

Eva Ryzhevskaya



This is me, captain of the medical service. The picture was taken when our regiment was sent to the Moscow suburbs after the victory in the Stalingrad battle. The picture was taken in Solnechnogorsk in 1943. In 1940 I graduated from the medical institute. I got a mandatory job assignment to Donetsk oblast, Gorlovka. I worked as an ambulatory surgeon in the medical office of the coal mine. The majority of my patients were coal-miners. I thought I had come there to stay. I had no idea that our peaceful life would be over soon. In spring 1941 I was summoned to the military enlistment office. Medical officers were supposed to be drafted into the army, no matter what they were specialized in. I was sent to the operative dressing platoon of medical battalion 264 of division # 244 of the Ukrainian front as an attending surgeon. When we came to Stalingrad it wasn't devastated yet. Houses were not demolished. We stopped by a tractor plant and deployed a medical battalion there. The siege of Stalingrad began on 13th September 1943. The plant was

totally demolished because of systematic shooting by the Germans. Only bricks were left of the plant. Bombings and shooting were almost constant. Germans had been firing from morning till night, so we had to move to the basement of a semi-devastated house. We used bunks as operating tables. The most important was that the wounded were put on the bunks so we could remove the fragments of shells, suppress hemorrhage. The squads that were fighting in Stalingrad brought us the wounded straight from the battles. There was no light in the basement and some Uzbek soldiers were told to help us. They were afraid of the blasts. And the latter were constant, sometimes with the interval of a few seconds. As soon as the blast started, the Uzbeks lay down on the floor. There was no way we could interrupt operations. Such a fragile girl as I had to command, 'Get up, immediately!' They got up, and lit the candles at once. In early January 1943 the Soviet commandment delivered an ultimatum to the Stalingrad group of the German troops regarding full strategic surrender. The Volga battle was over on 31st January 1943 and resulted in the resounding defeat and destruction of the picked Hitler troops: 24 generals headed by a commander. 22 German divisions, army # 6, tank squad # 44 and 60 separate German squads were besieged. There were about 330,000 people. The Stalingrad battle brought a radical change to the course of the Great Patriotic War, and the Soviet Union was in the advantageous position. Owing to my work in Stalingrad, the commandment included me in the list of awardees of the Order of the Combat Red Banner. I didn't receive this order; I was given the Medal for Military Merits. It was my first award. When we left Stalingrad, the commander of the division gave us the awards right in front of the line of columns. When we started attacking I received my second award - an Order of the Red Star and in September 1943 I was given the Medal for the Defense of Stalingrad.