



## ICKO BERKOWICZ

Field bakery no. 101.

### 1. Personal data:

Rifleman Icko Berkowicz, born in 1906 in Różana, district of Kosów, a baker by occupation, married; I have received a home education.

### 2. Date and circumstances of arrest:

On 17 September 1939, I was taken prisoner by the Soviets in the township of Snów, district of Nieśwież, from where I was transported to a POW camp in Kozelsk near Moscow, and subsequently to the camp at Yellow River [Yellow Waters]. After a few months, in March 1940, I managed to escape and return to Nieśwież, where I was rearrested by the Soviet authorities on 12 December 1940 and detained in the prison in Baranowicze. A court sentenced me to one and a half years in prison (forced labor) and I was deported to Vladivostok, from where a ship took me to my destination – the camp in Kolyma.

### 3. Name of the camp, prison, place of forced labor:

I was incarcerated in the camp in Kozelsk, at Yellow River [Yellow Waters], in Baranowicze prison, in the camp in Vladivostok, and in Kolyma.

### 4. Description of the camp:

Both the camps and the prisons were overcrowded and dirty. We had to sleep on the ground, while the lack of washing facilities meant that lice, fleas and other vermin were rampant.

### 5. Prisoners by nationality and category of crime:

The camps housed prisoners of many different nationalities, both Polish and Soviet citizens, accused of various crimes (political, strictly criminal, etc.).

### 6. Life in the camp:

I was forced to perform construction work, as an assistant, and earthwork, while towards the end I worked in the bakery. If you shirked work, you would end up in the punishment cell.



**7. Attitude of the authorities, NKVD towards Poles:**

They were vulgar and brutal, beating and shoving us around, using obscene language.

**8. Medical care and the mortality rate:**

Medical care was insufficient, and there was a shortage of drugs. A great many people died; in the camp in Kolyma, the mortality rate was as high as 70 percent. There were 4,000 of us in the camp.

**9. Was it at all possible to keep in touch with the home country and your family? If yes, then what contacts were permitted?**

I wrote a lot of letters and received many in response, however I avoided the official postal channels.

**10. When were you released and how did you get through to the Polish army?**

I was released in January 1942, while in Kolyma, and in August 1942 I arrived in Shahrissabz, where I enlisted in the 6th Infantry Division, being assigned to the commissariat.