

## Boris Iofik



This photograph was taken in Furstenberg in 1945 and shows me shortly before the end of the war. Now I'll tell you about my experience at the front.

At the end of 1943 I was invited to the local military registration and enlistment office. [Military registration and enlistment offices in the USSR and in Russia are special institutions that implement call-up plans.] I remember that my way there took a lot of time: the military registration and enlistment office was situated somewhere in outskirts of the city.

By that time I already got stronger, I was boarded and passed for general service. Of course, my eyesight did not improve, but authorities bated demands for recruits. We were taken to a military unit in Sverdlovsk region by train. We moved in a heated goods van [a heated goods van was a freight car adapted for transportation of people.]

The military unit we were brought in trained recruits. We were going to be trained and get military rank of sergeants, but at the front-line everything was not well. That was the reason why our training course was interrupted, and we were given the ranks of privates first class.

I was sent to infantry as a submachine gunner (regiment #1050, division #301) to the 1st Belarus front. I started fighting at the Polish border. We were charged with an important mission: to liberate peoples of Europe from fascist aggressors.

The majority of population of Poland waited for us and welcomed as liberators. They did not run to the West from the coming Red Army. And we, soldiers did our best not to disgrace the name of the

Soviet soldier.

Polish people lived under oppression of Germany more than 4 years. Jewish population of that country was almost cut down ruthlessly by fascists. A lot of Poles were killed, too. But the war worked less ruin in Poland than in cities and villages of Bryansk, Orel regions and Eastern part of Ukraine.

In the Polish countryside peasants had bread and had saved cattle harmless. In cities people lived half-starving. Heavy speculation flourished. Shops were empty, one could find there only hand-made wooden spoons.

I served like all other soldiers; I did not do any duties of a commander. I often rushed to the attack, including bayonet attacks, I shot certainly. I did not take part in hand-to-hand fights. What can I tell you about the war? It is a hard work! Your comrades, friends die every day. Every day can become the last one for you.

I performed no exploits, but fought honestly. I never sheltered myself behind my friends. So, I can say that I faced up to my responsibilities. We used to joke: an infantryman's hard lot is 2 hours at the very front-line and 2 months in the hospital. From that point of view I was lucky: I was wounded only once. Now I'll tell you about it in more detail.

In January 1945 I took part in a hard fighting not far from Warsaw on the right side of the Vistula River. There I was seriously wounded and shell-shocked: an artillery shell blew up very close to me. I lost consciousness, my brother-soldiers carried me out from the battlefield.

I was wounded in my foot: my heel bone was shattered. I spent more than 3 months in hospital in Poland. I was lucky to manage without operations. After hospital (at the end of April 1945: shortly before the end of the war) I was sent to the motorcycle battalion of the 2nd mechanized army of general Radzievsky. [General Radzievsky Alexey (1911-1954) was a Soviet military leader.]

Infantrymen looked at us with envy: usually in motorcycle regiment losses were noticeably less. Our tasks were different; we seldom advanced to the attack on foot. I took part in fights near Berlin as a submachine gunner on a motorcycle.

My place was in the buddy seat of the motorcycle, where from I executed fire. I celebrated the Victory Day 60 kilometers far from Berlin (in Furstenberg). I was decorated with an Order of the Great Patriotic War (1st Class) and a lot of medals (I do not remember the number of medals!).