

Deborah Averbukh



This is a photo of me, taken in Kiev in 1965. After the war, the term 'cosmopolitan' in the Soviet Union meant almost the same as 'traitor of the Soviet Union'. Usually it was the Jews that were called 'cosmopolitans'. Anyway, so I was fired in June 1948. On 1st September 1948 I found a job as a senior laboratory assistant of the theoretical elements of electrical engineering lab at the Kiev Institute of Film Engineers. My salary was 600 rubles, 400 of which I had to pay for my 'corner'. The 'corner' was a place in the room that I rented from a large family, where my bed stood and where I could only sleep. I also spent 60 rubles on public transportation to get to work and back. Thus, I had 140 rubles for the rest of my necessities. In summer 1951, at the end of the school year, 14



Jews were fired from the institute I was working at. Not all the Jews were fired: only lecturers, while professors could stay. In my labor book I read 'fired in connection with decreased work load'. I was fired on 1st July, and on 1st September of the same year my job was given to the sister of the secretary of the Komsomol Committee of that institute. By the way, among those 14 who were fired was a brother of academician Tetelbaum - Alexander Isaacovich Tetelbaum. But on the other hand, the chief of the Marxism-Leninism chair was also fired. She was an intolerable communist and, I believe, the greatest anti-Semite in the whole institute. But she was also Jewish, so she was fired. Those news about her felt like a good revenge that immensely satisfied me back then. When our high officials were choosing somebody to organize the corrosion department, they immediately told me that I wouldn't qualify for three reasons. I just asked them, 'What are the other two?'. They told me, 'You are not a Communist Party member and you are not a Ph.D.' So, I began to work on my dissertation. I knew I could never change the two other reasons. But I'm always critical about things. So, as I was running from one job to another, I was thinking, 'How many decades have to pass in order for people to hear the truth?' I defended my dissertation in 1971 and was confirmed in my office in 1972, although it was a unique case in those times. For instance, nobody wanted me to take exams at their institutions - neither Kiev Polytechnic Institute, where everyone knew me, nor in the Construction Institute - only because I was Jewish!