

Felicja Polkowski - Recordings made by the Imperial War Museum London.

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Object description

Polish civilian teacher in Baranowicz, Poland, 9/1939-4/1940; deportation from Poland to Soviet Union, 4/1940-4/1943; inmate in Ashkhabad Prison, Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic, Soviet Union, 4/1943; escaped from Soviet Union to Iran, 1943

Content description

REEL 1 Background in Włodawa, Congress Poland, Imperial Russian Empire and Poland, 1907-1939: family; conditions during First World War in Imperial Russia; education in Poland, 1919; flight of refugees from advancing Bolsheviks, 1920; teacher training in Poland during 1920. Recollections of period as civilian teacher in Baranowicze, Poland, 1939-1940: entry of Soviet Army in Baronowicze, 17/9/1939; attitude of local Byelorussians to arrival of Soviet Army; impressions of Soviet Army troops, 9/1939; emptying of shops of goods in Baronowicze after 17/9/1940; Soviet requisitioning of family home. REEL 2 Continues: arrest and sentencing of her husband by Soviet authorities; food and clothing taken to prison for her husband, late 1939; selling possessions, winter 1939-1940; teaching in Baronowicz, 2/1940-3/1940; deportations of 'rich' Poles, 2/1940. Aspects of deportation from Baronowicze, Poland to Soviet Union, 4/1941: night raid by Soviet Army and militia, 10/4/1940; start of train journey eastwards; provision of boiled water and other rations for deportees; crossing Ural Mountains; impressions gained of conditions in Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, 4/1940; suicide of Polish officer's wife under train. Recollections of period as deportee in Soviet Union, 1940-1942: arrival in Petropavlovsk area in Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic; allocation to work on collective farm. REEL 3 Continues: arrival at the Meat and Milk Collective Farm; description of collective farm buildings and their functions; inconvenience of cooking arrangements for families; attempt to obtain teaching job; accommodation in former cow shed and infestation of lice; start of work hand weeding wheat field; drinking water from pond in field; how mother received permission to live with her on collective farm; bed bug infestation; son's suffering from diarrhoea; arrival of food parcels from Poland, 1940. REEL 4 Continues: attempt to obtain doctors' certificate for septic hand; start of work milking cows and how this effected her hands and arms; re-allocation to sorting grain/seeds; privileges of milk maid; construction of house; presence of Iranians and Armenians on collective farm and their jobs; preparing fuel for winter, 1940-1941; state control of information about outside world getting into collective farm; receiving news of German attack on Soviet Union and amnesty for Polish deportees, 6/1941; how husband was sent to pick cotton on collective farm in Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic; struggle husband had to return to her and physical condition he was in on arrival. REEL 5 Continues:

husband's job delivering grain and meat quotas on collective farm; pilfering of state grain quota and how it spoiled grain in store; receiving permission to leave collective farm, 7/1942; preparations to leave collective farm. Recollections of journey from Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic to Ashkhabad, Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic, 1942-1943: incident of Kazakhs arrested for stealing wood and lighting fire in field; bribing of militia to leave Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic, 8/1942; nature of goods for sale in market; encounter with Finnish soldier on train who became protector of her family; arrival at Tashkent; Polish stowaway on train to Tashkent. REEL 6 Continues: circumventing bureaucracy at Tashkent Railway Station; arrival at Yangi-Yul and attempt of gang of youths to rob her; discovery that last Polish forces had left Yangi-Yul; failure to obtain aid from Jewish orphanage at Yangi-Yul; fighting amongst crowds to get on trains at Yangi-Yul; fight with thief on train at Yangi-Yul; obtaining help from Russian woman to get on train for Ashkhabad; making contact with Polish forces at Ashkhabad; disposal of last roubles to friend left at collective farm; impatience to cross border into Iran; liquidation of camp at Ashkhabad and threat of total destitution; employment as teacher of Polish children in Ashkhabad orphanage, 9/1942; refusal of authorities to let her mother leave Soviet Union. REEL 7 Continues: conditions in orphanage, winter 1942-1943; demand of People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD) that she take a Soviet passport. Aspects of period as inmate in Ashkhabad Prison, Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic, Soviet Union, 1943: imprisonment by People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD), 4/1943; conditions in prison; relations between prisoners; her varying morale in prison; personal searches in prison. REEL 8 Continues: trial for charges of living in Ashkhabad without passport and sentence received; how she was freed from prison. Aspects of journey from Ashkhabad, Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic, Soviet Union to Iran, 1943: threat to orphanage from robber gangs; arrest of staff at Polish orphanage; journey from Ashkhabad to Iranian border; confiscation of her Polish rings and Soviet gold at border; crossing border; prior recollection of referendum in Baronowicze to annex eastern Poland into Soviet territory; arrival of her family in Mashhad, Iran; story of how her mother was released from Ashkhabad Prison and made her way back to Poland.