

Yaroslava Melnychuk (Polyuha)



She was born on July 17th, 1929, in the city of Lviv. She received her primary education at 'Ridna Shkola' named after Leo I of Galicia. Yaroslava continued her studies at Lviv State Academic Gymnasium. In 1945–1949 she studied at Lviv Medical Institute. She cooperated with the OUN at the same time. Yaroslava was detained on October 20th, 1948, in Lviv on her way home from the medical institute. She was discharged due to the lack of evidence of her guilt. After terminating the 4th year of institute, Yaroslava was sent to the town of Stryi for practice. On June 16th, 1949, she was detained for the second time. She was under examination in the prison 'at Lontskoho' for 6 months. Yaroslava was sentenced according to the article 54, part 1 'a' and part 11 ('treason', 'participation in counterrevolutionary organization') of the Criminal Codex of the Ukrainian SSR. On November 30th, 1949, she was convoyed from Lviv Transit Prison # 25 to forced labour camps of Gulag. Yaroslava served her sentence in camps of Amur region, the Russian SFSR, and then she was sent to a transit point in the town of Aldan, the Yakut Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. She performed hard labour, felling, in particular. During her stay in a special settlement, she was able to find a job as a doctor at a local district hospital. Later on, she was allowed to continue her studies at the 5th year of Irkutsk Medical Institute. In 1956 she received her diploma and returned to Lviv, where she worked as a doctor at an ambulance station. Yaroslava still lives in Lviv.

A fragment from memories: The coming of 'the first Soviets', 1939

Actually, it was really terrifying for us. Terrifying, because as soon as the Soviet army came, arrests started, they began to take people away immediately. I recall an associate professor living in our house; a Pole he was. A car came and took him away immediately. Such a panic was there; people were tired of it, not so tired, but suffering. Even quite a funny situation happened with one of our neighbours, who lived nearby. When a car came to take her away (she was an actress), she went out of the yard, and I saw a large box of hats and costumes in her hands. She thought to herself that it would be possible to perform there. The intelligentsia suffered the most. Though, I can't say that the intelligentsia only. But the majority of the repressed had been involved in politics and had taken part in some Ukrainian organizations actively. Attacks on 'Prosvita' and 'Plast' were started to be launched, they began to be liquidated. And those who worked there were to be repressed. It was really sad then, a kind of excruciating suspense: every single minute one was waiting for something unusual, something dangerous, not knowing, what would happen ahead, not knowing, what all that would end up with. We don't know how long our so-called 'first Soviets' planned to stay, but people understood everything, even those who had waited for them actually treated them really badly, with great prejudices, because they caused a great suffering at that time.