

**Rangsdorf -
Interview with
Maria Kapitonenko
on the 06. August 2005**



I had to leave Drushkowska on the 27. September 1942. In Germany we arrived on the 15. October. First we were accommodated on a farm and had to reap potatoes until the cold snap. When it gets colder, we were sent to the Bucker Company in Rangsdorf. There I stayed till the end of spring 1945.

The food was terrible. Two or three rotted potatoes we had for lunch. In the evening we got 50 gram bread for the next day. We ate it at once and went to bed hungry. We were swollen because of the hunger, we had hunger oedemas. My friend Nina worked for the Bucker family and peeled potatoes in the kitchen. She said to me: „Come on Maria, we give you potato peelings. We lay them into the dustbin, and you take it out of it.“ I went there quickly with a bag and stepped in the last row of the crew. I was bold and spoke with everybody around. The watchman asked: „What do you have there?“ I showed it to him, and then he said: „You are a pig!“ He threw the potato peelings over my head and shouted: „You are a pig!“ But I said: „I’m not a pig, I’m a girl.“ I picked the peelings up (he permitted it to me) and brought them into the camp. In the room there was a stove of iron. I baked the potato peelings on it. I ate and shared them with my friends.

In the factory I had a „very good“ job: it was a big storeroom, there were discs and screws up other things. When I got the right documents I had to give these things up.

We were three, there were two Frenchmen. They respected me. They got small parcels from the Red Cross. One of them hid a tin with soup in his pocket and gave it to me. Oh, I was walking on clouds. I ate one’s fill of it.

One day my German master told me: „We have to bring down that thing, which is hanging up there.“ He asked me: „Will you climb there?“ I said: „No!“ Then he asked the Frenchmen, they refused. Then he sends me. Command is command. It was a part of a plane. I dropped it down. Then the master came to me and said: „Stupid!“ I said: „I am stupid?“ He beat me, I fall down and my nose bled. I said to him: „You are stupid, too!“

The Frenchmen came close to us. I cried, and the master went away. I had to continue my work.

With the German workers I mustn't speak, even not smile. But I did everything wrong. I said to the German, that the Russian army will beat them now. A German said: „Hitler and Stalin are stupid.“

The watchmen, who guarded us, were armed. All around there were barbed wire fences. Around-the-clock we were watched. On Sunday we were allowed to go out for a few hours. An acquaintance German took me to his house. I darned his socks, cleaned his flat. He tested me: he placed money, a ring, if I would take it. I didn't take anything. He often took me to his home and gave me sandwiches in return.

When I was rescued at the end of war, I came to the resettlement camp 221. There our officers came and asked: „Who can speak German?“ All were silent. Then I was asked. – „Yes, I can.“ – „Then you will come to a margarine factory.“ I asked: „And what should I do there?“ – „You will operate the scale while the supply.“ – Yes, I will go there. Especially because it was a margarine factory. I went there and the German welcomed me friendly. There was another girl at my place, who was on a farm before, so she could speak German. I spoke as well as I could. There was a typewriter, and I type night and day. I thought: „That will help me, to get any job.“

Then the general came and said: „We need a shorthand typist in our regiment. You can type?“ – „Yes“ I answered. – „We take you.“ He said to me: „You will work in the secret-detachment. But first we have to check, who you are.“ And they asked in Drushkowka. My father was on the front, also my brother, my mother they wanted to deport to Germany. But they sent she back, because she was too old.

I began to work in the secret-detachment and got to know my husband, Iwan Koschewoj. He was manager of the pharmacy in a military hospital. I married him. We went to Potsdam and let register our marriage.

Then my husband was sent to Kamtschatka; we lived there for seven years. There I was shorthand typist, too. My husband wanted me to join a medicine-educational establishment. Their answer was: „This woman was in Germany.“ I mustn't study. In a party assembly he said: „She has nothing to do with this. You, and you, and you are guilty.“

Finely we came to Drushkowka, and then I was the wife of an officer, but I couldn't find a job. My husband began to work in a pharmacy, and I had to start farming, because I had no profession. Later I became a cashier.

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