

O moim dziadku Marianie Kwiatkowskim. Fragmenty pamiętnika

A fragment of a memoir: on my grandfather Marian Kwiatkowski

SUMMARY

The author of this fragment of a memoir, the historian Tadeusz Marian Nowak, presents the extraordinary story of the life of his grandfather on the mother's side, Marian Kwiatkowski (1853-1913). Kwiatkowski lived during a period when Poland was deprived of its statehood, and the various Polish lands were under the rule of, respectively, the Tsar of Russia, the King of Prussia and the Emperor of Austria. Professor Nowak was born four years after the death of his grandfather, so he did not know him personally, but he reconstructed the early stages of his life story basing on family tradition, transmitted by his widowed grandmother, Maria Kwiatkowska, as well as on numerous mentions about his grandfather found in the letters of St. Rafał Kalinowski (1835-1907), canonized in 1991, which were published in the years 1978-1986; Kalinowski had been sent into exile in Siberia for his participation in the January Uprising of 1863, directed against Tsarist rule in Poland.

Maria's father, Felicjan Kwiatkowski of the Nowina clan, lived in the Russian-held part of Poland and worked as a forester in the village of Luka, where he was murdered in 1856, together with his wife and two children, by a gang of robbers. The only survivor was the three-year-old Marian, who at that time happened to be at the house of the family's friends. The orphan was taken care of by relatives, the doctor Stanisław Gałęcki and his wife Wiktoria. Seven years later Gałęcki took part in the January Uprising, and was sent into exile in Siberia after its fall. He was accompanied in Siberia by his wife and Marian Kwiatkowski, who was ten years old at that time. Both Kalinowski and the Gałęckis were exiled into the village of Usole on the Angara River, and then moved to the nearby town of Irkutsk on Lake Baikal. Both during their work in a salt mine, and later, when they were released from forced labour, but prevented by law from leaving Eastern Siberia, Kalinowski and the Gałęckis had to bear a great deal of material hardship. They were able to survive only thanks to financial assistance by another exiled Pole, Count Roman Bniński, whose estates were in the Austrian-held part of Poland, which meant that they escaped confiscation and brought in regular revenue, which was transferred to Irkutsk.

In 1869 the Gałęckis left Irkutsk in hope of finding work in a newly opened gold mine on the Lena River, while Marian Kwiatkowski, a pupil of a renowned junior grammar school in Irkutsk, was entrusted into the exclusive care of Kalinowski. The Bniński family soon got permission to move to Tobolsk, and later on to Żytomierz, which lay in an area that used to belong to the erstwhile Polish state. Marian Kwiatkowski accepted their invitation to join them. In Tobolsk he passed the examination into the fifth grade, while in Żytomierz he passed his school-leaving examination (in 1874) and there he also met his future wife Maria, the daughter of a local physician, Edward Niwiński. In 1874 Kwiatkowski went along with the Bnińskis to Cracow (Kraków); the Bnińskis also financed his studies at the polytechnic in Munich. It emerges from the letters by Kalinowski (who had returned to Poland from exile in 1874, and later joined the Discalced Carmelites' order), that after his graduation from the Munich

Polytechnic, Marian Kwiatkowski, with whom Kalinowski constantly kept in touch, worked in the salt mine of Wieliczka near Cracow (1881) and then as the district engineer in Limanowa, a town in the region of southern Poland then called Western Galicia. It was also in Limanowa that Kwiatkowski's five children were born, including Wanda, the mother of the author of this fragment of a memoir.

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