

Koppel And Fajgla Gringras



This is a photograph of my parents, Koppel and Fajgla Gringras, on vacation in Krynica - I guess, because they are holding glasses [Krynica is a spa resort].

Father is standing second from the right and Mother next to him. I think it could have been 1938, no earlier.

Father's name was Koppel according to the official papers. Later that was changed to Jozef, but he was still known as Koppel, like the hero of one of Singer's novels [The Family Moskat].

My father was the owner of the 'Moderne' photographic studio. It was a long road.

First somewhere holed up in the provinces, Pinczow or somewhere like that, then my father's emigration with his wife and two sons [Simon and Artur].

Father might have been about 25-28 at that time, by my reckoning. He went to Switzerland, via Hungary.

In Switzerland Father learned the art of photography. He lived there for more or less six years with his wife and children.

After 6 years in Switzerland they came to Kielce; they probably had some money saved up.

To be a recognized craftsman you had to buy a license, I seem to remember.

I suspect it was in around 1908, maybe 1909 or 1910 that the 'Moderne' photographic firm was opened, and it soon began to grow. And around 1930, 1932, 1931 my father built a factory of photografic paper and materials, which was called 'Orion'.

Mama's name was Fajgla, I don't remember the name exactly, because we called Mama Mama. How my mother came to marry my father, when they met, I don't know either. All I know is that

when she left Pinczow she emigrated to Switzerland with Father.

My parents spoke Yiddish mostly, but because of the photographic studio Polish had to be mastered as a tool.

My Mama spoke very correct Polish in my view, unlike Father, who spoke Polish terribly. But she didn't read - she probably wouldn't have had time for that with all those children and her extra work in the studio.

My mother was very fond of and grew flowers. Oleanders and a ficus. There was a palm, not very tall, but the ficus was big.

Those plants stood in the parlor. And she liked dressing up, in this satin dress; she liked dressing up on holidays.

She liked making food also; she made preserves, baked cakes, baked challot. She tried to keep the place clean, and she would always note that the doctor's wife who she'd lived with in Switzerland, a neighbor, used to wash the stairs too.