

**Mira Zimmerman**

**January 23, 2015**

**RG-50.030.0786**

### **Summary**

Mira Zimmerman was born as Mira Slawa Zimmerman on September 19, 1934 in Grodno, Poland on the River Neman to Yanina Szylawska and Rudolph Zimmerman. She lived with her mother on 80 acres of property outside of Grodno that her mother had inherited. The property was compensation to her uncle Valente for participating in the liberation of Poland. Her parents were in the process of divorcing so Mira seldom saw her father. A tiny dog her father gave her as a gift was precious to her but later the dog ran away when they were escaping from camp in Siberia. Her mother bought her another dog but it was stolen. Her mother was starting a berry and fruit garden when the war broke out and her father was called to the Army. Soon he was arrested by the Russians and in 1941 he was permitted to join the Polish Army helping Stalin. When the Russians occupied their property, everything was ransacked by them or by neighbors. On February 10, 1940 the Russians barged into their house and had her and her mother march to the cattle train to be deported to Siberia as their free labor was needed. They were not fed on the trip. Upon arrival in Siberia, Mira was placed on a sleigh pushed by her mother to Mikolinska, a former Army settlement. Her mother earned a few rubles for her work as a lumberjack while Mira remained with the children. Once a tree fell on her mother and the authorities thought she was committing suicide and changed her job to changing the oil and filling up the water. They had no belongings to exchange for food. Her mother bought a goat so that Mira could have some milk but when she picked up loose hay to feed it, her pay was shorted. Later they were sent to another camp near Perm where her mother trimmed the logs and floated them in the freezing river. In 1941 they learned they were free to leave the camp but remain in the Soviet Union. They ran away when they learned a Polish unit was nearby as the camp Commandant did not let them know they were free to leave. They took a river boat and a train going south. An officer in the Polish Army, Laurence Soletski, was helpful to Mira in Tatishchevo near Sartor and met him again in Jelibod in Uzbekistan near Tashkent where she introduced him to her mother in and later they married. First Mira got sick and went to the hospital and then her mother got sick. Also, their luggage was stolen and the officer sent them some money. They took a boat from Krasnovodsk across the Caspian Sea to Pahlavi, Persia where they had to walk on the hot sand despite Mira's shoes being stolen. Mira and her mother spent two years in a refugee camp run by the British in Persia where they got fed and her mother worked as a nurse in their hospital. They went to a second refugee camp in Persia and then to India where her mother worked in an orphanage. Mira attended school and church in these camps. After the war, Mira and her mother did not care to return to Communist Poland so they went to Coventry, England. Mira's mother found Lawrence in a hospital in Herford, England by placing an ad in the daily Army paper. He was recovering from an accident. Mira gave birth to a daughter in England and in the 1950s went to the US. Mira's half-sister (same mother and Mira's second husband), Danuta Soletski Urbies, 15 years younger than Mira, helps out during the interview and gives a summary of Mira's life.