

Friends And Relatives Of The Keiner Family



This is my family and our friends on an excursion in Rabka in the 1930s. On the photo from the left: Leopold Goldman, my Mother - Paulina Keiner (nee Kleinberg), my aunt Alicja Kleinberg, Horowitz, my Father Ferdynand Keiner, my uncle Izydor Minder. In the front: me, my uncle Roman Kleinberg, and my cousin Jerzy Minder. The environment in Rabka was mostly Christian. Father was a member of the local elite, although he didn't like being treated as such. The elite comprised the pharmacist, Mr. Mietus, Father Surowiak the priest, the doctors, Engineer Grochowalski, and the other poor attorney. They were Poles for the most part, these glorious provincial characters, colorful personalities. Father was friendly with Doctor Tadeusz Malewski, who was from a very poor family but was a keen doctor in Rabka. Father died in his arms. We lived opposite the church and Father would go to the parish priest, Surowiak, to play cards. Father was friendly with Jews too, of course. A few Jews had come to Rabka from Slovakia, what were known as Hungarian Jews. My father's friends were Tibor Kleinman, Lajos Brich, two friends from near Bratislava, forestry technicians, who had moved to Rabka in search of work and were employed at the sawmill there, and someone or other else, but the Jews were nevertheless in the minority. I remembered Lajos very well. This was a hugely amiable fat guy and drunk. I think there were about 200 Jews in Rabka at that time. In comparison with the local poor highlanders, who would usually have one cow and a bit of land, the Jews were a little wealthier. In their free time my parents would go out with their friends to this dance hall, 'Pod Gwiazda'. There was dancing, vodka, herrings, and guest performances by Lopek Krukowski. They would organize amateur 'live tableaux', something like short plays without words. I don't remember Mama taking part in them, but Alicja - Roman Kleinberg's wife - did. In any case, my parents didn't have too much free time. Father worked hard; twice or three times a week he would go by train the 14 kilometers to Jordanow, to the local court. Mama helped Father in his office, and kept house. We didn't have a servant. Later on Lola was taken on, who mainly took care of my upbringing. My parents didn't have any particular political convictions. Mama was totally apolitical, with slight Bund sympathies. My father, on the other hand, favored the Zionists, and although he didn't get particularly involved in their cause, he did pay some subscription or other. Mama had inherited a love of Polish literature from her father, and read a lot of belles-lettres. At home my parents spoke Polish; they didn't really understand Yiddish. Sometimes they would speak

German to each other, if they didn't want me to understand what they were saying. In Rabka before the war I completed six grades of public elementary school from 1930-36 and three grades of gymnasium from 1936-39. They were Polish schools. Gymnasium made a permanent impression on me. The school was called Dr. Jan Wieczorkowski's Private Sanatorial Gymnasium with public school entitlements. Sanatorial because some of the boys lived in a boarding house that was in an old manor house and some lived in the Benedictine Fathers' boarding house in town. Parents sent their children to Wieczorkowski's gymnasium partly for the treatment but mainly to ensure that they had a decent upbringing and education, because it was a famous school. In my class there were only a couple of Jews. At that school it was irrelevant who was Jewish and who Polish. It's inexpressible.