



## **PIOTR KURYŁOWICZ**

### **1. Personal data (name, surname, rank, Field Post Office number, age, occupation, marital status):**

Gunner Piotr Kuryłowicz, 25 years old, shoemaker by profession, unmarried, Field Post Office no. 160.

### **2. Date and circumstances of arrest:**

I was arrested in Augustów on 12 October 1939 for attempted crossing of the Soviet-German border.

### **3. Name of the camp, prison or forced labor site:**

I was in prisons in Poland in Augustów, Grodno and Brześć for 6 months, and in Gulag camps in the North for a year and 7 months.

### **4. Description of the camp, prison etc. (grounds, buildings, housing conditions, hygiene):**

Collective camp [?]. Very dirty, insufficient food: 300 grams of bread and half a liter of watery soup once a day. We couldn't shave or [illegible]; there were so many lice that there were piles of them. The prison in Augustów: lousy food and cramped conditions – while one person slept, two had to sit. The journey from Grodno to Brześć took three days. The conditions were horrible, because the weather was frosty and we didn't get anything to eat; we received 100 grams of bread only when we reached our destination.

In the camps I worked at railroad construction and received meager food. The quota was to cart off 7 cubic meters to a distance of 50 to 200 meters. We got 300 grams of bread and had to work barefooted, without decent clothes. We had to dig and cart off earth, the quota and the distance were as I said above.

### **5. The composition of POWs, prisoners, exiles (nationality, categories of crimes, intellectual and moral standing, mutual relations etc.):**

The camps were called colonies, and each comprised from 200 to 300 prisoners. They were of various nationalities: Poles, Russians, Carpathian Ukrainians, Czechs – and they were



imprisoned for crossing the border or for crimes committed in the Russian-controlled part of Poland. The Poles were greatly harassed by the escort and by the other senior camp staff. We were tortured to such an extent that the sick were dragged by the legs to work. They were moreover kicked on the way there.

**6. Life in the camp, prison etc. (daily routine, working conditions, work quotas, remuneration, food, clothes, social life etc.):**

When we arrived at the colony, beyond the Pechora River, we lived in tents, even though the temperatures fell to 40 degrees below zero. We returned from work all wet and had to go to sleep still soaking. Three months later, they erected barracks. At the time three fourths of the prisoners were ill. At first there were 200 people in the colony, but half of them died as a result of illness.

There were no clothes at all; for the first nine months I wore my own clothes, the ones in which I had been arrested. I never washed them, as we were short even of drinking water; we drank water from puddles after it rained.

Mutual relations were very strained. The Russians couldn't stand the Poles, they shouted at us.

**7. The NKVD's attitude towards Poles (interrogation methods, torture and other forms of punishment, Communist propaganda, information about Poland, etc.):**

The interrogations by the NKVD were harsh: they threatened you, gun in hand, and ordered you to face the wall. They constantly repeated that there wasn't and wouldn't be any Poland. The interrogations took place exclusively at night, three times a night. My punishment: five years, ruled in absentia. They just summoned me, read out the sentence and threw me into a different cell.

**8. Medical care, hospitals, mortality rate (provide the surnames of those who perished):**

It was difficult to get medical assistance, and you weren't treated as a sick person if you didn't run a temperature of at least 37 degrees. One Jew was extremely exhausted and couldn't work. One foreman pushed him, and then another. They took him back to the colony and he died a few hours later. It was in the 41st colony, 1st *otdeleniye* [section] behind the Pechora River. I know only his surname: Szemach, from the vicinity of Lwów.



**9. Was there any possibility of getting in contact with one's country and family?**

I wrote to my family twice, but received no answer. I couldn't write any more, as it was impossible to obtain any paper. They said that they couldn't send us any until they had built the railway.

**10. When were you released and how did you get through to the Polish Army?**

I was released behind Vorkuta on 22 August 1941. We went by barges and train to Kotlas, moving very slowly. In Kotlas we waited seven days because they couldn't get us a train. We couldn't buy any food, absolutely nothing. You had to go to the NKVD, where they would issue you a card for 200 grams of bread, and then you had to queue for it till evening. You either got it or not. There were many of those who didn't.

They issued us certificates and tried to talk us into staying for work or joining the Russian Army; they said that the Polish Army might or might not be organized.

Towards the end of October we went from Kotlas to Buzuluk, but we didn't reach the latter, going to Tashkent instead. There we were told that there wasn't any Polish representation. They took us to Nukus, where we had to work in a kolkhoz for 400 grams of wheat. From Nukus we went to Guzar, and there I joined the army on 12 February 1942.