

Raissa Smelaya With Her Family



This is a picture of me (on the left) with my mother Golda Ravikovich, nee Gorokhovskaya and my granddaughter Ludmila Kantemir, my daughter Irina's child. The photo was taken in Chernovtsy in 1969. My first husband, Leonid Yakovenko, died unexpectedly of a heart attack in 1956. I went to work as a radio telephone operator at the Department of Internal Affairs where my husband used to work. Our children, Irina and Vladimir, went to kindergarten and then to school. I worked and took part in amateur art activities: I sang in a choir and attended a folk dance club. My mother left for Kiev. My aunt wrote to her saying that she knew a Jewish man whose family had perished during the war and who wanted to meet a Jewish woman. The most important factor for my mother was that he had an apartment. She moved to Kiev and got married. My mother's husband, Solomon, was almost 20 years older than my mother. He was a very nice and decent man. Every summer my children and I spent two weeks with her. She was very happy to see her grandchildren and me. Solomon also loved my children. I married a Ukrainian man in 1958. My second husband's name was Petr Smely. We met at our acquaintances' and Petr began to court me. I was afraid that my children would have problems with their stepfather, but they liked him at once. Petr was a very nice man and I agreed to marry him. I took his last name when we got married. We moved to Chernovtsy in 1959. My husband got a job assignment there and my children and I followed him. I didn't work after we moved to Chernovtsy. My children studied and my husband worked as a driver in a car pool. We spent vacations with my mother and aunt in Kiev. They were always happy to see us. My mother got along very well with them. My daughter Irina took her husband's last name of Kantemir. Irina's husband is Ukrainian, but his nationality was of no significance to me. What I cared for was that they were in love and cared about one another. My older granddaughter, Ludmila, was born in 1969 and the younger one, Tatiana, in 1975. My daughter and granddaughters live in Chernovtsy. My granddaughters are musicians: Ludmila is a violinist and Tatiana is a pianist. Ludmila works at the symphonic orchestra. Although my grandchildren weren't raised religiously they identify themselves as Jews. My mother died in Kiev in 1988. We buried her in the town cemetery. I'm glad that she lived to see her grandchildren.