

# Janina Duda At A Meeting With President Putin



This is me, Janina Duda, in a photo with the president of Russia, Vladimir Putin. This photo was taken on 17th January 2003, when Putin paid an official visit in Poland, in Warsaw. It was his first visit to Poland. I was invited to participate in the meeting as a war veteran. It is thanks to the Polish President, Aleksander Kwasniewski, who presented me to Putin as the representant of Polish-Soviet soldiers. Kwasniewski is also on this photo, first from right, and Putin is second from right. We are here in the cemetery of Soviet soldiers in Warsaw, Zwirki i Wigury Street, there is a monument there. The period of the war, when I was with the partisans and after in the army, is very important to me. When in 1941 the Germans entered Bialystok, me and my friend, Grzegorz Lewi, we decided to leave Bialystok together. We were hiding in Bielsk Podlaski, after on Polyeskaya Nizina, about 400 km south east of Warsaw, today Ukraine. Then we reached this small town in - Vysotsk. And a ghetto was created in Vysotsk. When 1942 came, the liquidation of the ghetto started. And we were looking for partisans; there were already rumors in the area that we really wanted to join them. We were staying at the forester's hut, in the area of Rokytne, north of Sarny. This was the end of October 1942, a Ukrainian peasant came in the morning, driving a cart, and shouted: 'The Red Army is coming!' it turned out that large partisan forces had come from the interior of Ukraine, moving to western Ukraine. Of course, we went to the command straight away and asked to join. And they accepted us. I was in a Soviet partisan unit, I was sent to a unit in the village of Kupel. In 1944 I was staff officer of the AL Grunwald brigade, which was supposed to cross the River Bug. The war ended in this area in 1944. I joined the army and I was transferred to Poland, dropped with a parachute.