

ZYGMUNT STAŃCZYK

Master Corporal Zygmunt Stańczyk, 29 years of age, railway official, single.

Date and circumstances of the arrest: After the Soviet Army's invasion of the Polish territory, I found myself under Soviet occupation. Although I stayed there as a soldier of the Polish Army with my cousins in Kowel, since I lived under German occupation I wanted to return home or go abroad. Because the Soviet authorities carried out a census in the area, and because I did not want to be listed as residing in territory occupied by the USSR, [I tried to cross the border, but then] the NKVD arrested me and sent me to prison in Włodzimierz Wołyński on 20 November 1939.

The prison conditions were horrible; Poles were placed in the basements, which before the war had served as State Police warehouses. 148 people were crammed into rooms four meters wide and five meters long. We slept sitting down or standing up because there was no room to lie down. I also did not receive a drop of water to wash myself with and there was no way of changing my underwear. People were covered in dirt and lice, and all sorts of diseases were prevalent. I counted the lice I killed: 60-80 per day.

In terms of nourishment, we received 500 grams of bread once a day, tea twice a day, and half a liter of soup once a day. Prisoners were checked twice a day, in the morning and evening, in the so-called *proverka* [test]. Every second day we were taken to prosecutors and judges for questioning. There, under the threat of death, they forced us to give testimonies admitting to false allegations, calling us *shpion* [spy] or *ofitser kapitalist* [officer capitalist], and adding that Poland would never rise.

After three months in prison in Poland, I was moved to a prison in Kherson near the Black Sea, where I was kept in similar conditions described above for four months. There, Poles were tried and received sentences of three, five, eight, or ten years in prison. The day after I was sentenced to five years in prison, I was transferred north to the labor camp Kandalaksha, in which there were over a thousand Poles. Straight away they warned me [of several things]; that the labor quota would be designated and whoever did not meet it would

be considered an enemy of the Soviet people, [that we] would only receive daily rations of 300 grams of bread and half a liter of fish soup twice a day, and [that we] would be tried again in court. Winter was especially bad because prisoners could not meet the quotas and as a result became physically weak and sick and died of hunger and cold (approximately 400 Poles died in this camp). Others who survived winter still had various diseases and were unable to work. [When the weather was] 50 degrees below zero, they did not take us out to work, but the barracks were not much warmer since they were built from fresh wooden boards. The holes let in the cold, and the moisture damaged our health. In summer, the work was very hard. [We did things] like digging sewer trenches in the swamps, logging, and constructing railway tracks.

Among the prisoners at the labor camp there were inmates of different nationalities such as Poles, Russians, Czechs, Romanians, Hungarians, and Jews. They served sentences for various offenses. I stayed in this camp until the announcement of amnesty, after which I was released and joined the Polish Army in the USSR.

10 March 1943.