

Tsyliya Spivak's Mother Nehama Rozhavskaya And Brother Aron Kogan



My mother Nehama Kogan (her first husband's surname), with her son Aron. This photo was taken in Chernigov in 1923.

In 1918 my mother married Zachariy Kogan, a Jewish man. He came from Strezhalovka village. Regardless of hunger, devastation and pogroms they had a real Jewish wedding with a chuppah, music and feasting. My mother and her husband settled down in Grimaylov village with her husband's distant relatives. Their son Aron was born there. During a Denikin troop attack Zachariy was killed before his wife and son's eyes and Denikin soldiers raped my mother. My mother kept an official paper saying: 'This is issued by Grimaylov district executive committee to Nehama Boruchovna Kogan, resident of Chernigov town, to confirm that her husband Zachariy Gershevich Kogan resided in Strizhalovka village before 1917 dealing in farming. However, in 1919 during Denikin invasion to Ukraine, the above mentioned Zachariy Gershevich was killed by Denikin troops in Grimaylov town and his property was looted. However, his wife and children escaped from Denikin troops and now they don't have means to... Chairman of the village council...Signature'. Behind those few words there is a huge personal tragedy of my mother. She hardly ever talked about it. I know that after this happened my mother lived with grandmother and grandfather for almost ten years. She had a physical and moral trauma and it took her a long time to recover. She didn't work. She did housework, raised her son and looked after her younger sisters. My mother hardly ever went out or socialized with others. Her only joy was her sonny Aron. However life went on. Matchmakers began to look for a match for my mother: he was not too young, but mature, and

he might be as well a widower. So my parents met.

In 1924 my father became a widower. He was raising his children daring not to bring them a stepmother. Only my mother with her love and kindness to children raised my father's trust. In 1929 my parents got married. They didn't have a wedding since none of them was religious. For some time after the wedding my parents lived in Bragin town in the neighboring Gomel region in Belarus. My father worked as a storekeeper at a mill. However, my mother was missing Chernigov where her parents and sisters lived and in early 1930, shortly before I was born, my parents moved to Chernigov.