

Ewa Ryza And Beniamin Mniewski Before Their Marriage



These are my parents before their marriage, in 1921 or 1922. I think that picture was taken at a photo lab in Grabow near Leczyca [some 50 km of Lodz]. My mother was born in Lodz in 1901. Her name was Ewa Ryza. She obviously went to a Polish school as a girl, because she could read and write Polish. We spoke Polish at home. But when talking to my grandparents, my parents switched to Yiddish. My maternal grandparents called her Chawcia. They spoke poor Polish, understood

everything, but speaking was a problem. Those were people who had attended the cheder, received Talmudic education. My father was born in Grabow in 1900. His name was Beniamin, and his parents called him Benjumo, the Jewish way. I know from family accounts that his two elder sisters, both in their teens, I suppose, died of influenza. To save my father, his parents went with him to the rabbi. The rabbi told them to dress him in white, and that was how he had to be dressed until the age of three. His parents obeyed that very scrupulously. I don't know those sisters' names, no one spoke about that. Death was generally something that you didn't discuss with children. My father had his parents twisted around his little finger - the two daughters had died, and he was the youngest one, so he did what he wanted, he was like sacred. My grandparents wanted him to become a rabbi, but that of course was out of the question - he rebelled awfully. Didn't want to wear those robes, dressed the civilian way. But he certainly had a bar mitzvah. He studied at home with private tutors. I don't think he ever tried to pass the high school finals, he didn't need it - he didn't even think about higher studies because he married early. It was in Grabow my father met his future wife, my mother. I have no idea what their wedding was like. His parents were strongly opposed to the marriage, but my father was terribly in love with my mother. She was a poor girl and my grandmother didn't want her beloved son to marry a girl without dowry - she wanted a princess for him. And the ladies disliked each other, disliked each other terribly. My parents got married probably in 1922.