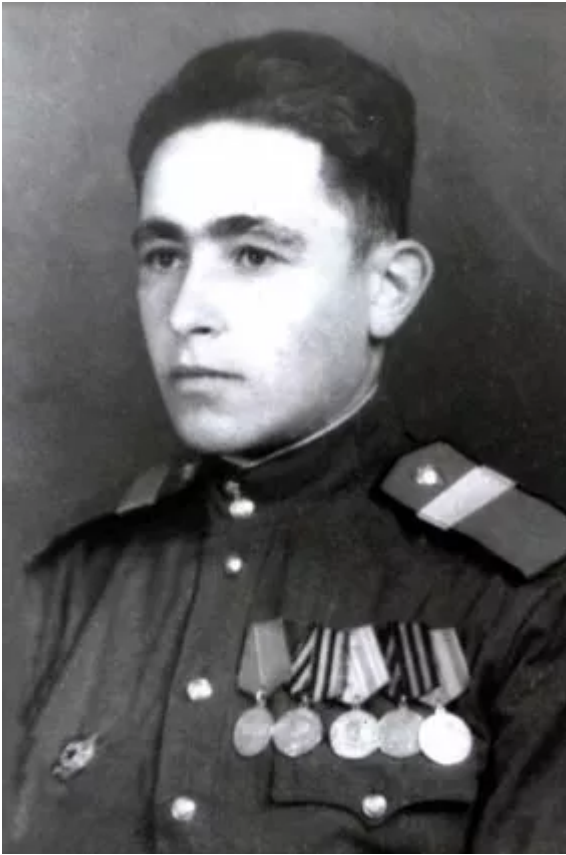


Boris Vayman



This photograph taken in 1948 shows me with my military awards. Here I'd like to tell you about my life at the front-line.

In September 1943 we were sent to Vitebsk region and my soldier's life started.

I sustained my first shock in entrenchments full of water: at night the water had frozen and my feet became pieces of ice, my overcoat turned into ice armor.

At that time we (consisting of the 3rd Belarusian front) were going to assume the full-scale offensive. I got to the division #17 (to the flame thrower platoon). I'll explain you what it meant. I had to carry a knapsack weighing 6 kg. Inside the knapsack there was a napalm-cylinder weighing 5 kg. In total I carried 13 kg on my back and a gun (flame thrower) in my hands. I pulled the trigger and flame 50 meters in length burnt everything on its way.

The front passed to the offensive and started its fight for liberation of Belarus. Our platoon used to join special storm-troops and we smoked Germans from their covers.

We fought our way through Belarus and crossed the border of Lithuania. In Vilnius during street fighting our weapon was very useful: we burnt fascists out from the houses. There I was shell-shocked for the first time: I was running across the street and fell down. Fortunately I fell behind a wall; otherwise I would have been killed. I regained consciousness in the hospital. The contusion appeared to be very serious: I lost my hearing and became speechless. It was terrible to think that it was for ever. Treatment took 3 months, but my young and healthy constitution helped me to

come through the illness. Fortunately both speech and hearing were back to normal. That contusion happened on July 10, 1944. Therefore Vilnius was liberated without me (on July 13).

3 months later I recovered and got back to my platoon (by that time it approached the border of Eastern Prussia). We passed to the offensive on January 13. We quickly went through 3 lines of German entrenchments, but on the 4th one a mortar shell exploded and I was wounded in the leg. I fell down into entrenchment. The wound was not terrible: the bullet missed the bone. I spent 17 days in the front hospital and again got back to my platoon. We participated in the storm of Kongsberg.

We burnt enemies out from houses, pillboxes and fortifications. Now I realize that those days were terrible, because we felt the near end of the war and were keen to meet the victory alive. In April we liberated Konigsberg and stopped: we did not move farther, because the war was coming to its end.

But for me the war was not finished, because the war with Japan began. In June they sent us to the Far East by trains. We got off in Chita and went at the march through Mongolia. It was extremely hot there (about 30 degrees centigrade), our way ran through sands. Because of the hot weather, we moved only at nights. They drew a rope between the endmen to prevent soldiers leave the column and be lost in the dark steppe or get under the tracks of tanks (tanks were moving along the roadsides).

So from Chita we moved through Mongolia, through Great Khingan Mountains, reached Manchuria [China] and met the Japanese army. It appeared to be a great surprise for the Japanese; they began to surrender, and we captured Port Arthur [a port in China]. On September 4 Japan capitulated. I went on serving as a soldier in Port Arthur.