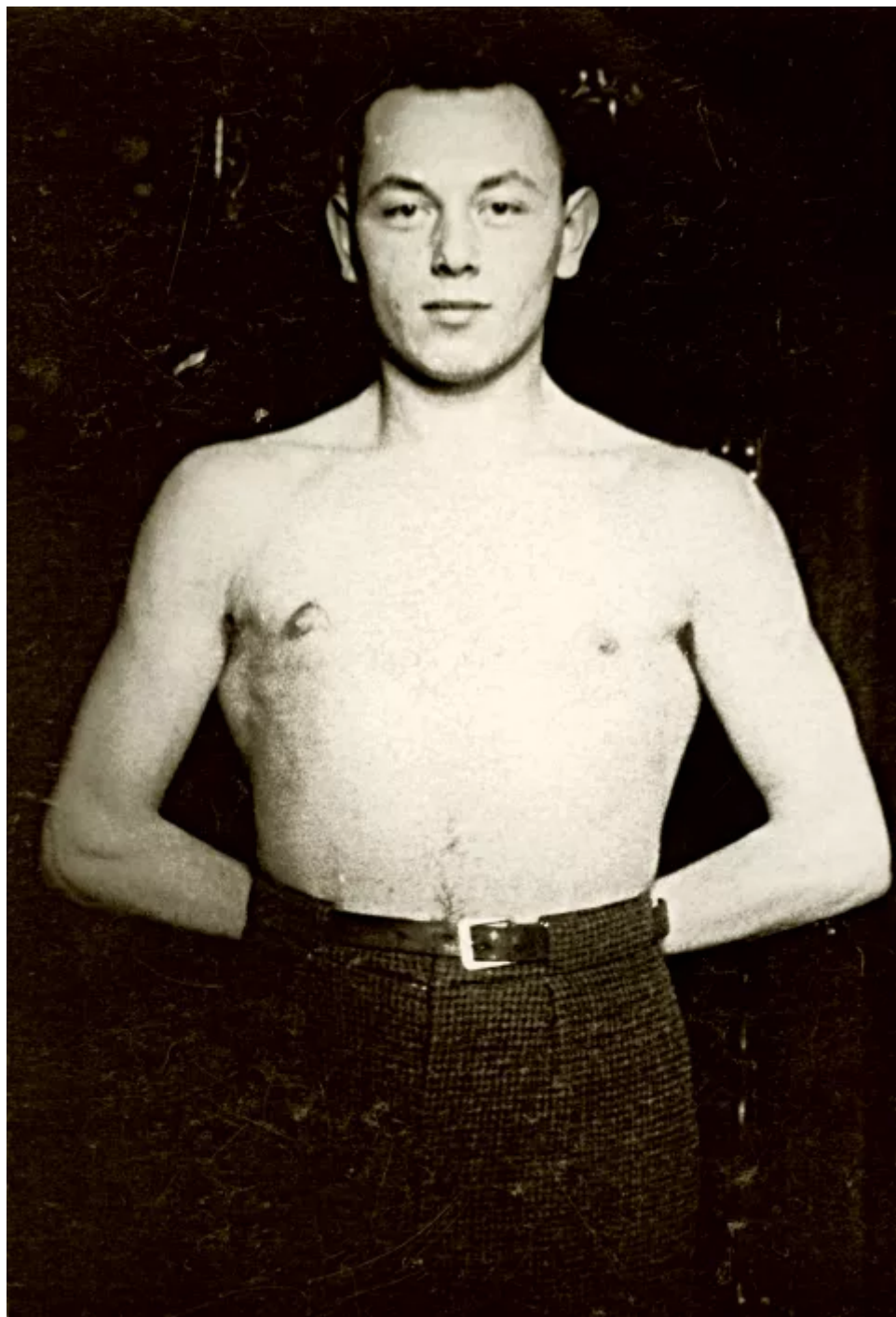


Jozef Seweryn



This is my portrait. The photo was taken in Cracow in the 1930s.

I was a member of the Polish Socialist Party. I joined it when I was 15 years old. I signed up because others were signing up. All of us - the boys from Podgorze - belonged to the PPS. There was nothing else in Podgorze but the PPS. I mean there were other groups - Zionists, Bundists, but they were very weak. We organized 1st May celebrations. Speakers would be invited to come; they explained what the PPS was, that it was an organization acting for the benefit of the working class. My grandmother and grandfather didn't have anything against my joining this party. Many of my grandfather's customers and all of his employees were in the PPS.

After I graduated from elementary school, I attended a three-year economic school. It was a good school. It cost 25 zloty a month. Part of this amount was covered by my grandfather and I paid some of it myself, from the money I earned at the dentistry supplies store. There were more or less ten Jews out of the 40 students in my class. All were assimilated, dressed in Polish clothing, behaved like Poles, so there were no problems with anti-Semitism. I passed my final exam in 1936. I worked for two years after graduating from school and then I was drafted into the army.

I was called up to the station in Cieszyn - the 4th Podhale Riflemen's Regiment of the 21st Podhale Division was stationed there. Because I had graduated from high school, I was sent to the officer cadet school. But after three weeks I was moved to Biala to the 3rd Podhale Riflemen's Regiment. This was because I was a Jew and they didn't want Jews in the officer cadet school in Cieszyn. There were many Jews in the regiment in Biala - of my friends I remember Baruch Kostenbaum, Idzio Wittenberg from Kazimierz, Romek Kinstling from Podgorze. After that we all served on the front.

They moved me in September and we took the oath in October 1938, because we were considered to be honest, reliable and useful soldiers. We were later stationed in Zaolzie, which was occupied by Poland at that time. And we stayed there for a while and then returned to Biala. In March I got promoted to corporal and on 3rd May I became lance sergeant in the 3rd Podhale Riflemen's Regiment.