

WACŁAW SZPARAGA

1. [Personal data:]

Corporal Wacław Szparaga, born on 23 December 1911, farmer, bachelor.

2. [Date and circumstances of arrest:]

My family and I were arrested on 10 February 1940. Two Soviet soldiers with rifles came to arrest us. They gave us 15 minutes to get dressed, but they didn't allow us to take anything with us, claiming that everything would be provided. They loaded us onto a wagon and took us to some house. During the rest of the day, they brought in more arrested people. At night, they took us to the station in Kosów Poleski, where they loaded us into train cars. They kept us at the station for two days. Nobody was let out of the cars. We set off after two days. During the journey, which lasted two weeks, they gave us warm soup every three days.

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

Arkhangelsk Oblast, the settlement of Vodopad, Plesetsky region. My task was to fell trees.

4. [Description of the camp, prison:]

The settlement was located in the woods and we lived in barracks. Larger families had their own houses, while smaller ones shared their apartments with other families.

5. [Social composition of prisoners, POWs, deportees:]

There were up to 300 people in the settlement, Polish deportees.

6. [Life in the camp, prison:]

Life in exile was very difficult. We worked from dawn until it got dark; we didn't celebrate any Polish holidays, and we had to celebrate their holidays, such as the 1st of May, the October Revolution, and others. Workers were given 200 grams of bread and some soup for dinner, while those who didn't work were given 40 grams of bread a day and a portion of soup that cost six kopecks. A lot of people suffered from swelling and died of hunger. Franciszek Szparaga, Tomasz Gołda, Stanisław Drązek, Jan Majduch, and many others whom I don't remember died in the settlement of Vodopad.

7. [Attitude of the authorities, the NKVD, towards Poles:]

The NKVD were constantly telling us that we should forget about Poland, that Poland no longer existed and would never exist again, and that we would never return to our country.

8. [Medical assistance, hospitals, mortality:]

The medical assistance was not good. A person was considered sick only when they had to be carried on a wagon, and if the person was able to walk on their own, they were considered healthy and just avoiding work.

9. [Was it possible to keep in touch with the home country and your family? If yes, what contacts were permitted?]

I had no contact with the home country or my family.

10. [When were you released and how did you join the army?]

I was released on 23 December 1941 and I headed in the direction of the Polish army in order to join them. I appeared before the draft board in Plesetsk and asked for instructions. They told me that the Polish army didn't need people, so I went on my own and joined the army in Jalalabad on 17 February 1942.

11. I don't know anything about the plebiscite because I was [then] in the area occupied by the Germans. In January I managed to get home, and in February I was arrested and deported to Russia.