

Gizela Fudem



That's how I looked like in 1940, shortly before the nightmare of the Holocaust started. The photo was taken in a studio in Tarnow. In 1940 we all sat at home, we had no work, neither us nor Dad. Then Mom agreed that we should take a cutting and sewing course. This course was taught by the wife of a doctor, an assimilated Jew. I think she was an amateur, but she had her clientele, and became a dressmaker, because her husband was somewhere in the army, I think, and with that army was running away across the border to Hungary. And she stayed alone and she opened a dressmaking shop. And she accepted apprentices, there were six of us, and taught us cutting and sewing, and also was taking advantage of the fact that we would finish by hand things she made for her customers. She had her clientele, German women used to come there, too. Back then, in

1940, we could still get around somehow. But it was getting very unpleasant, every couple of days a new announcement appeared saying what Jews cannot do and what they have to give up. We weren't allowed to have furs, tea, etc., and everything was punishable by death. The posts were in Polish and German. And men were also not allowed to wear beards, we had a horrible and painful moment when the barber came to our home to shave my Dad's beard off so that he could go outside, because if not, then the Germans would catch him and tear the beard off. Whoever was at home, we all cried, together with Dad. Grandpa, of course, also shaved his beard off; I don't know what it was like at his place then. But I remember that my grandpa was without a beard, we joked at home then that he looked like an old highlander. Because he was very tall, huge. Dad's beard wasn't very long, but still had to be shaved. And they didn't use a razor, but something nasty, it was called 'razol,' some chemical agent. First it was cut with scissors, and then treated with that 'razol,' it was a lesser sin if treated with 'razol,' I don't know why? I remember as if it was today that situation in the room, I know where each one of us stood, when they were cutting that beard off. Dad in general limited our outings, because we kept hearing that they caught somebody, tore out the beard of someone else, took that person away and nobody knows what happened to him. During that time my sister and I were learning German, and Dad used to send either me or my sister to go on that corner where the announcement post was with the newest announcement on what was forbidden. And I had to read it very carefully and repeat, and later Dad would ask questions, and if I didn't know how to answer one, he would get very upset, so I was almost learning by heart what was forbidden.