

# Ida Limonova's First Husband Natan Shafir In The Red Army



My husband Natan Shafir in the Red Army. Natan is the 2nd on the left and on his right is his friend and writer Jack Altauzen. I don't know the names of the two other military. The photo was taken at the front in 1941. Natan sent this photo to me to Chkalov. In 1939 war in Europe began, but we didn't believe that Hitler would attack the Soviet Union. In May 1941 my husband Natan was mobilized to a tank military unit on the Western border, but still the beginning of the war was a surprise to me. At 4 o'clock in the morning on 22nd June air raids began in Kiev. I was alone at home. Yuri was in the sanatorium in Evpatoria. At the beginning of the war, my husband started working in the editorial office of a tank unit on the Western border. We often received letters from him. Some of them were published in our newspaper. He wrote that he had been awarded a medal on 10th May and this day became especially memorable to him as it was also his son's birthday. He wrote that with each roar of cannonade he thought, 'This is to hit Hitler on the head for Kharkov, Kiev, for Yuri and for all mothers' tears!' I would like to read a letter that he wrote to Yuri on his birthday. It was a month before he perished.. 'My dearest Yuri, I hope this letter reaches you on your birthday. You will turn 6 on 10th May. Your Daddy wishes he could be with you on this day and give you a present and kiss you on your little up-turned up nose. Here's what I wish you: to have your grandmother Rosalia make a huge pie with raisins in Kiev on your next birthday, cream and other sweets; that we meet as soon as possible and I find you, Mummy Ida, your grandfather and grandmother healthy and happy; that you always remember Soviet soldiers that are shedding their blood for all boys and girls, fighting for your happiness, your laughter and your home. You are a big boy now, and you understand how difficult things are for your father and your mother. But we shall be together one day. We shall go to work and you will go to school, but we shall get together in the evenings to talk and recall the past. We shall read nice books, travel, go to the cinema and enjoy life. My dearest, you have so many nice things ahead of you. I keep thinking about you and your Mummy, and I'm ready to give everything to you, even my life. Happy Birthday and many kisses.

'Hurrah!' to the birthday boy!' In summer 1942 I stopped getting letters from my husband. I was very concerned. At first I was notified that he was missing. At that time Stalin issued an order to attack Kharkov at a time when the troops weren't prepared for such an attack. As a result, over 100,000 soldiers were encircled and eliminated in this area. Natan and their whole editorial office perished. Natan was a good soldier (he was awarded a medal 'For service in battle') and a skilled professional, a good father and husband. My son lost his father when he was 6.