Galina Barskaya With Her Colleagues

I, Galina Barskaya, sitting in the first row, fourth on the right. The photo was taken at a demonstration on 1st May 1956 in Kiev, where I went with my colleagues.

Before we left the Urals, the plant, the Jews who were working there warned me that terrible anti-Semitism had started in Ukraine. In order to find a job I went to see the second secretary of the city committee of the Communist Party in Kiev. He met me in Pervouralsk, where we worked together. When he saw me in Kiev, his first question was, 'What is your nationality? I wanted to send you to do Komsomol work, but now I am not even sure of that…' I don't think he was an anti-Semite; he simply understood that he could not send me to a work place where Jews were not allowed any longer. Nevertheless, he helped me to find a job at the committee for industrial and polygraph industry, whose chief was also Jewish. I began to work as his secretary, then I was promoted to a personnel inspector, and then – to the office of the chief of the personnel department.

I forgot to mention that in evacuation I had joined the Communist Party, that is why I was entrusted with such a responsible position. But certainly, if my boss had not been Jewish, nobody would have ever appointed me to this office. In that position I worked for more than 26 years – for the rest of my life, till my retirement on pension. Our team was very friendly. We always celebrated all Soviet holidays together – 1st May, October Revolution Day, etc. Our whole organization would go to demonstrations and picnics together.

We had a lot of Jews at our work. Our chief hired them knowing that otherwise they would not find a decent job. Later, when inspectors from the district committee of the Communist Party or from higher organizations would come, they would put red marks against the names of the Jews on our list and show the list to me, saying that there were too many Jews in our organization. But our chief always stood up for us. The anti-Semitic campaign of the 1950s 14 did not touch us either. We certainly knew about it and were concerned, but it did not affect us.

In general, anti-Semitism was manifested in everything. For instance, Aunt Olya and Uncle Nikolay came to live with me. We all lived in one room, which was crowded, so Uncle Nikolay went to fight for a personal apartment. A representative of the Communist Party district committee came over to see how old party member Rukoyatkin was living. Suddenly he exclaimed with indignation, 'Couldn't you find a Russian or a Ukrainian woman for yourself! Why did you have to marry a Jew!' For a long time after that Nikolay could not get an apartment. Later he was given two small rooms in a communal apartment.

I was a propagandist; I graduated from the Marxism-Leninism University. I can tell you how I was present at a class of political courses where colonels and other officers studied; they were sitting and talking about the Jews. Then I was so indignant that I shouted, 'You are sitting here, in this course, studying Marxism-Leninism, while Marx was Jewish and Lenin's grandfather was Jewish!' They looked at me with great surprise that I would defend the Jews, but they decided I was Russian. Well, it's just a little detail about the atmosphere at that time.