

Mimi-Matilda Petkova With Soldiers



This photo was taken on 1st May 1945 - the fall of Berlin. This is the 43rd Dravski regiment in which I served. I went to the front when I was 17 years and three days old. The Germans withdrew on 5th September. The partisan squad climbed down on 8th September, smashed the prison gates and so my father was freed. It was such a happy moment, we all gathered on the square, all people regardless which party they belonged to. It was 10th September 1944. Then we heard that the Germans were coming back. They had forgotten to blow up the ferry over the Danube, to Calafat. And the Soviet army was on the Danube border. The commander of the partisan squad - Ivan Vitkov Bakov summoned us, 'We have to organize a volunteers' team until the Soviet armies come and the situation in the regiments is normal again. You have to stop the Germans!' We had the third Drinski regiment, but they did not go then. I have a big sin with regard to my parents: not only did I run away from them to go to the front, but also I didn't write them a single line. In the fights in Yugoslavia a Jewish girl died. She was from Silistra. Her name was Solchi. The kulaks had killed her husband and son. I was 17 years old then; she was 25, that is, eight years older than me. They called her 'the Jewish girl'. They called me '6 by 35' because I was small and I carried a lady's gun [a smaller gun]. A friend of my father went to Vidin and my father asked him about me. 'Buko, they killed a Jewish girl, but I don't know her name?' Then they recited the Kaddish for me at the synagogue, believing that I was dead. The war gave me many things. I spent 46 days and nights on the battlefield. First, it helped me reconsider my life. Secondly, it made me firmer: more honest, more sincere and stronger. It could sound vain, but it made me the only Jew in Bulgaria with two medals of valor. So, I also defended the Jewish lobby in that war. Not only me -there were 2,848 Jews, 48 of them died, 240 of them were women.