

Efim Finkel



It is me, Efim Finkel, soldier of artillery regiment, on the first days of the war. The photo was made in Bolgrad, Odessa region, in 1941. I finished mechanic school in 1938 with honors for successes in my study and was sent to a higher mechanic school in Teplitza village in about 30 kms from Razdelnaya where I was to study for 3 years and could come home on vacations and holidays. In May 1941 after finishing my 2nd year at school I came home to Razdelnaya on vacation. In the afternoon of 22 June 1941 Razdelnaya was already bombed by German planes. We knew from Molotov's speech on the radio at noon that Germany attacked the Soviet Union. We knew about the war in Europe, but it seemed to be so far away from us. The German invasion was a nightmare for us. I cannot understand how it happened that Germany was pulling its troops and armaments to the border of the Soviet Union and nobody paid any attention to this. This couldn't have been

completed in one night! The war took us unaware. We didn't know what to do. There was confusion in Razdelnaya on the first days of the war. In few days mobilization began. I received a subpoena from the military registry office. All draftees were sent to Bolgrad in 70 kms from Razdelnaya where military units for the front were formed. Before I joined the army I had only held a rifle few times at military training classes in lower secondary school. We had high patriotic spirit. We were sure that the Soviet army was undefeatable and that the war would soon be over and we would win the victory. Stalin's spirit was with us as a leader and he would lead us to the victory. From Bolgrad we moved to the town of Renie near the Romanian border. We arrived there in the morning and at night we participated in combat action. I was in an artillery regiment. I was a loader and learned from others looking how they were doing it. At first I was assistant of loading soldier, but in 2 days I had to load cannons myself since my trainer was killed. Our artillery regiment was a part of 25 division. We moved from one front to another. Our artillery unit was the first in attacks and infantry followed us. It may sound strange, but I didn't feel any fear during the combat action. It came after it was over when we remembered our comrades that were killed. We lived in ground houses that we made by ourselves. There was a field kitchen where meals were made.