

Leopold Sokolowski With His Wife Gabriela And Son Ryszard



This is me, Leopold Sokolowski, with my wife, Gabriela and our son, Ryszard. This picture was taken in the 1970s in Poznan, when my son got his Master's degree in economy.

In 1948 I married a non-Jew, Gabriela Utrata. When one is 22 and comes to Poznan straight from military school, where was I to look for a Jew? Where would I find one? I was lucky, for my wife

knows even less about Christianity than I do. She was raised by the communists. I have great respect for that. My father-in-law, a carpenter, was a member of the KPP, and my mother-in-law was also active in the communist movement. They didn't go to church, but they used to send their daughter, that is my wife, to a grandmother or an aunt. When she was in the countryside she was taken to church, maybe they taught her something, but she did not have a religious education.

I went out with her and after a few months I went to her parents to ask for her hand in marriage. My wife arranged that I'd come and we'd talk. I brought some flowers or some alcohol, I don't remember which. I introduced myself, and said that I came here - well, they knew I didn't come to look at the furniture, but to visit Gabrysia - because I had serious intentions. Therefore I should explain certain things to them. I don't have a family, I am alone, and I am a Jew, if they don't mind. My father-in-law just sat there, without saying anything, but when I said that I'm Jewish he reacted right away. He said, 'Comrade Leopold, before the war I used to go to jail together with Jews, not to make any distinctions. I will be proud to have a Jewish son-in-law!' So in this respect I found a good family.

Obviously it is difficult in a mixed marriage to keep up either Jewishness or Christianity. That is why my son has been raised without religion and so was my daughter. My daughter joined a Catholic family, because she fell deeply in love with a boy who was, and still is, a strong believer. They have a good marriage, which has lasted already 30 years. My son's marriage is a little longer: 32 or 33 years. My son is an atheist, my daughter's house is Catholic and we participate in different events at both. We even participated in one Christmas Eve. We usually go away for the first or second day of Christmas Holidays. When we were over there at Christmas, my son-in-law read something from some Bible. He tolerates me. He knows his father-in-law is a Jew and has nothing against that. Very well, then I have nothing against him. He was raised like that; it's his right.