

Chasia Spanerflug With Her Friends Mikhail Lapidus And Motya Pinskiy



This picture was taken in the yard of our lyceum in Vilnius in 1937. In the front is my friend Mikhail Lapidus, whom we called Lapika. He perished in 1942 in Vilnius ghetto, behind him to the left it's me, Chasia Langbord, our mutual friend Motya Pinskiy is next to us. During the war he was in evacuation with his parents. Then he came back to Lithuania and in 1946 he left for Poland, and then for Israel. He is currently living in Israel and his last name is Panai.

Generally, children of wealthy people went to my lyceum and I took a split roll with me to conceal my poverty and to show that there was something in it, thought at times there wasn't even butter inside the roll. Children who knew about my poverty treated me very well. When the class was going on an excursion which wasn't free of charge, one of the rich children paid for me so I could go with everybody. They didn't do it to show off, but stealthily, for me even not to know about it.

I had friends. My bosom friend was Mikhail Brantsovskiy. He was my classmate. His parents were wealthy people - Mikhail's father was involved in manufacturing. I was friends with Mikhail's cousin, Chaya Kushnir, who came from the province and lived in Brantsovskiy's house. Mikhail's mother, Dina Brantsovskaya, was a very kind woman. Her house was always open for her son's friends. There were times when a large company of friends came to Mikhail's and stayed in the house until late. I often went there by myself. Aunt Dina always made sure that I was fed. She understood that I was undernourished. Sometimes I stayed overnight, not to walk around in the street at a late hour.

Masha Nemze was also my friend. Her parents owned a large fur store in the heart of the city. They had a dacha and they invited me to come over there for a couple of weeks during vacation. On Jewish holidays, the lyceum was closed and I went to my home town. I spent summer holidays at home as well. I didn't want to go home as I was afraid of my parents' tiffs, which became more frequent with the years. But still, I loved my town, my school friends and I enjoyed spending time with them.

In the penultimate grade we were to choose between two directions: technical and humanitarian. I chose the humanitarian one. Now I felt more confident in our company. I was loved in any company as I was never in a hurry to go home because I didn't have one. Besides, I was merry and appreciative. After classes we went out to a café, ate ice-cream, called on somebody to have a cup of tea, or sometimes went to the cinema. There were a lot of Zionist organizations in Vilnius, including youth organizations. Boys started wooing me. Usually I went to these organizations with my boyfriend. It was either Betar or Maccabi. They were different in their approaches, but all of them were purely Zionist. So, the years of my adolescence were full of Zionist ideas. During the meetings we often were told about Palestine, about life in a kibbutz. Youth was called upon to go to Palestine to build the Jewish state.