



## ZOFIA CHWIAŁKOWSKA

---

Zofia Chwiałkowska, 24 years old, unmarried.

---

When the Russians entered Poland and the Academy of Foreign Trade in Lwów was closed, I took a job at the post office in Nowogród, Łomża district.

On 20 June 1941 I was taken by the NKVD, together with my parents (elderly people, both over 60 years old) and sister. We were arrested by the NKVD chief and some lower-ranking NKVD officers. The chief was armed with a revolver, and the others had rifles with live ammunition. I was taken from the post office, and my parents from our home; they said that we were dangerous and therefore had to be removed to the Soviet interior. I was deported to the Pachar kolkhoz in Kazakhstan, Aktyubinskaya Oblast. The buildings in this kolkhoz and the neighboring ones were made of clay. There were no proper floors, as they were made of clay smoothed with fertilizer. The roofs were also made of clay and supported with several wooden posts. A room of 40 cubic meters had to house us and two other families, that is, thirteen people. The hygiene was neither discussed nor maintained. The authorities didn't care at all whether we had anything with which we could wash ourselves or our clothes. There wasn't a single latrine in the entire kolkhoz. Therefore each furrow, each shrub, very often even the corner of some pit house, served the purpose of a latrine. The inmates of that kolkhoz were mainly Ukrainians from the area of Odessa, Kiev and Kharkiv – these were the old prisoners. Apart from them there were Poles from the Eastern Małopolska region, from the area of Stryj and Tarnopol. The majority of the Poles were women: teachers and wives of soldiers and policemen, and wealthy landowners. About 50% were very intelligent, the rest was of average intelligence. None of the Poles was broken in spirit. We all believed that one day or another our torment had to come to an end, that a day would come when we would be released and our stay in the *spec-peresyłka* [special transit camp] would be over.



The Poles cooperated very closely, understood and helped one another. There was neither selfishness nor greed.

We worked mainly in the fields or the woods, and during winter we removed snow from the tracks. We began work in the woods at 4.00 a.m. and finished at 8.00 p.m. We had a two-hour dinner break. We had to turn the clayey, dry earth with *sapas*, that is, single-pronged hoes. Sometimes we were helping at the bridge-building site, that is, we dug the clayey earth with pickaxes and brought it in wheelbarrows to the people who were working some 400 meters away. During winter we had to walk a distance of 3.5 kilometers to the train station, where we were shoveling snow.

If we worked in the hamlet (or up to 12 kilometers away from it), we had our meals at home, and when we were sent away as a work brigade (25 kilometers from the hamlet), we received meals at the site. There was a rather large barn there in which we lived. At the same time the barn was used as a kitchen. We had to sleep directly on the floor; there was not a single stalk of straw or hay to be found. For breakfast we had 200 grams of whole wheat bread (only wheat grew well) and clear boiled water. For dinner we always had mutton soup (10 decagrams of raw meat per laborer) with a few leaves of overgrown lettuce or beetroot leaves. For supper we received 200 grams of *bryndza* (centrifuged milk cheese) and boiled water once again. We were paid in kind (millet, potatoes, wheat, cucumbers, tomatoes) after the New Year. We didn't receive any clothes and couldn't buy any. Social and cultural life was thriving only among the Poles. As for the general cultural life, it was limited to the *kolkhoz* meetings, where people were fighting over grain, and Communist propaganda meetings. I didn't attend the latter at all. The only medical assistance in the entire hamlet was provided by a vet. One couldn't get to the district physician. He was 25 kilometers away, and there were no means of communication. There was a train station 3.5 kilometers away from us, but the Poles weren't allowed to use it. A sick person who was able to walk to town was forced to work, and the ones who couldn't work also could not walk the 25 kilometers. All in all, there was no medical assistance.

I was released from the *spec-ssylka* on 30 October 1941. On 12 February 1942 I left the hamlet for Guzar, Uzbekistan, where I joined the Polish army.