartment with a kitchen. We didn't have a wedding party. We had a civil ceremony and went to visit my mother at the weekend. She made a wedding dinner for relatives. Israel worked at the Sugar Beet Institute. He was a senior scientific worker and then became the head of the laboratory. Stalin's death in 1953 was hard for me to bear. I cried after him like all other people. It didn't even occur to me that he was to blame for all our problems. My second son, Vitali, was born in 1954. Only in 1956, after the denunciation of Stalin's cult at the Twentieth Party Congress open anti-Semitism diminished and I got a job. I was the teacher of a group of children that stayed at school after classes to do their homework, school #157. In some time I got a job at an evening school for young working people. I taught Russian and Ukrainian literature at this school until I retired. My husband worked a lot and didn't even want to go on vacation. However, we went to resorts in the Crimea several times. Usually I traveled with our children. We had many friends and went to the theater, symphonic concerts, took our children to museums and tried to help develop their personality. We raised our children in an international air of respect of all people regardless of their nationality or faith, but they always identified themselves as Jews.