

Emilia Ratz



This picture of me was taken in 1945 in Sverdlovsk. There was a faculty of chemistry in Sverdlovsk, but our group of students had already taken so many exams in mechanical engineering that we decided to stick with it. That was in fall 1942. We completed our period of practical training in a motorcycle factory in the small town of Irbit. We worked twelve hours a day, just like the laborers there. There were no real roads in this little town, just tracks like those we had in the poorest parts of Eastern Poland. We were accommodated by different families. We had hardly any food, or, to be more precise, we were starving. Afterwards we returned to Sverdlovsk, took our exams and the next summer we were already given the subjects of our dissertations. We were supposed to finish our studies quickly in order to fill job positions. I completed my practical diploma training in a

factory for aircraft equipment. I was satisfied with my work. Of course we were used, but at the same time we also learned a lot. My husband always tried to make some extra money. I had an injury on my leg, which didn't heal because we couldn't get vitamins. We had practically finished our studies and were just missing our diploma examinations. But the prospect of going to work soon wasn't exactly enticing. Students didn't have much money and had little food but at least we had time and didn't have to work twelve hours a day. I dawdled over my exams a bit. Most likely someone told on me because I was summoned to the administration of the university. Since female emancipation wasn't exactly high on the list of priorities back then, I came up with the following argument: 'It would make kind of a bad impression if I was an engineer already whereas my husband was still a student, wouldn't it?' I negotiated six more weeks for myself and we finished our studies on the same day. ?