

Boris Lesman, The Interviewee



This is a photograph of me, it was made in 1944 (at that time I was senior lieutenant in infantry. I do not remember who took it. It happened after my first wound. I spent in hospital 7 months (in Samara).

After that I got to Stalingrad front. By that time Paulus troops had already been encircled, but not taken yet. So I was moving to the south by train. I was lying on the upper berth (my wound still bothered me). Three officers were sitting below: two lieutenants and one junior lieutenant.

They were talking, suddenly I looked at that junior lieutenant ... and understood that I knew him! 'Konstantin Vassilyevich! Hi!' He looked at me. I said 'Konstantin Vassilyevich, don't you recognize me? You are my teacher of physics, and I am Lesman ...' - 'Oh, Boris!' We embraced ...

He was a junior lieutenant. He said 'Boris, where are you going?' - 'To our headquarters.' - 'Listen, come with me, to our army. We will be there together.' - 'But can it cause any troubles for me?' - 'No, you will go to the front line, not to back areas!' - 'Where shall we go? To the front headquarters?' - 'No, it is not necessary! We will go directly to the army headquarters.' And so we arrived there.

They asked me 'Do you want to serve in our army?' - 'Yes, I do.' - 'Good. What position did you occupy before you were wounded?' - 'I was a company commander.' - 'Good.' And I found myself in the rifle division no. 302 as a company commander. Thanks to my teacher I became one of them through and through.

We liberated half of Ukraine, when Germans managed to defeat our division, and we were taken off from the front line and sent to Voronezh region, to heartland (it happened in July). [Voronezh is a

city in the Central Russia, 500 km far from Moscow.]

There we got new weapon, new soldiers, because we had lost many people. And I was appointed a battalion commander (about thousand people). And you remember that I was a twenty-years-old senior lieutenant! Two forty-years-old captains and several senior lieutenants much older than me were subordinate to me. I fought for my country very well.

From Voronezh region we were transferred to Ukraine, where I was wounded badly for the last time: for about seven months I have been treated in hospital in Kuybyshev.

I started thinking where I to go after the hospital. Of course, to the front. Later I decided that it would be better to join Lev. By means of field mail he informed me that he was able to take me to his unit. And it meant serving not at the front line, but somewhere in a financial department.

By that time I already was a senior lieutenant.

And my uncle arranged a request from the front line, from his unit '... to detach the senior lieutenant Lesman to our unit.' But at that time I got to know by chance that according to Stalin's order, all man-of-war's men had to return to fleet.

All of us were in infantry: they threw us to Stalingrad on feet, because the course of war events was extremely hard. I addressed the hospital command, and they answered 'We have no right to send you to the School: we do not know such order of comrade Stalin.' - 'But I have official information that they return seamen!' - 'Certainly we can send you to the front line.

Otherwise you have to recall your assignment.' And I wrote my uncle (nervously and urgently) 'Lev, I have an opportunity to get back to the Navy School, please recall your request.' And they sent a telegram from the front line 'We do not object to sending Lesman to the Navy School.' That was the way I got back to the School and finished the 2nd, the 3rd, the 4th course and became a seaman.