



STANISŁAWA IWAŃCZUK

Volunteer Stanisława Iwańczuk, born on 15 August 1922 in Zamłynie village, Luboml district.

I was the wife of a farmer, a housewife, and I had lately been living in the village of Rymacze. On 10 February 1940 at 4.00 a.m. I heard some shouting at my door. Since I was already awake, I listened in bewilderment. They began to shout in a terrible voice, "open the door". They didn't hammer on our door, but on my older brother's, as we lived together. When they entered, they immediately began to search for weapons and told us to get ready. There were ten of them, and each was so belligerent and hostile that we were gripped by fear. Their first words were: you must be packed within half an hour. My husband and brother had to stay put. My brother's children began to cry and so did I; I simply didn't know what was going on. Out of fear, the children ran off to friends three kilometers away, so they began to look for the children and were very angry. One of them yelled: take the most indispensable stuff! We couldn't take more than what we could load on one sleigh. We packed very little since we were befuddled. We were taken first to the school, where there were many other families who had been taken just like us. There was a committee in the school, and they debated whether we should be sent to the station then or later. The station was 12 kilometers away. We left the school at noon and arrived at the station at 3.00 p.m. We were loaded into a wagon, which was then locked with a key. It was a goods train. Everyone was crying, as they locked us in and said that we would be going in the direction of Siberia. We were scared out of our wits, and we didn't receive any water at that; some people still had their own food and shared it with others in the wagon. There were 38 people in each wagon.

We travelled for 23 days and then arrived at the station in Arkhangelsk. We left the train and were loaded into cars, in which we covered 130 kilometers in seven hours. It was freezing cold. We arrived at a club in Uspinga; it was organized in a former Orthodox church. The little



children got warm, and we spent the entire day and night there; then each sleigh was loaded with luggage and with five children. The older ones had to go on foot. And so we travelled for two weeks. We rested during the day and travelled at night. As a result, many children froze to death. I myself went through a lot: I had a child in the train, but during the two weeks in transit it was very cold and we had nothing to eat, and as a result the child died of cold and hunger. We were taken to the Ust-Niemo hamlet, Karpogorsk region, Arkhangelsk Oblast; it was situated 600 kilometers from Arkhangelsk, in the taiga. We were forced to work at felling trees and removing snow from the barracks. We were paid three rubles per week. As for bread, there were 800 grams per laborer and 300 grams per child. We lived from day to day, waiting for some kind of salvation. It was a *lesopunkt* [forest work unit]; there were five large barracks, all clumped together – one was occupied by the commandant and one was for the Poles. The men and the women lived together.

We worked very hard. In the morning everyone received a portion of soup, for dinner again soup and a piece of fish, and for supper the so-called *kipiatok*, that is, tea. We received half a kilogram of sugar for the entire month, and 800 grams of bread per laborer for the whole day. We worked all day long, waist-deep in snow; in April the temperatures fell to 48 degrees below zero, and although it was somewhat warmer in May, the snow didn't even begin to melt. There is always snow in the dense forest, both in winter and in summer.

One barrack housed 45 people. There wasn't any doctor. There was a nurse of sorts, but she didn't have any medicaments. When someone was sick but didn't run a high temperature, she wouldn't issue a medical leave, but perform a cupping therapy or administer aspirin and – the quicker the better – the patient would be driven out to work.

We had to work so hard all day, but after returning to the barrack, instead of resting, we had to fight the bugs or swarms of other vermin. It was impossible to get rid of them, because there were so many that when the cooks were making soup, the bugs were falling from the chimneys into the pot. We tried to maintain cleanliness, we washed our underwear and ourselves at least once a week (most often on Sundays). Everything we needed to do we had to do on Sunday. [During the week] it was all work. The majority of people in this hamlet were Poles and Orthodox Christians, mostly military settlers. We worked from dawn to dusk and constantly cheered one another up, saying that it would be better one day. There were approximately 60 people together with their families, sometimes up to a hundred people, but



only in the work season; we constantly opposed the Soviet authorities. More and more Poles were arrested and sent to a harsh prison in Piniga. It was a torment for the Poles, but they were tenacious and stayed positive. They repeated over and over that we would win. The mutual relations were very good. It was difficult to survive the day, as people had to work during the day and at night they were interrogated. The majority of interrogations took place at 11.00 p.m. or 2.00 a.m. We wore very light clothes, as only some were issued [clothes], mostly the Orthodox Christians, because they were cooperative – they listened to everything the Soviets said. A lot of Poles died, but I don't remember their surnames well, since the cemetery wasn't nearby, but 12 kilometers away. When we were leaving, 38 people had already died. In total, there were 36 families, but only 6 left when the amnesty was proclaimed.

I received help from back home and I often got letters, that is, every third day: it was a great comfort to receive letters from Poland, and from my mom at that. Everyone was very curious about how it was going to be.

We heard about the amnesty around 8 August 1941. On 10 August I was released from this horrible misery. On 23 August we left the hamlet and travelled for two months to Osh Oblast, Aradamdzajsk [?] region, [illegible] kolkhoz, where I spent some time. On top of that, both my husband and I fell ill with typhoid fever. There wasn't any hospital and nobody knew that we lay ill, there wasn't any help; only two weeks later, when I already felt better, were we taken to a hospital. It was horrible.

I joined the army on 3 April 1942, and now those hard times are nothing but a memory.