

Wladyslaw Minc



This is a picture of my older brother Wladyslaw Mintz, when he was 9 years old.

We spelled our name the same way, with a 'tz,' until the 1930s. We were all dressed like dolls, because my mother sewed for her children herself, made clothing.

So he is wearing this satin suit, with white socks. He was born 26th January 1915, so this photo was taken in 1924 in Lodz, at Bernardi's. Bernadi was a well-known photographer on Wolnosci Square.

My father's whole family was quite polonized, assimilated, several generations back they had spoken only Polish, the children were sent to Polish schools...

In any case, a nice bit of evidence of the extent of their assimilation is that my father had given us Polish names.

Moreover, he insisted that other children born in my mother's family should be given Polish names, too.

The point was for the kids to have an easier time later in their lives. So that my older brother, he was my senior by some 6 years, was named Wladyslaw, then I was named Stefan, and the youngest one was called Ludwik. Wladek, Stefek and Lulek.

We were all [Mr. Minc and his brothers] enrolled in Polish schools. My older brother at first had gone to the public school named after Mikolaj Kopernik [Nicolaus Copernicus], on Ceglana Street.

Later he attended the Wisniewski gymnasium. Wisniewski was the owner of this school, which was named after Boleslaw Prus.

Wladyslaw had ties with the Communist Union of Polish Youth.

My mother begged him to take his finals first, because he would make his views known at school, and he often got into trouble for that reason.

The school principal would go after him and so on. So he promised he wouldn't get too deeply involved.

Later he went to Cracow to pursue his studies in law, at the Jagiellonian University.

During his studies he was active in the The Union of Independent Socialist Youth. In 1948 it became part of the Academic Union of Polish Youth.

These were the 1930s still, a period when the Polish Communist Party was banned... thanks to Stalin, after all. I only remember that sometimes these messengers would show up in our summer house in Wisniowa Gora, bringing these materials, illegal papers.

Wladek wouldn't tell me what it was, he would just say: 'you hide it well, so well that even the devil can't find it.' And I would hide the stuff somewhere under the house foundations...

I didn't ask who or what, I knew you were not supposed to ask, this is how it was.

In the summer of 1939 I went to visit my relatives in Cracow. Wladyslaw was in his last year of law.

He was living in a dormitory at number 3 Przemyska Street, near the Debicki bridge, which leads to Podgorze, off from Starowislna.

I was staying with him in the dormitory and visiting relatives. Wladek was a very good student, he was enormously gifted.