

Isaac Gragerov



I as a student, photographed in Kiev in 1938. The photo was taken for a wall newspaper. After finishing school I submitted my documents to the Kiev State University. I wanted to become a chemist, but in 1935 there was no admission to the Faculty of Chemistry, and I decided to enter the Faculty of Physics. I failed at the exam in Russian and Ukrainian composition. I entered the Faculty of Chemistry at the Institute of Leather and Footwear Industry located near the leather factory. I was more interested in scientific research than practical applications and, after a year, I managed to enter the Faculty of Chemistry at Kiev University. I was very fond of chemistry. I was also involved in public activities, and at one time I was head of the Komsomol unit of my course and a member of the Komsomol committee of the institute. I collected monthly fees, conducted meetings, concerts and amateur artist contests. I also met a nice Jewish girl called Zhenia Kriss. We

went to theaters and concerts. We all celebrated 1st May and October Revolution Day together, went to parades, got together at somebody's place, danced and partied until late, recited poems and sang Soviet songs. There were many, many arrests in the 1930s [during the so-called Great Terror]. A few lecturers and students of the university vanished. There were portraits of devoted revolutionaries in the concert hall of the university. Many of these portraits vanished, after these people were accused of betrayal and executed. There were portraits of Kamenev and Zinoviev. Many other dedicated and devoted communists vanished in those years. Many of my father's friends and acquaintances disappeared. My father's brother Alexandr was arrested and vanished. My father had a feeling that they were coming for him one night. Of course, my parents understood the real situation, but I believed that all these arrests had their reasons, and that all those people were indeed 'enemies of the people'. My parents didn't try to tell me otherwise, but they often discussed how unfair the situation was. In 1940 I graduated from university with honors and entered the post-graduate course at the Academy of Sciences. My scientific tutor was Professor Yavorskiy, who lectured on the subject of organic chemistry.