

ALOJZY MATUSZEWSKI

1. [Personal details:]

Company Sergeant Major Alojzy Matuszewski, military police (non-commissioned officer of the Border Guard), born in 1898, married, three children.

2. [Date and circumstances of arrest:]

Interned in Lithuania on 23 September 1939 and deported to Russia by the Soviet authorities on 12 July 1940.

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

Imprisoned in the Kozielsk camp, and then transferred to Gрязovets camp together with others on 29 June 1941.

4. [Description of the camp or prison:]

Kozielsk camp – a former Orthodox monastery, surrounded by a high wall. The buildings were Orthodox churches and monks' quarters; the internees were accommodated here on bunks – two or three levels of them. A highly bug-infested place. We slept on wooden boards; paillasses [straw mattresses], blankets, and linen were issued later. A bath was once a week or biweekly.

5. [Composition of prisoners, POWs, and deportees:]

Interned officers of the Polish Army, district administrators, Catholic clergy, non-commissioned State Police and Border Guard officers, and military policemen. Non-commissioned officers and privates of the Polish Army were usually separated to be sent to a different camp. The intellectual level was good, the moral level was also generally good; mutual relations were usually tolerable.

6. [Life in the camp or prison:]

At 6:00 in the morning there was a wake-up call, a meeting, and a [head] count done by the Soviet authorities; the same thing in the evening. In principle, work took place only in the camp. Those assigned to work outside the camp were previously segregated by the NKVD.

Some inmates assigned to work at the segregation were isolated and not allowed to leave the camp. Work outside the camp [took place] under escort. The conditions were tolerable; I never heard of monetary remuneration. Food – hot water to make tea in the morning; lunch: soup mixed with a little oil or leftover scraps of meat (legs, intestines); in the evening – hot water or soup. Apart from that, we received 500 grams of bread a day, dry tea, sugar, tobacco, and soap. Clothes – Polish uniforms were worn until they wore out; they were later replaced with Soviet wadded clothes. Mutual relations were good. The behavior of interned Polish non-commissioned officers was usually good. Cultural life – communal prayer was unthinkable; even individual prayer was forbidden.

7. [Attitude of NKVD authorities to the Poles:]

NKVD agents observed everything, peeked [at us], and called people in for interrogations – some of us several times. They invariably did that at night. Once in a few days they sent commissars to the barracks to give us propaganda talks, such as: “There will be no Poland ever again, you will never go home,” etc., trying to undermine our spirit and faith. Cinematographic presentations for the internees – nearly always propaganda about the benefits of communism; lectures – talks about communism. Soviet newspapers were displayed on boards. They contained articles written by Wanda Wasilewska, ridiculing Poland and its political system.

8. [Medical assistance, hospitals, mortality:]

Medical assistance organized by Polish doctors was good, there was a hospital in the camp. Mortality was average; two or three internees committed suicide by hanging themselves, a few others died. I don’t remember their specific data or names.

9. [What kind of contact, if any, was there with your country and families?]

After a few months, in November 1940, we were allowed to write letters to our families – once or twice a month – through the Soviet authorities. I received a reply from my family in June 1941.

10. [When were you released and how did you make it to the army?]

After the Polish–Soviet agreement was signed [the Sikorski–Mayski Agreement of 30 July 1941], amnesty was announced to us in the Griazovets camp; it was then, on 29 July 1941, that I enlisted in the Polish Army and we were sent to the 5th Infantry Division.

Encampment, 19 January 1943