

MARIA OSKIERKA

Senior sergeant Maria Oskierka. I am 18, I was deported along with my family on 13 April 1940 as a student, because my father had been arrested. We were deported to non-confined exile in Siberia, in the rural settlement Dubrownoje II, Siewierokazachstanskaja Oblast, for forced labor in the kolkhozes.

We had to take care of the place we were supposed to live in by ourselves. We lived in a clay shed. There were mostly Poles in the kolkhozes. The number of people taken to the rural settlement was 102 overall. In the kolkhoz, we were working in the fields. The work was hard, and the pay was really low.

I was in the kolkhoz till 8 July 1941. On that day they took me to work at building the railway track from Akmolinsk to Kartaly, at the Jacksy station. There were more than a thousand Poles sentenced for many categories of crimes and with different nationalities. The intellectual and moral standing was average.

As regards the daily routine, we used to get up at 7 AM to go to work. We were working till dinnertime at noon. After 1 PM we went to work again, which ended at 7 PM. We often had to work at night. The quotas were above what we could do, no one could meet them. The remuneration for work was minimal. We had to take care of what we had to eat because there was nothing apart from bread in the shops, and there was often a shortage of bread. We used to buy other food products in other kolkhozes in exchange for our personal belongings. They didn't give us any clothes. After work, Poles from the nearby barracks gathered in one of them and kept themselves amused by reading books out loud or recalling the good old days.

The NKVD's attitude towards Polish people was very hostile. The communist propaganda was based on brainwashing our youth and children and infecting them with the spirit of Communism. We had very little information about Poland.

Medical assistance was very limited. They took only those who were gravely ill to the hospital. The mortality rate wasn't high in general.

Before the outbreak of the German-Russian war, we kept in written communication with the country and with family. The letters were censored, but we could figure out something from the ambiguous words.