



ALEKSANDER KALBARCZYK

1. Personal data:

Reserve Second Lieutenant Aleksander Kalbarczyk, born on 21 March 1901, elementary school teacher, married, 2 children – a 7-year-old daughter and a 4-year-old son.

2. Date and circumstances of arrest:

I was arrested on 1 May 1940 in Dobrowola, Wołkowysk district. An NKVD man, who came to my flat at 6.00 p.m. with one *boyets* and one militiaman, ordered my wife, children and mother out of the room, read out the arrest warrant and frisked me. Having been searched, I was ordered to sit still at the table. Then my family was allowed to come back in and the entire flat was searched. Among the many seized items were: Piłsudski's portrait, a drawing of the 1st Brigade's badge, 25 Polish zlotys and a motorcycle.

As soon as they had found the motorcycle in an outhouse, the search was finished. They let me take my underwear and a few indispensable things and say goodbye to my family. I was taken to the *se/soviet*, where I was guarded by the militiaman while the NKVD man and the others left. At about 2.00 p.m., three local residents were brought in and the four of us were transported to the jail in Świsłocz. I stayed there until 10 May 1940. Two interrogation reports were made there regarding my case, but my interrogations were peaceful, they didn't resort to torture or even verbal abuse. On 11 May I was transferred to the prison in Wołkowysk.

3. Name of the camp:

The prison in Wołkowysk, gulag camps – the hamlet of Ukhta in Komi ASSR (petroleum mine).

4. Description of the camp or prison:

The prison at Kościuszki Street in Wołkowysk: a courtyard, 30 by 45 meters large and surrounded with a three-meter high wall, farm buildings (a cowshed, a pigpen, and a stable), a single-story house with six rooms, an isolation cell and the latrine. The room in which I was

incarcerated was 16 square meters large. Until 16 June 1940 there were 19 prisoners in that room, and later 32 people were imprisoned in it. We tried to maintain cleanliness, but our efforts were futile – there were plenty of lice. 13 people slept on pallets and the rest on the floor, using whatever they had as bedding. We were allowed to sleep between 9.00 p.m. and 5.00 a.m. We weren't allowed to lie down during the day. We couldn't talk in normal voices, we had to whisper. The window was opened on the warden's order and only at night. As a result, my friends often fainted due to the lack of fresh air. The searches, both personal and in the rooms, were carried out 2–3 times per month, and sometimes more often. A few people were taken for interrogation every single day. Those who had lived in the Świsłocz area were interrogated rarely and in a calm manner. We could receive packages from our families every four weeks, depending on the NKVD's permission.

5. The composition of prisoners-of-war, inmates, exiles:

In February 1941, by the ruling of the *osoboye soveshchaniye* [special council of the NKVD], I was sentenced to five years of forced labor, and on 20 February I was deported to Komi ASSR, the hamlet of Ukhta, 31st Borovaya (a petroleum mine). There were approximately 4,000 Poles and 2,500 Russians there. The majority of the Poles were imprisoned for border crossing or as "socially resistant" elements; the Russians – for theft, armed robbery, and some also as "socially resistant" elements. The intellectual level of our people was acknowledged, and the Russians' was very low. They robbed us of everything, so it was impossible to keep any possessions, and they also beat us in the streets, so one couldn't go out alone in the evening. Stolen items were sold to the administration or *strelkas* [guardsmen], and the money thus obtained was used to purchase food tickets from the kitchen. The Russian intelligentsia treated us Poles decently, but the lower classes were very mean. The administration's attitude was very bad.

6. Camp life:

Wake-up at 5.00 a.m. You had to get dressed and wash as quickly as possible in order to get in the queue for breakfast. We had to wait for about an hour for a soup made of oat or millet groats with oil. Second meal: fried fish or thick groats. This food was better, as I was assigned to the group of miners (*dvizheniya*). I received 900 grams of bread per day. At 6.30 a.m. we had the so-called *razvod*, when the foremen gathered their men and set

off for work with them. If someone was sick before setting off for work and was running a temperature of 39–40 degrees but hadn't reported that on the previous day, he would be driven out to work by force. In theory, we worked from 7.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m., but in fact the work always began earlier and ended later. I worked transporting carts loaded with stone from the shaft and along a 150-meter long bridge to a place from which they were drawn off further by horses. We had to move all the carts that had been loaded in the mine, that is, from 60 to 130 a day and sometimes even up to 180. There were many days when we could hardly move after returning from work. We couldn't even find the strength to go and get ourselves some dinner. We had to queue for dinner for an hour or more. For dinner we received the same food as for breakfast. Every day at 7.00, 8.00 or 9.00 p.m. there was the so-called *proverka* (counting of people) and then we could go to sleep. There were 300 of us in the barrack, and it was filthy, cold, and filled with stifling air; everyone slept on whatever he had. From 20 March to 24 August 1941 I earned 8.75 rubles.

Following the outbreak of the Russian-German war, I was transferred for labor in the woods, on the road, etc. It was even worse there. I worked from 6.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m., and the food was worse, as I couldn't meet the prescribed work quota. My friends often suffered breakdowns due to overworking, but we helped one another, offering a piece of bread or moral comfort. 300–400–500 grams of bread. I wasn't issued any clothes, as I had my own. Social life was very good, but there wasn't any cultural life.

7. The NKVD's attitude towards Poles:

When I was in the prison, I wasn't tortured during interrogation like the others, but I was questioned calmly. We had news from people arriving at the prison, and in the camp from free people living near the camp. All information about Poland was so far-fetched that I barely lent an ear to it. However, it was a great comfort for many people.

8. Medical assistance, hospitals, mortality rate:

We could see the doctor every day, but you had to run a temperature to be issued a medical leave, as otherwise – even if you were badly injured – there was no chance of obtaining an exemption from work. None of my friends died.



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

I was allowed to write to my family once a month. I received two letters and one package.

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

I was released from the camp on 26 August 1941, and upon release I received 147 rubles and 60 kopecks. I travelled for 14 days before I got to Totskoye, where on 11 September 1941 I joined the Polish Army.