

Bitoush Behar



This is me – Bitoush Behar – at the age of 25 in 1955. This photo was taken in a studio and was intended for the official document at my graduation from the Institute of Mining and Geology in Sofia. There is no stamp of a photo shop on the back of the photo, nor any other inscription. The design of the back of the photo resembles a postcard.

After 9th September 1944 life returned to normal again. [The day of the communist takeover in Bulgaria. In September 1944 the Soviet Union declared war on Bulgaria. On 9th September 1944 the Fatherland Front, a broad left-wing coalition, deposed the government.] Even before 9th September, in 1943-1944, I was working as a shoemaker. Afterwards, in the end of 1945, I started work at 'Mikromer' Locksmith's. There we were making keys, locks, oxygen welding. My master, whose name was uncle Georgi, and my father had been together in prison in 1936. I spent two years there and then the town committee of UYW [a communist youth organization, which went underground after the coup d'état in 1934 and fought against fascism] sent me to ORT [Union for the Distribution of Industrial and Agricultural Labor among the Jews] in Sofia. At that time UYW hadn't been transformed into Dimitrov Communist Youth Union [Bulgarian Komsomol] yet. That took place later, in 1948. In ORT I attended six-month courses to train for jig locksmith. After completing them I worked for 4 or 5 months at 'Osvobozhdenie' Cooperation – a Jewish cooperative company in which the machines were from 'Joint' [An American Distribution Committee]. I worked there for 6 months and came back to Plovdiv and worked at 'Ustrem' Metal-Working Cooperation, a subsidiary of 'Joint' too from 1946 till 1950. 'Ustrem' Cooperation was the first manufacturer of machine-tools. I worked there for a year and a half and then I was sent to Rabfak, where I studied

for a year and a half. I was very good at Physics and Chemistry there. Our teachers were wonderful, all of them were so good – the best, the elite of the teachers in Plovdiv and they were eager to work there. For example, the eminent teacher of Bulgarian and Literature, Vera Gulubova, who I have mentioned at the beginning. I remember that I used to smoke at the time, she came to me and told me: ‘Behar, you smell like a tobacco warehouse, if nature had wanted the man to smoke, it would have put chimneys on our heads.’

After that I was advised to enroll in the Institute of Mining and Geology, into a field where specialists were needed. I enrolled and spent nine terms studying from 1952 till 1957. At that time I was living with the family of one of my father’s sisters. After graduating I got a job at Gorubso.