



ANTONI FERET

Corporal Antoni Feret, 27 years of age, a farmer, unmarried.

Following the Red Army's entry into Poland, special agitators began to spread Soviet propaganda, trying to persuade the Ukrainian population that the colonists or military settlers who had arrived in Ukraine in 1920 from Western Małopolska had received their land for free and that these bad people, hostile both to the Soviet Union and to every Ukrainian, should no longer be allowed to live here. There were meetings held every day. Their agitators opened them with the following words: "It isn't enough to cut down a tree, it is necessary to uproot it'.

They stormed in on the night of 10 February 1940, and in the space of two hours they kicked a dozen or so thousand Poles out of their homes. They deprived us of everything we had, and we found ourselves locked up in railway cars. Tears flowed down the faces of the elderly and children. The Soviets were merciless, shooting helpless women. When asked why they were deporting us, they replied that we were being *liberated*.

Our journey lasted a whole month. A great number of old people and children died because of the severe winter and the lack of fuel in the railway cars.

We were taken to Chkalov Oblast, Mednogorsk region, about 150 families in number. Living conditions were unpleasant (barracks). Several families shared one barrack. There were also Ukrainians who held various state positions. We weren't allowed to contact the local population. Nor did they let us go to the movies. Several men couldn't gather together in one dwelling. We were supervised by the NKVD.

We worked at the ore mine. Everyone who had reached the age of 16 was required to work. Our pay was very low – about 150 rubles per month. Families consisting of five people of whom only one worked found it difficult to buy anything at normal prices.



Medical assistance was very poor. People weren't admitted to the infirmary, and those who were died.

They forbade us to teach prayer to our children. They also tried to convince them that Poland couldn't exist and that there was no God, and they weren't allowed to learn Polish.

After a month they arrested fourteen men whom they accused of being kulaks and Polish lords. The NKVD aimed to win people over by offering them work for which they were going to receive a normal remuneration. The Soviets tried to achieve their goal by making people believe that they were offered such work for good.

The NKVD granted them priority of service in the shop. They didn't have to stand in a queue, received remuneration from the Soviets, and weren't required to work.

The mortality rate – 30 percent, including a lot of people between 16 and 25 years of age.

On 3 July 1941, I was arrested by the NKVD in the hamlet. I was accused of having been a member of an organization while in Poland, and of being an enemy of the Soviet Union.

At the time, two of my cousins were arrested too. I left my mother, 56 years of age. Following the amnesty I was released. But there are a lot of people who are still missing. Life in the winter of 1942 was very hard. Some people were driven to the point of eating dogs. Many died because of the lack of heating fuel. When people went to the kolkhoz to bring something to eat, the NKVD took the food away from them and gave it to their informers.

After the outbreak of the war between Germany and the Soviet Union, people were forced to take loans to build houses and to purchase cows. In this way they tried to secure signatures to the list they had previously drawn up, but nobody agreed to sign it.

The fate of other Poles is lamentable and the Soviets say aloud that Poland is going to exist – if at all – only as a Soviet republic.