

STANISŁAW NOWACKI

Stanisław Nowacki, gunner, aged 27, student of the AGH University of Science and Technology in Kraków, married.

On 13 April 1940, the day after my father-in-law Cavalry Major Józef Weiss Weissenfeld was arrested, his wife and two daughters were displaced from Lwów. Probably as a result of an omission, I wasn't on the list of exiles, and joined the transport only upon my request.

We were settled in Kazakhstan, Semipalatinsk Oblast, Zharmas Raion, in the Stalin kolkhoz (*Kazakhstanskaya SSR, Semipalatinskaya oblast, Zharmaskiy raion, k-3*).

This was a poor, Kazakh kolkhoz, which permanently experienced crop failures and the resulting hunger. It consisted of several dozen mud huts. The notoriously empty granary was turned into a free accommodation for 20 people. The rest (approx. 30 people) lived in rented rooms, so the housing conditions were tolerable, given the circumstances.

The Polish colony was made up of families of arrested officers, judges, non-commissioned officers and policemen. Everybody was considered able to work physically, irrespective of their age or health condition. As a consequence, we were harassed and threatened to be deprived of the free accommodation. The head of the kolkhoz would typically say that there was enough water for the old and the sick in the river.

We were given the same work as the kolkhoz workers, providing the mythical *trudodni*. However, the earnings we received for our work involved very meager food from a common cauldron, and in addition the Kazakhs cheated on the provided food rations. Selling our clothes, watches, etc. is what saved us from starving. Our authorities did not allow us to be transferred from the kolkhoz to workshops or mines.

In autumn, as a result of another crop failure, the NKVD authorities ordered the resettlement of Poles from the Kazakh to Russian kolkhozes, where the living conditions were much more tolerable, i.e. you could earn about a kilogram of flour a day.

In addition to issuing identification cards valid only in a given region and the said resettlement, the local authorities showed no interest in us. In the vicinity, there were only

a few cases of arrest caused by expressing one's views and inefficient attempts to escape to Lwów.

There was no clear communist propaganda or organized denigrating of Poland.

The occasionally arriving agitators referred most often to numerous articles by Wanda Wasilewska. We were even shown a film by the same author, presenting the life in Poland just before the war and at the moment of Bolsheviks marching in.

Schools in the kolkhozes were non-existent. Only in the district residential estate or mine settlements, parents voluntarily sent their children to school.

Medical assistance was satisfactory and even good once a Polish doctor and a dentist were employed in the local outpatient clinic. From among our colony, only old people died, i.e.:

- in 1940 Mrs. Zakrzewska, wife of a policeman from Lwów; Józef Skwerczyński from Lwów (his son, a cavalry lieutenant, was in Starobelsk);
- in 1941 Mrs. Malwina Cieńska and Szczesny Cieński.

Throughout our stay in the kolkhoz, we communicated with Lwów, from where we received letters, money and food. These were often parcels from unknown people, sent via the parish. Until the outbreak of the German-Russian War, I received letters and packages from Kraków.

The so-called amnesty was announced around 15 August 1941, and we were provided with temporary certificates to confirm that we were Polish citizens. The certificates authorized us to travel freely across Russia. These situations coincided with mass conscription of Russians to the army, so the kolkhoz lacked workers. This resulted in the authorities treating us more politely and trying to persuade us to stay. Despite that, mass but unorganized departures began – mainly to the south. At the same time, the liberated prisoners were walking around the district residential estate to look for their families.

In late autumn, mixed conscription committees commenced operation. In the first place and in accordance with the instructions received, the army was joined by people who were not the sole income providers. In winter, I worked as a geologist in a mine and in March 1942 I was drafted into the army. I was enlisted in an Organizational Center in Guzar on 20 April 1942 and assigned to artillery.

As far as I know from the letter written down in September 1942, a dozen women with children (from the old colony) stayed in the kolkhoz. Apart from them, in the summer of 1942, approx. 40 Polish colonists from the vicinity of Buchach were settled there.

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