

Igor (Israel) Lerner



This photograph was taken in GIPH (at my work). Here I'll tell you about foregoing events.

I became a student of the Technological College. I graduated from it with excellent marks. Besides I was an editor of the College newspaper, a former front-line soldier, a communist party member. Therefore notwithstanding the generally accepted mandatory job assignment, they suggested me to choose a place where I would like to work. There were 2 good places to work at and one of them was GIPH (the State Institute of Applied Chemistry). Everyone knew that at GIPH they never employed Jews, therefore I chose the 2nd one (not to receive refusal!). And what a surprise: I got to know that they invited me to GIPH! 2 weeks later I started working there. My first chief was a Jew, too. There I worked 42 years (from 1956 till 1998). I liked my work and was one of the top experts of my profession. My first position was a mechanic of experimental workshop. Later I became its chief and worked till I retired on pension. Nobody forced me to retire, on the contrary: they tried to persuade me to go on working.

Till now I keep in touch with my former coworkers: I am a member of the local veterans council. I share my memoirs about war with schoolchildren. I aim at putting new heart at their patriotic spirit, because in my opinion at present patriotic education at school needs to be up to higher standard. When I talk to children, I understand that they lack it, too. They usually ask many questions and listen very attentively. Boys are interested in military questions, while girls ask about love during the war. I had a look at school textbooks of history and it seemed to me, that war is covered there insufficiently. In particular well-known 10 Stalin Blows are described badly. [10 Stalin Blows or 10 blows Soviet Army gave to fascist troops in 1944. They were strategically important for the military campaign of 1944.]

During my work in GIPH I came across no manifestations of anti-Semitism. I had got an access permit and held high positions. To tell the truth, in the beginning of my work there were several very elderly women (Communist Party members since pre-revolutionary times). My nationality gave them no rest. They considered me to be responsible (for example) for Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973. They asked me every minute 'What do you want to achieve there in your Israel?' But GIPH administration put no pressure upon me. When I came to GIPH, there were many Jews. Later their

number decreased and during the period of state anti-Semitism GIPH was one of the most closed for Jews institutions. We worked upon very important projects connected with defense industry (till now I can tell you nothing about them). I keep good relations with my coworkers till now. I am allowed to keep my let-pass and can enter the Institute whenever I want. I receive medical treatment at the Institute polyclinic. My former coworkers invite me to all holiday parties and ceremonial meetings. By the way, some day soon I am going to take part in the preparatory meeting for the Victory Day celebrations.