

Leon Moshe Seliktar As A Cadet With A Friend



This is me (on the right) as a cadet with a friend. The picture was taken around 1948 in Sofia.

In 1946 I graduated from high school and was conscripted. I graduated from the School for Officers in Reserve and I became an officer and served at that base. Meanwhile, Jews started to immigrate to Israel: friends and relatives. I also wanted to leave. I even applied for immigration, because my parents and sister were leaving on 10th April 1949. I was still a regular soldier then, my application was approved by my commanding officer, and then it was passed through the Chief of Staff Gen. Kinov. He even asked to see me, he was very considerate, but told me that he couldn't let me go: 'You will remain on duty until your period of service is over.'

But since my duty was a bit classified - I was a tankman, and I worked with some kind of new communications system - when my military service was over, my superiors told me, 'We will not let you go to Israel, so you'd better stay and work here and you'll have enough money.' So I joined the military. I was an army officer until I retired in 1982. I retired in the rank of colonel.

I envied the people who were leaving for Israel. Even when my parents were leaving, I went to the local Israeli organization, which was sending the groups and explained to them my situation. They warned me not to think of escaping, because if I was caught, I would be shot. I was still a conscript then. In my career I had a few problems, not so much for being a Jew as for having relatives in Israel. For example, I wasn't promoted as regularly as the Bulgarians; once my boss' wife, a Bulgarian, asked him, 'How long are you going to live with that Jew?' I also had other problems, but I don't want to talk about them.