Paulina Schynzvit And Her Mother Vera Pasternak

These are my mother Paulina Schynzvit and my grandmother Vera Pasternak, photographed during a walk in the park. The picture was taken in Tartu in the 1930s.

In 1937 my mother married a German Jew called Mark Schynzvit. They had known each other for several years before getting married. Once my mother went on a trip to Germany and France. At that time the fascists were already at power in Germany, but tourists were still safe there. Mother met Mark during one of the excursions in Germany. He was a widower, six years older than my mother. Mark had his own company. They liked each other and wrote to each other for a while after she returned to Estonia.

At that time they did not think about whether Mark would move to Estonia or Mother would go to Germany. Then it became clear, Jews would not be safe with the fascists being at power in Germany, so Mark moved to Tartu. By that time the fascists had seized his enterprise, he only managed to take some money with him. At least he could feel safer here.

Mother and Mark got married in Tartu. They had a traditional Jewish wedding, but a rather modest one. Mark could not get Estonian citizenship immediately, but the Estonian government gave him temporary passport, issued for fugitives. He could not be in the government, but other than that he had equal rights with Estonian citizens. With time that passport was changed to an Estonian passport.