

Mina Gomberg's Father Ilia Roitman



My father Ilia Roitman on Victory Day in the 1980s. There are orders and medals, awarded to him for his combat deeds and labor achievements, on his jacket. These include the Order of the Great Patriotic War, the Order of Glory, the Medal for the Defense of Stalingrad, the Medal for Courage, etc. My father was born in Kiev in 1909. He finished cheder and a Russian secondary school in Kiev. After finishing school he entered some technical college, but he only studied there for a short time. The family was pressed for money, and he had to work to support them. My father worked as a laborer wherever he could find a job. In 1939 he was recruited to the army and involved in the Finnish campaign. His service lasted for about a year, and he returned home afterwards. My father went to the front on the first days of the war in 1941. He wrote to us every now and then. He was a tank platoon leader; he was in control of four tanks. He liberated Prague with his units and had the

rank of first lieutenant. He was wounded twice. The first time he was wounded on his left hand, and his fingers didn't bend after this injury, and the second time he had an eye injury. But we knew that he was alive which was most important and that he could demobilize when he was allowed to do so. My father demobilized in 1946. He got a job as a foreman at the Vodokanal municipal water-supply company. He worked with Vodokanal until 1984. Every year on 9th May [Victory Day] my father and I went to the Monument of Glory, the Tomb of the Unknown Ukrainian Soldier [a memorial to unknown Ukrainian soldiers]. Every single time my father was in a hysterical state. It must have been about what he knew and remembered, but he never mentioned anything to us. He never revealed this mystery, and we never found out whom he cried for and why he was afraid to tell us. My father died in 1986. His death was a terrible blow to me.