

He Wanted to Be a Scientist

Yakov Fleishman

I lost my older brother Emanuel during the first battle of the 156th Brigade on the 23rd February 1943 near Alekseyevka. His friends said that he had a brilliant mind.

Emanuel Fleishman was born in 1914. After graduating with distinction from secondary school in Kaunas, he served in the Lithuanian army. In 1938 he graduated from university in Brno, Czechoslovakia where he received a diploma as an engineer in light industry. When at the University laboratories, he had many brilliant ideas which found expression later in his work in the textile factory. However his further studies were interrupted by the war.



Emanuel Fleishman

On Sunday 22nd June 1941 Emanuel heard the terrible news about the Nazi attack and rushed to the factory but there was no one there. He went from department to department looking for someone from the management in order to receive instructions. At the last moment having heard the first explosions in the town, he fled town on his bicycle. On the way he learned of the murderous acts of the Lithuanian nationalists, and he took the side roads where many of the Red Army soldiers were retreating.

His way to Russia was hard and accompanied by hunger. He arrived at Bashkiria and settled there as a worker in a remote textile factory. His aspiration was to go out to the front but his supplications at the recruitment office did not bear fruit as at that time the westerners were not being sent to the front. When he learned that a Lithuanian Division was being organized near Gorki, Emanuel approached the Lithuanian representative and finally succeeded. He was sent to Balakhna which is near Gorki. In Pravdinsk he met an officer he knew from the old Lithuanian Army who when he saw him rudely said, "Here is another *zhidukas* (Jew) that had appeared to save his Lithuanian motherland."

Emanuel joined the 3rd Company, 156th Brigade. In one of the letters he sent to those in his family that had managed to save themselves from the German executioners, he wrote that at the least the enemy must be made to pay for the bloodshed with its own blood. In another letter he wrote that his Jewish comrades in the battalion had gathered on 13th September 1942 and celebrated *Rosh Hashanah* (Jewish New Year) in secret.

In that letter he expressed his hope that the victory over the Germans would result in a positive change in the destiny of the Soviet Jews, that Jewish schools would re-open, our national culture would flourish, and the ruling institutions would fight against anti-Semitism. But in the meantime circumstances were completely the reverse. A soldier from Birobidjan by the name of Goldenberg became his friend and dared to tell his company about the bitter fate of the Birobidjan Jews who had come from all over the world to build a Jewish homeland. In October 1942 Goldenberg suddenly disappeared and nothing has been heard of him since then.

In his last letter Emanuel wrote, "We are fully equipped and finally we are going to battle." Later comrades-in-arms told us that he went bravely to the first attack on the enemy and was killed by a German sniper's bullet.

Yakov Fleishman, engineer, Tel-Aviv

