

Chasia Spanerflug With Her Schoolmaters



This is our class, 100 days before graduation. From left to right sitting - Russian language teacher Khachinska, then I, Chasia Langbord, the third is our teacher Maleiskas. Both of them died in the ghetto. To my right is Medaiskaya, the Polish language teacher. She also perished. The first from the left standing is my friend Mikhail Brantsovskiy, the third from the left is Mosya Bernstein, the first girl in the row is Chaya Kushnir (she died during the occupation), then Masha Nemze, and my friend Rabinovich, who also died in Vilnius ghetto. I don't remember the rest. So many years have passed ... most of them died during the Holocaust. The picture was taken in 1939 in Vilnius.

When I was studying in Vilnius I made 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. In 1939 I finished the lyceum.