

## PIOTR SIERKOWSKI

Senior Uhlan [Cavalryman] Piotr Sierkowski, born 29 June 1902 in Lipsko (Lublin Voivodeship, Zamość district, Mokre commune), residing since 1922 in Mańków colony (Wołyń Voivodeship [Volhynia], Horochów [Horokhiv] district, Kisielin [Kysylyn] commune), farmer, married (wife: Nadzieja, born 1907 and four children: daughter Emilia, born 1927; son Adolf, born 1928; daughter Alicja, born 1932; and daughter Teresa, born 1936).

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On 10 February 1940, in the morning, I was captured with my family, taken to the train station in Wojnica, and locked in a train car. There were six families in the car, a total of 30 people, and we were transported this way, in a locked car, until 2 March, that is for 22 days. During that transport, we were each given a piece of bread and soup three times. We had some of our own flour and that's how we kept ourselves fed. If we wanted to cook something, [it was difficult because] very often there wasn't enough water, and [also] because of this water shortage, everyone was dirty and we had lice all over us. The children suffered from this the most.

On 2 March, we arrived at a *posyolok* [hamlet] in Arkhangelsk Oblast, Nyandoma district. There, they let us out of the train and led us to barracks, to big rooms (they were called *obshchezhyte* [common living; large dormitory rooms]), where there was very little space and lots of bugs that wouldn't let you sleep at night.

On the second day, we were called before the medical commission consisting of two women and the chief officer, and they determined the health categories [we were to be divided into]. They split us in brigades and made us go to the forest to work. Even my ill wife was deemed healthy. For the forest labor, one had to keep up with daily standards, which would be enough to provide for the family, if one's members were all capable of work. In my case, only I could work, which meant endless shortages, with the only rescue relying on selling belongings: watches, suits, etc. Russians who lived there weren't allowed to talk to us. They were told that we were Polish criminals and enemies of the

Soviet Union. On 13 May 1940, I was taken with my family to another *posyolok*; the living conditions were the same.

Further interrogations by the NKVD took place in the chief officer's office, behind locked doors. I was examined once and I got scared because he [an NKVD officer] put his Nagant on the table and said: "Look," pointing at the table, "you tell us the truth about what you were back in that rotten Poland that is gone forever now, and if you don't they will straighten you out in prison." Once the interrogation was over, he forbade me to ever tell anyone where I had been and what I had been asked about.

There were 48 Polish families in the *posyolok*.

The medical aid was such, that if somebody was sick, they had to wait an entire week for a feldsher, who had [illegible] some iodine tincture and aspirin, and then she would just tell one to eat well because, as she said, all medicines are needed for the army.

My daughter Wanda, born in 1934, caught pneumonia and suffered from it for four months. After countless requests and with much opposition from the chief officer, he finally gave permission and a *propusk* [pass, permit] to get her to the hospital, where she stayed for two weeks before they told us to take her back and, again, just have her eat well. She suffered for two more weeks with no medical aid; she got encephalitis and died in agony on 16 July 1941.

My father, Michał Siekierkowski, died in the same *posyolok* on 30 July 1941. Other people I had known who died were: Klepka, Ulanicki, [another] Ulanicki, Koszybowa, Jakubik, Tymińska, Cichocka, Czerwińska, [another] Czerwińska, [illegible], and others whose names I don't remember.

Before the war, communication was possible and unlimited; [before] the Soviet-German war, I mean.

In August 1941, the amnesty [for Polish citizens in the Soviet Union] was proclaimed, we received *udostoverenie* [a type of identification card/certificate], and on 8 September we were released from the *posyolok*. We left for Saratov. We travelled for two weeks on our own expense, we had to pay for tickets and buy necessities with our own money, which we didn't have enough of, and we had to suffer [through] hunger on the road. When we arrived in Saratov, the Soviet evacuation office assigned us to work in *kolkhozes* in the German

Povolzhye. There, we could work on a *kolkhoz* and it made life possible. We let the Polish authorities know about our presence and they told us to stay there and wait for a message concerning our departure.

Wachtmeister Dąbrowski, from the 5th Infantry Division, arrived on March 1942 in Tatishchevo, and took us by military transport from Tatishchevo to Jalalabad. We were sent from there to temporary work on a *kolkhoz* in Bazar-Kurhan, where on 20 July 1942, I joined the Polish army as a part of the 5th Infantry Division, *Rej. Bud. Kwat.* [possibly: Regional Management of Quarters and Buildings] platoon.

Place of stay, 14 March 1943