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POVERTY. EVERYDAY LIFE OF WOMEN AND FAMILY VALUES IN CONDITIONS OF DEPORTATION: POLISH MOTHERS IN KAZAKHSTAN (1930S AND 1940S)

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Abstract: The misguided policy of the Soviet authorities forcibly deported more than 60 ethnic groups in the 1930s–1950s to Siberia, Central Asia, and Kazakhstan, regions that were geographically and ethnically completely different from their historical homelands. One of the nations that had suffered such a tragic fate and had been deported to Kazakhstan were the Poles, who are the subject of this research.

The deportation process carried out in the Soviet Union changed the peaceful life of the Poles who were exiled against their will. They were forcibly removed from their ancestral homeland, deprived of the property they had accumulated throughout their lives, and forced to adapt to the new conditions of the places of exile. Many of the deported Poles were women, elderly people, and children. Since the 1990s, deportations in the Soviet Union have attracted considerable attention from both domestic and international scholars, resulting in extensive research on deported ethnic groups and Soviet repressive policies. However, despite this substantial literature, the gender dimension of deportation remains largely unexplored and has not been systematically examined in domestic historiography by either historians or sociologists.

The main purpose of this article is to examine the history of deportation and family values under deportation via focusing on Polish mothers in Kazakhstan within the period of 1930s–1940s through the lens of everyday life history. The study is based on the memoirs and recollections of deported women and their descendants, recorded over different years. The materials were collected through the interviews conducted within research projects by domestic scholars, as well as from sources published within internet. During preparation of this article, various general scientific methods have been applied, including historical methods (the comparative-historical method in studying and analyzing the recollections of deported women, macro and micro-historical approaches, etc.), empirical research methods, theoretical cognition methods, and general logical methods and techniques of research. The application of analysis and synthesis methods makes it possible to examine and characterize the everyday life of deported women.

The scientific novelty of the article lies in the theoretical analysis of excerpts from the recollections of Polish women, mothers who managed to preserve family values in deportation. The article examines the events of forced resettlement, as well as the processes of adaptation and survival in an unfamiliar environment. As a result: first, the concept of the “mother’s role in the family” is revealed; second, the importance of maternal upbringing in shaping the child’s personality is clarified; and third, the role of the mother as the keeper of the family hearth and bearer of the family’s sociocultural values is demonstrated.

Keywords: Poles; deportation; repressed nations; totalitarian system; family; mothers

INTRODUCTION

As a result of political repressions and deportations, a significant number of nations were forcibly resettled and placed in the Kazakh steppes in the mid-1930s and the following years.

Until the late 1980s, forced migrations remained one of the strictly taboo subjects in the USSR: any information about deportations and the deported nations was excluded from both academic and public discourse.

The article consists of three chapters:

1. The Forced Resettlement of Poles to Kazakhstan in the 1930s–1950s;
2. Deportation in the Memories;
3. Narratives of Displacement and Poverty of Polish Mothers in Kazakhstan.

The first chapter addresses the issues of number and geographical distribution of Poles deported to Kazakhstan, as well as Soviet policy toward them. The second chapter presents excerpts from the recollections

of Polish women, mothers who managed to preserve family values in the harsh conditions of deportation. The materials drawn from women's recollections not only illustrate the processes of forced resettlement but also allow these events to be seen through a mother's eyes. The third chapter contains an analysis of narratives concerning the displacement and poverty of Polish mothers in Kazakhstan in the context of changing social roles in situations of systemic violence.

The article aims to examine the everyday life of women deported to the territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan and its specific regions, particularly Southern Kazakhstan during the 1930s–1940s. Special attention is paid to the role of mothers who, despite severe hardship, managed to preserve the unity and integrity of their families, overcoming difficulties for the sake of their children's future. The research is based on the academic works, memoirs, recollections, and testimonies of the descendants of the deported people.

The collected material will be analysed in terms of trauma and the impact of psychological and physical poverty on the role of women in the deportation process. The collected material allows for an analysis of the social aspect and transformations of the role of the mother in families subjected to the violence of resettlement under the communist regime. The experience and strategies for survival in the face of hunger and psychological violence are universal and relate to the fundamental values of the struggle to preserve dignity and basic human rights. Trauma as a result of poverty in the physical and symbolic sense is a trace of the individual's collision with destructive factors of exceptional impact, including at the state level—as a result of the breakdown of legal structures and protection; at the local level—as a result of the destruction of neighbourly ties and well-being; at the individual level—as a result of depression, mental illness or critical moments in one's life caused by physical and psychological violence. At each level, from a feminist perspective, it is necessary to revise the act of aggression and appropriation in the face of patriarchal power.

The fundamental research questions are: how did deportation, as a traumatogenic social change, influence the transformation of the role of the mother in the Polish community in Kazakhstan in the 1930s and 1940s, and in what aspect of motherhood as a social role in everyday practice did mental and physical poverty play a dominant role?

Degree of Research of the Issue

The first studies on this topic appeared in the West. In 1960, R. Conquest's book was published in the United States, containing a chronology and statistics of the deportations of nations (Conquest, 1960). In the late 1970s, A. Nekrich was the first to examine ethnic deportations in the USSR as a coherent scientific problem (Nekrich, 1978).

Beginning in the 1990s, scholarly works started to appear that addressed the history of ethnic nations subjected to deportation. Amongst the key studies on the deportation of nations in the USSR is V.N. Zemskov's work *Special Settlers in the USSR (1930–1960s)*, which defines the scope of the Soviet policy of special resettlement conducted from the 1920s to the 1950s and, for the first time, provides commentary on the documents that had been under special state protection (Zemskov, 2003).

In his work *On the Issue of the Deportation of Nations of the USSR in the 1930s–40s* N.F. Bugai (1989) was one of the first to introduce archival documents into academic circulation, providing data on the relocation of deported ethnic groups from their historical homelands to Kazakhstan, describing their hardships, as well as the living and legal conditions of their adaptation in an alien environment. In A. Kijas's study *Polacy w Kazachstanie* [Poles in Kazakhstan], extensive information is presented on the history of Poles resettled in Kazakhstan (Kijas, 1993). The work by S. Ciesielski and A. Kuczyński *Poles in Kazakhstan: History and Modernity* examines the geography of Polish settlement, their population size, and issues of re-emigration (Ciesielski and Kuczyński, 1996).

Amongst Kazakhstan's scholars, one of the first to address the issue of the deportation of ethnic groups and number of population deported to Kazakhstan was the academician M.K. Kozybaev, 2000: 135). In the historiography of Kazakhstan, the concept of "camp economy" and use of prison labor are examined in the work of Zh. Abylkhozhin (1997: 360). The deportation of nations as a crime of the totalitarian regime was analyzed by K. Aldazhumanov (1998). The studies of M. Kozybaev and Zh. Abylkhozhin formed the theoretical and methodological foundation for the study of the history of mass repressions.

The collective work published in 1998 by a group of domestic scholars became one of the fundamental works in Kazakhstan's historiography about the crimes of totalitarianism and the deportation of nations in the 1930s–1940s (Anes, 1998).

In 2000, a collection of documents *From the History of Poles in Kazakhstan (1936–1956)* (Degitaeva, 2000) was published, presenting primarily the legislative framework of exile and deportation, as well as a documentary chronicle of the mass resettlement. In N.V. Stepanenko's monograph devoted to the history of the Polish diaspora, the author examines the formation of the Polish diaspora in Kazakhstan based on an extensive analysis of archival materials (Stepanenko, 2020).

Amongst the works that served as the foundation for this study are the collection of memoirs and interviews *The Socio-Cultural Uniqueness of the Life of Ashysai and Kentau Residents* (Koigeldiyev, 2019), prepared by the Oral History Center of Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University; *From the History of Deportation to Kazakhstan (1939–1945)* (Abdukadyrova, 2019), edited by the team of the Archive of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan; and *Polish Special Settlers in the North Kazakhstan Region (1936–1955)* (Grivenna and Chinishlov, 2022), all of which study the fragments of memoirs of deported Polish citizens. Also used were the memoirs of Wanda Isanskaya (2019) and Valentina Koziol (2022), the interview collection *Memory for the Sake of the Future* (Rakysheva, 2013), articles by B. Zagursky (2011) and N. Kubik (2023), and personal recollections published online.

The necessity to reflect all aspects of deportation not only through archival and narrative sources but also through oral histories and personal memories underscores the relevance of the issue addressed in this article. Analyzing memoirs, recollections, and interviews allows for identifying certain patterns in how mothers perceived the deportation processes and for reconstructing a specifically maternal perspective on deportation as a distinct aspect of these tragic historical events.

In addition, archival materials from the Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan (CSA RK) and the Archive of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan (AP RK) have been introduced into academic circulation.

Research Methods

In preparing this article, historical methods (comparative-historical method in researching and analysing the memoirs of deported women, macro- and microhistorical approaches, etc.), empirical research methods, theoretical cognitive methods, and general logical research methods and techniques were used. The use of analysis and synthesis methods makes it possible to examine and characterise the everyday lives of deported women.

The methodological basis of the article is Alf Lüdtke's concept, which emphasises the study of the microhistory of individual ordinary people or groups of people, the study of everyday life, and the desire to understand history as a multi-layered process that is recreated and, above all, transformed by those who are both the subjects and objects of history (Lüdtke, 1999: 117–126). This leading German historian emphasised the important role of research into memorialisation as a form of coping with war and genocide in the modern era. Memoirs allow for the creation of a history of everyday life that pays particular attention to microhistorical phenomena and processes, the history of small societies and historical collectives, as well as family and biographical history. Its aim is to ensure that "ordinary people find their own voice and face in history". These "voices and faces" are also revealed in fragments of the memoirs of deported women, whereby we are interested in the aspect of studying the historical experience of individuals, rather than the thought constructs they express. We draw on a broad tradition of research projects using the historical testimony of witnesses to history (memoirs, accounts, individual interviews), which have developed in the field of European and American research since the 1960s, and, importantly for us, also in scientific reflection on the study of the Holocaust, relations with Nazism, the trauma of genocide and forced labour (e.g. Hartman, 1994; Linenthal, 2001) and in the theoretical approach to the concept of subjectivity in terms of being a witness to historical processes (Głowacka, 2003).

Relevance of the Study

In recent years, research has increasingly focused on reassessing the unlawful nature of Soviet policies related to the forced resettlement of nations from their ancestral territories within the USSR. However, the gender dimension of deportation processes has not yet received sufficient scholarly attention and has rarely been the subject of specialized studies. Therefore, this topic represents a relevant and promising direction for further academic inquiry. The study of the history of ethnic nations unjustly deported to Kazakhstan, as well as the exploration of the role of women, in particular mothers, in maintaining family cohesion and human dignity, constitutes an important scholarly task and holds substantial research significance.

The study of poverty trauma is original and unique. We assume that poverty was transmitted across generations and that the status of "ene-

my of the nation” resulted in social and systemic exclusion for subsequent generations. Stigmatisation did not only affect women. However, the limitations associated with social barriers, such as the type of work performed, the need for excessive physical effort or being subjected to sexual violence, were a deeply painful experience of existential crisis for mothers. The narratives are dominated by the theme of heroisation of the female protagonists of family stories, emphasising their superhuman strength in the face of the violence of the regime, expressed both systemically and in interpersonal relationships. Research into the intergenerational consequences of trauma began with reflections on the experiences of Holocaust survivors, which showed that traumatic experiences have serious consequences not only for those directly exposed to them, but also for their offspring. An analysis of the intergenerational transmission of intra-family and systemic violence in the narratives of mothers deported to Kazakhstan confirms these assumptions. The consequences of transgenerational poverty were: memory erasure, regression, transformation of social functions, a dominant perspective of economic crisis, including the experience of hunger, stigmatisation and the transmission of “sub-citizen” status.

We follow research conducted by Ewa Jackowska (2004) on the trauma experienced by Poles deported to Siberia. The researchers showed that the complex, multi-level system of stressors commonly affecting deportees degraded the nervous system, physical condition and psychological mechanisms. However, Ewa Jackowska’s research conducted on a group of 100 Siberian deportees confirmed the positive role of mental resources in the process of adapting to extremely harsh living conditions, and the mechanisms protecting the subjects from the destructive effects of stressors included, among others, emotional bonds with their parents. The role of the mother is therefore particularly important in strengthening the sense of community, cooperation and hope for survival, and actively pursuing one’s own concept of existence is the best way to adapt.

Research Results

1. The deported nations were deprived of housing and property accumulated over a lifetime and were resettled in regions with unfamiliar climatic conditions. Many of them had died from famine and severe winter frosts.
2. Before and during the Second World War, the majority of Poles deported to Kazakhstan had been women.

3. The gender aspects of deportation processes in the national historiography have not yet become the subject of special scholarly research. Within this topic, a number of issues still require deeper research.
4. Polish women deported to Kazakhstan, including to the South Kazakhstan region, went through severe trials. They were considered “politically unreliable,” were under constant state control, and were subjected to various forms of political and legal pressure.
5. The cruel policy of the totalitarian regime is revealed through the analysis of the everyday life and social status of women deported to Kazakhstan in several waves. The research is based on scholarly works, memoirs, recollections, and archival materials.

MAIN SECTION

The Stalinist regime applied various measures of coercion for political reasons: imprisonment, eviction from places of residence, exile, forced settlement, compulsory labor under restricted freedom, deprivation and limitation of rights and freedoms, and the designation of ethnic nations as “dangerous” to the state based on their ethnicity. Deportations, or forced migrations, are a form of political repression with specific characteristics. First, they are administrative, i.e., extrajudicial, in nature. Second, they are contingent: they target not an individual person but an entire group of people, often a very large group, meeting criteria set from above. The third characteristic is their clear intention to uproot masses of people from their established and familiar environment and place them in a new, unfamiliar, and, as a rule, risky environment for their survival (Polyan, 2001: 27).

One of the largest national groups among the victims of political repression in the USSR were the Poles, as well as Polish citizens of other nationalities living within the territory of the Polish Republic. The deportations of Poles to Kazakhstan, the harsh climatic and living conditions at the new location, the “unceasing” surveillance of the Polish “contingent” by the NKVD and special commandants’ offices, as a “socially dangerous element” of society, and the repressive policies of the

Soviet state towards them created a heavy moral-psychological atmosphere in society and left an indelible mark in the memory of those who experienced the “breath of death”.

During World War II, the situation of Polish citizens deported was much more difficult than for their compatriots deported in 1936. In 1936, those to be deported were given 3 to 6 days to gather and were often allowed to take necessary belongings and livestock, whereas the Poles deported from Poland had not been given such an opportunity.

The tragic events of the deportation of ethnic nations raise the issue of survival strategies of ethnic groups that were forcibly uprooted from its historical homeland, removed from its familiar socio-cultural environment, and thrown into an existential, borderline situation faced with the threat of both physical extinction and the loss of its ethno-cultural roots and characteristics. As a result of deportation, not only the material aspects of existence were endangered but also the existential and semantic ones, which are deeply connected with the identity of the given ethnic group. One of the most pressing problems for the deported peoples during the Soviet period was the preservation of their ethnic identity as well as the integrity of their families.

The deportation processes became a trauma for the deported, both as a psychological and emotional wound. In the case of the deported nations, the trauma was repressed, as people in the Soviet era did not have the opportunity to process trauma through open verbal discussion or other symbolic resources. However, trauma can only be overcome when “memory returns” (Alexander, 2013: 265), when people revisit this initial traumatic event, not in reality, but symbolically, in memories, memoirs, essays, interviews, etc.

Women’s memoirs reveal recurring patterns that reflect the language of trauma. The first concerns the announcement of deportation and the extremely limited time allowed for preparation, often expressed in phrases such as “they announced the resettlement” or “we were given one day to pack.” The second highlights the inhuman conditions of transportation, where women were placed in “cattle cars” and endured unbearable circumstances. The third pattern relates to maternal narratives describing adaptation and survival in Kazakhstan, as mothers sought to preserve their families despite repression and displacement.

I. Forced Resettlement of Poles in Kazakhstan in the 1930s–1950s

By the end of the 1930s, one of the main tasks facing the local executive government was the organization of special settlers through the system of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs. This action was based on the resolution under the title of "On the relocation of 15,000 Polish and German households from Ukraine to the Karaganda region of Kazakhstan and their settlement in agricultural areas". The legal basis for this unlawful action of deporting an entire nation, the Poles, was the Soviet Council of People's Commissars' decree No. 776–120 from April 28, 1936, "On the relocation of Polish nationals from the Ukrainian SSR" (SA SPH T, F4, I1, C121: 8).

As indicated in the archival materials, we can see that the policy of population persecution began to take on a mass character. The deportation of the Poles was seen by the Soviet state as a preventive measure to cleanse the border areas of "unreliable nations". In terms of their legal status, they were equated with the group of "former kulaks". In addition to the Poles, during this period, German families were also deported from the Baltic republics, Western Ukraine, and Western Belarus (Zemskov, 2003: 205). They were settled in the Alma-Ata region (3,000), the East Kazakhstan region (2,000), the Karaganda region (3,000), the Aktobe region (100), and 5,500 households in the South Kazakhstan region (State Historical-Regional Archive of Kazakhstan, 8 pages). As a result, the Polish national autonomous district named after Yu. Marhlievsky was liquidated in Ukraine. Polish schools and cultural and educational institutions were dissolved (Kijas, 1993: 34). For the settlement of the arriving Poles, 13 settlement points (villages) were organized: No. 1 Kalinovka, No. 2 Donetsk, No. 3 Beloyarka, No. 4 Podolsk, No. 5 Krasnaya Polyana, No. 6 Vishnevka, No. 7 Konstantinovka, No. 8 Krasnokievka, No. 9 Novo-Berezovka, No. 10 Novo-Grechankovka, No. 11 Zeleny Gai, No. 12 Chkalovo, No. 13 Petrovka (AP RK, Archive of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 167 pages). In total, 37 settlements were organized, 31 of them in the North Kazakhstan region and 6 in the Karaganda region. The majority of the deported Poles were placed in the current North Kazakhstan and Akmolinsk regions (AP RK, F141, I1, C12263).

On September 1, 1939, Germany attacked Polish territory, starting World War II. On September 17, 1939, the Red Army crossed the border of Eastern Poland. In these regions, the process of reorganization of the

state structure began (Dybowska, Zaryn and Zaryn, 1994: 270–271). The next wave of deportations of Poles took place in 1940–1941, after the division of Poland between the Soviet Union and Germany, by the decree of April 10, 1940. A new category of special settlers was referred to in the document as “Polish settlers and refugees”. The settlers were individuals from Poland who had been given land in Western Ukraine and Western Belarus during the 1920s–1930s. When these territories were seized by Soviet forces in 1939, the resettlement of the “Polish settlers” began. The settlers in Poland performed certain political functions regarding the local population, and therefore, in the USSR, they were declared “the worst enemies of the working people” and deported as entire families deep into the USSR. Between 1939 and 1941, the “Polish migration” became one of the largest migrations in the history of migration (Amirbekov and Mamyrbekov, 2015: 83). The resettlement of the Poles was a one-day operation in which they were moved quickly, without the opportunity to look back, within a single day. The journey of one echelon took 3–4 weeks. During this period, there are different opinions among scholars regarding the number of Poles resettled to Kazakhstan. Scholars such as A.Sh. Altaev, G.K. Kokebayeva, and B.O. Zhangutin, based on the analysis of documents from the archives of Russia and Kazakhstan, report that 60,678 Poles were resettled during this period (Kokebayeva and Smanova, 2012: 50). According to archival documents, the total number of Polish citizens in Kazakhstan in 1941 was 61,092 people, the majority of whom were settled in rural areas in sovkhoses and kolkhozes (CSA RK, FR-1137, I18s, C33: 1–4). On July 30, 1941, an agreement was signed to restore diplomatic relations between the two countries, which included measures to create a Polish army on Soviet territory.

The USSR and Poland committed to assisting each other in the fight against fascist Germany. The agreement was accompanied by a protocol regarding the situation of Polish citizens in the USSR, according to which the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR from August 12, 1941, on the amnesty of Polish citizens was adopted. The Resolution of the USSR Council of People’s Commissars and the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of the same date outlined the regulations for the residence of Polish citizens in the USSR. After their release (from prisons, labor camps, special settlements, exile) and obtaining temporary identification documents, they had to register at the Polish embassy and receive passports, and then residence permits for foreigners (Degitaeva, 2000: 7).

At the beginning of 1942, the number of Polish citizens in the Kazakh SSR was 103,757 people (CSA RK, FR-1146, I1, C287: 9). According to archival data, Poles were settled in the republic's regions as follows: South Kazakhstan region—25,998 people; Zhambyl region—22,051 people; North Kazakhstan region—12,362 people; Kostanay region—5,317 people; Pavlodar region—9,233 people; Semipalatinsk region—9,000 people; Aktobe region—5,646 people; East Kazakhstan region—454 people; Alma-Ata region—184 people; Kyzylorda region—1,000 people; Karaganda region—373 people; Guriyev region—187 people; West Kazakhstan region—159 people; Akmolinsk region—7,793 people; 4,000 people worked on the construction of the Akmolinsk-Kartaly railway (CSA RK, FR-1146, I1, C287: 9).

According to archival data, on July 6, 1945, a Soviet-Polish agreement was signed, according to which all former Polish citizens who had Polish citizenship before September 17, 1939, were granted the right to return to Poland. In accordance with the decree of the USSR Council of People's Commissars from November 29, 1945, No. 791-121, a commission was organized in the Kazakh SSR for the resettlement of former Polish citizens to their homeland. Starting in January 1946, the rapid pace of mass re-evacuation led to the fact that by the spring of 1946, the majority of Poles deported in 1940-1941 had left for their homeland. According to the final data, by June 1946, out of 55,177 Poles registered in 16 regions of Kazakhstan, 52,292 people were sent to Poland (CSA RK, FR-1137, I18, C139: 24). While far away from their homeland and subjected to brutal inhuman treatment by the Soviet authorities, Poles developed various strategies to cope with the hardship, deprivation, and ethnic oppression (Zhumatay et al., 2024: 435). Deported Poles were under the commandant's regime until 1956, meaning they were not allowed to leave their settlement and had to report to the commandant's office every two weeks. People dug earth huts and lived in them as entire families, trying to adapt to life in the harsh new conditions. In 1956, the special supervision over the Poles was lifted, and representatives of the Polish nation (Soviet Poles) were allowed to move freely within the USSR.

II. Deportation in Memories

The resettlements were forced and dehumanising. The traditionally understood role of the mother, based on emotional security, stability, psychological support and caregiving, was subject to a change in social norms.

The role of women as the sole breadwinners of the family was based on the work ethic, analogous to the myth in the communist system. Working beyond one's strength became a strategy for survival, but it did not eliminate poverty, which manifested itself in the systematic challenges of everyday life.

Memoirs of Maria Vyacheslavovna Vavrovskaya about her family:

My parents and relatives from the Podolsk region of Ukraine were deported to Northern Kazakhstan, to the village of Taincha, in September 1936. Before the deportation, we were given three days to prepare for the journey. We were told to go to Kazakhstan to develop new lands, and we were allowed to take a heifer, ten chickens, and some furniture. In 1936, after we moved, my father died. In 1937, on November 25, when my father was arrested, my mother was 42 years old. She was left alone with five children. I don't know how my mother managed to feed us while working two jobs. She saved us from hunger by planting beets and pickling entire barrels of beets, which she then stored in the basement. My father was shot on December 9, 1937, in the city of Petropavlovsk. I can say that my mother's efforts, so we would not die of hunger or have to beg, were immense. Many children... with small bags, stood and begged for alms (Rakysheva, 2013: 520). She was the pillar of our family, selflessly working from morning till night at two jobs, cooking, washing, and cleaning. My mother endured such difficult conditions and saved our lives. She cared for us when things were hard and protected us from everything. My mother passed away in 1968 at the age of 73. Of course, there were tough times, and I was very upset by my fate, how it turned out, how I lived. I didn't have a childhood or youth. I feel somewhat deprived in this life compared to the way things are now (Rakysheva, 2013: 524).

In Stanislav Stikovski's memoir:

On February 10, 1939, armed NKVD officers broke into the house of my parents and relatives in the Kovel district of Volyn, giving them only one hour to gather their belongings and then taking them to the railway station. There were barbed wire fences on the windows. The train car was very cold. On the opposite side, there was a mother with a small child, whose hands were blue from the cold. The mother was carefully wrapping him up. On March 1st, by evening, we arrived, and we were sent to the Nyanzi settlement in Arkhangelsk Oblast. There were several barracks in Nyanzi, and we were placed in them. My father and brother Peter worked in the forest as loggers, rolling logs to the riverbank. The Poles were not accustomed to such hard work. They had no warm clothing or shoes, lacked food, and they were often ill. My brother Petrous got sick, and he was unconscious with a temperature of 40 degrees. At the same time, a tree fell on my father in the forest, breaking his palm and rib in an accident. Only my mother worked. She had no warm shoes, so to avoid frostbite, she wrapped her shoes in wet rags, and when she went out into the cold, the rags froze after a few minutes, making her feel warmer. But when she returned from work, she would place her feet in the bread oven to warm them. Life was very hard for us then. Only my mother worked. In 1941, the German-Soviet war began, and the commandant, Lozhkin, called a meeting of the Poles and announced that we were free.

However, this was not the freedom we had dreamed of because we could not return to our homeland. We were allowed to go only south. [...] When we were being transported from Siberia by freight train, the train stopped at the Arys station for 2 hours. My mother went to get some food for us. But the train left after a few minutes, and I was very scared that I would never see my mother again. We were taken to the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic, to the Kyzylkanat collective farm in the Shymkent district. In January 1942, my father was drafted into the Anders Army, and my brother Peter was sent to the youth division. My mother stayed alone in the collective farm with three children. My mother worked in the collective farm, cleaning cotton and harvesting with a sickle. The salary was very low, and the reward was food for the labor days. But it was very hard to survive on this. There was an outbreak of typhus in the country, and in February, I fell ill with enteric fever. After that, my mother, and my siblings Joseph and Janina, also fell sick. There was a famine, so we went to the steppe to search for garlic, ate raw berries, and at times, we ate hedgehogs, turtles, and even dogs, roasting them over a fire. It was very difficult for my mother to support us alone, so in the fall of 1942, Nina and I were sent to an orphanage in Sholakkorgan. She was very worried about us, and in the spring of 1943, my mother and my sister Yuzefa came to the orphanage. My sister was admitted, and my mother found a job at a cotton point. When relations between the Soviet Union and the Polish government worsened, the Polish orphanage was closed, and we were transferred to a Russian orphanage, where most of the children were Polish. 1944 was a difficult year for our family. With food being scarce, we were given only a slice of bread and mush every day. On March 3, 1946, we returned to Poland. From this memoir, we can understand the role of the mother, who, despite enduring many hardships during the deportation, managed to keep the family together and safely bring her children back to their homeland (Koigeldiyev, 2019: 327–345).

Regardless of their skills and age, women were subject to the same destructive mechanisms of exclusion and systemic marginalisation. The children of “enemies of the nation” were subject to a strict regime of control, operating in distorted contexts of local relations. The kolkhoz system, based on traditional and backward methods of agricultural management in steppe conditions, posed excessive challenges for deported women: physical exhaustion, hard physical labour in conditions of hunger, lack of social security and living infrastructure, and lack of prospects for the future. Physical poverty forced young women to marry, which was seen as the only social mechanism offering a chance to change their lives. Breaking the stigma of being a deportee in Kazakh conditions was impossible using systemic tools.

In the memoir of Walentyna Koziol:

On April 13, 1940, from a place called Graevoda in Poland, my mother Apolina Przibyshevskaya (Rybishtat) and her family—my grandmother and her children: my mother Apolina (19 years old), Alfreda (14 years old), Zenobia (8 years old), Yanina (4 years old), and Vladislav—were all taken aboard a freight car and deported. My

mother's father had been sentenced a year earlier. After a three-week journey, many Polish citizens were settled in the Pavlodar region on a large area surrounded by a high fence. In the Kazakh steppes, mostly women with children and elderly people were sent, and they were forced to work a lot in collective farms, living in primitive conditions in such a harsh climate. At the age of 22, Apolina was left alone with her three younger sisters and brother. She buried her mother, who died of typhoid fever, and her youngest sister, who was 5 years old. She had to feed her sisters and brothers. She married Jan Lankov and gave birth to five children: Vladislav, Bronislav, Valentina, Tatiana, and Peter. Apolina always prayed for the return to Poland because she was afraid that when her daughters grew up, they too would become milkmaids. The milkmaids smelled terribly, their clothes and they themselves were soaked in the smell of cow manure. But that wasn't the worst part—they had crooked fingers and painful hands from milking so many cows (Kozioł, 2022: 23–24).

One winter evening, while returning on a sleigh from the dairy farm, where she transported cow's milk in metal containers to the collective farm every day, she noticed that the bull had become very restless and was running faster and faster. She turned around and saw a pack of wolves approaching them. At that moment, death was in front of her eyes. Left alone in the frozen steppe, she had no hope of surviving. She did not give up. For the sake of her children, she had to survive, and that gave her the courage to fight for her life. She struck the empty metal containers with a stick to scare off the pack of wolves, but they did not retreat. She thought she would rather burn than be torn apart and eaten alive by the wolves. She set fire to the hay that was left in the sleigh, and a large flame erupted. In front of her, she saw the road leading to the farm. The wolves slowed down and retreated, afraid of the fire. Her mother, barely alive but happy, returned home.

After the war, the repatriation of Poles from Kazakhstan began in mid-1946. She prepared the documents to leave for her homeland, Poland, for the bright future of her children. It wasn't easy because her husband was Russian. She ran around trying, and finally, just before the last attempt to repatriate, she received an official letter stating that her family was also granted "amnesty". In 1946, it was time to gather, travel to Pavlodar, and board the train, but it turned out that Vadik Itatush was missing. Mom and Bronik started looking for them. Dad had taken his sons on a boat and sailed to the Irtysh River to avoid being sent to Poland. He knew that his mother would not leave her sons in the bare steppe and would not go without them. The hope of returning to Poland seemed to collapse, but the following year, we returned to Poland," she writes in her memoir (Kozioł, 2022: 11–43).

In the following memoir, Helena Nalivko (born in 1923) from the Nadoltsy (volost) in the Tomaszów district of Lublin province, was deported to Siberia (special settlement in Yel, Lenin district, Arkhangelsk region) in 1940, and on November 30, 1941, together with her family, was relocated to the Kalinin collective farm in the modern-day South Kazakhstan region, Sozak district. Market mechanisms and money as a tool for socio-economic order were eliminated in the conditions of deportation. The economic system, including the kolkhoz system, was based on barter exchange, "work for product," thus destroying the social system and rela-

tionships. Healthcare, food security and social service infrastructure were unavailable to the deported population, which forced women to develop new mechanisms and strategies to protect their loved ones.

In February 1941, we worked in the collective farm's garden. For our work, we were paid daily with 100 grams of flour, from which my mother baked flatbreads. Besides this flour, we had no other food, and as a result, we got sick with chicken blindness (we couldn't see anything in the evening). Concerned about our condition, my mother went to a nurse working in the hospital in Sholakkorgan village for advice. The nurse advised her that the way to cure this disease was to cook a dog's liver for us. The nurse had dogs at home, slaughtered them, and ate them, so she gave my mother the liver of one of her dogs. My mother cooked the liver for us, and we ate a piece each. We were so hungry that we didn't even notice that it was the liver of a dog. The dog's liver helped, and we recovered from chicken blindness.

In 1942, typhoid fever broke out, and most of the deportees in the collective farm where we were living fell ill, many died. That year, my sister Yadz was sick for 10 days, had a high fever, and was unconscious. However, there were no medicines to treat her. Over time, she recovered, but she never returned to her former condition. When my sister felt better, my mother exchanged her gold watch for 4 kilograms of butter, eggs, and a small amount of money. The butter and eggs were given only to Yadz to help restore her health (Koigeldiyev, 2019: 199–202).

They lived in Southern Kazakhstan from 1942 to 1946.

In 1943, propaganda was carried out among the deported Poles encouraging them to obtain Soviet citizenship. In the police stations, each of the detainees was offered to accept Soviet citizenship, those who refused were arrested... Many people died from hunger, disease, and the hardships of life, while our family lived with the hope of returning to our homeland. One day, Kazya took a bowl of her food in her hand, looked at it, and then said to her mother: "Dearest Mama! How I wish that, before I die, I could eat my fill just once, even if only of this wild herb soup. If only once you could give me everything you've cooked for everyone." In response, her mother burst into tears and could not calm down for a long time. What should have been happening in a mother's heart? Thus, months and years passed. Our family returned to Poland in 1946, all together (Koigeldiyev, 2019: 216–226).

An important aspect was national identity and nostalgia for the lost homeland. It was also an important factor in the survival strategy, counterbalancing the consequences of living in psychophysical poverty. The system of administrative pressure increased resistance to aggressive socialisation, denationalisation and Russification. From the authorities' point of view, the focus was on the weakest groups, i.e. orphans and women. The forced separation of families, the breaking of interpersonal bonds, including family ties, the marginalisation of parental rights and

the destruction of the family were effective deportation mechanisms responsible for causing intergenerational trauma and violating the sense of personal security. The Polish language and entities with Polish social capital, such as the Red Cross and Anders' Army, played an important role in maintaining Polish identity.

In the following memoir, Kazimierz Adamovich Krupinsky (born in 1937) recalls that his family, from the village of Maryanovka, Lutsk district, Silno volost, Volyn region, was deported in 1940 to Siberia, to the special settlement of Nyanda, Leninsky district, Arkhangelsk region. In the autumn of 1941, they were transferred to Southern Kazakhstan, to the village of Kursai, later to the town of Chulakkurgan (South Kazakhstan region). They lived in a small kibitka; everyone worked in the kolkhoz, harvesting cotton and wheat. The family went through a difficult period, in 1942 my grandmother and my two-year-old brother died, and in the spring of 1943 my father passed away.

Kazimierz recalls:

After my father's death, my mother, to save my life and my brothers' lives, placed us in an orphanage in Chulakkurgan. I was 7 years old at the time. The moment of separation from us at the orphanage was one of the most tragic decisions of my mother's life. If she hadn't left us there, it would have inevitably led to our death from hunger. But being in a Russian orphanage meant a threat of Russification. It must be said that the Soviet officials who ran the orphanage were hostile to the Poles. None of us knew what would happen to us during our time in the orphanage. I remember how my mother, during the farewell, asked us to always remember our surname and Polish heritage. Now my mother was very far from us, hundreds of kilometers separated us. During the three years we were in the orphanage, she couldn't know much about us. She visited us only once. At that time, visits were often impossible due to the difficult living conditions. The mortality rate was very high. Children were suffering from various diseases, especially dysentery and tuberculosis, and hunger was rampant. All the children were starving, and the mortality rate was very high at that time. Later, we were moved to a new orphanage, established by the Polish Patriots Society in Sayram. The staff was Polish, and in the orphanage, the children and youth were taught in Polish. Our entire orphanage left for Poland on May 1, 1946. Today, when I myself have become a father, I understand the pain my mother must have felt at that time (Koigeldiyev, 2019: 353).

In the following memoir, A. Grib (grandson) writes:

On 10 February 1940, retired officer Ignacy Grib and his family (wife Zofia and five daughters: Veronika, Nina, Lida, Lena, Tanya) from the village of Sinkevichi on the eastern outskirts of Poland were deported to Siberia. In July 1941, the Soviet government decided to form military units of Poles. Ignacy enlisted in the army of General

Anders, and in December 1941, he and his family traveled to Central Asia. On the way to the city of Arys, Ignacy had to leave his eldest daughter, Veronika, who had contracted typhus, in the hospital. Zofia, with the four girls, arrived in the village of Chayan in the Baydibek district of the Chimkent region. Ignacy found his family after 3–4 days, but the next day he passed away. Zofia, with the children, was left alone, and it seemed like the end of the world, with only hunger and death ahead. The Kazakhs accepted the Polish family as their own: they shared bread with them, and the children began playing together. Zofia worked on the collective farm to feed the girls and give them the chance to study. She sent the children to an orphanage in the city of Turkestan, leaving only Nina with her. The mother's heart broke from the separation, but this was the only way.

In 1946, the long-awaited news came about the return of the deported Polish citizens. The Polish children from all the orphanages were being prepared for their journey back to Poland. Zofia and her daughter Nina were sent to the Szczecin region, returning home without knowing anything about the younger girls. Once in Poland, the mother searched for her children through the Red Cross. The family reunion took place much later in the city of Kwidzyn. Only the eldest daughter, Veronika, was missing, and all searches came to nothing. But the mother's heart told her that her daughter was alive. In Poland, Zofia tried to find Veronika through the Red Cross. But time was relentlessly passing, and with it, the hope of seeing her eldest daughter faded. Gradually, life returned to normal. Zofia's four daughters successfully married. Zofia lived and was buried in the city of Gdynia.

The miracle-surviving Veronika was sheltered by an Asian family, who provided her with forged documents, changing her place of birth, nationality, and birth year. She lived in fear of being exposed for a long time and did not speak Polish. In her final years, she understood that her parents were no longer alive, but she hoped that her four younger sisters were still alive. Until the last moment, she dreamed of meeting them. On April 25, 2012, she passed away at the age of 86. In 2017, Veronika's daughter, T. Iriskina, published her mother's memoirs online and found her mother's sisters. On August 26, 2017, Veronika's children met their aunts in the city of Nidzica. They had been waiting for this moment for 75 years. This small, fragile woman, Zofia, endured the horrors of repression, survived in Siberia, kept her children alive in Kazakhstan, returned to her historical homeland, and became the center of a large and united family (Abdukadyrova, 2019: 505–524).

Poverty and marginalisation in the local community resulted from the status of "enemy of the people/child of an enemy of the people" and from the stigma that existed within local structures. It should be remembered that in 1936, the term "enemy of the people" was used in the Constitution of the USSR, where, according to Article 131, an enemy of the people was defined as anyone who committed an attack on socialist social property, described in this provision as "sacred and inviolable." The consequence of the procedure of incorporating the occupied territory into the USSR was the need to regulate the citizenship status of the inhabitants of the annexed territories. On 29 November 1939, the USSR

authorities granted Soviet citizenship to the inhabitants of the occupied eastern territories of the Second Polish Republic. This was one of the elements of Sovietisation, aimed at destroying evidence of the existence of the Polish state. The forced granting of citizenship and conscription into the Red Army were long-term measures of terror. When, after the end of the war, the possibility of repatriation to Poland arose, it was necessary to prove Polish citizenship. Unfortunately, some families only had Soviet passports, which made the procedure of returning to their homeland difficult. It should be remembered that deportation made it much easier for the authorities to register the population.

The following memoir belongs to the family of Tadeusz Kulyk (born in 1930), who lived in Granatów, Trostyanets volost, Lutsk district, Volyn region. In 1940, they were deported to Siberia, to the special settlement of Nyanda, Lensky district, Arkhangelsk region. Later, they were sent to the Kazakh SSR—to the Stalin kolkhoz, Chulakkurgan, Suzak district, South Kazakhstan region, and then to Achisay, Turkestan district. The Kulyk family returned from the Kazakh SSR to Poland in 1946, though not in full composition (Koigeldiyev, 2019: 357).

Tadeusz Kulyk:

After the deterioration of Polish-Soviet relations, all Poles aged sixteen and above were forced to accept Soviet citizenship. Those who refused were considered enemies. In our family, only my mother was of age; the rest of us were minors. My mother refused to take citizenship because among Poles there was a belief that if they accepted it, they would never return to Poland. She decided that even if she herself could not return, at least her children should. For that, she was imprisoned and sentenced to two years in prison and five years of exile.

Having no means of subsistence, I, together with my younger sister, was sent to an orphanage in Chulakkurgan. I stayed there for more than half a year, waiting for my mother's release from prison. She did not serve her full sentence—since she became swollen from starvation, she was released. She came to our orphanage because she had nowhere else to go and wanted to see us. A week later, she left for Achisay, where she died. I do not even know where my mother was buried. We were always hungry, and each of us had only one dream—to eat our fill of potatoes before death. In April 1946, my sister and I returned to our homeland without our mother (Koigeldiyev, 2019: 354–363).

In the following memoir, the family of Tadeusz Kulik (born 1930), who lived in Granatów, Trostianets volost, Lutsk district, Volhynia, was deported to Siberia in 1940 to the special settlement of Nanda, Lensky district, Arkhangelsk region. Later, they were relocated to the Kazakh SSR: the Stalingrad collective farm in Chulakkurgan, Suzak district, South

Kazakhstan region, and later to Achi Say, Turkestan district. The Kulik family from the Kazakh SSR returned to Poland in 1946, but not in full composition.

In his memoir, Tadeusz Kulik writes:

At first, in 1940, we were sent to Siberia, and after a long journey, we ended up in the territory of the Kazakh SSR, in Chulakkurgan. At the end of February, we were relocated to another place because there was no work in Chulakkurgan, no conditions for life, and no hope of surviving. The village of Achi Say, located a few kilometers from a lead mine (Koigeldiyev, 2019: 357).

In his memoir, Tadeusz Kulik writes:

After the deterioration of Polish-Soviet relations, all 16-year-old Poles were forced to accept Soviet citizenship, and those who refused were considered enemies. In our family, except for my mother, everyone was underage. My mother refused to accept citizenship because there was an opinion among the Poles that if they accepted it, they would never return to Poland. She made the decision that, even if she didn't return, at least her children would. For this, she was imprisoned and sentenced to two years in prison and five years of exile.

Without any means of support, Tadeusz and his younger sister were sent to an orphanage in Chulakkurgan.

I was there for more than six months because I was waiting for my mother's return from prison. She didn't serve the full sentence. Since she had swollen from hunger, they released her. She came to us in the orphanage because she had nowhere else to go and wanted to see us. A week later, she went to Achi Say, where she died. I don't even know where they buried her. We were always hungry, and each of us had one dream: to eat a full meal of potatoes before death. Nothing else mattered, and those were the times. At that time, my father was in England, having gone there after Anders' army. I exchanged the materials sent by my father for food for my sister and myself. Everything my father sent had to be exchanged for food. My sister was in another orphanage house, and I did what I could to keep in touch with her. In April 1946, we returned to our homeland (Koigeldiyev, 2019: 354–363).

An ambivalent attitude towards fundamental values such as freedom and faith resulted from the excessive difficulties of everyday life, harsh conditions of food shortages and poverty, and the deterioration of family ties. The experience of imprisonment, repression, isolation and labour camps caused mental illness, deep depression and anxiety. As a result, apathy and complete withdrawal from social relations exacerbated poverty and led to death. The scale of the phenomenon is unknown.

In the following memoir, Wanda Isanskaya (Glukhovskaya, born 1926) with her family: father Jan Glukhovsky, mother Rozalia, grandmother Franciszka, sister Eugenia, and Danusia, lived in the village of Bozhuv, Skobelkovskaya volost, Khorokhivsky district, Volyn region (Poland). On February 10, 1940, they were deported to the special settlement of Koltovo in Siberia. There, in 1941, the family had a daughter, Halinka... 1943 was a very tragic year for my family and for many Polish families across the USSR. It brought despair, pain, and sorrow. Poles were forced to accept Soviet citizenship, but they refused because they believed that by signing, they would close the door to their homeland forever. For refusing to accept Soviet citizenship, my mother and sister were arrested. They received a sentence of 2 years in prison and 3 years in exile. My father also refused to sign for citizenship and was sent to prison.

In her memoir, Wanda Isanskaya (Glukhovskaya, born 1926) writes:

I had to search for food every day. Danusia was older, so she didn't cause much trouble. It was worse with Halinka: the child needed more careful care, especially better food. And there was no food. This freedom was much worse for me than a prison cell. My task was not easy: how to survive without any means of livelihood, without work? There was nowhere to steal and nothing to steal (Isanskaya, 2019: 51-70). [...] I often came to the prison fence with the hope of meeting him. And so, one day, when I was walking toward the prison with that hope, I unexpectedly met my father. He had been released and was walking home. At this meeting, he knelt in front of me, cried, and asked for forgiveness for letting himself be deceived by the communists. He felt guilty and carried this pain with him for the rest of his life. I searched for work, hired myself out with the Kazakhs, and gradually became a painter and plasterer. I was happy to even have a job, even if it was for a short period. They paid me 1 kg of grain or flour, or a piece of bread for a full day's work. This always brought some help to my family and gave us hope. Halinka always met me at sunset when I returned home. She called me "mom", while her real mom was in prison. I was taking her place, whether well or badly, I don't know. After his release from prison, my father couldn't recover. Instead of pulling himself together, he became completely indifferent. He could never come to terms with his fate (Isanskaya, 2019: 83-85). For agreeing to accept Soviet citizenship, my father was assigned to work at a cotton point. I begged him, even pleaded with him to start working there. My father only thought about death. But then, finally realizing that there was still someone to live for, he began to work. It seemed as if he was in a state of deep depression. His mental condition worsened, just as Halinka's health did. Now both needed help (Koigeldiyev: 83-85).

Halinka died on September 12, 1943, at the age of just two years and three months from hunger. She died, like many other children born in exile. One really had to be in good health to survive the exile. My father received the news of my mother's death, and for him, it was a great blow. He

contracted typhus, was hospitalized, and died a few days later. The family of six, which was loaded into a freight car on a frosty February morning in 1940, returned in the warm spring days of 1946 with only three girls (me, Eugenia, and Danusia) (Koigeldiyev, 2019: 83–95). The little girl who bore all the hardships of the deported Polish family fulfilled the roles of both mother and father in the family.

III. Narratives of Displacement and Poverty of Polish Mothers in Kazakhstan

We wanted to present narratives of displacement and poverty of Polish mothers in Kazakhstan in the context of changing social roles in situations of systemic violence. Studying and analyzing this interaction between a person's daily life and society makes it possible to reveal the diversity of historical processes and to reinterpret past events from new perspectives. In the 1930s–1950s, all members of deported Polish families, both parents and children, experienced extremely difficult periods in their everyday lives.

Our goal is to study the role of mothers who bore the heavy burden of family hardship in the everyday life conditions of deported Poles in Kazakhstan. Through this, we aim to shed light on aspects of the topic that have so far remained overlooked. During this period, such changes were, of course, also evident among other peoples deported to Kazakh land. From the memoir fragments, we can see that in preserving the unity and cohesion of deported Polish families, mothers of various ages played an essential role, and that among them were young girls who assumed the role of mothers and endured the hardships of life. The memoirs presented in the article reveal that mothers prioritized the unity of the family and the well-being of their children, and that young girls who became mothers in place of their own mothers also experienced the full weight of life's hardships.

During the 1930s–1940s, the majority of Poles deported to Kazakhstan in several waves were resettled in a scattered manner across the territory of the Kazakh Republic. Within 1937–1938, Polish men were arrested and accused of anti-Soviet activities. During the war, men were taken to labor armies, sent to work in mines, or joined General Anders' army, leaving behind women and children.

According to the recollections of deported women and their descendants, the events of forced resettlement, adaptation, and survival of fami-

lies in Kazakhstan are conveyed through the language of trauma. These fragments of women's memories reveal several recurring patterns. As mentioned above, almost all men were taken away to labor units, to the army, or arrested as "enemies of the people", and most of them never returned to their families, having died far from home. The country's dire situation, hunger, and destitution led to the deaths of many children. The thoughts, feelings, and experiences of those who suffered such losses were deeply personal, unique, and inimitable.

Deported women, despite enduring such hardship, managed to survive and persevere, living on the edge between life and death. However, these women could not have endured or saved their children and families had they not grown accustomed to the constant presence of death. In recollections of death, S. Stikovsky writes: "Poles died of hunger even on the streets" (Koigeldiyev, 2019: 322).

In Walentyna Kozioł's memoir, she talks about burying her mother who died of typhoid fever and her younger sister who died at the age of 5 (Kozioł, 2022: 38–39). In Helena's recollection:

The beginning of 1942 was very difficult because not all Poles were accepted to work in the kolkhoz, and not everyone could earn even a small amount of flour necessary to survive for at least one more day. Many died of hunger. In 1942, most of the deportees in our kolkhoz fell ill with typhus, and many of them died. That same year my sister Yadzya became sick; for ten days she had a high fever and lay unconscious, but there was no medicine to treat her. Many people died from hunger, disease, and the hardships of life (Koigeldiyev, 2019: 199–202).

Another recollection, from A. Grib (grandson):

Zofia, together with her four daughters, ended up in the village of Chayan, Baydibek District, Chimkent Region. Ignacy found his family after three or four days, and the next day he passed away. Zofia remained alone with the children—it seemed like the end of the world, and ahead lay only death from hunger (Abdukadyrova, 2019: 505–524).

In the recollection of Tadeusz Kulik:

We were constantly hungry; each of us had only one dream—to eat our fill of potatoes before death. Nothing else. Such were the times. These fragments are evidence of women's adaptation to death, their simple acknowledgment of it. Perhaps this attitude allowed them to stop fearing death, to become indifferent to it, or to comprehend the hopelessness of their situation, and thus, in some way, to preserve their strength and their lives (Koigeldiyev, 2019: 358).

In addition, the recollections mention that mothers in the families were responsible for raising children, providing for the household, and performing hard labor in agriculture and industrial workplaces. From the recollections of Maria Vyacheslavovna Vavrovskaya: "My mother worked two jobs: at night she herded the kolkhoz livestock, and during the day she guarded a large carrot plantation. For this work, she received only a few kopecks" (Rakysheva, 2013: 520).

In the recollections of S. Stikovsky: "My mother worked at the kolkhoz, she cleaned cotton and harvested crops with a sickle. The pay was very low. The only reward was food rations for the workdays completed. But even with that, survival was difficult." In the recollections of A. Grib (grandson): "Zofia worked at the kolkhoz to feed her daughters" (Abdukadyrova, 2019: 505–524). The recollection fragments describe mothers of different ages who supported their families, as well as young girls who, having lost their parents early, took on the role of mother for their younger siblings.

Wanda Isanskaya recalls: "My parents entrusted me with the responsibility of raising my sisters, even though I myself still needed care. I stayed at home and became a protector for my younger sisters, Danusia (10 years old) and Halinka (not yet 2 years old). I had to replace both our mother and father for them" (Isanskaya, 2019: 64).

In addition, one of the psychologically most burdensome experiences in the families of the deported Poles was the refusal to accept Soviet citizenship. Wanda Isanskaya, in her memoir, wrote:

The year 1943 was very tragic for my family and for many Polish families throughout the USSR. It brought despair, pain, and sorrow. Poles were forced to accept Soviet citizenship, but they refused, believing that this signature would forever close the road back to their homeland. For refusing to accept Soviet citizenship, my mother and my sister were arrested (Isanskaya, 2019: 62).

That small document caused so many family tragedies, deprived so many Polish people of their lives. Not only those who refused to sign disappeared, but above all, the innocent children left behind by their imprisoned parents. How many people that piece of paper made widows and orphans, only for it later to turn out that it had all been a meaningless sacrifice.

The recognition of the role of the mother in the life of every person in science has been established for quite some time. The survival of deported families' children from hunger and various epidemics directly depend-

ed on the mothers' ability to withstand the heavy burdens placed on them and their ability to overcome them.

From the fragments of memories and interviews, we see that mothers were the ones who endured hunger, poverty, and the hardships of life. They were the protectors and guardians of each family during that time. In the memories above, we focused on the role of mothers in maintaining the unity of the deported Polish families. Despite the varying ages of the mothers, their goal remained the same: to ensure the safe return of their children to their homeland. In this journey, mothers endured many hardships, did not give up, and sacrificed themselves for the future of their children. We created a portrait of these heroic mothers, who thought only of the future of their children and sacrificed everything for it. There is nothing more precious in this world than a mother to her child. No one can do what a mother does. The beauty of the world comes from the mother. Mercy and love come from the mother. Goodness also comes from the mother. Always with a tender heart, saying "my child", the golden mothers, who were caught in the turmoil of fate and thought of the future of the Polish nation, played a special role.

CONCLUSION

Research into the physical and psychological aspects of poverty is a new direction in reflections on the process of Soviet deportations of Slavic nations to the USSR, including Kazakhstan. As an act of systemic violence against individuals, deportation was traumatic in nature. It was a dynamic, sudden, and often unexpected process. It was carried out under coercion and terror, including psychological pressure and repression against women and girls. According to Piotr Sztompka (2002: 341), deportation constituted a profound, radical change affecting the core values and identity of entire communities. The most sensitive area was culture, understood here as a universe of values.

The smallest social unit subjected to degradation was the family, and consequently the role of women as mothers. They in particular were subjected to propaganda pressure to impose a foreign system of values and subjected to practices contrary to the culturally rooted ethos of the mother-caregiver. Motherhood deprived of economic and social support became a function balancing between extreme deprivation, mar-

ginalization in the local environment, and death. An analysis of the role of women in deported communities allows us to deepen our knowledge of the mechanisms of creating new patterns in the process of a society's continuous development in new conditions or the deepening of deeply rooted archetypes. Society is constantly evolving through continuous acts of reproduction and transformation (Sztompka, 2002: 32).

The culture of a nation determines its identity and continuity. The breakdown of social structures, the forced sudden change of symbolic space and the infrastructure of everyday life were dehumanizing and violent. The terror of deportation, combined with long-term marginalization, resulted in psychophysical poverty and a lack of personal security, leading to mental disorders and physical destruction of individuals. The strategies used by mothers, women who took on the role of breadwinners, revealed a whole range of mechanisms of resistance—from physical labor despite difficult conditions to opposition resulting in repression in the form of imprisonment. The permanence and unambiguous nature of violence in the communist system required long-term action under the influence of many stressors, including uncertainty of existence and extremely difficult economic conditions. Women, especially mothers, showed mental and physical strength by taking up the challenge of protecting deeply rooted values and transmitting national identity from generation to generation. The belief in the possibility of returning to their homeland became a mobilizing factor around the idea of preserving Polishness.

In a situation of economic poverty, women demonstrated a number of creative strategies for coping with the challenges of everyday life. Adopting a proactive attitude motivated them to work beyond their capabilities, but systemic restrictions prevented the deported population from changing their social status, escaping extreme poverty, or rejecting their social status as second-class citizens. Individual narratives focus on mechanisms of survival and making maximum efforts to improve living conditions. Poverty was subject to mechanisms of inheritance. On a micro scale, this means a slow, systematic, traumatogenic change bordering on acute trauma, which is passed down from generation to generation and resonates in the relationships of daughters, sons, and grandchildren.

The social role of women in the deportation process was constantly redefined and subject to dynamic and unexpected challenges. A number of external factors influenced the conditions in which the so-

cial role was played, including objective factors such as new difficult climatic or soil conditions, lack of living infrastructure, and subjective factors such as local social moods or the attitude of state administration officials. It was the social structure and the new system of oppression that determined the behavior of individuals in a given role. Women in the role of mothers showed a high level of adaptation of their role and position to the transformations of reality. The previous cultural model of the "mother-provider" was reduced to the role of a person providing basic resources for existence. However, this did not diminish the position of the mother in the family, but rather strengthened it. The language of the descendants' memories invariably expresses love, admiration for sacrifice, and respect. The exception are narratives showing how poverty, expressed in apathy and mental disorders, led to the negation of the social role of the parent or manifested itself in passive resistance and helplessness.

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