

Henryk Lewandowski With His Friends



From left: me, Jurek Goldwag and Sewer, I do not know his other name. I think, this photo was taken in Jaremcza in 1937 or 1938. I went to elementary school in Nowa Osada, where I lived. It was a Polish elementary school. I don't recall there being a Jewish elementary school in Zamosc, there were cheders, for the little children. There was also a Jewish gymnasium, one of the very few; that uncle of mine, Izaak Jungman, completed a Jewish gymnasium. Because we lived on the outskirts, there were some Ukrainians in the neighborhood, and so the classes were mixed, Polish, Jewish, and Ukrainian. As for the school's quality, well, obviously many of the Jewish children had trouble with the Polish language since they didn't use it at home, they had that accent, and had trouble writing. Village children, not necessarily Ukrainians, but the Polish ones as well found it hard to express themselves, or to spell. There were very few white-collar children at the school, so I was one of the best as far as Polish was concerned, I spoke well and could write rather well, too. I was even elected the class president. There were no 'Jews' and 'Poles' at school. The divide was a religious one. You'd say Jews, Catholics, and the Orthodox or Ruthenians. As we played soccer during the breaks, it was Jews versus Catholics. I don't know the origins of that, the divide dated back to the distant times when the nationality issues were not so clearly defined, and people were identified based on their denomination. For example, the Treaty of Versailles determined the Curzon Line based not on the ethnic criterion, but the religious records. The Orthodox or Uniates were Ruthenians, the Catholics were Poles. I'm not saying there was no anti-Semitism, but it occurred in the older grades, in gymnasium. Among these 10-, 11-, 12-year-old brats there was no such thing. Everyone attended religion classes, either Catholic or Jewish. We had a female teacher. I don't remember a thing of these classes. Maybe it's because my parents didn't really urge me to learn religion that hard. As for the friendships, neighborhood was everything. I mean, if someone lived nearby, you hung out with him. I had some buddies living downtown, their parents were friends of my parents. They were mostly Jewish, but that was downtown, and I didn't go downtown much, once a week maybe, because it was quite a distance. I played with the Polish children on a daily basis, they lived two houses down the street, we played palant and kitschka [Editor's note: tipcat, sometimes simply called kitschka. Palant is also a different children's game, similar to

cricket]. Palant was a long wooden bat, perhaps a meter long, and kitschka was a 20 cm piece of wood. You put the kitschka on the ground, dug a little hole for the palant to be put underneath it, and then threw the kitschka in the air and quickly hit it again. The point was to send the kitschka flying as far as possible.