

Osip Hotinskiy



This is me photographed in winter 1941-42.

I was photographed in our earth hut. There is a support post made from a newly cut tree behind me. This photo was taken at the front near Smolensk in 1942.

I finished school in 1939. I was fond of exact sciences and I entered the Bauman School, present-day Moscow High Technical School. In 1939 a new law on army service was issued.

Before this students hadn't been subject to army service before finishing their education, but according to this new law the students were to join the army when they reached the recruitment age.

In October all 1st-year students were recruited to the army. I was recruited as a private to a reserve regiment. We were trained to handle a mortar and sent to the Finnish Front.

After the Finnish campaign the Baltic Republics of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia were annexed to the USSR. Our division was sent to support the annexation of Estonia in 1940.

Later we were ordered to relocate to Belarus, Chermekha station near Brest Litovsk, 30 kilometers from the western border of the USSR. There were earth huts made for us. They were big and made to accommodate a company.

There was a deep pit dug, logs on the floor and plank beds on the sides, little windows by the surface. The roof was covered with grass to camouflage it.

There were iron stoves to heat the earth huts. In winter soldiers on duty gathered brushwood and wood for the stoves. There were also smaller earth huts for mortars.

In 1941 I was awarded my first Order of the Red Star, and in 1942 I received the second one.

These are all my military awards.

I was also awarded an Order of the Great Patriotic War, 1st Class, in 1985, before the 40th anniversary of the victory over Germany.