

**Slema Mushkat
16/2010**

Duration: 14:54

Russian Vets, Interview date Nov 22/2010

- 00 00 **Shlema:** (English)I was born in Poland, not far from Vilno. Settlement Sarkovshizno. Shlema Zalmanovich Mushkat. 1919, November. The life? I was... before the war start I was 20 years old, 19.
- 00 23 20 years I was in the army. I was... I was fighting. I was "komandir orudiya" (artillery gun commander). It was artillery. The best one – "Slava" – you know what "Slava" mean? I don't know, I can't explain. (Len: Glory).
- 00 46 I stopped a train. It was coming over everyday, kill other people. So I got order to stop. I told you, you know, a train "Bronepoezd" (armoured train). (Switches to Russian): An armoured train was firing at our positions.
- 01 11 (Switches back to English): In English is for me hard to explain to you. (Len: do you want to do this in Russian?) Eh? (Len repeats the question). OK, Russian I think is the better. OK, in Russian. (back to Russian): It was later... in '43, no, '42 to '43. The Leningrad Front. An armoured train was running and firing at our position.
- 01 44 I was ordered to stop it. I was an artillery gun commander, 76 mm gun. There was a swamp. The place was inaccessible for the horses. We had to carry the gun on our shoulders. We stopped the armoured train.
- 02 05 Stopped...rather destroyed it. I was awarded Order of Glory [one of the most prestigious Soviet medals]. (Olga: when you blew up the train, what happened? Olga repeats the question). We destroyed it. It stopped coming. We destroyed it.
- 02 35 I lost 2 men. (Olga: How many men were in your team?) It depended. 9, 11, 15. We needed more men to carry ammunitions. It depended. Normally 12 or 11. (Olga: How many men charged the gun to blow the train up?) How many men? Olga repeats) I don't remember exactly how many: it's been 70 years!
- 03 18 I don't remember exactly how many. All I know is: I lost 2 men, I even remember their names. I lost 2 men. I was a gun commander. The armoured train was firing at our positions.
- 03 36 We didn't attack. Our unit was a special task one – a defence one. Prior to the Leningrad Front I was in another unit. I was wounded and sent to a hospital. I don't remember how I got to Gorky Region, I don't remember. I got to a hospital in Gorky Region.
- 04 06 After I recovered I got to Gorokhov Camps in Gorky Region, a reserve regiment, where units were formed. I was appointed a squad commander. The unit was formed before being sent to the front.
- 04 26 (Olga: a German train?) A German train. The station's name was Zvanka. It changed hands several times. The Germans were there. The front was there, in Leningrad area. Later on we got to Karelo-Finnish Republic, Karelofinnia: Langepoko, Soldovala, Turayakve.

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- 04 57 We had hard time fighting against the Finns. After we were done with Finland we were sent over to the Far East. It was in '44 that we finished fighting against the Finns.
- 05 14 We were deployed in the Far East. We were stationed not far from Vladivostok: the Olga Bay. That wasn't hard. (Olga) The Finns? The Finns used to come at night throwing knives. They used to put down the guards with their knives.
- 05 32 They put down the guards. They killed a lot of our soldiers. They gave us a hard time. They were skiers. The temperature was 40 below zero, freezing cold. (Olga) We took a defensive position. We didn't do anything, just holding a defensive position.
- 06 01 When attacked we fought off. The year? (Olga: yes) the year was '43. (Olga: 43?) Yes. It was winter of '43-'44. (Olga: in the territory of Finland?) Yes, Finland. Or rather, not Finland: Karelo-Finnish ASSR. Well, it was considered Finland.
- 06 33 Close to Leningrad, the Leningrad Front. (Olga: were they fighting on the German side?) They were on the German side. (Olga: did they fight against the Soviet Union?) Yes. They fought against the Soviet Union. The army... (chuckling)... our unit... the Germans were retreating, we occupied their positions.
- 07 08 When they attacked us, we fought back. That was the Leningrad Front. (Olga: sorry) It was part of the Leningrad Front. (Olga: the Leningrad Front). Yes, it was. (Olga: Were you nearby during the siege of Leningrad?) Yes, I was.
- 07 29 I was at the Leningrad Front, but I wasn't in Leningrad during the siege. The siege was close to where we were. Our unit was not in Leningrad during the siege. (Olga asks about the medals). For the Defence... for the Defence... well anniversaries: 45th anniversary, 50th anniversary. For the Defence of this and that.
- 08 03 Those are anniversary medals. They are not too important. They were given to everyone. (Olga: Japan?) I wasn't. I didn't happen to fight. (Olga) We took up the defence, that's all. When they attacked us, we fought off. The attacking units were given more medals. I was only awarded Order of Glory.
- 08 43 The rest of my medals are anniversary medals. I knew them all. It's in my book about the Jewish heroes. I got it from Israel. I didn't know that Malinovsky was a Jew, Front General Malinovsky.
- 09 09 I knew a general who later on was put in prison. General Velinsky, Hero of the Soviet Union, a neighbour of mine, he died in Israel. (Olga: the book you've mentioned?) I had a small book about Heroes of the Soviet Union. (Olga: did you write it?) No, no, someone in Israel.

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- 09 39 The book tells about their background and when they joined the army. Someone brought it from Israel and gave it to me. There was a "story" that the Jews didn't fight at all!!
- 09 54 That all the Jews were in Tashkent. (Olga) Many heroes. In the army? We were on the verge of life and death. If I had chosen not to be in the army I wouldn't have been in the army.
- 10 11 But I knew: should the Germans win, they would have done with all of us. There was a Jewish battalion from Canada: 17,000 men, they were volunteers. They went to fight at the front.
- 10 29 And from Russia too... Staying out of army was worse. After the recovery I was out of the front, in Gorky Region, near the Gorky Factory. You walk into a store: "Our husbands are fighting at the front, why aren't you?" They didn't know that we were injured.
- 11 02 There was a government order to take out from the front the former residents of Poland and West Ukraine. I was in the Gorky Region. They didn't let us to join the army, I didn't know why. I went to the Military Commissariat and told them I was from Gorky Region.
- 11 37 It was much worse out of the army: people were starving. (Olga: tell us about getting wounded). We started an attack in the night. I was wounded in the hip. The bullet got in here and got out there (shows). I was taken to a tent. I know a man here who was wounded the same day and got to the same hospital.
- 12 07 I don't remember how I get to Gorky Region. I don't know how. I can tell you, not me in particular, not in my unit, no. Not with me. Maybe some place. I wasn't a private soldier. I was doing my best. I didn't want them to think I was eager to get to Tashkent.
- 12 35 We were on the verge of life and death. After the war? Too bad. Anti-Semitism, especially in the area where I lived: in Lithuania, in Vilnius. (Olga: Did you return to Lithuania?) Eh? (Olga repeats) After the war I returned to Vilnius. I went to the old home town, but there was nobody left there.
- 13 10 My parents were killed. I went to Vilnius, got registered and started a job. I started a job and was "awarded" for good work with 27 years of imprisonment (chucking). 17 years in prison and 10 years in exile. "Spekuliatsia" (profiteering).
- 13 33 "A Jew is a profiteer". I was lucky I was a Polish citizen. I was transferred to Pol... In '57 the government issued an order allowing the Jews who had lived in Poland before the war to return to Poland. I was transferred to and let go in Poland.
- 14 07 I left to Canada where my brothers lived. (Olga: Did the brothers immigrate to Canada before the war?) My brother was in Canada. He passed away last

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year. Where? (Olga: in the interview). Canada is the best country in the world!

14 29 I have all I need. There's no country better than Canada! I have lived in a few countries. I am 91 years old. I don't need anything. Who gave you my phone number? (Mila: Thank you for interviewing with us).

14 54 End of interview.