



STANISŁAW POPŁAWSKI

Rifleman Stanisław Popławski, 20 years old, student, unmarried.

As soon as the Russians entered Poland, the Ukrainians began to swell with self-importance. One of them, who under Polish rule had been a lay judge in the commune, having been appointed head of the committee by the Ukrainians, came to the school when it was being inspected by a Soviet major. He tore down the Polish eagle from the wall and threw it to the floor. He said that it had shat on their heads enough during the past 20 years.

After some time a meeting was organized, at which the Ukrainians said, through their agitators, that Polish landowners not only had to be chopped down, but also had to be uprooted, that is, we were not only to be removed from our property, but also deported into the bowels of Siberia for hard work in the forest. They told the Russian authorities that the settlers were those who had fought against the Bolsheviks in 1918. In fact, the Polish government had given the settlers these lands because they really deserved to have them. The Soviet authorities used their agitators to spread propaganda against the Poles, and these people hit all the right notes and made statements to the effect that Poles had to be deported.

They organized mass arrests of settlers in all the Polish areas, saying that they were in possession of arms and refusing to hand them over. This happened on 10 February 1940; I was deported with my family of six. My father and I were placed in the corner of the room, and three militiamen with loaded guns, aiming at us, warned us that if we shifted even slightly to one side they would shoot us, and they kept their fingers on the triggers. Another three men from the NKVD searched one flat after another for weapons, banging on the walls and turning beddings upside down. Having found nothing, one of these NKVD men said that they had to transport us to a different part of Poland. They emphasized that we couldn't take anything except for one change of clothes and food for a week. We were given about 90 minutes to get ready, and then our belongings were placed on horse-drawn sleighs.



When the entire settlement was ready, we were marched to the station under a guard of militiamen and armed Ukrainians. At the station they immediately put us into small goods wagons, about 80 people to each. During six weeks on the journey we received 500 grams of bread per person and half a liter of soup once a day.

About 200 families were deported and divided among three colonies: Maly Ungut, Pimya and Cheremoshka. In all these townships we were forced to work eight hours a day, that is, from 8.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m., with a one-hour dinner break.

Remuneration was very low, as you could earn about 50 rubles for 14 days' work. When a laborer skipped work one day due to great frosts, he was immediately fined or put in jail.

All three of these camps were situated in the depths of Siberian forests, where all you could see was a patch of sky above. We lived in wooden barracks. About 10 families lived in a rather small room. When spring came and the snow began to melt, polluted water caused many diseases. Out of 150 people, about 50 perished.

NKVD men came almost every day, and they claimed that there was no Poland and that it would never be reborn. When a laborer was late or left early, he was promptly tried by a court and punished. As for clothes, there were almost none.

The NKVD was hostile towards Poles. They organized various meetings, during which their agitators spread propaganda against Poland.

Medical assistance was practically non-existent. However, when they saw that someone was dying, they would take him to the hospital for show, so that he would die there.

In October they read out to us that we were released and they issued us passports. A week after we had been released, I joined a group of men and we went to the army. Our journey lasted for about a month. We came to the assembly point in Totskoye, where I was assigned to the 1st company of the Lwów Battalion.