

Kofman Raikhchin On Board The Warship



I often had to make business trips. This photograph was taken during one of such business trips in 1970 on board the ship on the Baltic Sea. Here I'll tell you about my work after college graduation.

After graduating from the College they sent me to Kharkov to work at the factory which belonged to sensitive areas of national defense: it had no name, but only a number - 201. [In the USSR numbered institutions worked on confidential, usually military subjects.] In 1950s in the USSR there appeared a new industry branch - rocket production (our factory was founded in connection with it). That sphere of knowledge was not only new, but also a priority one, therefore they invited only intelligent graduates. At first they suggested me to go to Komsomolsk-on-Amur, but I wanted to go to Kharkov: it seemed to me that I could find very interesting work there. The factory manager came to Leningrad himself to find young specialists. He looked through my documents and agreed to take me. In total 10 graduates from our College were sent to that factory and 4 of them were Jewish.

At the factory I wanted to work at the design office, but they sent me to a workshop as a foreman. Today it is an open secret that our factory worked out and produced radio equipment for rockets (both ground, and on-board). We sent our production to Dnepropetrovsk, where they assembled rockets.

Having returned to Leningrad, I started working in one of institutions which belonged to sensitive areas of national defense (now it is named the Institute of Distant Radio Navigation). It was easy for me to find job, because of my previous working experience: a person from Kharkov special institution was welcomed everywhere in our sphere. I worked there 40 years up to my pension: I retired on pension in 1997, by that time I was 73 years old. There were no manifestations of anti-Semitism at our institute. You see, its director was a person who always took Jews into his institute. And in fact in the USSR there were times when it was not easy for a Jew to be employed. Once a personnel manager of our institute told the director that he was not able to take in a guy because of the item 5. Director answered 'Well, then it is necessary for me to go to the local Party committee and let them explain me what item 5 means.' And that guy was immediately taken in,

because in fact the instruction not to take Jews was secret. As for me, I remember some insignificant troubles, but in comparison with the situation at other organizations it was trifling, not worth speaking about.

One day a large group of 150 persons were going to be presented with government awards for some successful work. Placing of awards was up to the institute administration. I was recommended for Order of Honor, but the local Communist Party committee did not approve it. As a result, I was awarded only a medal. And during the Six-Day-War at one of our meetings they decided to hold up to shame Israeli aggressors. I stood up and said that it was not an aggression, but a preventive action of the country surrounded by hostile neighbors. Immediately I was called a nationalist, and they stopped inviting me to meetings for half a year. You may consider it strange that despite of all this I speak about absence of anti-Semitism in our institute. Be sure that in comparison with other Soviet institutions we (Jews) enjoyed an earthly paradise in our institute. I often made business trips. We often sailed by ships on the Baltic Sea and tested our equipment.