

Albert Tsessarskiy And His Friends



This is me in the forest of Western Ukraine among the partisans in 1942. I am the 2nd to the left in the bottom row. The top row from left to right: the 3rd is medical assistant Masha Shatalova, medical assistant Anatoliy Rosenfeld is next to her, commissar Alexander Stekhov is next to him.

I remember the outbreak of war. I was on my way to the hostel from my sister's place. I saw window wide open and listening to Molotov's speech when I was in the street: "War". I dashed to the hostel, where military enlistment office was located. I came to the office I was indicated. I was included in the USSR NKVD squad of special purpose. People from that squad were included in reconnaissance and diversion partisan groups and squads. That was the way my military life had started. The squad, where I started my army service was called "Separate motorized rifle squad of the special purpose squad".

First, our squad did not study. I was assigned as a doctor there. I was conferred the title of doctor of the 3rd rank, i.e. captain. All of us were clad in military uniforms. We joined the acting army and moved towards the west. Then I found out that in January 1942 the group under commandment of the Hero of the Soviet Union Dmitriy Medvedev came back from the rear of the enemy. Medvedev was the leader of the partisan movement in Bryansk oblast, Western Ukraine and many other parts of USSR, occupied by Germans. My fellow student Alexander Feinstein was with them. He told me everything and took me with Medvedev. He managed to get me transferred to his squad, which was being formed at that time.

Squads were formed from volunteers. When the squad had been formed we started training. Nobody knew anything about the forest life, how to walk in azimuth Medvedev taught us that. In May 1942 our first group came to the rear of Germans. We jumped with parachutes from the planes. We had the first training jump out of Moscow, then a military jump in the rear of the enemy. We had one passenger plane on us. On the 10th of June 1942 I was unexpectedly called by Medvedev and told: "Doctor, you were to go with me in the last group. You have to take off now."

Reconnoiterer landed on the stamp. He had an open hip fracture. You will assist him". It was my first flight to enemy's rear.

We had a lot of battles and we had to take all our wounded with us. We acted in Rovno, Lvov [about 1000 km to the south-west from Moscow], Lutsk and Vinnitsa. We had a mobile hospital. There was no place to leave the wounded as we did not have the rear. Within the whole period of time only 3 wounded died as there were in the lethal condition. We lived in the forest, slept on earth, even during winter time. We put feet closer to the flame and head to the trunk of the tree. Sometimes we stopped only for 2-3 hours. Germans were constantly chasing us. We had to change the position of the camp very often. For the first year and a half I was the only doctor in the squad. There were two more medical assistants. Then Vera Davydova, who studied in our institute, was sent to the squad. Local doctors also came to help. Finally there were 10 doctors. Our squad grew. There were about 3000 men.

We had been in more than 80 battles for 2 years. We had not lost a single battle, but we had a lot of casualties. Everybody participated in the battles. The cook took a rifle and started shooting. The sanitary unit was also involved in battles, though in accordance with the international convention medicals were not supposed to fight. There was no other way-out.