



WALENTYNA DECH

Volunteer Walentyna Dech, born on 18 February 1918 in Równe in Volhynia, unmarried.

When the War broke out I had already graduated from a vocational school, but I wasn't working due to recurrent health problems. I had a blind mother and an ill father, for many years bedridden. We lived on the old-age pension of my father, a former technical railway office worker. Then the War and occupation came. As a Polish patriot and scout, I didn't want to work for the enemy (like the majority of Poles). My mother died in 1940. Until 1941 we scraped together a living by selling our things. In 1941, however, the threat of famine loomed large. I began to look for a job, and a month before the outbreak of the German-Soviet War I got the post of a paramedic in the former Polish military hospital, which had been turned into a Soviet hospital, and where many refugees from the western Polish territories also worked.

And then came 22 June, the day of the outbreak of the German-Soviet War. The bombing lasted for three days in a row, without a break, and nobody could leave the hospital (it was surrounded by Soviets armed with grenades and rifles). On the night of 26 June the entire personnel, together with the sick, the wounded, and the civilian populace who had hidden in the basements, were – despite protests – deported in cars to Novohrad-Volynskyi and from there, under constant bombardment, driven on foot as far as Kiev and Nizhyn. On 24 August we were transported from Nizhyn to Donbass, and when the Germans reached the town (Gorlovka), we were deported to Siberia, to Kuzedeyevo, Novosibirsk Oblast. We worked there under terrible conditions, preparing a facility to receive the wounded and performing other tasks. One third of the hospital personnel were Poles, who received very meager remuneration, but since there was nothing to buy this resulted in us having too much to die but too little to live on. We were overworked and received poor medical assistance. Although it was a hospital, the living conditions were terrible; our clothes barely covered our naked bodies, and



temperatures often fell to 60 degrees below zero. We were forbidden to speak Polish, we were constantly followed, and some Soviet man was always present; they were often ridiculing and poking fun at things which are most sacred for every Pole: Poland and religion. I didn't have any contact with anyone in any of those places. When the front was settled and the Russians got the upper hand against the Germans, the hospital was moved to Ostrogozhsk in the vicinity of Moscow. There we learned that a Polish army was being raised, and following the amnesty, on 5 February 1942, the Poles were liberated. After many hardships and sufferings, I reached Tatischevo. I came to Jalal-Abad with a friend from the 5th Infantry Division. On 27 June we submitted our applications to the Women's Auxiliary Service.

On 28 August we were notified of our admission to the WAS and left Jalal-Abad for Guzar, where we underwent unitary training.