

Ferdinand Chernovich



This is me. The photo was taken when I was getting discharged from the hospital before my departure for Moscow.

The photo was made in Tbilisi in 1945.

In the spring of 1941 I passed my final exams. June 22 the Great Patriotic War began. In august 1941 I and other draftees were sent to the camps in Chelyabinsk [about 1500 km to the North-East from Moscow].

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.

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 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.

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. There were a couple of mortar regiments like ours at the operational disposal of the army.

German forces in the vicinity of Stalingrad were defeated on February 2, 1943. After Stalingrad battle our regiment as a part of Guards mortar division was sent to Moscow for rearmament and replenishment.

Our regiment was replenished and well-armed. We were sent to Kursk. It was withdrawn from division and went to battles as a separate regiment. Our army was getting ready for Kursk operation.

We arrived there at the end of March, 1943. Mass battles were commenced on July 5, 1943. Probably we knew that a fierce battle was ahead of us. During political classes we were told about coming operation, its tasks.

We were apprised of the situation on other front-lines. It was even a more fierce than Stalingrad battle, but it did not last long. I was awarded with the medal for Military Merits after Kursk battle. I got it in autumn, 1943. It was written in my order citation that I demonstrated discipline and valor.

After Kursk I was not a telephone operator, but a radio operator. Communication with commandment was established. Battery commander had communication with division commander, division commander had communication with the regiment commander and so on and so forth.

I serviced artillery instrumental reconnaissance, which was observing the adversary and regulating fire. All that data was transferred in cipher via radio operators. We did not know the cipher.

We moved to the west - to Byelorussia. We liberated the town of Novozybkov in Bryansk district and stopped by Gomel. We fought for positioning. There were no battles. Only in June, 1944 we liberated entire Byelorussia. We left western Byelorussia for Poland.

My front-line experience ended in Polish town Belostok. My colleagues, radio-operators and I were on our way to the observation post and I stepped on the mine. I was the only one who suffered from a pin-point blast.

My comrades picked me up. Somebody had the car brought and I was taken to the medical battalion. I was on the operation table in 40 minutes. My leg was amputated. I spent couple of days in medical battalion and I was transferred to the army hospital in Tbilisi, Georgia.

It took 13 days to get to Tbilisi from Belostok. I had stayed in the hospital for 6 months. I was given a temporary artificial limb and was taught how to walk with an artificial limb.

At the end of February 1945 I was discharged from hospital and on March 1, 1945 I came back to Moscow.