



## STEFAN MANIAK

### 1. Personal data:

Sergeant Stefan Maniak, 43, non-commissioned career officer.

### 2. Date and circumstances of arrest:

On 12 July 1940 I was taken by the NKVD from an internment camp of Polish soldiers in Lithuania, in the town of Wiłkowyski.

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

Yukhnov camp, Kozelsk and Gryazovets. Work within the camp consisting in building construction, outside the camp – chopping lumber in the forest, repairing and clearing the roads from snow. Forced, unpaid labor, in exchange for soup for dinner.

### 4. Description of the camp/prison:

Yukhnov camp: the buildings were old, bricked and some made of clay, adapted from former stables. Exterior walls were constantly wet on the inside, covered with frost in winter. Floors were rotten with mold, full of holes or freshly made from wood. Interior: two to four bunks of beds, crowded, it was only possible to lie on one's side. The straw handed out for pallets was rotten and smelly. The buildings were plagued with bedbugs, rats, and hordes of mice. Lavatory: ditches dug up to 30 meters deep, unprotected from accidents which resulted in the internees falling into it at night and drowning. Food rations: during the first days we were given corned game meat, rotten, smelly, impossible to eat; later stinking sea fish with tiny finger-sized raw fish as a side, which nobody ate. Water was from the river, stinky.

Kozelsk camp: accomodation in a monastery, rooms infested with bedbugs, accommodations and rationing a little better.

Gryazovets camp: absolutely terrible accommodation, resting at night in attics or under the trees outside, and later in barracks without walls; food rationing, until the amnesty, like in Yukhnov but even without fat and fish, bread portions decreased by 50 per cent.

### 5. Composition of prisoners, POWs, exiles:

Nationality: Poles, Belarussians and a couple of Jews – Polish soldiers and sometimes public officials. Intellectual and moral standing – 84 per cent were average, the remaining 16 per cent belonged to an organization of heathens and snitching informants, concerning whom I have filed individual reports to Unit II of the 8<sup>th</sup> Division in Pahlavi and Tehran. In the USSR in Gryazovets, I listed Lt. Col. Krańczyński by name.

#### **6. Life in the camp/prison:**

Daily routine: 6.00 a.m. wake-up call, morning roll call, work from 8.00 a.m. to 12.00 p.m. and from 2.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m.; those unassigned to work had to go to propaganda talks or take out communist books, most often the Stalinist constitution. From 7.00 p.m. to 10.30 p.m. there were meetings or propaganda film screenings. They were saying the worst things about Poland and calling England a prostitute.

#### **7. The NKVD's attitude towards Poles:**

Insidious, vicious, stripping us of human dignity. Questions like: did you fight against the USSR? Why didn't you fight your officers, but instead fought for capitalism? Investigations about one's occupation and function before the war. Interrogations during night and day.

#### **8. Medical care, hospitals, mortality:**

Medical care was bogus; there was a lack of medicines and nutrition. A sick internee couldn't buy himself any milk, eggs or butter. Those with pulmonary diseases were isolated in the toilets, where the floor was rotten, and dampness, mold, rats and mice at night wouldn't let anybody rest. Fatalities: Ensign Eugeniusz Kiniasz, Corporal 2<sup>nd</sup> Ensign Jakubowski, Sergeant Krzypski and a senior sergeant.

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

Throughout the whole time I received two letters and a parcel; from 25 February 1941 I received no correspondence at all. When inquired about it, the *politruk* [political worker] answered, "There are letters and parcels for everybody, but we hand them only to good people; *svoloches* and enemies of the Soviet nation will not get them and nobody should expect that."

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



After the proclamation of amnesty for Poles on 27 August 1941 I was accepted into the Polish Army, and on 2 September, together with the whole camp, I departed for Totskoye by train, where the Polish divisions were being formed.

*Gdera, 14 January 1943.*