

Beniamin Zylberberg With Joel Wizner, Iciele Gutwillig, Zalme Griner, Cukierman And Mendl Frajhof

This picture of me and my friends was taken in Krasnik in the 1930s. From left to right it is me, Joel Wizner, Iciele Gutwillig, Zalme Griner, Cukierman, somebody I do not remember and finally Mendl Frajhof.

I had Jewish friends who were between two and four years older than me. For a ten-year-old that is a huge difference. Those older boys were from non-religious families, and under their influence I started to move away from religious traditions. They talked me into going to Mr. Gawlik's shop on the square. Mr. Gawlik was a Christian who sold cold meats that were half the price of those that you could buy in the Jewish shops because the Christians based them on pork fat and not on goose fat as the Jews did. We were poor, and that price difference was significant to us, but we wouldn't have done it if not for our non-religious views. And so under their influence I started eating pork. I remember the names of some of those boys: Bajrech, or Berek, Gutfilig, and Mojsze Frajhof. The last was murdered by the Germans later on in the camp in Belzec.

In Krasnik there were no clashes or conflicts between the Jews and their Christian neighbors up until the beginning of the 1930s. Although some ridiculing went on, it never got serious. We, Jewish lads, walked freely all over town; there were no streets that we were afraid to go down. But soon after Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933 our Polish friends, whom we had played with, started throwing stones at us. Fortunately we were on very good terms with our Polish teachers. I remember their names: Garncarz, Koszalk, I even remember the priest who taught religious studies, although Jews didn't take part in that subject. The headmaster himself, Mr. Pytlakowski, who taught us history, was a member of the National Democratic Party, but he has remained in my memory as a decent man. But his two sons used to throw stones at us.