

<b>Zinoviy Rovner</b>	<b>Duration: 54:49</b>	<b>Russian Vets, Interview date Nov 30/2010</b>
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- 00 00 (What's your name?) **Zinovi**y: Zinoviy. (What's you full name?) Zinoviy Yefimovich Rovner. (What is your date and place of birth?). September 6, 1925, the city of Kiev. (When and how did your army service begin?) 00 31
- 00 31 Pardon? (Repeats). What year? I was drafted in November, '43. I was demobilized in June, 1950. I participated in action against Japan in August-September, 1945. 01 15
- 01 15 (In what battles did you take part?) Please speak up. (Repeats). I was involved in liberation of North Korea. North Korea, as well as the entire Korea, had been occupied by the Japanese army. 01 35
- 01 35 Occupied by Japan. (Please tell us about your battles and what your rank was when you started in the war). Ok, Ok. I started as junior sergeant. During the first 10 days of August, 1945, following the agreement with the allies, the Soviet troops crossed the border of North Korea. 02 10
- 02 10 I served in an artillery battery, mortars. We entered North Korea. We passed through the territory of North Korea and in September the war was over. Our unit was stationed in Korea's capital – the city of Pyongyang. 02 44
- 02 44 The Japanese name for Pyongyang was Hedzio. I served in Pyongyang until 1948 when our army moved out of Korea and returned to Russia. Afterwards I served in town Spassk-Dalniy, the Far East, Russia until demobilized in June 1950. 03 15
- 03 15 As for the combat action, our mortar battery was on horse traction. The troops were moving very fast. North Korea is a mountain country. A huge mass of troops was moving forward. 03 42
- 03 42 The mountain country consisted of mountainous roads with numerous passes (перевалы). The passing of troops was dangerous: the Japanese defended their positions by utilizing long-term weapon emplacements (огневые точки) hidden at ends of mountain roads. 04 17
- 04 17 The Japanese used to open fire at vulnerable troops that were moving along the roads. The vulnerability was due to narrow roads and huge masses of the troops moving along the roads. 04 33
- 04 33 The huge masses were moving along, sustaining significant numbers of casualties until destroying the weapon emplacements. After a while, the commanders managed to figure out the Japanese tactics. 05 04
- 05 04 Before going upland, submachine gunner companies were sent up to locate and destroy the weapon emplacements to let the troops advance without difficulty. The first time I came under the Japanese fire was during the defense of the town Dudin. 05 24
- 05 24 We emerged from a woodland moving towards a valley targeted by the Japanese snipers. My task as a radio operator was deploying a radio station

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and setting up the communication line between the battery and the higher command. 06 08

06 08 (What kind of soldiers were the Japanese?)In terms of technical equipment, the Japanese army was worse than the Soviet Army and worse than the American army. As for the soldiers' skills, the Japanese soldiers were very disciplined and very fit. 06 37

06 37 They used to put up fierce resistance all the way until the Emperor of Japan ordered the cease-fire. The Japanese higher command faced an ultimatum that the future resistance was useless and there was no sense sacrificing the lives of soldiers on both sides. 07 07

07 07 The Emperor of Japan made a decision to stop hostility against the allies – the Soviet and American troops. The war was over. The army started peaceful activities, settling down; military units were stationed in North Korean municipalities. 07 40

07 40 A normal peaceful life began: drills, special training, etc. – a regular army. (Did you attack the Japanese or was the war static?) Naturally, no doubt we attacked them! As I mentioned I served in a mortar battery. 08 13

08 13 We quick marched 40 to 60 kilometers a day. As the battery gun were on horse traction we weren't allowed to sit on gun's boxes, only the "coach" was allowed to be in the coachman's seat. 08 39

08 39 The rest were on their feet. We wanted to spare the horses: speaking of quick marching, the human body was more capable to tolerate. We were on the go until the cease-fire. 08 59

08 59 We were on the go all the time dislodging the enemy from the hills and weapon emplacements. That's what the war was like. We liberated the North Korean territory from the Japanese occupants. 09 17

09 17 (What was the difference between fighting against the Germans and the Japanese?)First of all the time frames were different. The war against the Germans lasted 4 years, while the military action against Japan lasted about 20 days. 09 52

09 52 Despite the short run of the war the situation was difficult: Japan was Germany's and Italy's ally. Our troops were situated along the border with North Korea 10 10

10 10 My battery was facing the Japanese who occupied North Korea. On clear days we were able to observe the Japanese in their territory. We were very close to each other. The situation was so tense that we expected a Japanese offensive at any time. 10 48

10 48 That's why the army was in operational readiness, prepared for the Japanese to start an offensive. The Japanese kept neutral until our troops crossed the North Korean border. 11 10

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- 11 10 That was one difference: the Japanese kept from invading our territory. While the Germans did invade our territory, the Japanese didn't. They might have had an agreement with the Germans to cross the borderline at some point though. 11 26
- 11 26 However that didn't happen. (Why did the Red Army invade Japan?) The Red Army didn't invade Japan. Those were American troops that invaded the Japanese territory. We liberated North Korea. 11 56
- 11 56 South Korea was liberated by the American army, while we liberated North Korea. Why? Because Japan was Germany's and Italy's ally, both Germany and Italy confronting the anti-Nazi coalition. 12 15
- 12 15 Naturally we fought against Germany and Italy, and according to the arrangement between the allies we started the war against Japan. (What were your feelings invading a country while the Germans were pushed out of Russia?)
- 12 43 The thing is there was a Japan-Germany-Italy alliance. That alliance was opposed to the other one. America started supporting us after the Germans attacked our country. 13 02
- 13 02 Naturally the anti-Nazi coalition was set up including the US, Great Britain, France, Canada and some other countries. They were opposed to Hitler's coalition. Naturally, our army fought against the Germans. But the time came when there was a need to defeat the Japanese army and to liberate Korea from the Japanese occupation. 13 47
- 13 47 That's when our country began the war against Japan, by the agreement with the allies. You may know about the Teheran and Yalta conferences strengthening the alliance between us and America and Great Britain. 14 20
- 14 20 It was agreed that the alliance would defeat the Hitler's coalition and put the end to the war – putting the end to Nazism and Japanese imperialism. (Looking back can you recall of any heroism you committed?) 14 49
- 14 49 I don't think of myself as a hero. I was drafted and just did my job following commanders' orders. I served as a radio operator in a mortar battery. I was to provide communication between the battery command and the weapon emplacements. 15 15
- 15 15 The battery was in one location; the battery commander was defining the target at an observation post in another location. My radio operator partner was at the battery while I was with the command at the observation post. That's how it was. 15 42
- 15 42 The battery was firing while we were adjusting the fire, doing the spotting for mortars. Personally... that was just a normal, a regular military service – making sure the enemy would be defeated. 16 02

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16 02	I just operated whatever facilities I had in my hands. I had a radio station in my hands. Besides, I had a submachine gun and everything a soldier was supposed to be equipped with. 16 15	
16 15	When given an order we fired, otherwise it was a daily routine. (What does "communication" mean?) Pardon? (Repeats) Sorry? (What do you mean by "provide communication"?) What did I mean? (Repeats.) Communication? 16 41	
16 41	Oh that... The battery must fire. But before firing there must be a laying (наводка) by adjusting all the devices to ensure the target was hit directly. The battery commander was at the observation post. He was defining which target poses the most threat. 17 07	
17 07	It could be a weapon emplacement, a tank, a vehicle or a unit. On spotting the target the commander issued an order for the individual guns – specific artillery commands. 17 26	
17 26	"Gunsight this, percussion primer that". The gunlayer used the devices to lay the mortar so that the mine would hit the chosen target. The point is that depending on the muzzle laying the mine might be short, long, missing or hitting the target spotted by the commander. 17 59	
17 59	So our task was to spot the target and communicate the orders to the battery for the crew to adjust the mortars following the battery commander's orders. The battery commander had a person at hand who did the math. The math person gave the results to the battery commander. 18 34	
18 34	The commander communicated the data to the battery ensuring the mine would hit the target spotted by the commander. That was similar to... (Do you think that was very important in the war?) Communications were very important!	
19 03	If not for the communications, how would the commander be able to direct the battery firing from 1 or 2 kilometers distance? His orders needed to be heard by his subordinates. That's what communications were like: 19 25	
19 25	The commander dictated the text to me, I spoke in the microphone, the operator on the other end received the message and passed the information to the mortar commander or platoon commander. The commander passed the order to the gunmen – all of them or just individual gunmen. 19 46	
19 46	It depended on the battery commander's own mission. (Was there anti-Semitism in your division?) There was no official anti-Semitism. I didn't encounter any anti-Semitism in the army. 20 26	
20 26	Everything was ok. There was no official anti-Semitism in the whole country either. There was some on a lower level. It was a hidden anti-Semitism on the leadership level. 20 45	
20 45	There was no "glasnost" regarding anti-Semitism. (Did you encounter anti-Semitic incidents during your army service?). No, not in the army. Army is a	

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- solid body. All the commanders cared about was a normal operational readiness and combat training. 21 22
- 21 22 They ensured that there would be no outrage, no incidents of that kind. There was no ethnic hatred in artillery which was a privileged part of the army. The personal was selected based on education; naturally the personnel was different as compared to say infantry. 21 51
- 21 51 In our unit there were West Ukrainians, Tartars, etc. Everything was ok, I can't recall anything of the kind. (Were there many Jews in your division?) Pardon? (Repeats). It's hard to say in regards to the division. There were 3 Jews in my unit, as far as I know. 22 29
- 22 29 Everything went ok. As a Jew I was appointed a more important job as a radio operator which required more qualifications and more skills. (Did you know any Jewish war heroes?) Pardon? (Repeats). Oh, many of them! After I left the army I saw a War Heroes memorial in Kiev (аллея героев), some of them were Jews. 23 28
- 23 28 In Kiev I saw a memorial of a Jewish lieutenant colonel – a war hero: a tombstone with his picture, rank and name inscribed. Those memorials were taken good care of, with flowers etc. Jewish families – mothers and wives used to come to memorials. 24 34
- 24 34 During victory anniversaries crowds of people attended those memorials, with flowers and memories of the war. (What was the lieutenant colonel's name?) I can't recall, just typical Jewish first and last names. I can't recall. It just went away from my memory after so many years. 25 05
- 25 05 If you need... (Tell us about the time you learnt that the war began). When I learnt... (you learnt). In '41 I was an 8-grade student. My cousin who was 2 years my senior, was a cinema college student. He was encouraging me to apply to the cinema college. 26 00
- 26 00 One day he came to me telling me that there were 2 vacancies as his college 1<sup>st</sup> year students. He said "if you want just go there. All you'd have to do is just pass two easy exams – math and physics. If you pass you'll be admitted to the cinema college." 26 34
- 26 35 I was very interested in joining the college. And so I applied and was admitted. We had an exam in June. I was studying for the exam on June 22<sup>nd</sup> – the day the war began. I was at home reading for the exam. 27 00
- 27 00 My father worked outside of Kiev, he used to leave in the early morning hours – about 6 am. All of a sudden my father came back home saying he could not get outside of Kiev because he had left his id. 27 23
- 27 23 He took the id and left. I continued reading. I noticed that there was a noise from airplanes overhead. I went to the balcony and saw planes overhead. I had no idea what was going on. 27 45

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27 45	I turned on the radio to listen to the news. The announcer said that a very important announcement is coming up at noon. It was Molotov's speech about the German invasion. That's when I learnt that the war began. Later on came German air raids. 28 16	
28 16	A major air raid was carried out against Kiev on June 25 and more air raids on later dates. At the beginning of July we evacuated to Serdobsk, Penza region. (Did you capture any Japanese soldiers?) Pardon? (Repeats) Captured...? 28 54	
28 54	Yes, it happened so... The first day we entered town Dudin, we marched through the town to its suburbs. I vividly remember a hill and how we were climbing the hill to descent to a valley. I heard the sound of a shot in front of me. 29 32	
29 32	I saw our junior sergeant putting his hands on his stomach. As it turned out later, 4 Japanese kamikazes had hidden in the bushes on the road side. They shot and wounded our sergeant who fell down in front of me. 30 02	
30 02	We rushed to where the shot had come from. We jumped over a wire fence to find 4 Japanese kamikazes hidden in the bushes. The soldiers killed three of them with their rifle butts. The other one was tied up. 30 38	
30 38	He was sent to the HQs. Yes, we did. We saw Japanese POWs all the time. There was a fuel warehouse in the town where we were stationed. A group of Japanese POWs worked at the warehouse unloading train cars with coal. 31 05	
31 05	They were highly disciplined POWs, very much so! And very clean too. (did you talk to them?) Pardon? (Repeats). No, we didn't, we didn't speak their language. The translator who worked with them told us what they were doing. They had political classes. 31 39	
31 39	They studied Marx and Engels! The Japanese POWs studied Marx and Engels! They studied Marx's "Capital". What a surprise! They were much disciplined. Very much so! And very clean too. Their cloths...very interesting...kind of an underwear...32 05	
32 05	which was a summer uniform. The pants were on garters, and a shirt. They had snow white towels tucked in their belts. They used to wash their hands before the meals wiping them with those snow white towels. 32 24	
32 24	In the winter time the summer uniforms were used as winter underwear, the winters being cold. And they were given warmer items to put on the underwear. (Was there any anti-Semitism after the end of the war?) 32 51	
32 51	Anti-Semitism? Yes. My son and I encountered anti-Semitism. Are you interested in more details? There was anti-Semitism, especially in Ukraine. (What were your feelings encountering anti-Semitism after having fought in the Red Army?) 33 29	

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33 29	As I said, I was drafted like any other citizen of the Soviet Union, no matter what nationality. The war began and people were being drafted. I was drafted based on my age, no matter what nationality I was. Everyone was drafted. 33 55	
33 55	All the Soviet nationalities were drafted to defend the country. When I left the army I encountered... I wanted to have access to education. I applied to an institute... no, first I went to evening classes to finish a secondary school. 34 29	
34 29	I enrolled in a school. I was the only candidate for a Gold Medal. I was the only one. One of my class mates, a Russian guy, was recommended to be awarded a Silver Medal. 34 45	
34 45	Eventually he was awarded a Silver Medal, and I wasn't given any medal at all. There was a rule in Russia. If a student didn't agree with a test mark, he/she wasn't allowed to view his work. 35 15	
35 15	Suppose, I would like to see my mistakes in a math test paper, ok? The work wasn't shown to me. I had no right to view my work. I had no chance to see if I had made a mistake or if my work was given too low mark on purpose. 35 40	
35 40	I made an appointment with Ukraine's minister of education. The address was Lenin Boulevard. The minister's name was Beloded. I entered the room, the minister stood up to greet me. 36 17	
36 17	We shook hands. He spoke Ukrainian to me: "what is the purpose of your visit?" I go "I was recommended to be awarded a Gold Medal, but was given too low test marks for my math paper and literature exam. 36 49	
36 49	He continued in Ukrainian, asking me what was my request. I go "all I want is to view my paper and see if there are mistakes in it". He says "Do you think we don't trust our "gorono" (city education department) workers who marked you papers and found mistakes in them?" 37 06	
37 06	"I can't help you with this". Being a party member I went to Ukraine's communist party central committee. I went there to seek justice. There was a higher education department in the central committee. I made an appointment with the department head. 37 36	
37 36	I entered his office. He was very polite with me. He asked me what brought me to his office. I explained that I wanted to view my paper and see my mistakes. He said "Listen man, even complaining to Moscow isn't going to help you". 38 07	
38 07	He was "human" advising me that it was no use complaining: I would never be awarded a Gold Medal. I had to sit exams like a regular applicant. [gold medal holders were admitted to universities without exams]. 38 23	
38 23	In the process of examinations there was an attempt to put me a lower mark. However as a war veteran, all I needed to be admitted was just a positive	

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		mark, just higher than "2". A math teacher tried to fail me giving me higher complexity problems. 38 58
38 58		I remember one of the problems was a construction problem. I solved the problem. He said "You've made a mistake" which meant he would mark my exam as "unsatisfactory" leading to my wasting a year. 39 14
39 14		I had already wasted a year: I had applied to Moscow Energy Institute's Kiev office. By the way, 22 Jewish applicants' essays had been marked "2" (unsatisfactory). 39 33
39 33		I said to the math teacher "Show me where my mistake is". He started rambling, saying "You see now what your mistake is?" I go "No, I don't". He said "Let's not bargain, I put you "3". 39 55
39 55		I said "Thank you". I was mad. I felt angry whenever nationality based problems arose. I said "I expected a problem with my mark. I expected you to put me "2". He said "You should not think this way" His face turned red. I got a positive mark and was admitted to the institute. 40 25
40 25		There were other attempts, not as serious as with math though. When I applied to Moscow Energy Institute, 22 Jews' essays were marked "2". Same story with my son. 40 52
40 52		(What were your feelings years after the war encountering anti-Semitism?) Many people were surprised, we were surprised too. My father was killed in a battle near Orel. 41 25
41 25		I am a war veteran. There seemed to be no reason for treating law abiding citizens this way. Unfortunately we were treated wrong in terms of access to higher education and employment. 41 45
41 45		There were so many jokes... Many employers were given secret orders not to hire Jews. This was on Moscow's orders. Ukraine was eager to follow Moscow's orders. 42 12
42 12		The Jews were oppressed. The Jews were not hired despite the existing vacancies. The Jews were the first ones to be laid off due to staff redundancies, no matter how skilled and qualified they were. 42 46
42 46		There were orders to lay off a number of Jews in certain industries. (What were your feelings when you were in Korea? Did you think you contributed to the victory over Japan?) During the war I wasn't mistreated. There was no anti-Semitism in the army at that time. 43 19
43 19		At that time the Jews were treated right. (Did you think you contributed to the victory over Japan when you were in Korea?) Has it got to do with anti-Semitism? (No). Yes I did. We were there to defeat the enemy. 43 54
43 54		I was drafted like millions of young guys. My mission was to be in the army fighting the enemy, end of story. (Did you hear about the nuclear bomb in Hiroshima?) Yes, I did. 44 18



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44 18	Yes, 2 bombs, Hiroshima and Nagasaki. (What did you think when you entered the territory of ...Manchuria...?) It was in Japan, Hiroshima and Nagasaki were bombed. 44 44	
44 44	Those were Japanese cities. What we entered was Korea. Korea was in the mainland separated from Japan by the Sea of Japan. Japan is an island country. Korea was a mainland country. 45 05	
45 05	We treated the Japanese as our enemies, like the Germans and Italians. Our mission was to defeat the Japanese army, and to liberate Korea from the Japanese occupation. (do you remember the regions you were stationed in Korea?) 45 27	
45 27	(Do you remember specific battles and specific places?) I have mentioned before that we entered town Dudin. Our troops moved fast to meet with the American army. 45 41	
45 41	Our troops' mission in Korea was to liberate as large a territory as possible. We were to capture as many cities and municipalities as possible. Our army was carrying out the mission. 46 04	
46 04	Our unit was stationed in Korea's capital – the city of Pyongyang. The Japanese called the city Hedzio. We were doing our job in the capital city. (No more questions. Would you like to add anything?) That's what I remember about the war... (interrupts: what would you like to add about the war?) 47 09	
47 09	You see the war is no fun: it's about killing people, lack of food, lack of sleep, etc. You may be injured or killed any minute. Fighting was soldiers' job. As for the Japanese war it was very short due to the troops very fast advancing. 47 46	
47 46	The most scary thing about the war in Korea was when the Japanese met us on mountain passes, machine gunning lots of our soldiers. They used to hide in the bushes along the road, having good view of our troops. We had nowhere to hide. 48 09	
48 09	The road was 3.5 – 4 meters wide with precipice on both sides, comparable to Georgian Military Road: precipice and hills all over. The roads were 3 to 4 meters wide with huge numbers of the troops moving along. 48 28	
48 28	The commanders used to rush us "Faster, faster, faster..." We tried to get through the passes as fast as possible to minimize the number of casualties and to occupy more territories. 48 42	
48 42	As I have mentioned there was a competition between us and the Americans for capturing as much of the Korean territories as possible, advancing as much as possible. 48 55	
48 55	That's how it was – all the time on the run, holding to our mortars when getting tired. Walking all the time. Short halts for meals and feeding the horses. And on and on we went. 49 22	

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- 49 22 The situation before the offensive started was very serious; the Japanese could cross the border any minute which was a small river... we could see each other, using binoculars or telescopes. 49 45
- 49 45 We used to watch over the Japanese. We saw a road on the Japanese side, with soldiers and officers moving along the road. A soldier at an observation station transmitted information to the outpost. If he saw a Japanese officer riding a horse he transmitted information to the outpost. 50 17
- 50 17 "An officer riding a horse and a batman walking alongside, holding to the horse. A mounted officer and a batman walking..." Well what can I add? The Japanese are very calm, steady and even-tempered people. 50 39
- 50 39 They didn't give the war a damn... they were very fit. When given the order to cease fire, they did it right away. There were no partisans, no hiding in the bushes... (What would you like to add?) Please ask your questions. 51 13
- 51 13 I will do my best to answer your questions. Had the war lasted longer I would have had more to say. I can tell you that for vitamin deficiency I developed night blindness. 51 42
- 51 42 I was losing my eyesight at dawn. But I had to walk on. How? I had to hold to my mortar's plate. The mortar was moved by horses. I was holding to the mortar all the time. When we reached a river I walked into it without seeing. 52 10
- 52 10 We were fighting night blindness by eating raw liver. We had to chew raw liver. Night blindness wasn't feeling nice. During a halt when I lied down on grass there was a chance of lying next to a dead Japanese. 52 41
- 52 41 Not seeing where to lie down, no way to get oriented in space without someone's help. (Thank you very, very much! We are going to shoot your medals now. Close up of medals.)
- 53 43 I had to recall everything... you know sometimes you just live your life without realizing that it would be of interest to anybody. That was my everyday life. A human being gets used to anything, including the war. 53 59
- 53 59 We were ok and healthy. The army was a good opportunity to learn something new, to work on your character, endurance and stamina. A good school! Although 7 years was too long to stay in the army. 54 25
- 54 25 I was in the army '43 to '50. (Close up of the medals).
- 54 49 End of interview.