



FLORIAN KUJAWA

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

Non-commissioned officer Florian Kujawa, 30 years old, elementary school teacher, unmarried.

2. Date and circumstances of arrest:

On 22 August 1940 I was deported from the internee camp in Ulbroka (Latvia).

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

Kozelsk, Gryazovets.

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

In Kozelsk there were buildings of a former monastery, which – especially after some fixing up – were quite good. The housing conditions were bad due to lack of space and a great numbers of bugs, as the camp command did nothing to fight them. In comparison with other camps, the hygienic conditions were bearable, especially after February 1941. In Gryazovets – especially since it was summer – the conditions were slightly better.

5. The composition of POWs, prisoners, exiles (nationality, categories of crimes, intellectual and moral standing, mutual relations etc.):

The internees were almost exclusively Poles. There were about 1,000 officers, 1,400 policemen, 400 non-commissioned officers and 200 civilians (in Kozelsk).

6. Life in the camp, prison etc. (daily routine, working conditions, work quotas, remuneration, food, clothes, social and cultural life etc.):

In the morning and in the evening, roll calls held to check the number of inmates, building by building. Wake-up was at 6.00 a.m., curfew at 10.00 p.m. We had meals three times a day, but in the evening we received boiled water and made tea ourselves. All tasks were generally performed by privates and by officers up to and including captains, who peeled potatoes and cleaned fish and volunteered for work in the kitchen and the bathhouse.

Bread was the staple of our diet (800 grams). The worst food was between November and March. About five times a week we had soup made from beet leaves (pickled), which was very bland.

In December 1940, social life deteriorated significantly. The reason for this was the spread of Communist views among the internees, which resulted in suspicion and often mistrust of people who didn't exactly waver, but were simply less active.

Cultural life was generally limited to reading a small number of Polish books that had been brought to the camp by those interned in Lithuania. The internees from Latvia had had their books taken away on the very first day after their arrival. A choir and an orchestra had to suspend their activities due to our unwillingness to sing Russian songs.

Only tailors received remuneration, and only for work done for the Bolsheviks (the camp crew). This was why they were so obliging towards them.

In Gryazovets, the food was much worse. For a few weeks before the signing of the Polish-Soviet agreement, the [daily] bread ration was 400 grams. The food was completely devoid of fat, and fish were usually half-rotten. In both these camps the sugar ration was 25–30 grams, but there were periods during which we didn't receive any sugar at all.

7. The NKVD's attitude towards Poles (interrogation methods, torture and other forms of punishment, Communist propaganda, information about Poland, etc.):

As a rule, they interrogated those who had worked in political organizations, or the Second Department [illegible], or those who were denounced by interned Communism sympathizers or simply Communists, who provided the Bolsheviks with incriminating information pertaining to attitudes towards Communism and concerning a particular prisoner in question. Interrogations were carried out usually at night, often until 6.00 a.m.; the interrogators used various tricks and threatened the prisoners with deportation to the north or imprisonment of family that had remained in the home country, which was why many inmates broke. In all probability, sophisticated torture wasn't used.

The Communist propaganda was spread through movies, newspapers, books, radio broadcasts and talks which the political commissars organized in various blocks for small groups on an ad hoc basis. This method yielded meager results, as the intellectual level of

the political commissars was low and they often made fools of themselves. The propagation of Communism by interned Communists was much worse for the internees. Many people lent their ears to them, and they managed to turn many Poles – seemingly decent individuals – into Communist agitators, and even to talk them into joining the Red Army.

The information we received about Poland and the government were such as to undermine our faith in regaining our freedom and restoring the Polish State.

8. Medical care, hospitals, mortality rate (provide the surnames of those who perished):

The camp hospital functioned thanks to Polish doctors. It was poorly equipped: for instance, the first appendectomy was performed by a Polish doctor with the use of crude instruments and at great risk. There were only the most basic medicaments.

As for the medical assistance, my own experience can serve as a good example. Due to general exhaustion and avitaminosis, I suffered retinal hemorrhaging in the left eye. The tool indispensable for medical examination (a magnifying glass) was delivered to the doctor after five weeks, although the nearest hospital was located in a town that was only three kilometers away. Since the Polish doctor was unable to make a diagnosis and my condition was deteriorating (with a risk of blindness), he told the chief doctor, a Soviet woman, that I should be sent to Smolensk for a clinical examination. I appended my own request to the doctor's statement. The answer was a curt "no", accompanied by an ironic laugh and a waving of the hand. Then I understood that my request must have seemed like a pipe dream to this doctor. I was eventually sent to an ophthalmologist after eight months of illness, following the conclusion of the Polish-Soviet agreement.

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

We were first allowed to write letters to our families after five months. We received only some letters from our families, and they were often delivered after two or three months. Usually the letters were distributed in batches. The letters were kept by the camp command so that they could compare them and learn detailed information about the internee.

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

I was released on 22 or 23 August [1941] in Gryazovets.

On 25 August I was admitted to the Polish Army.