

Moisey Marianovskiy



This is me, Moisey Marianovskiy, commanding officer of Tank Company 187 of a tank brigade, in 1941. We fought at the Moscow direction. This photo was taken in October 1941.

On 5 October 1940 I was recruited to the army. I served in Porkhov town near Pskov [about 400 km northwest of Moscow]. In six months I was sent to a military school. At the weekend my whole platoon accompanied me to the station. This happened on 22 June 1941 [the Great Patriotic War started 22 June 1941]. Nobody in our regiment knew that the war began. I took a train to Kalinin [about 200 km north of Moscow]. The train stopped and I came to the platform. I could not grasp what was going on. Somebody was playing an accordion, somebody was crying. I asked somebody, "What's going on?" And they replied, "Soldier, don't you know? It's the war." I was heading to Gorky

[about 400 km east of Moscow] tank school.

We took an advanced course at my school. The cadets like me had already learned serving in the army. We could shoot, load and knew all other required operations that we were supposed to know. By October 1941 we were given the rank of lieutenant and graduated from the school. I was sent to tank brigade 187 and I was appointed commanding officer of a tank company. There were three tank squads in the company. There were 3 tanks in a squad and 10 tanks in a company.

I was at the frontline in the Briansk and later in the Moscow direction. Our brigade did not retreat. There was Moscow behind us, there was nowhere to retreat. I was inside a tank on battlefields. I gave my commands and executed the orders I received from my commandment on the radio.

We stayed and slept in the woods. In winter we installed tents or slept in tanks. We took every chance to take a nap in a tank. We did not have timely supplies of underwear and clothing. We basically had normal food supplies. The army did not starve, but there were hard times as well, particularly in spring, when it was difficult to deliver food products to army units. At such times we suffered from hunger. We had a field kitchen that cooked for us. We also received 100 grams of vodka.

In spring 1942, when I was in tank brigade 187, I was wounded and sent to a hospital. After the hospital I was assigned to the 23rd Guard tank brigade. When I returned to the front after the hospital, the situation there stabilized a little. Germans were defeated near Moscow and Stalingrad. This was the turning point and our forces started moving in the western direction. We already struggled for the Ugra and Dnepr Rivers, etc. Battles for Smolensk [about 350 km west of Moscow] began. My units took part in the operation to liberate Spas-Demensk, Kaluga region [about 180 km west of Smolensk]. These were hard battles and I had to use my wits. We headed to fight for Byelorussia. There were also hard battles during crossing the Dnieper. General Zakharov, Commander of our front, decided to attack the enemy on its flank. This operation was also successful and in 1943 I was awarded an Order of Red Banner. In August 1943 I was wounded in my eye and was sent to a hospital in Moscow. After two weeks in hospital I returned to my regiment. The hardest battles were at the Mogilyov-Minsk roadway. Some of them were outrageously savage. Commander of the Front ordered me to take command of the brigade, though I was very young (I was just 24 years old). We were at the Mogilyov-Minsk highway at the time. This didn't make me feel happy, but this was what I had to do... For this Mogilyov operation I was nominated for the award of the Hero of the Soviet Union in June 1944, and I received this award on 24 March 1945.

Then operations were held one after another. After finishing one we started preparation to another. Soon we directed our efforts to liberation of Western Byelorussia. We were hurrying to the Polish border heading to reach Koenigsburg, Berlin and end this war victoriously as soon as possible.