



TELESFOR KACZMAREK

Platoon Officer Cadet Telesfor Kaczmarek, born on 26 December 1910, tax office clerk, married.

On the night of 1–2 March 1940, in my house in Pińsk at Lewkowska Street 12. The house was surrounded: there was a uniformed militiaman by the window, and another militiaman in plain clothes by the entrance door. An NKVD functionary in plain clothes and a uniformed militiaman, the latter with a bayonet fitted to his gun, entered the flat. The flat was thoroughly searched, I was served with an arrest warrant, and my collection of photographs and various personal papers were seized. Following a two-hour search, I was taken to the NKVD headquarters at Albrechtowska Street and incarcerated in a dungeon for 10 minutes. Then an investigation was conducted with the use of various interrogation methods, such as threatening me with a revolver, throwing an inkstand at me, ordering me to stand to attention, kicking me on the ankles, and other forms of harassment. This lasted for four hours, until dawn, and was later repeated every few days until 30 May. On that day the investigation was brought to a close, and I was transferred to the prison at Brzeska Street in Pińsk. It was a brick prison, with many windows boarded up; there was filth, lice, and 90 people incarcerated in a cell that was meant to hold 30. Food: 600 grams of soggy black bread, twice a day some hot watery soup with millet, or else [illegible] plus 20 grams of sugar.

From 3 October 1940 – the prison in Brześć nad Bugiem, the fortress. From eight to ten people were incarcerated in a so-called single cell.

I remained in Brześć until 22 May 1941. The food was slightly better there – usually a hasty pudding of whole meal flour, sometimes porridge or beans. We had a bath every week and changed underwear every second week. From time to time we could buy some tobacco or cigarettes. Mixed composition [of prisoners]: peasants, civil servants, representatives of the



liberal professions, laborers, criminal offenders, bandits. The majority were imprisoned for being a Pole or for cooperating with the Polish authorities. The intellectual level was varied and depended on the education received – peasants were in the majority, but almost all were literate. The moral standing was rather high, and there were few cases of spiritual collapse; deep faith in a quick liberation and great religiosity prevailed. The peasants were in the best shape, both physically and morally.

From 22 May to 16 September 1941 – including a very tiring journey, during which we received nothing but salty fish and no water – I was imprisoned in the camp of Vorkuta on the Usa River. I worked there loading and unloading barges, usually with enormous logs. The work depended on the arrival of barges. Sometimes I worked for three days and nights only with short meal breaks, and sometimes I remained unoccupied for the whole week. I had my own clothes, which were ragged. We lived in mud huts together with rats, lice and bugs. Social life thrived in small groups of people, who stayed together in order to obtain food by all possible means. We received the same food for all the different kinds of work – either oat soup or millet meal. 700 grams of bread per day. Sometimes, for exceeding the work quota, one received half a liter of milk.

The NKVD's attitude towards us was negative. We met with mendacity and hypocrisy at every step, and their sole goal was to work us to the bone.

Once I was out of prison there wasn't any medical assistance.

From the time of my arrest until deportation from Poland I knew what was going on thanks to newcomers in the prison, who told us all the news and sometimes sneaked in some Russian newspapers, such as *Pravda* and *Izvestia*. After being deported from the prison to the camp, I lost all contact with my country. I didn't have any contact with my family from my arrest until June 1942. The NKVD functionaries claimed that Poland had never existed throughout the whole of history and that it never would, and we – if we would keep working efficiently – might one day occupy high positions in the Bolshevik state and be awarded high Bolshevik decorations.

I was released on the basis of the amnesty of July 1941. I left Vorkuta on 16 September 1941 and travelled all over Russia in pursuit of the Polish Army, which was allegedly being raised in all sorts of places. Finally I appeared before the Soviet-Polish draft board in Bukhara, from



where I was sent to Chokpak, where the 8th Division was being formed. I was admitted into the Polish Army on 21 February 1942.