

Julian Gringras And His Friends On A Trip



This is a photo from a trip I went on with my friends to Dabrowka near Kielce.

It was taken in 1930. I am sitting at the top, wearing a shirt with a white collar a la Slowacki.

The first boy on the right in the second row has a similar shirt. His name is Kisiel. First on the left at the top is my future brother-in-law, Mosze Baum.

Except for Mosze Baum, all these boys are Poles. I got this photo after the war from my schoolfriend Nowak.

My friends at gymnasium? One of my classmates lived in Dabrowka, he was called Marian Pilichowski, he's on the photograph. We would go on these 7-km walks from Kielce to Dabrowka, and sit there and talk.

That was all. That was all for that lad [Pilichowski], because a year or two later he died. He'd most likely been ill the whole time, with his lungs, even though he was the son of a forester. A very decent, nice lad.

I was in a class that numbered around 50 students. The class teacher was Konradi, the Latin master. 50 pupils, three of them Jewish, with surnames that made up a tiny fragment of landscape.

You see, there was Baum - a tree; there was Gringras, or green grass; and there was an apple, he was called Jablko, the third one, not Appel, but Jablko [Mr. Gringras is translating the surnames].

As it happened, in terms of level, we, the three of us, were top of the class. There were a few clever Poles, but not many. Some of them were one-sided, mastered literature well, for instance.

Our classmates used to go to Baum's house; he helped them in math, Polish, etc., he was very helpful. They didn't come to me.

The three of us didn't keep apart from the rest of the class. We mixed with the others. There was no isolation within the class. There were no insults, name-calling, etc.

The number of pupils dwindled fast. In the next grade there were not 50, but 40 or so, and about 30 of us made it to matriculation. They dropped out, didn't move up from grade to grade, or the economic situation was such that they couldn't carry on.

They were boys from the countryside there. There was this one, Bezak. You could tell he was from a very poor family. There weren't too many wealthy children in my gymnasium.

We had a school uniform: a stand-up collar on our jackets and kepis on our heads, with crowns, like the kepis the French policemen wear. That was the compulsory gymnasium uniform. The boys on the photograph are in uniform.