

Asia Shnirelman



This is my wife Asia Magder (nee Shnirelman). This photo was taken in the Gabis Studio in Kishinev before she entered the University in 1939. In 1939 I became a student of the Faculty of Literature and Philosophy of Bucharest University. After passing exams for the first year I went on vacation to Kishinev in June 1940. On 28th June the Soviet Army arrived in Bessarabia. I stayed in Kishinev and my studies at university were over - Soviet citizens were not allowed to travel abroad. I knew I was the only man and breadwinner in our small family. I knew I had to get an education and to do this I had to learn Russian. The best place to learn Russian was the Faculty of Russian Literature and Language. The subject of my first lecture was antic literature. I didn't understand a word of it. I sat beside a pretty girl and continued to sit beside her at classes from then on and started learning the Russian language. It didn't take me long to pick it up, though I kept writing in Latin letters. I passed

my midyear exams with excellent marks and became a student of the college. The girl and I became friends and then fell in love with one another. Her name was Asia Shnirelman. She was born into the Jewish family of a doctor in Kishinev in 1922. On Saturday, 21st June 1941, I was spending time with my co-students. We had passed our summer exams and enjoyed ourselves dancing, singing, and drinking wine. I returned home at 1 o'clock in the morning. At five we woke up from the roar of bombing: the Great Patriotic War began. I knew Jews had to evacuate. I made Mama promise that she would evacuate with my fiancée Asia's family. We knew we would become husband and wife to spend our life together.