

Rachil Meitina



This is me when I worked at the Bakulev Institute of Cardiovascular Surgery in Moscow as senior scientific employee. This photograph was taken by an Institute photographer in the 1970s. I submitted my documents to the biochemical laboratory of Vishnevski Institute of Surgery where I became a junior scientific employee. I was employed on 1st December 1949 and on 3rd January 1950 I was fired due to reduction of staff; they explained to me that since I was a new employee it was all right to fire me rather than somebody that had worked here for a long time. However, it was crystal-clear that they fired me because I was a Jew. Other employees felt sorry for me. One of them was acquainted with Bakulev, who was opening a laboratory at that time. He began to study lungs and needed to learn about gaseous metabolism, blood gases. He needed employees. Alexandr Bakulev was a famous surgeon. He was chief surgeon in the Kremlin hospital for many years and a full member of the Medical Academy of Sciences. He was the director of the surgical clinic at the town hospital; a very decent and intelligent man. He was a multifaceted surgeon.

When I began to work with him he was organizing a lung department. In 1948 he performed the first heart surgery. He employed me. There were several broken units in the room where I was to work. They opened the door saying, 'This is where you will be working'. I started work on 28th January 1950. I actually set up the laboratory that lay the foundations for the Bakulev Institute of Cardiovascular Surgery. I was one of its founders. I was head of the laboratory. I worked there from 1950 till 1989.