

## Beskin, Izrail Solomonovich

### Lieutenant-General

General Beskin was one of the Soviet Union's outstanding artillery commanders. He was born in Vitebsk on November 25, 1895. His father was a dyer. As a child Beskin attended a religious Hebrew school (*cheder*), worked as a clerk, and gave private lessons. He graduated as an external student from the Vitebsk gymnasium and hoped to enroll at the University of Kharkov, but lack of means forced him to return home to Vitebsk. There he was drafted into the Czarist army.

In 1918 he enlisted in the Red Army. He assisted in the suppression of the kulaks in Vitebsk and Smolensk provinces. He was sent to the first Moscow artillery courses and on their completion was named commander of a battery of one of the units of the Moscow garrison. During the Civil War he fought against Kolchak's troops in Siberia and took part in freeing Khabarovsk, Spassk, Volochayevka, and Vladivostok from the White Russian and Japanese forces.

In 1936 he completed his studies at the Frunze Military Academy. He joined the Communist Party in 1939, and fought in the Soviet-Finnish war in 1939-1940.

In the war against Germany Beskin started out as a colonel in command of artillery of the 27th Mechanized Corps. He later became deputy commander of artillery of the 1st and 5th Armies and then commander of artillery of the 53rd, 65th, and 70th Armies.

The artillery commanded by Colonel, subsequently General, Beskin met the fierce onslaught of the Germans near Moscow, Roslavl, Gzhatsk, Tula, Kaluga, Yukhnov, and Demyansk.

General Batov, commander of the 65th Army, wrote that the heavy artillery offensive of Soviet troops in the battle for Stalingrad was planned and carried out with the direct participation of General Beskin.

General Beskin's artillery unit played a large part in the advance on Sevsk, Loyev, and Rechitsa. For his skillful operational planning in the advance on

Mozyr-Kalinkovichi, Beskin won praise in an order issued by the Supreme Command.

In 1944, General Beskin devised a brilliant plan for the liberation of the city of Bobruisk. He skillfully coordinated artillery fire with the other troops, quickly silenced enemy fire and opened the way for the infantry (which destroyed enemy positions without losing a single soldier) to win the city. Again he won praise from the Supreme Command.

Similar recognition from the Supreme Command was received by General Beskin after the liberation of Torun, Gdansk, Rostock and other cities in Poland and East Germany.

On May 31, 1945, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet awarded General Beskin the title of Hero of the Soviet Union for his brilliant organizational abilities and his courage in destroying German forces defending the Oder River, which led to the Soviet crossing and the capture of more than 19 cities and many other populated centers.

After the war, General Beskin retired from the army and settled in Irkutsk, where he died on January 21, 1964.

**Source: Gershon Shapiro (Ed.), *Under Fire, the Stories of Jewish Heroes of the Soviet Union*, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, 1988 pp. 46-47**