



ANTONI BURJAN

I would like to supplement my questionnaire for former prisoners and deportees to the USSR as follows.

I was interned in Lithuania, in a military camp. After they took over Lithuania, the Soviets also took Poles under their "care", and thus in the morning hours of 12 July 1940 NKVD soldiers carried out body searches and counted us. This occurred in the township of Vilkaviškis, where the camp for Poles was located. Next they led us on foot, in groups of one hundred, to the train station four kilometers away. Before we were marched off, they announced that if any of us made just one false step to the left or to the right, firearms would be used without any forewarning. The escort was numerous and behaved with great severity. At the train station I and the others were loaded onto goods wagons; the windows were boarded shut, so it was completely dark and extremely stuffy inside. People lost consciousness. When we cried for the guards to give aid to the sick, they did not respond. We had to relieve ourselves in the wagon, and a terrible stench soon arose. We were transported in these conditions to Mołodeczno. In Mołodeczno they loaded us onto another wagon – similar to the first – and ferried us to Kozelsk.

On 15 February 1941, after the inquiries against all of us had been brought to a close (the Soviets considered us as politically suspect), I and the others were taken – as I have already stated – to Murmansk, traveling in an equally dark and stuffy wagon. Furthermore, when night fell the train would be halted a number of times, and during each stop NKVD soldiers would bang on the wagon walls with hammers. In all probability, they were worried that in spite of the strong guard and electric floodlights (which lit up the entire train) someone might try to escape.

On 5 June 1941 we were put on a ship in Murmansk. We were forced to wait outside for a whole day and night before they loaded us onto the vessel. A very strong wind blew gusts



of snow at us, making the waiting all the more difficult to bear; in addition, we were all hungry. Finally, we were put on the ship; it was so cramped on board that we were unable to sit. A Soviet prosecutor boarded the ship, and we turned to him with a complaint as to how we were being treated. He responded that the conditions were not that bad, and added that as enemies of the people we were being sent to die. On 17 June 1941 they offloaded us on the Kola Peninsula, at the spot where the Ponoy River flows into the White Sea. They forced us to work every day. We toiled twelve hours daily, not counting the time it took to get to the place of work. It took two hours to get there and back. The sick also had to work. Everyone was forced to toil at gunpoint, and the guards said that they would readily shoot us, for the country was in a state of war. On 13 July 1941 we were all loaded onto a ship and taken to Arkhangelsk. On 22 July they put us on a train heading for Vladimir. Conditions on the ship and the train were nearly the same as those which we had experienced previously. After arriving in Vladimir, we were driven on foot to Suzdal, some 40 kilometers distant. Those who couldn't walk were prodded with bayonets to keep moving. I was in this group, walking barefoot. Along the way one of the Poles, a policeman, wanted to draw some water from a well near the road. The commandant [illegible], an NKVD bastard, shot at him from his revolver, but missed. A commotion broke out. The escort set up their weapons and announced that they would shoot us. A similar situation arose further along the route. Throughout this time we received no food or water. We were not informed of our sentences. One of the NKVD officers who often came by the building in which I was detained in Kozelsk said that we had received sentences of 9 to 15 years in absentia.

Sergeant Antoni Burjan