

Kurt Kotouc And His Friend Zdenek Ornest



This picture was taken in the second half of the 1980s when I went with Zdenek Ornest (on the left) to the USA to visit our friend Leopold Lewi, who had also belonged to the 'Skid' boys in Terezin.

During the war, when I was in Terezin, I was lucky because I got into building L-417. It was in a Terezin school building where there were ten boys homes. Each home had its own room, its own caretaker, its own number and its own name. I was in number one and our caretaker was Valtr Eisinger.

We called our group 'Republika Skid.' The name came from Eisinger who told us about the Russian book 'Republika Skid' that he liked very much. We were all taken by this and we wanted to be Skids. In brief a Skid comes from the 'Skola Imeni Dostoyevskovo', a school for the homeless kids in post-revolution St. Petersburg. A Skid was secret. Although a symbol of our home hung on our wall Eisinger told us to explain this title to strangers as 'Skola I. domov'. We were therefore a republic and had our own leadership, which was established on a festive Friday night on 18th December 1942. We were each given duties and responsibilities that corresponded with our interests and abilities. The members of the group were elected to different functions and at one time I acted as the chairman. A notable characteristic of Skid was that it was a collective where each person found their place.

The magazine Vedem was exclusively the domain of us, the boys. Professor Eisinger only wrote introductions and sometimes he contributed with a translation from Russian. On Friday night we would always sit around the table, or on the bunks and each person who had written something that week would read their contribution. The magazine was not publicized in any other way than during these Friday night session. For two whole years, we 'put out' our magazine each Friday thanks to the leadership of our editor, Petr Ginz.