

Emilia Ratz On A School Trip



This is a picture of me with schoolmates, taken at a school holiday camp in Kazimierz in 1937. I'm the first from right. A girl from the 12th grade is reading me the future. At the grammar school I went to there were mainly Jewish teachers who would have had a hard time finding a job at a public school and who were very committed. I assume my parents sent me to this school on purpose because there was a strong anti-Semitism in Poland at the time, whereas I didn't have to face anything of the like in this school. It wasn't a Jewish school; all the students there were assimilated Jewish children who stood by their Jewishness and the fact that they were Polish citizens and regarded Poland as their homeland. My father allowed me to spend my summer vacations in a school camp that was neither kosher - the teachers weren't religious - nor Zionist. On one of these occasions I met a student there, who had pitched his tent nearby, fell in love with me and wrote letters to me afterwards. I didn't have the slightest idea that he was interested in me. I was hardly

17 years old, hadn't finished school yet and a 20 or 22-year-old seemed an old man to me. My father learned through these letters that a Jewish man from a rich family was interested in his daughter. However, I told my mother, 'If he phones, tell him I'm not at home.' My father was outraged that I'd let the chance of such a good match slip through my fingers.