

EDWARD BODNAR

Report on prison journeys

I met Colonel Wędziagolski on a prison transport from Minsk to Polotsk. This old man full of national dignity and national pride had become extremely weak by the end of the journey and asked his fellow travelers to help him walk further.

In Polotsk, a group of prisoners [numbering] a hundred people were taken over by a large convoy of people and dogs. Colonel Wędziagolski informed the prison governor that he was not able to walk because he felt sick. However, he was mocked and told to walk. We took Colonel Wędziagolski under his arms and we walked 300 m in this way. Colonel Wędziagolski, however, weakened completely, collapsed and dangled entirely on our arms. [He was] was virtually carried by us, delayed the transport and created a macabre spectacle for the passers-by of Polotsk. The prison governor, a young lieutenant, only now stopped the transport and ordered the colonel to be put on the prison cart, which had arrived in the meantime. Having determined who was ill, he escorted him personally together with his dog.

Colonel Wędziagolski was put on the ground in the prison yard. After our group of prisoners arrived, he was ordered to stand. An attempt by the deputy governor of the prison to lend him assistance met with harsh mockery on the part of the governor, who kicked the colonel to his feet.

I shared Colonel Wędziagolski's fate in a prison cell in Polotsk from 12 May until 18 June 1941, when the dying old man was called to be transported. During this period, Col. Wędziagolski's state had deteriorated significantly—angina, heart attacks and constant diarrhea caused a complete loss of strength and disbelief in his chances of surviving a difficult journey. All attempts to have Colonel Wędziagolski taken to the hospital were to no avail. During the prison governor's visits to the cell, Colonel Wędziagolski gave impertinent and brusque answers. He was quiet and withdrawn in the cell. He interacted with me more closely. Recently, it was hard for him to even speak. He sensed his end approaching and therefore asked me to tell his daughter Anna Argasińska (wife of the Undersecretary of State in the Ministry for Posts and Telegraphs) in Bornerowo village, Warsaw, about his journeys.