

WŁADYSŁAW SŁUŻEWSKI

Senior Rifleman Władysław Służewski, born in 1909, [illegible], married.

I was arrested on 9 September 1940, in Białystok, for my absence at work during Christmas, and also [after] several [more] times of being absent [illegible] they called me *wrag Sowieckiego Sojuza* [enemy of the Soviet Union]. When they arrested me, they kept me in custody for 24 hours and then took me to the prison. I stayed there for three and a half months; living and hygienic conditions were terrible, food consisted of 600 grams of bread and water in the morning, half a liter of *parzonka*, that is, a kilo of groats for 200 liters of water – in other words, not a soup, but slop after washing the dishes. Dinners were the same. As for the hygienic conditions, whoever remembers and if he was in prison during Polish times, the stuffiness was terrible, because in a cell like mine, there were 185, while in Poland [there were] no more than 35, so that we were lying like cattle on top of each other. They let us out to the latrine [toilet] once a day, and all day we were doing our physiological needs in a cell. The windows were closed and the curtains above the windows were made of plywood so that nobody could see anyone in the yard or on the street, so you can imagine how pleasant the air was. Bedbugs and lice never gave up, day or night; we were allowed to go for a walk once every two weeks for ten minutes. These were prison conditions in the USSR.

Later, I was deported to the Gulags, where new agonies had begun; that is, labor and the Gulag's conditions: we woke up at 5:00 AM, at 6:30 AM *rozwod* [preparation?], and at 7:20 AM we marched out to work. The place of work was five kilometers away from the Gulag, the frost from 50 to 55 degrees, ragged and barefoot, we worked waist-deep in the snow in the forest. Life: *kipiatok* [boiling water] and 300 grams of bread, because no one could do a quota. This quota was impossible for a horse, let alone a man. They asked six people to drag 15 cubic meters of tree from a distance of half a kilometer to Birja [?], through ravines, in the snow up to two meters. And if he did not do it, they would lock him up in the *kandziej* [detention] for the night, where it was unheated, and where there were holes everywhere,

so that the wind blew frost inside; and on the next day in the morning, he was again, cold and hungry, chased to work. In such conditions, hungry, cold, and without a bath, in dirty underwear; lice would eat the whole your body.

I experienced such pleasure from 1 January to 25 August [1941]; place of stay, camps: Kołdonowo, *Omskoje Stroitelstwo*, *Murmańskaja Żelieznaja Doroga* [Siberia]. Later, after the Polish-Russian pact, I was released on 29 August. In Kandalaksha [a city in Kandalakshsky District], they loaded us on a ship and brought us to Arkhangelsk. In this city we were sitting at the station for two days, and then I left with my friends for Kuibyshev [Kuybyshevsky District of Novosibirsk Oblast], where there was a Polish outpost. We went to this outpost and they accepted us for transport from there. We left for Samarkand [a city in Uzbekistan, Central Asia], where we stayed for two weeks. There, again, was a pitiful sight – people were lying on the ground, adults and children, and a few thousand were lying in the garden near the station. I saw two corpses and one dead child with my own eyes. Then, they sent all Poles back to the kolkhozes and the mortal life began once more: they required hard work, impossible quotas. I was working at wadding, meaning that I had to collect cotton batting. The quota was 40 kg per man, but I could only collect 20 kg, so I did not receive 800 grams of bread, but only half of it; after a month only 500 and 300 grams, and then there was no bread at all; just 200 grams of unwashed rice and 150 grams of flour – it was all-day maintenance for every Pole in this Lenin kolkhoz between Samarkand and Krasnogvardeysk [a city in the central part of the Leningrad Oblast]. From four months on a kolkhoz, out of 14 of us, two died in 1941. Knowing that we could not stand it anymore, we quit the kolkhoz without any compensation, and six of us went to Krasnogvardeysk. We were lucky, because there was a transport of our army and we came to the commandant and asked him to enlist us in the army. The commander agreed, he accepted us, and we went to Guzor, where I was enlisted in the army where I am today.

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