

Albert Tsessarskiy And His Friends



This is a reunion of 2 partisan squads: ours and Fyodorov's, having acted in Byelorussia. We were ordered to re-position to the Byelorussian forests after severe battle; it was much quieter there and we could recoup. From left to right: the second to the right is commander of Byelorussian partisan troops Fyodorov, I and commander of our partisan squad - Dmitriy Medvedev. Winter 1943.

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.

Medvedev was NKVD worker. His career was not easy. His father was a Jew, 'vykrest' (convert from Judaism). He left his family and lived close to Bryansk, in the town of Bezhits. He had 3 sons and all of them worked for the NKVD. Dmitriy Medvedev was a big-hearted man. He was against certain methods, used in NKVD. He was fired from there for three times and was the director of some warehouse before the very outbreak of war. When the war was unleashed he came to Lubyanka and asked to send him to partisan squads in Bryansk forests, which he knew very well. Authorities had been considering the issue for three days. Finally he was approved. He collected a group of people and went there. He had conducted some successful operations there and founded partisan movement. When the war was over I went to Bryansk Museum of Partisan Movement. There is a lot of good information about Medvedev in that museum. When he came back to Moscow, he was

awarded with Lenin's Order. He met Marshal Zhukov, asked for his advice regarding organization of the guerilla movement. Stalin held speech on the necessity to form guerilla squads.

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 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. 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.