

Chasia Spanerflug With Her First Husband Boris Friedman



This is me, Chasia Spanerflug, with my first husband Boris Friedman. The photograph was taken in Vilnius in 1939. This is our wedding picture.

In 1939 I finished the lyceum. I didn't yearn for home. I loved my home town, but I wasn't willing to live there. I decided to earn a little bit more money in order to continue my education at the

Institute of Foreign Languages. I was employed by the parents of one of my fellow students, who owned a large fur store. I started to work as the accountant's assistant. The chief accountant, who trained me, found a cashier job for me at a store, where all kinds of sewing goods, threads, buttons and lining material were sold. The store belonged to two merchants. One of them, Friedman, was a very rich man.

In August 1939 Friedman's son Boris came to Vilnius from France, where he studied at the Textile College. Though Boris was 13 years older than me, he at once took an interest in me, a modest girl. He started calling on our shop and invited me out to eat ice-cream or watch a movie. Boris was a Zionist, member of Betar, the most active Zionist organization. He was a follower of Jabotinsky and told me a lot about his ideas. Then in August 1939 Jabotinsky came to Vilnius and Boris invited me to attend his lecture, which took place in the philharmonic society. We stood there agape! He was a brilliant orator. I had never heard a more ardent speech in my life. It was the beginning of the affection between Boris and me.

On 1st September 1939 Poland was occupied by the Fascists. World War II broke out. Soviet troops entered the eastern part of Poland, where my native town was located. Now it became Soviet Belarus. I felt homesick and in September 1939 I went to Zdzisiot practically without saying good-bye to Boris. Our town had changed a lot. People were really despondent. Repressions against Zionists commenced and my father was expecting to get arrested. I didn't stay home for longer than a week. One day a young man, dressed to kill, got off the bus from Novoyelnya. He started asking how to get to our house. It was Boris Friedman. He said that his mother had sent him to bring me to Vilnius to live in their house. My parents decided that it was better for me to be in Vilnius, in the house of a well-heeled family. I said good-bye to my parents and left for Vilnius with Boris.

I settled in a posh apartment in downtown Vilnius, in a gorgeous white house. It wasn't safe in Vilnius. The city was given to Lithuania and it became the capital once again. All political changes often ended up with a pogrom for the Jews. There was a small pogrom in Vilnius. Nobody died, just windows were broken and Jewish stores were plundered. Up to 20th October 1939 the borders were open. On 13th October Mother came, and Boris and I had a modest wedding under a chuppah in the Vilnius rabbi's office as the synagogue was closed down at that time. Mother left at once and I never saw her again.