

Margarita Kamiyenovskaya



This is me during the evacuation. This picture was taken in Syzran in 1943. In 1941 we left for evacuation. We didn't know where exactly we were going. All we knew was that we were heading for the rear of Russia. We stayed for about half a year in Staraya Kulatka. Then we moved to a grain Sovkhoz not far from Syzran. We stayed in the grain sovkhov for less than a year as my father was taken to Syzran. It was a miners' town. My father worked in the hospital. It was very primitive. There wasn't even a lab. My father worked in the therapeutic department and received patients. Medicine was given in the hospital as per prescription of the doctor, and the junior medical

employees stole medicine. Doctors constantly checked with every patient whether they had taken their medicine. If they hadn't, it meant that it had been stolen. After we moved to Syzran, I worked in the office of the municipal health care department. Then I was mobilized to anti-aircraft defense. The command center of the anti-aircraft troops was deep in the earth and we had to stay there for 24 hours and then we could take a day off for another 24 hours. I was a telephone operator. There were two dozen phones and one operations phone connected to the observation post. Syzran was located at the Volga River, so the position in the town was semi-military. When the German aircrafts were approaching the town, we were to report from the observation post over the operations phone. The person on duty was to stay at the table and if the phone rang, he had to pick up the receiver within a second and a half and answer the call. There was a bunk in another corner of the room, where people on duty could lie down, but they were afraid to do so as it was impossible to reach the phone in a second and a half. Once I was very tired and took a nap. I woke up from the sound of my own voice. I was by the phone and said, 'Headquarters of the anti-aircraft defense troops. The operating orderly speaking!' There were a lot of mice in the headquarters. Once, I was at the table, wearing valenki, and the mice were running on my feet. After the anti-aircraft defense I was sent to nurses' courses. At that time my mother and I stayed together. My father had left as he was called to Leningrad. All Estonian doctors were called to work in Leningrad at that time. My father was transferred to Tallinn in 1944 before the war was over. We went back to Tallinn in fall 1944.