

Salomea Gemrot With Her Polish Friends From Przybyszowka



This is a picture of me and my girlfriends. It was taken in the 1920s in our garden in Przybyszowka by my oldest brother, Zygmunt. I do not know who saved that picture or where I got it from. I had two good friends in the village since the first grade - Poles. We were very close, like family. They really loved me. And I loved them. Henryka Raczy got married to a neighbor who had some position in sports in France and she settled in France even before the war. And there Henryka was called Henriette Raksi. And they really wanted to take me with them. And the second friend was Waleria Wisniowska; she died very early, of pneumonia. They went to secondary schools, trade schools, in Rzeszow. Those were schools on the same level as my school - the Artistic Crafts School, because Father signed me up for that school after eight grades, because he thought that I'd learn some trade, that I'd know something after graduating from this school. My father was very tolerant and

so was Mother. He made sure we were tolerant as well. I remember how Polish neighbors used to celebrate Christmas - they had their ways. There was this tradition that they gathered in orchards after Christmas Eve and put some straw around these trees and they performed some rituals there. We went there and laughed. Father scolded us, 'You can't do such things! I don't ever want you to do it again! It's their tradition, it's their business! Would you be pleased if your traditions were laughed at?' - That's what he told us. So no jokes about someone's religion were allowed at our house. You just couldn't do it! Our Polish neighbors from the village had different attitudes to us, Jews. It happened that they sometimes called us 'parch' [Polish, literally 'pimple', 'blister,' but also used as a derogatory term for Jews]. In spite of that my parents had friends and acquaintances among Poles. The priest would even come to play cards with Father in the winter and really enjoyed talking to him. He was an older man. He was the parish priest in Przybyszowka. I don't remember what his name was, but I didn't like him. Whenever he came, I'd leave. He must have pestered me with some questions about religion and I didn't like that. Why should he examine me like that? And that's what I told him. He later complained to Father that I was impolite.