

Mikhail Katsenelson



This photo was taken in 1975 before my retirement and departure from Lipetsk.

My service was very interesting. Time slid by. I served in Lipetsk more than 20 years: I arrived there in the rank of senior lieutenant and was demobilized as a colonel.

In Moscow they took into consideration my age and sent us an order about my This photo was taken in Lipetsk in 1974. It was taken in a photo studio and I don't remember the reason (most possibly it was my wife who insisted).

For a long time (about 2 years) my chiefs concealed me from the supervising services. They needed me working and it was a great pleasure for me. At last in 1975 there came another order about pensioning off, and my name was listed. So I had to say goodbye to my friends and students and leave Lipetsk.

From Lipetsk we moved to Leningrad, where my wife was born. At first we lived in a communal apartment near Fontanka River. One day I was walking along the Fontanka River and saw the name of the organization: Research Institute of Steel. You see, in Lipetsk there was a branch of the Moscow Institute of Steel and they invited me there to deliver lectures.

They even suggested me to accept a post at them, but my wife wanted to move to Leningrad. So I went to the institute and said that I wanted to work for them. They were happy to take me and immediately decided to send me on business trip to Yerevan.

In Yerevan they arranged output of computers, and our aim was to examine them and make a decision about purchase. I was appointed to be in charge. At that moment I recollected that I had forgotten to pay party dues and asked if it was possible to do it at my new place of work.

They agreed and the secretary of the local communist party organization asked my surname and took the money. Meanwhile the Institute director ordered to buy tickets to Yerevan urgently.

I went home quickly to let my wife know about the situation. I had scarcely entered the room when the telephone rang. My new chief (a Jew, by the way!) called me to say 'I am sorry, but we cannot give you job.' It was the first manifestation of anti-Semitism I came across, besides the episode in the Academy connected with Doctors' Plot.

So I lost my work having no opportunity to start. Then I went to a regional military registration and enlistment office. [Military registration and enlistment offices in the USSR and in Russia are special institutions that implement call-up plans.]

They sent me to work as a chief of the civil defence staff at a building organization. [Civil defense is an effort to prepare civilians for military attack. It uses the principles of emergency operations: prevention, mitigation, preparation, response, or emergency evacuation, and recovery.]

A little bit later I became the chief of the civil defence staff at Glavleninggradstroy, the leading building organization of the city. It was a great organization: there were about 200,000 employees.

They kept under control all construction projects in the city. I worked honestly (as I always did!), but I was not into it. Very often they required only formal actions and neutral reports. And I was accustomed to implement more serious tasks, I wanted my job to captivate me entirely.

I started searching for something else and became an active lecturer of the Znanie society. [Znanie (Knowledge), the All-Union society for propagation of political and scientific knowledge was created in July 1947.]

Lecturers of that society delivered lectures at different places: factories, building sites, research institutes. The main topic of my lectures was world situation. I even became a well-known lecturer in the city.

People said that I used to give interesting and bright information. When they asked for a lecture, they often asked to send me. Sometimes they said 'Send us please a lecturer who is very much like Levitan.' [Yury Levitan (1914-1983) was the most famous soviet radio announcer.

During the Great Patriotic War he read reports from fronts. It was he who declared: 'Great Patriotic War against fascist aggressors was victoriously finished!' Levitan's voice was an integral part of the war atmosphere.] Indeed, my voice sounded very well, nobody could fall asleep during my lectures.

So I worked at Glavleninggradstroy 7 or 8 years. I was able to go on working, my coworkers put high value on my work, I liked my work.