

Henryk Prajs With A Group Of Frayhayt Members In Gora Kalwaria



This is a photo of members of my Zionist organization "Frayhayt." It was taken in Gora Kalwaria in the 1930s. I am standing in the third row, fourth from right. The man in the hat sitting in the center is Mojsze Rawski. He was a shoemaker. He moved to Palestine before the war. I visited him in 1965 in Netanya. As a child I was a member of Skif, the Bund's children organization. But later I preferred to join a Zionist organization, because I believed it necessary to build our own state. That's why I joined the Right Poalei Zion as a scout. I was still a kid, I was 14. It was a social democratic labor party, they wanted to liberate Palestine to create our own state in which the social democratic parties would flourish. There were maybe 50 of us, Frayhayt members, in Gora Kalwaria. We rented a room on Pilsudskiego Street. It was about 10 meters long and 7 wide. There was a library and everything else there. The room was paid for from the membership fees. All the pre-war organizations were funded from membership fees, unless someone rich from abroad donated 100 zlotys; it was an awful lot of money before the war. We often had our meetings there, always on a Saturday or Sunday, on free days. There were talks, excursions. The talks were basically about the culture, the world, what was going on, how things in India or China were, in Warsaw, or the rest of the world. Basically the economic life, wars, and so on. If I knew something, I prepared a short speech. Do I recall any such speech? We fought for freedom, democracy, or the unions in other words, for equal rights, and against exploitation. Ever since 1933, when Hitler came to power, people grew more and more certain a war was coming. Everyone who had the chance to do so, fled to Israel [Editor's note: until 1948 Palestine]. Apart from that, the ones who fled were patriots, they wanted to build their own country, and did the right thing; emancipation is one thing, but having your country goes a long way. Many of my friends left before the war, Mojszele Rawski was one of them. At first before leaving they were Hahalutzim. They formed teams and took up the toughest tasks, trying to prepare for Israel, to build their country. They knew beginnings are always tough, so they learned to farm, to work in a sawmill, they learned the trade of masonry, all the worst drudgeries. There were two kibbutzim in Gora Kalwaria. One belonged to the right-wing Zionists, or Grinbaum's democratic Zionists in other words. It was located in a house on the corner of Polna and

Dominikanska streets. The whole upper floor was theirs. They had many talented people among them - there was a painter for example, she painted landscapes. The other kibbutz was on Ksiedza Sajny Street, the one leading down to the river. I don't remember what group they were. My organization, Right Poalei Zion, didn't have a kibbutz in Gora Kalwaria. If one of us wanted to join a kibbutz, he had to go to the eastern regions of the country. Lots of folks were preparing for that, but I doubt if all of them actually left. It was hard to just leave your father, your mother, your brother, and go. I didn't take part in kibbutzim activities. Neither did I think about leaving for Israel.