

Adolf Landsman



This is me at the end of war. There are my awards from left to right: Order of the Red Star Order and the Great Patriotic War, first class, and the Guards insignia is below them. The picture was taken in Chenstokhov in July 1945, on the way home.

In January 1945 I was wounded for the second time in the battle close to the Czechoslovakian town of Kosice. When I was discharged from the hospital, I was sent to the separate antitank squadron #108 of the artillery division #8. I stayed in that squadron until the last day of the war.

On 8th May, we were given the task to support the artillery infantry, which was supposed to capture the closest settlements. We remembered the words of the Czech officers. In actuality we didn't have any collisions with the Germans for the last couple of days, and now we had the order to attack and we didn't know how the events would unfold.

After a short training, our and Czechoslovakian infantry started attacking. All cannons of the squadron were on direct pointing range, and we rapidly fired at those positions which were in the way of the infantry. The battle lasted for three hours, and by the evening of 8th May, the town was captured.

There were no casualties in our squadron, but there were the wounded and killed in the infantry. When the battle was over the cannons of our squadron were placed along the road. We awaited the order to attack, but the order didn't come. Around 9pm, we heard desultory fire. We thought that our rear regiment, which was trying to move to the west, had a battle with the Germans.

Soon we saw our soldiers holding their rifles and guns in vertical position and shooting in the air. They rushed towards us and cried out something but we couldn't hear the words.

Of course we had a hunch what their words meant but were afraid to rejoice preliminary. Finally we could hear clearly, 'The war is over!' Then our squadron commander followed them and confirmed the joyful news by saying that Germany had surrendered, and at midnight of 9th May, military actions were terminated on all fronts. We were congratulating each other on the victory, kissing each other, singing and laughing. We loaded a couple of weapons and made fireworks to celebrate the end of the war.

Then we started to remember our kin, friends and comrades, who fell in battle. We felt especially sad for those who died on the victory day. On 9th May our division commander let our squadron march before the infantry.

As all of our weapons were mechanized, we moved very fast and happened to be the first representatives of the Soviet Army in Czechoslovakia during the official termination of the war. The villagers exclaimed with joy as we passed. They gave us flowers.

In one of the villages they even met us ceremoniously. At the exit of the village, there was an arch, adorned with coniferous branches and there were portraits of Stalin and Benes.

There was an orchestra playing nearby, and tables were laid along the road with wine and food. Our main task was to follow the drivers for them not to drink up. The joy of victory and the warm reception in Czechoslovakia was embossed in my memory as the happiest day of my life.

I finished the war in the rank of a lieutenant.