

Grigoriy Kagan



This is me, senior lecturer of the 3rd AACD anti-aircraft artillery school, a player of the school hockey team. I was photographed during an interval at the training. This photo was taken in Aluksne (Latvia) in 1952.

I was going to resume my studies in the Military Electrotechnical Academy of Communication after the WWII. I was admitted to the first course of the Communication faculty of the Academy. I had all excellent marks in all subjects in the Academy. I also received a room in the dormitory of the Academy where I could live with my wife and son. I graduated from the Academy with honors on 25th August 1950, and my Jewish surname was written in golden letters on the white marble board in the Academy.

There was already strong anti-Semitism in the society. It grew stronger since 1948, the period of struggle against cosmopolitanism. I was appointed deputy chief of communication forces of the 25th Air Force army deployed in Leningrad. I went to the human resource department of the 25th army. Their HR manager was happy to see me and said I was expected. However, when he read my surname in my diploma, his expression changed and he said that regretfully he had forgotten that this position had already been assigned to someone else. After graduating the Academy with honors and having a job assignment I had no job while I had to provide for my wife and my 4-year old son. I could not find a job. The three of us had to live on 90 rubles per month. I received this allowance for my rank and this was the only income our family had. Of course, I understood this had to do with my Jewish identity: the other graduates of the Academy, who had worse marks than

I, were appointed to higher positions and were duly promoted. The military career was closed for me. Some time later I was invited to Moscow where I got an offer to fill the position of a lecturer at a military school. I had a choice to teach electric engineering in Zhytomyr, and this position corresponded to my rank of major, or physical basics of radio equipment and location in anti-aircraft artillery school #3 in Aluksne town in Latvia, and this position corresponded to the rank of lieutenant colonel. I decided for Aluksne, thought Zhytomyr was near Kiev and I could visit my parents if I had decided to go there.

My wife, my son and I moved to Aluksne. The Baltic Republics were annexed to the USSR in 1940. The Latvians considered it to be occupation of their country. They treated us as if we were occupants and they were right since we behaved like occupants. When I arrived I was offered to choose some accommodation. I looked around and decided for a small cozy cottage in the center of the town. The owner of the house was ordered to vacate one room for me and he did it obediently. He did not have the right to argue since he might have been arrested for disobedience otherwise. Such requirements were explained as needed by the state. I spoke fluent Latvian within half a year and spoke it without an accent, though I did not know the grammar.

This period was very pleasant for me. I was also involved in the sports activities at my school. I was a football trainer and played hockey for my school. Both students and lecturers had a warm attitude toward me. I liked and enjoyed my job. However, I had to think about my career.