

Anna Lanota's School Class On A Trip In Torun



This is a school trip to Torun in 1931. I was 16. We were on the ship on the Vistula River.

I am standing second from right and first from right is my cousin Ewa Prywes. She was the daughter of my mother's sister Bronia and sister of Mosze Prywes.

They lived in Lodz. Ewa had survived the war in Warsaw; she was totally unlike a Jew, so she didn't go into hiding. We often met up during the occupation. She died in 1980 in Warsaw.

I hated school. The drill annoyed me, the fact that you had to go, this had to be done, that had to be written down. I did it all, but it was unbearable.

I was a good student. Most of all I liked learning Polish literature, German, and German literature. Languages were taught over a very long period then, six years, so to this day I know German and Hebrew well.

I liked nature too, because we were taught that on excursions outside the city. I liked Latin as well, perhaps because the teacher was nice. There were a lot of lessons. They started at 8 and I would go home at 4.

Gymnasiums such as the German or Jewish ones had restricted state approval, which meant that they could award the school-leaving certificate but the examination had to be invigilated by someone from the education office.

The questions for the school-leaving exam were the same as in Polish schools. You took Polish, mathematics, Latin and I think physics, a written and an oral exam in every subject. I took my school-leaving exam in 1932.

They sent us an invigilator from the education office who was a German and a Nazi. I think they must have sent him to the Jewish gymnasium on purpose. He flunked 14 out of 30 girls, often for silly things, for instance for turning their heads and looking behind them.

Several of them he refused to admit to the oral exam. The girls who didn't get their school-leaving certificate that time got together and straight afterwards went to Palestine together.

The same man from the education office had been at the school-leaving exams in the boys' Jewish gymnasium, and the lads had warned us what kind of a person he was.