

Alexander Tsvey, Graduate Of Infantry School



This is I, Alexander Tsvey, a graduate (with honors) of infantry school, in Ufa mortar gun battalion. As per the special order of the ministry of defense we were pre-term conferred with the rank of lieutenant and sent to the front. It took place in Ufa in February 1944 . I sent this picture to mother and she kept it for years.

In December 1942 I was drafted in the army. I was in the 10th grade and had not turned 18 yet. I and some of my classmates were sent to Ufa [Bashkyrya, about 1200 km to the east from Moscow] infantry school, to the mortar gun battalion. At school I was issued a certificate that I finished the first half year with straight excellent marks.

Our train came to Ufa on the 12th of January 1943. The school was in the city center. The auditoriums and barracks with double-tiered bunks were in the 3-storied premises. Upon arrival we went to the bathhouse. We were given uniforms, soldier's boots; we were taught how to put foot wraps on. We started school immediately. March drilling, crawling, studies on mortar guns and infantry military statute. We hardly had any leisure time. We got up at 6 and went to bed at 23. I was perseverant in military studies. Then we had classes on shooting-range. I was an excellent marksman. I was lucky: I was in the lines when our troops were attacking in - Byelorussia, Poland, and Eastern Prussia [Germany]. I did not feel bitter disappointment when during the first days of war our army was being constantly defeated. But still dreadful and fierce war was ahead of us- 452 days before the victory.

We went to the Byelorussia. Finally we went through all authorities in the headquarters and I arrived at 40th Amur rifle regiment # 102 of Far Eastern division of 48 Army. In afternoon 19th of March I reported commanders of mortar gun squad on our arrival. The regiment settled in the place. Next day I received a platoon. So, I became a platoon commander.

On the 15th of April 1944 we moved to the leading edge. Our division took off and headed on a trip for many days. Having walked for over a hundred km we reached the destination point on the 17th of June, which was called the town of Rogachev [about 450 km to the west from Moscow]. We had to take part in one of the most large-scale operation of our troops, called Bagration. There were trenches, dug-outs, people, horses and weapon... It was clear that the intensive preparation was underway. On the 23rd of June we were read the order on tomorrow's assault. Finally, the defense of the adversary was broken through. The enemy was retreating and our army #48 headed to Bobruysk [about 600 km to the west from Moscow]. I became more sturdy within those 2-3 days. I felt myself a true front-line soldier and gained more self-respect. Defeated troops of the enemy were stampeding towards the West. We had to chase them. First, we moved towards Minsk [Byelorussia], then we turned to the south towards Baranovichi [about 800 km to the west from Moscow]. We walked 65 kilometers in one day. In early August we crossed the border with Poland. I was happy to liberate my motherland, Byelorussia. Now we were to take fierce and ruthless battles in Poland. It was the end of 1944. We moved forward with fierce battles, liberating one inhabited locality after another.

The year of 1944 was over. It was full of the hardest and most dangerous events in my life. In January I was a military school cadet and took final exams. By December I had been in severe battles in Byelorussia and Poland. I had a contusion and was in the hospital. I can bravely say that I became really battle-seasoned and skillful officer. The final year of war with the fascist Germany was ahead of me. Fierce battles, the bitterness of loss and the joy of victory were waiting for me.