

**Isaak Budnitsky**

**Russian Vets**

**Interview date Aug 29/2012**

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Duration 16:42

- 00 00 (background conversation)00 18
- 00 18 (Please introduce yourself) I was born in a town of Vasilkov, Kiev Region, in 1918. (One more time)00 49
- 00 49 My name is Isaak Borisovich Budnitsky. I was born in 1940 (One more time)01 07
- 01 07 I am Isaak Borisovich Budnitsky. I was born on April 29, 1918. When I was of age I was drafted to serve in the army. I was a soldier with 255 aviation regiment, a rank and file service man. 01 36
- 01 36 I had served there for about a year until the war began. At that time I had been promoted to sergeant major. When the war began I had to evacuate from city Stanislav where I lived at the time, where I served...to liquidate everything related to ammunition. 02 06
- 02 06 I was left behind for 10 to 15 days. We liquidated everything related to ammunition. We could hardly leave the place because there was only one way out of Stanislav – via Lvov. And so I went to Lvov wherefrom the army started the so called retreat. 02 32
- 02 32 The hardships during the retreat were worse than in any war. Those were hardships regarding food, overnight stays, wandering strange places that nobody could imagine to be in. 02 52
- 02 52 We lived there... we retreated gradually... Personally, as a sergeant major, I managed to get out of encirclement in Aksai area via the Aksai bridge. I carried a lot of our unit's documents with me. My subordinate guys and I took the documents to Russia. 03 20
- 03 20 We broke through to Russia as an entire battalion. From there the idea of retreat started, as well as hardships, complications, illnesses, hunger, whatever. 03 36
- 03 36 Everything came to us as we moved along. We made it to Stalingrad, our entire unit. I was a service man for an aviation unit, 17<sup>th</sup> Airborne Army and 8<sup>th</sup> Airborne Army, we did the servicing. 03 55
- 03 55 We were in Stalingrad area when Stalin's order was issued stating that there was no way for us to retreat across Volga. We were ordered to protect our country and fight against our enemy. 04 10
- 04 10 That's where we stopped retreating and started the battle of Stalingrad and everything else. From there we started our offensive. The offensive stretched along the Southern Front. I was at the Southern Front. 04 28

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04 28	From Stalingrad we moved to Crimea. We got to Crimea where we moved...to make my story short, I made it as far as Vienna. The war ended in Vienna. That was when the war ended. 04 54	
04 54	We went through a lot of hardships in Stalingrad in regards to our troops. I was awarded a number of medals for my combat merits. I was awarded my first medal for Stalingrad: Medal for defence of Stalingrad. 05 21	
05 21	We were awarded Stalingrad related medals after advancing to the Crimea. During the course of the war I was being promoted to officer's ranks. I was promoted as high as battalion commander. 05 37	
05 37	Later I was promoted to battalion's chief of staff. And lastly, I was promoted to commander of detached motor transport battalion, 132 division. I was in command of the unit and its soldiers. 05 54	
05 54	For me the war ended in Vienna. In Vienna we were awarded with the rest of medals and letters of commendations. In Vienna we stayed for awhile. The end of the war was imminent. That's when I finished my official military service. 05 26	
05 26	As soon as the war was over, we were stationed in Austria for several months. After that we were transferred to Aksai to continue our military service. I served in the army for 3 more years. 06 56	
06 56	Thus, my army service lasted 10 years, starting from the first day of the war. As you can see, I was awarded with: 2 Orders of Patriotic War, an Order of the Red Star and a great number of medals for my merits during the Great Patriotic War. 07 21	
07 21	That was my service in the Great Patriotic War. I was a distinguished officer enjoying all the officers' privileges, that's true. I felt myself very well. I am 95 years old now. I am 95 years old now. I have a big family. 07 46	
07 46	We live in Canada, we feel fine here. Canada is an amazing country. I didn't use to have what I have now. I received everything here, in this big wonderful country. 08 02	
08 02	Even without receiving money for 10 years, because I was sponsored by my children. I haven't received any money here in Canada. We built our own lives here in Canada. Despite not being paid money I am deeply satisfied living in this wonderful and amazing country. 08 27	
08 27	(Background conversations) (Pls tell about an interesting episode during the war)08 46	
08 46	We serviced aviation. You know that aviation demands a great volume of bombs etc. You also know that all those weren't kept at the front line. They were kept in the rear of the army. 09 06	
09 06	We had to supply truck loads, several truck loads, during the night time... only in the night...24 hours...I used to sleep 2 hours a night. We didn't have other	

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time...We used to supply ammunition all the time to make sure the bomb aviation functioned non-stop. 09 31

09 31 That's why we were in action literally 24 hours a day bringing the ammunition to the front line aviation. 09 42

09 42 Where was I? I was all over the Southern Front: from the beginning to the end of the war I was all over the Southern Front which I have already told you about. 09 54

09 54 Before the army I was admitted as a Party candidate. After 1 year of service I had a vacation. I went to Kiev where I was admitted to the Party. I started my army service as a Party member. 10 24

10 24 (Did you feel you were Jewish?) You know what, this is a disputable issue, even here in Canada. You know, I was born in '18, being so old, I lived all my life in Kiev. 10 48

10 48 All my life I worked various laborer's positions until I made my way in life and until I was drafted to serve in the army. I was... I was... I was... a manager of an enterprise. I was growing on my own. Nobody ever told me who or what I was. 11 09

11 09 Jew or no Jew...In all my 94 years, I have never heard in all my life that I am a Jew. Maybe behind my back somebody said something...Personally I have never heard or felt anything like that. 11 28

11 28 (Does the young generation know about Jewish war veterans' heroism?) You know, regretfully, I don't know why, but many people start forgetting about it, not mentioning appreciating it. 11 54

11 54 It should be treated differently. But still, I think there are many people who remember and appreciate heroism of each and every individual. (do you consider yourself a hero?) (Laughs) I am a hero when at home. 12 15

12 15 Because I am the boss in a big house. I feel fine. I was adored by the whole country where I lived and worked. After the war I worked for one and the same company for 28 years. 12 30

12 30 When I came to the party committee to introduce myself, they sent me to work at a factory where I worked for 28 years. What I want to tell you, and I have already mentioned this, is that I never felt that I was a Jew. I was in a leadership position until my daughter lifted her... to leave from Russia. 13 02

13 02 Once she applied for exit from Russia, and she was permitted to leave in 6 weeks, I was summoned to the party committee. They tried to persuade me to renounce my daughter and son-in-law. That was a dispute. 13 26

13 26 We had to give our consent for her to leave. I was expelled from the party and fired from a leadership position for giving my daughter consent to leave the country. 13 39

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- 13 39 I had been appreciated by the party committee leaders, I had earned my authority being with them for 28 years. I lost everything. Even my closest friends renounced me, they couldn't do anything about it. 13 58
- 13 58 That was my fate. Jewish...rather Russian fate. That's how my life went. After a while... I was apart from my older daughter, while my younger one lived in Moscow, my younger daughter. 14 15
- 14 15 Her husband was a test pilot. His whole life he was in the army. That was a big problem in our lives. As a result, the daughter moved to live in Kiev. In Kiev, we were given permission to emigrate along with our daughter, her daughter and husband. 14 43
- 14 43 When we were about to leave, the son-in-law stayed in Moscow. For many years, he struggled to be permitted to emigrate. Eventually he left and moved to live in Canada. And now he lives here with his family. 1500
- 15 00 (Do you consider yourself a hero?) In this respect, yes, I do. Yes, I do. I think that being of Jewish origin, and knowing what was going on in this respect in our country, the rumours and all, I went through the war from its first day, being promoted from a private soldier to commander of a detached battalion, without any privilege, without a degree etc. just because of my ability to be a commander and a leader of a big unit.15 43
- 15 43 Under my command, I had 150 trucks servicing the aviation. I serviced both bomber and fighter aviation. We didn't have our lives for days and nights just being busy carrying out our responsibilities. 16 01
- 16 01 (Do you have war injuries?) I was contused, a minor contusion, and no wounds. (Thank you) I can't say differently. It's just what I went through in my life, and what I got in this respect, nobody abused me because of being a Jew. This is true and this is how it is. 16 37
- 16 37 (Thank you). Is that it? (It is). 16 42
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16 42 Two orders of Red Star, Medal for liberation of Stalingrad, which is the most dear award, the Order of Red Star, two Orders of Patriotic war, 2 orders, and a great number of service medals etc. That is I was an honoured person until I left to move abroad. And obviously I lost the rest of it. (Thank you)

End of interview