

MIECZYŚŁAW ŁUPIŃSKI

Mieczysław Łupiński, rifleman, 6th Tank Battalion.

After a few months following the arrival of Soviets in Poland, the Soviet authorities began to arrest social activists and more important personalities. And so, in February 1940, a gradual deportation of Polish families commenced. Regardless of the great frost, they ruthlessly took mothers with small children, even though their husbands and fathers had been in prison for a long time. They came at night by car and ordered to pack one's belongings in an hour and did not allow to take more than 50 kilograms of luggage. They would take everyone, irrespective of their age and health condition – women who had given birth to a child two days earlier, which often resulted in such women dying during the transport to the station and children dying and freezing like animals due to the great frost and being thrown out of the wagons. They told my wife and children that they would go to my father who was in prison, and the Soviets said that no one was in prison in their country.

When I was arrested, the Soviet soldiers told me that I would be back home in a few hours. But this was a lie, because they took me to a prison in which I stayed from 20 January to 1 September 1940.

In the prison, where the room was intended for 40 people, they let in 140 people, who fainted due to the lack of air. They gave us soups with smelly fish (one liter a day), but we were so hungry that we ate them.

As for the interrogation, they conducted it only at night, when we were sleepy, and tortured us. Franciszek Radłowski, when he went to a *sledovatel* [an interrogator], they took all his clothes off, wrapped him with wet blankets and stood him between two hot stoves for him to admit his guilt, which he had no idea about. The interrogations were carried out by means of such tortures.

On 1 August [1940], we were loaded into wagons used for cattle transport, and they transported us a whole month. In the wagons it was very stuffy. They fed us salty fish which we, who were starving, had no choice but to eat. They did not give us water, so many people died of thirst. During the transport they kept telling us that there where we were going,

we would work and would have enough to eat. But unfortunately, when we reached the destination, which was the taiga, we had to work extremely hard. Me and other prisoners were running on empty, and those who couldn't work, would starve to death. At night we slept under the bushes, surrounded by guards, and it rained day and night. Terrible poverty prevailed in our camp, we threw out plenty of lice, but it was impossible to get rid of them. In the labor camp I sold my shoes and for the received money I bought black biscuits from my sick friend. These biscuits were taken from me and I was accused of preparing to escape. The quotas were so high that to meet them you had to remove 6 cubic meters of soil with a wheelbarrow or to saw or chop 7 cubic meters of wood. Nobody was able to meet such quotas and those who would not, received 300 grams of bread and half a liter of thin soup twice a day.

When a message came to our camp to release Poles, because the Polish army was being formed, a representative came to the labor camp division, who called me to the office and promised me various things, so that I would report to him what the Poles said and what was their attitude towards the Soviet authorities. I did not agree, so he forbade me to tell anyone about it or I would be shot.