

Marian Macko (1929-)



Palestine, 1946.

On the 1st of September 1939, when Germany attacked Poland and the Second World War broke out, I was nine years old. We lived in North-Eastern Poland in the County of Wilno, which is now part of Belarus. Our family was made up of: our parents Józef and Bronisława, my sister Marysia (eighteen), my brother Romuald (sixteen) myself, Marian (nine), and my sister Lucyna (five). We had a farm with around sixteen hectares of land. As Poland was resisting and fighting courageously against the overwhelming German army, on the 17th of September the Soviet Union (Russia) invaded Poland from the East. By the end of September, Germany and the Soviet Union had defeated and partitioned Poland. The Soviet Union took over the part of Poland where we lived. Hard and cruel times were ahead, as shortly the Russians started deporting Poles to Siberia. Firstly, they deported army personnel (and their whole families), the police, and the intelligentsia. From the 10th of February to the 20th of June 1941, there were four waves of deportation to Siberia. Over one million Polish citizens were deported. The Russians deported us on the 20th of June 1941. This was the last wave of deportation, as on the 22nd of June 1941 Germany attacked the Soviet Union. On the 20th of June, at around four o'clock in the morning, while our family was sleeping, a loud knocking on the door awakened us. On opening the door, the NKVD (later the KGB) entered and went through the house. They gave us half an hour to gather up clothes and some food. They loaded us onto a lorry which had come to the house and took us to the railway station. Waiting for us at the station was a cattle train. We were loaded into the carriage which was then bolted. We must have waited around half a day by the time

everyone had been gathered for deportation. Before the train moved off, an NKVD official came to our carriage and called out my father's name and then took him away. A moment later, the train started. The people in the carriages started singing "Z Tej Biednej Ziemi" "From This Poor Land" (a Polish religious hymn). Soon we passed the pre-war Polish border and were on Russian land. We were going deep into Russia without our father and without any idea of his fate.

More paragraphs in the book...

I arrived in England with the Polish army in September 1947. In October, I was demobbed and became a civilian and tried to settle here. I applied to work as a miner and underwent training in Wales arriving in Rotherham in December 1947. I settled at the Miners' Hostel, Herringthorpe Valley Road and for a few years found work in the mines around Rotherham. My first wage was £2.17.6d (in old currency). Later on, I had a number of other jobs. However, my main one was in the London and Scandinavian Metallurgical Company on Fullerton Road, Ickles where I worked for 34 years taking early retirement in 1989. In 1960, after twenty years, I was finally able to visit Poland to meet my father and sister Marysia. In 1991, after fifty years, the opportunity arose of visiting my original family area from where the Russians had deported us to Siberia. At present it is in Belarus. Finally, in 2003, I moved to Tinsley but still feel tied to Rotherham, which is still my hometown!

This account was put together in collaboration with Marian Macko.



Army Cadets, Palestine 1944 - I am on the left. My friend, Felix Kowal on the right, ended up in Nottingham.



Orphanage photo, I am in the second row, second on the left Masindi, Uganda, East Africa, 1942.



Class photo, I am in the second row, first on the left. Second from the left on the back row is Karolina Perkowska (later Grabowska), who would also find her way to Rotherham. Masindi, Uganda in East Africa, 1943.



My return, after 50 years, to the point from which I had been deported, Hierviaty, now in Belarus, 1991.



My house on Regent Street, Kimberworth, Rotherham and home from 1980 to 2003.