

Yevsey Kotkov And His First Wife Dora Kotkova



This is a photo of my first wife Dora (Dorochka) and me, Yevsey Abramovich Kotkov, in a photo taken in Kiev in 1935. When the NEP, the New Economic Policy introduced by Lenin to support small business and entrepreneurs, was eliminated in 1928, private shops such as the private tinsmith shop where I was working, were closed. They were building big factories. I went to work at a big aircraft plant. I met a lovely Jewish girl named Dorochka at this plant. She was carrying bricks at the construction site ? they were building shops for this plant. She looked poor and dark. I asked her 'Darkie, darkie, what is your name?' 'Dora'. 'You Yiddish?' 'Yiddish.' 'Will you marry me?' Her parents had been killed during a pogrom in 1920s when she was sixteen. She was born in 1906 in a little Jewish borough near Kiev. She understood, but did not speak Yiddish, and didn't know anything about Jewish traditions. She was living with an aunt of hers whom she didn't like. We didn't have a wedding ceremony. We didn't have a place to live, either. I couldn't take her to the former janitor's quarters where my family lived -- it didn't even have separate rooms. We didn't celebrate any Jewish holidays. We couldn't, as Saturday was a workday then. Yom Kippur was a workday, too, and we couldn't miss work, as doing so was considered sabotage. I became an atheist. Dorochka and I used to go to the cinema. We went to work together and came home together. We were so poor, but so very happy. Dora had to have surgery for an abdominal pregnancy and couldn't have children. The aircraft plant where Dorochka and I worked was fulfilling military orders, and when the war began on 22 June 1941, it came under bombing from the start. The plant was urgently evacuated to Chuguev (near Kharkov). We worked in the spare parts repair shop. I had a special military exemption stamp in my passport. I was considered to be of more importance in the rear. When the Germans approached Kharkov, we were evacuated to Kazakhstan. We rented an apartment and worked in a shop of the plant which was also evacuated to this town. After the war, we remained in Chuguev for a year. In 1952 Dorochka, my my love, died from breast cancer. It was a big loss for me. I didn't know what to do.