

Leopold Sokolowski In The Polish People's Army



This is me, Leopold Sokolowski, in Lubsk in 1948. I am standing with my friends, Stefan Dab - Tadek Einhorn before the war - and his wife. Stefan was born in Nowy Targ and he knew my parents before the war.

I was terribly naive. When I was in Lubsk, I didn't know that a year after the war the Kielce pogrom took place. How would I know? I didn't buy newspapers, I didn't read, I didn't care, I wasn't interested. I didn't know either about the pogrom in Cracow in 1945. Had I known, who knows what course my life would have taken. Later, when I was in the army, I had no contact with the Jewish community. I did meet Jews, for I wasn't the only Jew in the army. Some of them I recognized immediately, for example Major Orbach: not only his name but also his looks were telling.

I was in touch with an old acquaintance from before the war, a Jewish woman, Wadelis. When I was stationed in Poznan, she suggested I can move in with them. Her daughter and my future wife were the same age, and they were best friends. So that was my contact with a Jewish family. Later I found out that Mrs. Wadelis was hoping I would marry her daughter, Edzia; I was a Jew, she liked that. But I knew them both and picked my present wife. I liked her a lot.

I wanted to be a doctor very much. I talked to Doctor Lipszyc, from Lubsk. I told him how much I would like to study, but that I had to make a living and had no base, no home. He said there were so-called academic companies in the army. For a year they prepared you for the final exam and those who passed signed commitment papers to the army, for 12 years, I think, and were moved to Lodz. In Lodz there was the Military Medical Academy. At the time it was called WCWM, Wojskowe Centrum Wyszkozenia Medycznego [Military Center for Medical Training]. One could study there and remain in the army.

I said, 'Yes! Right away!' But he said there is one condition: not to reveal Jewish descent. So I said, 'Doctor, I was scared for five years. Am I to remain scared for another five? You are a man, so you know. I am circumcised. I go to take a shower with the whole company and what? I cover myself, because I had it circumcised?' He said, 'Somehow you have to manage.' So I said, 'No, I'm not up for this, not now.' Because of that I didn't become a doctor. Though I liked that idea very much.