

Ferdinand Chernovich With His Front-Line Comrade Semion Vorovskikh



This is me (to the right) with my front-line comrade Semion Vorovskikh. We were in Kazan' for reformation.

In 1941 we parted with Simion and I did not know about his further fate. I sent this picture to my mother before I went to the lines.

The picture was made in Kazan' in 1941.

In spring 1941 I passed my final exams. I did not make any plans for summer. On Sunday, July 22, 1941 I was at home by myself. Mother went out somewhere.

My neighbor knocked on the door. She told me to turn radio on. Molotov was finishing his speech on outbreak of war. I was able to hear his last words: "Our cause is just. The enemy will be defeated. We will gain the victory."

In august 1941 other draftees and I were sent to the camps in Chelyabinsk [about 1500 km to the North-East from Moscow]. We were not given the uniform, we stayed in our civilian clothes.

They wanted to allocate us in different military schools according to our education. I did not want to go to the military school as I was not willing to become a professional military. I was lucky. At the beginning of November we were brought to some school, but there probably was a excessive number of students as the commander asked if there was anybody among us who did not want to study.

Some people stepped forward. I was one of them. We were sent to the training squadron of the reserve regiment. We had stayed there for a month. We were taught how to become radio operators. There was malnutrition. We were constantly starving, thinking only of food.

In December we were given uniforms and sent to Kazan suburbs in the Guards mortar division. I was a private, and had remained a private until the end of war. We left Kazan for Gorkiy [now Nizhniy Novgorod], where we got ammunition, mostly consisting of mechanized combat vehicles, rocket launchers called Katyushas.

At the beginning of January 1942 our Guards mortar squadron was sent to Volkhovskiy front. At that time our counterattack in that direction was terminated and there were no severe battles. Radio stations were not used there and we were field telephone operators and laid cable in the fields.

We were on round-o'clock duty on the phone. We were supposed to stay by the phone for 24 hours. If cable was ruptured somewhere we were supposed to crawl to the place where it was ruptured and joint ruptured ends. Cable was precious to us, we always ran out from it.

That is why when the squad moved to another place, we reeled on cable and took it with us. We had to do it rather often. Katyushas made one salvo and moved to another place not be noticed and demolished by Germans.

Then they remained on their positions. The radio-operators were given a truck to take the equipment before we moved to another location.

We lived in dugs-out. There were severe frosts. The earth was frozen. It was impossible to dig. We had to use a crow bar. Of course, it took us a long time to make a dug out. It was the most vexing when we were through making dugs-out and getting settled, we had to move to another place in couple of days.

So, we had to start all over again. First, our nutrition was not very good. There was not enough food and besides it was not replenished on a regular basis. Then it got better and nutritional standard was increased.

Our regiment took part in demolishing German forces close to Stalingrad. The city itself was practically devastated by the Germans. We were positioned in 13 kilometers from Stalingrad. We had stayed there for 7 months -- for the entire period of the Stalingrad campaign. Commanders developed operational plan and stealthily moved 10 armies there.

We began our attack on November 19, 1942. German forces in the vicinity of Stalingrad were defeated on February 2, 1943. 22 divisions consisting of 330 thousand people were besieged. In couple of months other participants of the Stalingrad battle, I among them, were awarded the medals "For Liberation of Stalingrad."