

Feliks Nieznanowski's School ID



This is my school ID from 1938. It is my unique document that survived war. Thanks to this ID I could leave the Soviet Union after the war, because I had the confirmation that I am a Polish citizen.

I went to school when I was seven. I went to elementary school, it was a school operated by the Jewish Community of Warsaw. My parents fixed it so that I found myself there. There were several such schools in Warsaw, run by the Jewish Community. I don't know where the others were, though. It was supervised by the municipal school inspector, but also by the Jewish community. There were

also other schools, private ones. I should have gone to a Polish elementary school at 1 Podwale Street. That was school number 1, it was my district. But they decided I'd go to a Jewish school. It wasn't a coeducational school, there were only boys, I remember. The curriculum was the same as in a Polish school, but also Yiddish, later Hebrew, then we started studying Rashi, the Tannakh, and slowly, slowly, I was deepening my knowledge about things Jewish, becoming a Jew.

A typical class had twenty-odd to thirty students. It suddenly became terribly important to me, and I was impressed, because every student had to have a satin uniform and a white collar. You had to adapt and I was sort of uncouth, coarse, and suddenly I found myself inside that school rhythm of things. But I liked it. I was terribly determined to present myself favorably to the teachers. They didn't have to drive me to study. I did my homework so eagerly. Gradually they came to like me, told the other kids, 'Look at Felek, he doesn't have the conditions you have, you live in luxury, and yet you refuse to study, follow his example!' And because of that poverty, that misery, I started understanding things. All the students were Jewish, and they came from various backgrounds. I remember that every day we were given milk and a bun with marmalade. Every student got that. And the boys from the more well-off families brought sandwiches and shared with others. I was a good student so they'd invite me home to do homework together. There was always something to eat there, those were Jewish homes, well-off - something I never had at home.

The school wasn't just about going through the basic curriculum. The curriculum was rather packed. Besides the usual subjects, there were also the Jewish courses to go through, and they were treated as seriously as the others. So there was quite a lot of tension, a lot of homework to do. And, I remember it very well, the teachers were rather ambitious and were determined not to leave anyone behind.