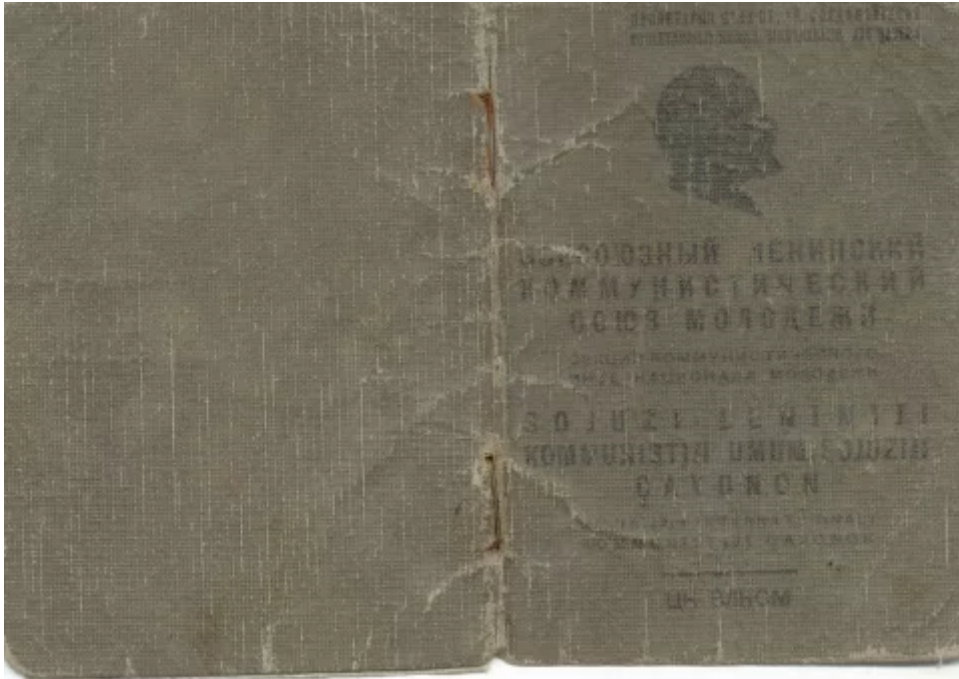


Grigoriy Fihtman's Komsomol Identity Card



This is my Komsomol identity card obtained in Kurgan-Tubeh town in 1943.

Before going to the army I joined Komsomol. It was mandatory for recruits to become Komsomol members since we were to be trained to go to the front. It was a routinely process: chief of the military registry committee called secretary of the district Komsomol committee and informed him: 'Admit this recruit to Komsomol since we are recruiting him to the army tomorrow'.

So in 1943 I was mobilized to the army. Young men went to the army at the age of 17 at this height of the war. This was 1943, when Ukraine was to be liberated and Byelorussia and there was a long road to go before the victory. At that time every day of the war meant thousands of deceased.

Every day! I served at the border with Afghanistan where we fought basmachi gangs. Those gangs consisted of former kulaks, as Stalin called them, from Central Asia republics who escaped to Afghanistan in the early 1930s during collectivization. They took advantage of the war situation and engaged us into combat action in the south. I became a sergeant there and had a squad under my command. I had a Russian friend from Leningrad. His name was Gennadiy. He liked playing the guitar and I liked dancing. Gennadiy couldn't dance, so I was giving him dancing classes and taught me elements of playing the guitar. We found a common language. Once, after another combat action he was cleaning his weapon and unintentionally shot himself. He was my age, 17 years old.