

WŁADYSŁAW OTTO

1. Personal details (name, surname, rank, field post office number, age, occupation, marital status):

Second lieutenant Władysław Otto, 33 years old, no children; 11th Railway Sapper Battalion, workshop company.

2. Date and circumstances of arrest:

I was taken prisoner with my fellow officers from the battalion from the village Błudów, near Horchowo in Wołyń, on 20 September 1939. During the transport through the village, there was a shooting. As a result of this shooting, the Ukrainians killed our chauffeur, Wiśniewski, and wounded one sergeant. On the Ukrainian side 14 people were killed, and for that we were detained and charged (sentenced to five years).

3. Name of the camp, prison:

I stayed in the prison in Łuck (for about a year); after a year I was transferred to the prison in Kharkiv (where I stayed for a week), and after that to the North, to Komi. There were many people in the prison. Two thousand people were being kept there, while it was supposed to hold up to 600 people – because of that, it was really overcrowded. They let us take care of our bodily needs two times a day. Additionally, there was a *parasha* in every cell, usually full, so there was no hygiene at all. We had a bath every 10–14 days. When they searched me, they took my watch and many other things and never give them back, even though I tried to recover them. The labor camp in Komi (120 kilometers northeast from the city of Ukhta) was situated in the woods. It was made up of wooden buildings, covered with clay – they were dirty and full of bugs, people were all red and swollen from the bites of those bedbugs.

5. The composition of POWs, prisoners.

30 per cent were Poles, 20 per cent were Ukrainians, the rest – Russians. Political and criminal prisoners of low intellectual and moral standing. There were constant thefts, fights. The attitude towards Poles was very hostile. I didn't maintain friendly relations with anybody. I was the only hostage there.

6. Life in the camp, prison:

In prison, I used to do various types of work (before I was sentenced). There were constant searches, every two or three weeks. Food – 600 grams of bread and a stew. In the labor camp, the work was really hard – cutting down trees for 14 hours a day. Food – 500 grams of bread and a stew two times a day. After a year I received five rubles (4.99 to be exact) as remuneration. There was a movie once a month (a Soviet propaganda film).

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

It was inhuman (everyone who has been there knows it). They always said the same thing, that we wouldn't see Poland ever again, because there would be no Poland.

8. Medical assistance, hospitals, mortality rate (provide the names of the deceased):

It barely existed. The mortality rate was very high (I can't remember the names).

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

There wasn't any.

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

Under the amnesty, from 10 September 1941, I was released from the camp in Ukhta. From there I went to Tock [Totskoye], to the Polish Army, where I have enlisted in the railroad company.