

STEFAN SZUTOWICZ

[1. Personal data:]

Platoon Officer Stefan Szutowicz, born in 1899, butcher, married; I left my wife and three children behind; 104th Transport Company.

[2. Date and circumstances of arrest:]

Arrested on 12 May 1940 by the Soviet authorities as an “untrusted element” and swindler; imprisoned in the Grodno prison.

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

The Grodno prison from 12 May 1940 to 26 March 1941. On 20 March 1941, I was sentenced in absentia to three years in a labor camp and I was deported to the south of Russia, to the Pechora River, to the central labor camp in Usinsk region.

[4. Description of the camp, prison:]

Food in the camp: 600 grams of dark bread, a cube of sugar, half a liter of thin soup for dinner and half a liter of the same soup for supper.

The rooms were overcrowded. In a room, which under Polish administration would have been fit for 10 people, up to 60 people were now squeezed; the window was covered with a metal sheet, and it was possible to open just one window vent.

We slept on a bare floor or cement; it was all dirty. The walls were red because of the bedbugs and other vermin we killed on them – not only people were covered in lice, but also the walls and the ceilings. We didn't change or wash our underwear – we could wash it only in the baths while taking a shower, but if the turnkey saw it, we were locked in the punishment cell. We used our shoes as head rests, and we covered ourselves with jackets. Throughout the time I spent in the prison, I had a shower in the bathhouse five times. We went for a 5-minute walk every third day.

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

My companions in distress were Poles, Jews, Catholics and Orthodox, arrested on the charges of being "untrusted elements" – state and local clerks, police, military gendarmerie, engineers, merchants (as swindlers), wealthy peasants, farmers (as those who exploit someone else's work). For refusing to accept Soviet passports, for refusing to work in kolkhozes, and as settlers – Polish soldiers, volunteers from the previous war from 1918, 1919 and 1920 – they were arrested and deported.

[6. Life in the camp, prison:]

In the labor camps: The working day lasted from 6.00 a.m. to 12.00 and from 1.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m. The work quotas were impossible to meet, but for not meeting them the food rations were reduced to 250 grams of bread and boiling water (*kipiatok*).

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

The Soviet authorities were ruthless towards Poles. During interrogation, people had their fingers stuck in doors. They were beaten mercilessly, had their teeth knocked out, were kicked, thrown into an underground cell filled with water for 24 hours, locked in an underground dungeon without any food for up to six days, had needles stuck under their fingernails, and were judged in absentia.

[8. Medical assistance, hospitals, mortality:]

Medical assistance – there was only one type of medicine with which they treated all diseases.

When I was locked in an underground dungeon for five days, I saw through a [illegible] hole a sick and groaning man being dragged on stretcher on the floor, supposedly to the doctor, but after 15 minutes he was dragged back to the underground dungeon and thrown into a dark cell; he made no sounds then. Nobody checked on him for three days. I don't know who that poor man was.

In Kozhva, on my way to the labor camp, I saw a dead man being carried. He was a Polish senator, count Zamoyski.

[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 my home country and family.

They tried to make me believe that I would never see Poland again, that Soviet communism would conquer the entire world; that there was no God and that we didn't need churches or priests.

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

I was released from the labor camp on 27 September 1941 and transferred to a kolkhoz in Nukus by the Amu Darya River. In March 1942, I was summoned by the draft board and transferred to Czurżuj [?], from where I went to Persia with a group of civilians [?] and joined the Polish army.

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