

Grigoriy Sirotta With A Comrade At The Front



This is a picture of me (on the left) with a comrade on service at the front. This photo was taken in the woods of Belarus in 1944 by one of my comrades. The war began on 22nd June 1941. In 1941, during the shooting in the town of Staraya Russa, I was wounded. I was taken to the hospital in the rear in Gorky region. In May 1942 I was to go to the front, but I was sent to Rybinsk instead to take some retraining. I met a wonderful Russian girl there, my future wife. Her name was Sophia Orlova. She was born in Rybinsk in 1921. She was the director of the civil acts registration office. We met

at the cinema. I went to watch *The Pig-Tender Girl* and *The Shepherd*, and then I saw her. I asked for her ticket and took it to the box-office to exchange it for a seat next to mine. We didn't talk during the movie. I took her home and promised to meet her again. That happened on 7th May. I met her a few times after that, and on 11th August we got married. We had a civil ceremony at the registration office where she worked. We didn't have a wedding party. It was wartime, and everyone felt far from celebrating. Sophia's mother welcomed me heartily and treated me very nicely. There was no antipathy towards Jews in the family, and my wife always came to protect Jews whenever there was a hint of anti-Semitism. My parents wouldn't have been happy about having a Russian daughter-in-law, but I realized that there was only a slight chance of them being still alive. We already heard about the mass extermination of Jews in Belarus in July 1941, and I suspected that the same had happened in Ukraine. On the day after I got married I went to the division headquarters at the front. I talked with my commander about hiring Sophia as a typist. They sent a clerk to pick her up in Rybinsk and an interesting incident happened then. The clerk went to Rybinsk via Moscow. He was going downstairs to the metro and saw my older brother, Yasha, going upstairs. We were so much alike that the clerk ran after him and addressed him as, 'Comrade senior lieutenant!' My brother turned to him and said, 'I don't know you'. Only at that moment did the clerk understand that he was wrong and said, 'I'm a clerk and work for your brother'. My brother was en route from the Pacific to the North Sea Navy, so along with my wife the clerk brought me news about my brother. My wife was at the front with me. In 1943 she got pregnant and was sent to hospital. They prescribed her some pills that led to a miscarriage. Besides, she got sepsis. She had a surgery and it took her a whole month to recover. We continued our service. Our army crossed the border with Prussia, and I was ordered to go to Alma-Ata to study military discipline and become a professional military.