I have never before made a film about the war. This is the first. I produced the film Star, but producing is totally different from directing. I was convinced I should make a war film, and I am glad that I made it. A film about war is the apex of film directing, in a sense it is putting oneself to a test (an art house picture is far easier to make). It is important for a director to have a war film in his resume. I liked the story written by Ilya Boyashov. It reminded me of “Moby-Dick” – with a tank in the place of the whale…
The duel between a soldier and a tank gives a unique possibility to show the war from an unusual perspective: mystically. It seemed extremely interesting to me to integrate a mystic story into the realities of the war and show the way I felt about it. I tried to impart life to the tanks… I would say I came to admire the Т-34. It is an extraordinary machine. It has its own unique aesthetics and character. It reminds me of Russian greyhounds – cheerful, agile and beautiful. And German tanks are more like bulldogs, heavy and fearsome. One more thing…our tanks are steadfast. Many of the tanks that appeared in our film were in World War Two. They are over 70 years old, but would still start up immediately.
There are also fantastic elements in the film, so it can be regarded as a mystic war fantasy.  But if we look at world history, we have to admit that World War Two is the most important event since the beginning of human existence. For the first time the whole world was on the brink of a dramatic change in direction. If providence had not been on our side, the outcome could have been different…
I dedicate this film to my father, who fought in the war, and to that generation.