



JAN POPOWSKI

1. Personal data:

Senior Wachtmeister Jan Popowski, born in 1888, farmer-agronomist, military settler, married.

2. Date and circumstances of arrest:

On 10 February 1940 at 6.00 a.m., three Soviet policemen arrived at my place and found me harnessing horses to the sleigh, as I was about to go to the mill for flour. Having shouted "ruki vverkh!" [hands up], they approached me, searched me for weapons and told me to go to the house. Then they ordered me to sit down, placed themselves in front of me with their guns at the ready and [didn't allow] me to move.

About half an hour later an NKVD man arrived, took some paper from his car, read out some articles of theirs and gave me 20 minutes to pack our belongings, as we were to be deported to some oblast. I myself didn't dare move, but they brought the local scum who took out some items and loaded them onto cars, and then they took me and my family, consisting of seven children and my wife, to the train station.

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

And so they transported us to the Arkhangelsk Oblast, Lednia hamlet, Lensk District, on the Vychegda River.

4. Description of the camp, prison:

The work was very tiring, felling trees in the forest: the snow was over waist-deep and in wintertime the temperatures fell to minus 50 degrees. The work quota was to cut down up to 3.5 cubic meters – I earned from two to three rubles per day. With such meager wages I couldn't feed seven small children and my sickly wife. As a result, my family suffered unspeakable hunger. I was constantly hungry, and so were my kids.

5. The composition of prisoners-of-war, inmates, exiles:

There were about 120 people. 80 percent were Poles, and the rest were Ukrainians; the majority had worked in the forest service. The Poles were treated by the administration in



a vulgar manner. We were told at every meeting, you Poles stop thinking that England will spasić [save] you, your zhizn [life] is here; they also tried to talk us into building houses for ourselves.

6. Life in the camp, prison:

It was a barren, joyless life; hunger plagued us to such an extent that we couldn't even manage to stand for a bit to have a chat. Everyone thought that he had been deported from Poland to Russia for extermination, as the toughest animal wouldn't withstand such hunger, let alone a fine Polish man.

7. The NKVD's attitude towards Poles:

The local authorities were very hostile; first of all, they tried to imbue us with communism: our children in schools and in orphan asylums, and us during various meetings.

8. Medical assistance, hospitals, mortality rate:

Medical assistance was deficient and inadequate, and we were required to provide grounds for requesting it.

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

Contact with our country was limited, but families provided help very regularly.

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

Following the amnesty, on 15 September, we were taken to "Wnukus", and from there we were sent to various kolkhozes. Two weeks later we were transported to Uzbekistan and again distributed among various kolkhozes. My family and I were sent to the Enkalop kolkhoz in Buslan region, with a train station in Kuzel (train depot). And so on 10 February 1942 I joined the Polish Army. From February to 15 April, three of my little children and my wife died from hunger – we received no help from Polish welfare services, and in the kolkhoz we sometimes didn't receive any food for two days in a row.