

## Boris Pukshansky



This photograph of me was taken in Germany in June of 1945 by one of my brother-soldiers. Let me tell you how I managed to get from ghetto to the front-line.

December, January and February were the hardest months in ghetto. We suffered from frost. But the same was with Germans. They had no winter clothes, because they hoped to win the war before the winter. On February 23 our bomber aircraft attacked Liozno. Next day early in the morning I went to work. I worked together with my fellow countryman Isaak Tsiperson (he was 3 years older than me). Suddenly our chief Korolev approached us and said 'You, guys, go on working and I'll be back in a couple of hours.' It seemed to us strange: he never informed us about his plans. Several minutes later he came up again and said 'Today Germans will execute by shooting all Jews in ghetto.' Together with Tsiperson we took our shovels and rushed to the wood. All the day long we were walking somewhere. In the evening we found ourselves near the village where Isaak's acquaintances lived. We spent the night at their place and continued our way in the morning. Several Jews from that village joined us. We decided to make our way to our armies. Having walked about 50 kilometers, we met a group of our scouts raiding in the rear of the enemy. They told us that if went in a certain direction, we would be able to cross the front line in 2 or 3 days. They moved in the same direction.

We followed the scouts and in 3 days reached disposition of their regiment. I showed them the only document I had - my school-leaving certificate and said that I was a volunteer. And Tsiperson told them that he had exemption from military service. He moved farther (to home front). Later I got to know that he was arrested, because he told everybody about our armies retreating. And I appeared

in the army. Though quite a lot fell to my share, I am happy that it turned that way. So in February 1942 I became a soldier of the rifle battalion #21 in scouts platoon of Kalininsky front. It was frosty winter. The occupied territory was supervised by Germans insufficiently: they settled down only in large cities, villages and woods were free of them. In villages there ruled polizei soldiers, and in woods there were organized partisan groups. Our scouts used to go far into the enemy rear. Our group consisted of 15 or 20 persons.

I keep in my mind the first tongue [soldiers of the Soviet army called a tongue a soldier of enemy army captured by scouts] captured with my participation. His name was Arthur Wolfmayer. We captured him near the city of Nevel. We lay in hiding in a wood, and he stepped aside into the wood to meet natural demands. There we took him. He appeared to be a roadman of German army, and we received useful information from him. We had not only to capture tongue, but also to implement other tasks. For example some partisan groups were in fact specially organized by Germans to destabilize partisan movement. We had to find out what groups were true. Each raid lasted about 2 weeks. Sometimes we went very far beyond the front line (about 150 kilometers). During these 2 weeks we did not take off clothes, slept in the wood near the fire. We seldom took food with us: we preferred to take more ammunition. You see, local population always gave us food, though they were almost half-starving. People on the occupied territory seemed to be very confused: they could not understand how Germans managed to move forward far inland so quickly. It was also difficult for them to get used to fast and sharp division of society into partisans and polizei soldiers. People not always trusted us, they thought we were masked enemies. But in general people believed us and put reliance upon us.

Scouts were very much appreciated in the army: the command did its best not to part from them. Therefore they always tried to cure walking cases at their medical battalion and not to send them rearward. [The Medical and sanitary battalion is a separate part of the body of troops intended for its medical maintenance.] In that case after recovery the scout could make his comeback.