

Czesława KWOKA

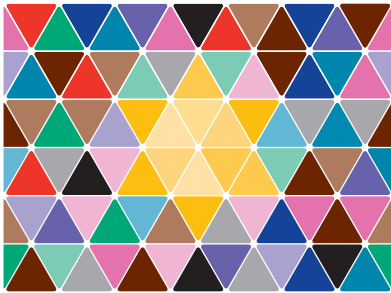


Photo © Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum



Mosaic – Victims of
Nazi Persecution





Czesława Kwoka

Czesława Kwoka was born on 15th August 1928 in Wólka Złojecka, a small village near the city of

Zamość in south-eastern Poland. Nothing is known about Czesława's life before the Second World War except that her mother's name was Katarzyna, although it is clear that the family were poor farmers.

In the summer of 1942 the Nazis decided that the area around Zamość would be 'Germanised'. This meant that Polish families were to be expelled from their homes; their farms would then be taken over by German settlers from other parts of Europe such as Bosnia, Romania and Luxembourg. The so-called resettlements began on 27th November 1942 and Wólka Złojecka was one of the earliest communities to be affected. Czesława and all of the other Poles living in the village, except for those who had managed to run away first, were arrested. They were sent to a transit camp in Zamość where they were held until they were deported elsewhere.

Czesława was one of approximately 30,000 children from the Zamość region who were deported. Younger children (and the elderly) were separated from their families and mostly sent to special 'rest villages' in other parts of Poland where they were left to fend for themselves. However, Czesława was considered old enough for forced labour. Most people in this situation were sent to work in Germany but Czesława and her mother were instead deported to Auschwitz concentration camp on 13th December 1942.

Like most other new Polish inmates, Czesława was photographed when she arrived in Auschwitz. The man who took her photograph was a Polish political prisoner called Wilhelm Brasse. He later recalled that Czesława was confused and frightened and did not understand what was being said to her. Before the picture was taken, she was beaten by a German female Kapo (Kapos were privileged prisoners who supervised other inmates).

Czesława's mother Katarzyna died in Auschwitz on 18th February 1943, just two months after arriving in the camp. Czesława died less than a month later on 12th March. The cause of her death is unknown although it is likely that she either died of disease or was murdered with an injection of the poison phenol. She was fourteen years old.