

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# The Unseen **Terror** of East Prussia

## Roza Shanina

Roza Shanina was born April 3<sup>rd</sup> 1924 in the Russian village of Yedma, in Arkhangelsk Oblast. Her father was a WWI veteran who had been wounded during the Great War and worked, as a logger while her mother was a dairymaid. Eager in her studies, Roza would walk 13 km to Bereznik to attend Middle School. At the age of fourteen and against her parents' wishes, Roza walked 200 kilometers across the **Taiga** to a rail station. There she travelled to Arkhangelsk to attend college. She worked in a Kindergarten while completing her studies and graduated in 1942, by which time Germany was already invading the Soviet Union.



Roza learned in December of 1941 that her brother Mikhail has been killed at the Siege of Leningrad. She quickly went to Military **Commissariat** to enlist but was refused, but she didn't stop trying. Finally on June 22<sup>nd</sup> 1943 she was accepted into Vsevobuch program for military training and enrolled into the Central Women's Sniper Training School. She graduated with honors and was asked to continue on in the program as an instructor but felt a need to serve on the front lines of the war, "Yes, I want to be at the front, it's simultaneously interesting and dangerous, but not frightening to me for some reason" she wrote in her diary on October 12<sup>th</sup> 1944.



Throughout her travels in the war she kept a diary of her experiences. She was the first woman in the war to be awarded the Order of Glory 3<sup>rd</sup> Class, for bravery in the face of the enemy during the battle of Kozyi Gori.

As the Russians pushed down into East Prussia, it was then that a Canadian Newspaper crowned Roza Shanina with the title, "The Unseen Terror of East Prussia". She was credited with 59 kills during her sniper career. Unfortunately her life was short lived and she died January 28<sup>th</sup>, 1945 in East Prussia while shielding a wounded soldier from an artillery strike. Even to the end she remained un-frightened.

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Directions: After completing the reading answer the following questions using complete sentences.

Definitions: Using Google define the following terms:

i) Taiga (Geography):

ii) Commissariat:

1. Using Google, explain the Siege of Leningrad: What was it? When did it take place? Who was involved? What was the outcome, and why was it of significance to the Eastern Front?

2. Visit the website: <https://rozasdiary.com>. Here you will find a series of letters she wrote from July of 1944 until her death. Follow the steps below and record your responses on a separate piece of paper.

- a. Read at minimum of 2 of her letters.
- b. Write down the date of the letter
- c. Summarize each letter. (2-3 sentences)
- d. Describe why these letters are significant to historians today.  
(2-3 sentences)

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Directions: Read these excerpts from Roza Shanina's Journal and respond to the following questions.

"I'm showered with glory. Recently, the army newspaper "Destroy the Enemy" wrote: "Distinguished Shanina was awarded the medal "For Courage" for actions during an enemy counterattack - an honourable sniper in our units. In the Moscow journal "Spark" my picture on the front page, killed 54, three German prisoners, two Orders of Glory - this was before. Imagine: the whole country reads it, all my friends, and who will know what I feel at this moment."

- January 16<sup>th</sup>, 1945

Recently, the poet Ilya Ehrenburg wrote of me in an army newspaper, thanked Starostenko,<sup>1</sup> the captain, battalion commander, the first to enter German territory; mentioned Yurgin<sup>2</sup> and me as notable snipers. "57 times in succession thank her, thousands of Soviet lives she saved." And I thought to myself - this is really glory. "Glory - that or his skull split for the motherland, or someone else's crumbles - that is glory" (Bagration said), but it's just hogwash for the rear, and in fact, what have I done? No more than is expected of the Soviet people to defend the Motherland. Today I am willing to go on the attack, even **melee**, no fear, my own life has grown so hateful, I'm happy to die for the Motherland: how good, to have this opportunity, but I would have to die a nasty death. So many soldiers are killed!

- January 16<sup>th</sup>, 1945



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Directions: After completing the reading answer the following questions.

1. "Imagine: the whole country reads it, all my friends, and who will know what I feel at this moment." What is the tone and meaning of this excerpt?
2. At one point in her diary, Roza wrote, "What have I done? No more than is expected of the Soviet people to defend the Motherland." Do you feel in our society today there is an expectation for you to defend our country if we were invaded? Explain how these types of expectations might be created in a country for a civilian to feel this need to defend his/her country.

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Directions: Read these excerpts from Roza Shanina's Journal and respond to the following questions.

"Battle of Pillkallen [now Dobrovolsk, Kaliningrad, Russia]. The city has taken many of ours, all of them killed. From the shtrafbat company one man returned alive, unharmed; the rest were killed.

I myself fought for a place under Pillkallen. Many times we took it and were expelled. Very successfully fought back a **counterattack**. 15 kills for sure, as I was at close



range and shot a lot. We watched four artillerymen through ten-fold and six-fold binoculars. When **Fritz** started to crawl we could still see their helmets, shot at them. Bullets were ricocheting off their helmets, which we could see well because they were tracer cartridges. First at a distance of 200 meters, then they stood up to full height 100 meters out. When they got within 20 meters we fled. We were behind an embankment in the woods

and escaped easily. Sent to the house, but the "Slavs" had all fled. We were left alone. Beside me Captain Aseyev, our artillery division commander, artilleryman, Hero of the Soviet Union, was killed. And we finally retreated.

Order: re-establish the position. We crawled back and took the house, expelled Fritz. Then I went to the Regimental Command, tired, and ate for the first time that day. By this time it was 12 in the evening, and I slept soundly.

Suddenly I heard shooting from the basement. Fritz, 15 of them, crawling. They smashed the artillerymen, who had heard, being near the house, in the barn. The girls were all cowards and fled. Kaleria was the brave one. The girls saw the danger and were ready to tear me to pieces when I led them to the front. Sasha Koreneva was killed in the fight and two were wounded: Valya Lazarenko and Anna Kuznetsova. I was afraid to go home, as the girls will "stick" all the blame on me. Soldiers, the boys and commanders, are pleased by my bravery. It came before the commanders, and I was recommended for the **Order of Glory** 1<sup>st</sup> Degree for repelling those attacks."

- October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1944

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Directions: Answer the following questions based on the reading using complete sentences.

Definition: Using Google, define the following terms below.

- i. Counterattack:
  - ii. Fritz:
  - iii. The Order of Glory:
1. The reading above paints a vivid image of the war. What sort of emotions does Roza experience throughout this entry?
  2. Based on the reading draw an image from one of the scenes below. Be sure to write a description of the event so your reader knows what is going on.

