



MARIAN CZAPIŃSKI

1. Personal data (name, surname, rank, age, occupation, marital status):

Senior Sergeant Marian Czapiński, 42 years old, regular non-commissioned officer, married.

2. Date and circumstances of arrest:

On 17 September 1939, when we were marching to the rallying point with the company reserve and its commander, Captain Hiller, on orders from a battalion commander of the Border Protection Corps (KOP) in Kopyczyńce, near Chrostkowo, we came under machine gun fire from two Soviet armored cars, firing at us from a distance of 300–400 meters. The captain was heavily wounded in both legs with three shots.

3. Name of the camp, prison or forced labor site:

I was disarmed and sent first to Kamianets-Podilskyi, then to a POW camp in Kozelshchyna, Poltava Oblast, and next to an iron mine in Kryvyi Rih, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast. From there I was transferred to Emilianów, located seven kilometers from Równe, to build an asphalt road between Kiev, Lwów, and Przemyśl. Later I was moved to a camp in Tuligłowy, Mościska district, next to Pługów, Zborów, and finally to Skole, Stryj district, where there were stone quarries (a mine).

4. Description of the camp or prison (grounds, buildings, housing conditions, hygiene):

In Kamianets-Podilskyi I was placed in military barracks, since almost the whole Soviet garrison had entered Poland and the barracks were empty. Over 10,000 slaves were imprisoned there at the time, and they were sent in various directions from there. Food was bearable. We slept on the floors in both the rooms and corridors of the barracks.

The camp in Kozelshchyna comprised approx. 12,000 people, including 2,157 officers and about 4,000 policemen; the rest were non-commissioned officers and infantrymen. Officers and senior non-commissioned officers (from sergeant up) were placed in six big stables, which had formerly housed a pig farm, liquidated due to an epidemic of swine erysipelas.

The dung hadn't been removed from these stables, but only sprinkled with a solution of chlorinated lime. We had to take it out ourselves, with no tools or implements at hand, and then cover the floor with a yellow sand – we had to sleep on this for a month, that is, until some material to make pallets was delivered. As time went by we built a kitchen, as previously we were being issued small amounts of foodstuffs (in kind) and everyone had to cook for himself, although we were short of firewood and the temperatures were freezing.

First the policemen were deported, then non-commissioned officers and infantrymen were taken away in groups, and finally the officers were deported, probably to Starobilsk. To this day I haven't met any of the officers who were with me in that camp. I recall the following surnames: non-commissioned officer Dr. Lalak, from an Uhlan regiment, who had a peaked cap with a white brim; Captain Sylwester Trojanowski, from a battalion of the Ostróg Border Protection Corps; Szurlej from the Border Protection Corps; Cavalry Captain Komorowski (a world famous show jumping champion); Second Lieutenant Wróblewski, an airman from the Warsaw air force regiment.

In that camp, once or twice a week we worked at a train station situated two kilometers from the camp, where we unloaded wagons with timber, and on other days we performed various tasks on the camp premises.

In the mines in Kryvyi Rih we worked three shifts, eight hours each, at various jobs. We worked three days in a row and had the fourth day off; we were quartered in a building. In the rest of the camps, where we worked at road construction, we had to work from dawn to dusk, up to twelve hours a day. At first we had every second Sunday off, and later we had to work on all days, except for those when it was pouring with rain.

In the above-enumerated labor camps we were quartered in large tents, heated with iron stoves during winter, or in wooden barracks. There was an emergency room and a bathhouse with disinfectant facilities in each camp.

5. The composition of prisoners in particular camps was as follows:

in Kozelshchyna, Poltava Oblast – 12,000; in Kryvyi Rih it depended on the size of the mine: in the one where I worked there were 54 people, and in Kryvyi Rih there were generally over 12,000 prisoners; in Emilianów near Równe – 800; in Tuligłowy, Mościska district – 1,400; in

Pługów – 400; in Zborów – approx. 600; in Skole, Stryj district – 900. In general, the moral standing of the Poles in all those camps was good, with single exceptions. National minorities usually cooperated with the Soviets, helping them determine the military ranks of soldiers and detect opponents of Communism; they often laughed at our misery and complained to the Soviets that they had been persecuted and mistreated back in Poland. However, there were also some members of the minorities who stuck with us and believed that this situation wouldn't last, as the war wasn't over yet and from time to time we received news that the Polish Army was being raised abroad and that Poland would be reborn.

6. In the camp we worked from dawn to dusk, up to twelve hours a day. The work quotas were very high (for instance to dig a trench, 9 cubic meters). Those who met them received bearable and sufficient food. Those who didn't fill the quota received food from the so-called upper caldron, and if someone skipped work for some reason, for example due to illness, he received only watery soup and 400 or 600 grams of bread, depending on the camp commander. Five rubles per day were deducted from the monthly remuneration to cover food expenses. Various swindles, such as documenting work that had never been done, were carried out by our people so that we could meet the quotas. For filling the quota one could earn from eight to twelve rubles a day. New clothes were issued only to those who went to work, and only when their old garments were ragged. Mutual relations were good only among the Poles.

Cultural life was very poor, there were only Communist propaganda books and magazines, which were rarely read. Sometimes an obligatory meeting was organized, and then a political commissar would read something out to the rest.

7. On the surface the NKVD authorities were rather kind, but they were secretly obtaining information from other prisoners, asking them what property one had or what plans, what he had been doing back in Poland etc. Interrogations took place usually at night. Those who refused to talk were locked up in solitary confinement, where they had water poured on the floor or were divested of their clothes and starved, all to extort confessions. They wanted to turn everyone into their informer, who would tell them what the others thought of them and what views they held. For instance, on 17, 18, and 19 June 1941 in Skole, an investigation was carried out against me, and I was questioned as to why three people had been serving time for holding Communist views in my region in 1936, at the time when I commanded a Border



Protection Corps (KOP) fort. I was indicted for counter-revolutionary activities and I was to be tried on such charges. It didn't happen only due to the outbreak of the German-Soviet War on 22 June 1941.

8. Medical assistance, hospitals, mortality rate (give the names of the deceased):

Medical assistance was quite good, I don't recall any cases of death.

9. Was there any possibility to get in contact with one's country and family?

I had contact with my family, that is my wife, by post, but not all her letters reached me.

10. When were you released and how did you manage to join the army?

I was released in Starobilsk, from where on 7 September 1941 I was sent in a military transport to Totskoye.

Khanaqin, 17 February 1942