



## ANDRZEJ BIAŁOBOCKI

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My name is Andrzej Białobocki, I am 43 years old, a farmer by occupation, married, and I serve in the army with the rank of corporal.

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On 18 September 1939, I was disarmed and taken prisoner by the Soviets in the district of Słonim. My colleagues and I were driven on foot for four days, without any food, to the train station in Stołpce. There, we were loaded onto a train and sent on our way, traveling for five days; yet again, we didn't receive any food, so we had to use up our own rations and whatever good people would give us through the wagon windows. Our destination was Kozelsk, where we were located in buildings, for the main part bricked, however so crowded (there was around 10,000 of us in all) that lice and bugs started to multiply. We were given hot food once a day, and also 700 grams of bread. The prisoners were officers of the Polish Army, policemen, and soldiers. After spending a month in Kozelsk, we were transferred to Kryvyi Rih, where the hard labor began. We lived in barracks made of clay, and walked to work together with the civilian population. The work norms were extremely high. We were searched frequently, and the Soviets would take all of our devotional items, such as rosaries, medallions, prayer books, etc. Apart from this, the conditions were tolerable. On 19 May 1940, we were transported to the Polish lands occupied by the USSR. I was sent to the POW camp in Mościska. We worked on the road for twelve hours a day. The quotas were high. We lived in wooden barracks. The courtyard was full of mud, so that your feet would always be wet – our shoes, riddled with holes, did not provide adequate protection.

The attitude of the NKVD and authorities to us Poles was hostile. Our physical strength would be exploited in various ways. Pep talks and lectures, organized in order to instill us with the theory of communism, were frequent; they would be held in the camp's day room. The existence of God was rejected, and we were forbidden to pray; as a matter of fact, our



national and religious feelings were a constant object of attack. The political indoctrinators would say that the "Polish masters" had maltreated the Ukrainians and Byelorussians, or something along the lines of: "The bourgeois, capitalist Poland has ceased to exist for good. If it shall be reborn, then it shall be 'red', as one of the Soviet republics". The day after war broke out between Germany and Russia, while we were being driven on foot from Przemyśl to Volochysk, we stumbled upon five massacred prisoners in one of the camps. Some of the bodies had letters from their families, and these allowed us to learn the victims' surnames. I remember one: Kamiński from Warsaw (we found a letter from his wife and daughter on his person). Generally speaking, if anyone lagged behind due to exhaustion and hunger, he would be shot dead by the NKVD soldiers. During the voyage in sealed wagons from Volochysk to Starobilsk, we were fed with small fish and received 150 grams of bread per day.

We arrived in Starobilsk on 7 July 1941. On 24 August 1941, the Polish Army was established by Colonel Wiśniowski from amongst prisoners of war from the Polish territories. There were some 20,000 of us soldiers in Starobilsk. Thus, I was able to enlist in the Polish Army.

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