

# Naum Tseitlin



This picture was taken in 1948 at the Moscow Municipal House of Pioneers, where I worked then as the head of the science and technology department. A whole long story is connected with this Palace and my work there.

In the late 1930s, my life took a sharp turn in a new direction in which, as it happened, I have been moving ever since. I came across a newspaper article saying that the first Municipal House of Pioneers had opened in Moscow, and it also said what circles were organized and what specialists were invited to work with children. It looked interesting to me and I organized an architectural studio there, and a construction laboratory, which subsequently trained a lot of well-known specialists. Simultaneously, I was a correspondence student at the Timiryazyev Academy, the famous Agricultural Academy in Moscow, named after K. A. Timiryazyev. I passed my last examination on June 20, 1941. I only had to defend my diploma. And suddenly the war broke out.

When the war with Germany began, I worked as the head of the science and technology department of the Moscow Municipal House of Pioneers. I learned about the outbreak of the war from a radio broadcast of the speech by V. M. Molotov. 'Hitlerite Germany has unilaterally broken the agreement with the Soviet Union, and without a declaration of war has started military aggression on a broad front line from the southern to the northern part of our boundary line.'

I hurried to work and when the entire collective had gathered we had a meeting. I warned the director that I was prepared to apply as a volunteer to the army. After the meeting we dismissed all the kids, and on the next working day, which was Tuesday, I came to work with a filled in enlistment form and handed it over to the secretary of the party organization. She said, 'I did not expect that you would be the first.' I was not subject to the draft. I still hold a passport from that period, which states, 'Not subject to the draft, has not undergone any military training,' right under

my surname. It was because I was born with a very serious disease, I had heart problems.

I learned that all 27 men, who worked in our department, had filled out similar forms, and we were enlisted in a squad of the National Guard. On July 2 I received a message saying that I should go to school no. 313, close to our House of Pioneers. I came with an ordinary sack, because I did not have any military kit-bag. Just a sack, with things packed by my wife. We were lodged in that school, desks were removed and beds installed, and some guys were sleeping on the floor. Our military training began. This is how my life as a soldier, a defender of my fatherland, started.

Having returned home, I, without a day for rest, went to the place where I had worked before the war. I was received with open arms, and I immediately resumed my favorite job. Gradually I became not simply a teacher in circles, but also a propagandist of manual labor at secondary schools. At that time I supervised the department of science and technology in the Moscow Municipal House of Pioneers, directed the club of young craftsmen, I was the initiator of the first 'Skilful hands' hobby groups in this country, for which I created the program and the first methodical recommendations.