

## Residents Of Dzisna



These are residents of Dzisna, my home town. The photo was taken in 1926 at a Jewish ceremony, called Ostrzezyny. When a boy turned three years old his parents invited all the family and friends and they celebrated. Here you can see the Bimbat family, one of the most important families in Dzisna. I was born in a small town called Dzisna, in the Vilnius district. Dzisna itself was a town close to the border, there were two rivers. There were 6 thousand people in Dzisna. Some 60 percent were Jews. Or 50-60 percent. The remaining ones were Poles and Belarusians. The community was strong. There were merchants, tailors, local officials, doctors. The Poles had the better jobs, in the magistrate, in the offices, there weren't many Poles, less than Jews. We always lived in harmony. But we lived separately. There were only Hasidim in our town. [Mr. Solowiejczyk is simply referring to religious Jews]. They were carpenters and tailors, shoemakers, merchants, those who made the pavement and built houses, normal people. Yes, they were pious, when the time came they went to the synagogue to pray or prayed at home. But they were not loonies, those who walk around in the summer wearing fur caps, with sidelocks, or who only wear socks, they weren't excessively pious. They were normal pious Jews, moderate, reformed. There were eight synagogues. They were normal synagogues, orthodox, Hasidic. Hasidim prayed there. There was no reformed synagogue. There was this one where, how to put it, the rich ones went and another one where the poorer people went. There were all classes of people in the town. One synagogue on the market square, that's where the butchers went. No one financed these synagogues, only the community, the people would chip in. There were also those immigrant elements, Misnagdim, opponents of Hasidim, but they got kind of watered down, assimilated to the environment. There are quarrels among them even to this day. So much that when you were walking in Glebokie and you met some Russian, that is a person of the Eastern Orthodox faith, and he asked you: 'Is this the moon or is this the sun?', you'd have to answer 'I'm not from around here' if you didn't want to get beaten up.