



STEFAN BĄKOWSKI

Corporal Stefan Bąkowski, born in 1900, a farmer by occupation.

On 10 February 1940, I was deported together with my family from Kolonia Dźwiniaczka, district of Borszczów, to the Altai Krai in Siberia. My family and I were given 30 minutes to pack our belongings and get ready. Our immovables – including livestock – were appropriated by the Soviets. They packed us, 37 in all, into a goods wagon, closed the doors, and drove us for more than a month – under guard – in an unknown direction. Every third day we were given some hot food, and water once daily. When we arrived in Siberia, we were forced to perform arduous work in the forests – both men and women. If we were 20 minutes late for work, we would be tried and lose 20 percent of our wages for a period of three to six months. Our remuneration was so meager that I myself was unable to earn enough to keep my family even modestly fed. In order to supplement our income, so that my family would not starve to death, I was forced to sell our bedlinen and spare clothes for food, even though I was working harder than ever before in my life. Despite our best efforts and arduous toil, we were always told that we did not want to work: – *You think that you will return to your Poland? Indeed you shall – once hair starts growing on your palms*, we would be told by the commandant, one Uścinów, whose deputy was Korzemiakin.

When someone fell ill and turned to the doctor for help, the response would be: – *This is nothing, you'll get used to it*. Finally, when one sick man persisted with his requests, he was told: – *We are not allowed to give you sick notes, such are our orders*. When a sick prisoner became weak and was unable to work, they would take 50 percent of his or her daily food ration. When my sister fell ill, I went to the office and asked that they give me a horse so that I could take her to the doctor. They refused my request, and a short time later my sister died. With only the greatest effort did I wheedle them into lending me a horse so that I could transport her body to its final resting place.



Finally, I could take it no longer and enlisted in the Polish Army, however leaving my family behind. They remain there to this day, that is if they are still alive, for I have no news from them.