



PAWEŁ DALIDOWICZ

Rifleman Paweł Dalidowicz, 30 years old, unmarried.

On 2 December 1939, when my attempts at crossing the Polish–Latvian border failed, I came back and was caught in the border zone by the Soviet border guard.

After the report was drawn up, I was sent to Słobódka, where I was under investigation for illegal border crossing. I spent a month and seven days in the prison in Słobódka. I was interrogated twice during that time. The prison was organized in a former post of the Border Protection Corps. There were small rooms there, used as cells. About sixty people were incarcerated in a cell four by five by three meters large, under hygienic conditions that were beyond the most primitive level. Everything was lice-infested, we didn't have a bathhouse, and we couldn't change our underwear. Our food rations consisted of tea and a 100-gram slice of bread; for dinner, half a liter of watery soup; for supper, half a liter of soup and a 100-gram slice of bread.

On 10 January 1940 I was transferred from Słobódka to the prison in Głębokie, where I was incarcerated in cell no 6. This prison was organized in a former monastery. The cell in which I was incarcerated was quite spacious, but it had walled-up windows. It housed from twenty to thirty prisoners. There were prisoners of various nationalities, but the majority had been charged with attempted border crossing.

I remained in Głębokie until 18 August 1940. I was interrogated twice during my stay. We didn't have any baths at all, the prisoners were plagued with lice, and we didn't change our underwear. It was only two months later that we were taken for a bath for the first time and our clothes were disinfected. The disinfection, however, resulted in the majority of our clothes being burned, so as a result we were divested of our only change of underwear and



also some outer garments. Our food rations consisted of 600 grams of bread and tea for breakfast, a bowl of soup for dinner and some watery soup for supper. The cells weren't aired, and we had to sleep directly on the floor, without mattresses or blankets.

There was a doctor in the prison. There were two cases of suicide, but I don't remember the surnames. There wasn't any possibility to get in contact with one's family.

At the beginning of August some prisoners, including me, were summoned and had their sentences read out: I was sentenced to five years of *trudovye lagery* [corrective camps].

Two weeks later I was deported together with four hundred other prisoners to Arkhangelsk. The journey lasted for 28–30 days. At the station in Głębokie we were loaded onto goods wagons of average capacity (18 tons), 45–50 people per wagon. Next the wagons were sealed. In Orsza we were transferred to larger wagons, but the number of people per wagon increased to about eighty. There were some days during our journey when we didn't receive any food, but usually the food rations consisted of a 1.8-kilogram loaf of bread per six people and a small fish known as "komsa", weighing up to 200 grams. At some bigger stations we received a bucket of water for the entire wagon. We had to relieve ourselves inside the wagon.

We arrived in Arkhangelsk at the beginning of September 1940. We stayed at an assembly point, where wooden barracks had been built. One barrack housed from 300 to 350 people. We didn't work there, as we were awaiting departure for the north. We received better food, as we had meals three times a day: tea and 400 grams of bread for breakfast, soup, groats, and sometimes fish for dinner, and soup for supper. There were from four to five thousand people in the assembly point. We had a bath every two weeks, but we didn't change our underwear and didn't receive any soap, so we could wash neither our underwear nor ourselves. There were many deaths and many people went insane.

In Arkhangelsk we were loaded onto a cargo ship and housed in former cabins. We traveled for four days and nights, and then we were unloaded in Nanarmanka [?], where we spent the night. Next we were loaded onto a river vessel and continued further north. This journey lasted for five days, and finally we were unloaded in the town of Użnawen [?].

A Gulag camp was already there, and its inmates were constantly working. Large tents, furnished with double pallets, were put up in the camp; each had to house four



hundred people. There were about two thousand people in that camp, all of them well-known Polish citizens of Polish nationality. We were divided into brigades. There were about twenty people in one brigade: in mine, the foreman was a Russian. A friendly atmosphere prevailed.

I worked in the docks at unloading ties and rails, and other prisoners worked also in the nearby camps felling trees. We worked from dawn to dusk with a one-hour break. We received food twice a day: soup and groats for breakfast and for supper also soup and groats, and bread. The quantity and quality of meals depended on the amount of work done, as there were regulations specifying the work quotas. If a prisoner failed to meet the quota, he received a watery, fat-free pea or wheat soup for breakfast, and for supper the same soup and approx. 400–450 grams of bread. If a prisoner filled at least 120% of the quota, he received 900 grams of bread per day, soup and groats, and sometimes fish. One had to meet at least 100% of the quota to receive food that would sate one's hunger at least to some degree. We weren't issued any clothes, so we had to work in our own, ragged garments. The majority had to do without any shoes, with feet wrapped in rags. Only those who filled 120% of the quota were paid – their remuneration amounted to eight to ten rubles per month. The prisoners didn't receive cigarettes or shag tobacco. There was a health facility, but it was difficult to obtain exemption from work.

After two months we left the camp and went to a site situated about eighteen kilometers away, where we were placed in mud huts. One hut had to house about twenty people. We were tasked with clearing snow from a part of the road that was eight kilometers long and nine meters wide. We appointed a cook for each group. Our food consisted of peas, groats, and fish, and sometimes we had meat and bread. In March 1941 I was transferred to a Gulag camp in Wieszkuria [?], where I stayed until 26 May 1941. I worked there at removing ice from barges and docking them, and also at loading these barges and other vessels. From Wieszkuria we went to a camp in Aszurek[?]. There were about four barracks there. At the site we learned that over five hundred prisoners had lived there during winter, but all of them had died of hunger or from various diseases. The corpses had been thrown out into the snow, so we collected them during the thaw and buried them in mass graves, a dozen or so bodies in one pit. From the whole hamlet only two inmates, who had been working in the bathhouse, survived, and they escaped death because they had left the hamlet earlier. We stayed there from 30 May to 2 September 1941, and on that day we



left for Pechora, where each of us received his *udostoverenie* [certificate of release]. Then we left in a transport to Kotlas, and on 3 February 1942, after several weeks on the road, I joined the Polish Army in Lugovoy.