

Irena Beczkowska And The Krzanowski Family



This is a picture of our friends, the Krzanowski family. The only person I know there by name is my sister Irena Beczkowska (nee Horowitz), the child in the center. The photo was taken in Wieliczka in the 1910s. Wieliczka had a population of some 10,000, and quite many of those, three thousand perhaps, were Jews. On Saturdays especially they wore the decorative kalpaks, the long black frock coats, and they very much stood out from the crowd. There was certainly a synagogue in Wieliczka, and there was also a Jewish quarter, called Klasno. That's where the majority of the Jews lived. I suppose if you count Klasno, there were many more Jews than the three thousand I mentioned. It could have been half of the town's population. My father surely knew half of all the Jews in Wieliczka in person. Sabbath wasn't celebrated in any special way in Wieliczka, but the shops were closed, the Jews probably went to the synagogue, but you didn't see that. We didn't celebrate all the Jewish holidays, though there was always matzah for Pesach. Judgment Day, New Year - those were very solemn days, I mean we didn't do anything special, but you saw that and made sure not to offend anyone. For Judgment Day, for instance, we pretended and didn't eat too ostentatiously. And my mother's friends often came to check. We basically expected such inspections because, in

the first room, where you sat, there was always a loaf of bread, a knife, some butter, for the children to come and eat if they wanted. And at that time, during the high holidays, there was nothing. In fact, we often went to Cracow for those days to avoid offending anyone, avoid dazzling people's eyes. We also observed all the Catholic holidays, the Christmas tree was always there. We didn't observe that as a religious holiday but rather as a ceremonial dinner, to avoid offending people, because we had many Catholic friends as well.