



AUGUSTYN BOLESŁAW

1. Personal data:

Platoon Leader [illegible] Bolesław Augustyn, born 1902, post office clerk, widower, [?] Street.

2. Methods and conditions of the forcible expulsion of the civilian population.

Everyone who left the German-occupied territories was required to register at the local administration office (the commune or city board) and at the police station. During the registration people were given special questionnaires to fill out. In addition to some personal data, these questionnaires contained such questions as: were you a member of any political party or organization? If so, what party or political organization were you a member of? Do you want to stay where you are or do you want to go back to the German-occupied territories? Do you have any relatives in Russia? How do you provide for your family?

Right after their arrival in the eastern territories, the Soviets launched a large-scale propaganda campaign aimed at encouraging people to go to Russia. They promised good salaries, travel allowances. We were also given "permission" to choose a place we would like to be in. When this propaganda turned out to be to no avail, they began deporting the civilian population deep into Russia. The order in which particular groups of people were deported was as follows: foresters, State Police officers, wealthy farmers, Polish settlers and their families, refugees. Deportations were carried out in the following way: during night raids, in order to prevent people from escaping, their homes were surrounded. Those who were detained were thoroughly searched, and so were their apartments. The detainees were told they were being taken home, and by home the Soviets meant the places people had indicated in the questionnaires mentioned above. Some were given half an hour, others even less. Then they were taken, usually without having been allowed to pack everything up, to assembly points – the NKVD stations or other enclosed and guarded areas. After about twenty hours of being detained at such a point, I and my family (my wife and two children) were transported to the train station and brought out of the country in closed railway cars. During our journey, which lasted thirteen days, we weren't given a morsel of bread. Only twice did they give us some soup. The conditions in which we traveled were horrible. The



cars, apart from being closed and filled to overcrowding (there were forty people in one car), were also infested with lice. There was no water. Nor was there any toilet. Consequently, we had to defecate inside, in the presence of women and children. Since it was difficult to buy anything to eat, we suffered from starvation and exhaustion, which affected especially little children. We were taken to Kotobw [?], Swierdlovsk Oblast, Novolyalinsky region, quarter 54. It was a little hamlet.

3. Life in the countryside. The Soviet authorities' attitudes towards Poles sent into exile without court convictions:

- a) Terrain. Boggy forests, malarial territory.
- b) Living conditions: I was allotted a single room, three by three meters, in an old house with pane-less windows, a leaky roof and a leaky ceiling. I don't know how much I paid because the rent was deducted from my earnings. I wish to note that my room was infested with bedbugs and a variety of other insects that couldn't be disposed of in any way. Throughout my time there, there was nowhere to bathe. Nor was our room ever fumigated.
- c) Food. There was a canteen, but only the laborers equipped with special cards were allowed to use it, having to pay for the meals they were served there. Food, in terms of both its quantity and quality, wasn't adequate to meet the needs of people performing heavy physical work. There was also a food storeroom. It sold nothing but bread and, occasionally, frozen potatoes, equally frozen cabbage, and some groats. My wife was ill. She almost never left her bed. My eight-year-old daughter didn't work either. My son, older than my daughter, worked on an irregular basis. Consequently, I had to work alone to feed my family. I shared with them every morsel of bread I earned. It is clear that we were always hungry and exhausted.
- d) Work quotas. I. We were required to cut down 2.2 cubic meters of brown wood, to chop off its branches, to saw it into one-meter long pieces, to remove the bark and to arrange it into woodpiles. The remuneration for this work was 8.5 rubles. II: 22 cubic meters of wood had to be loaded onto the sledge and then tied up so it could be transported to its destination.
- e) Working conditions. We worked in the woods, regardless of the weather, be it freezing cold or rainy, and we had to cover a distance of at least 4 kilometers to get to our workplace.



As a way of forcing my family to work, they sent me to work 70 kilometers away from where we stayed. As a result I wasn't in touch with my family for a period of two to three months. In this way my family was forced to work hard to earn their living.

- f) The composition of deportees. Polish citizens and people resettled from Ukraine and the Dnieper Ukraine.
- g) Sanitary conditions. Given the lack of medicinal and protective products, sanitary conditions were unsatisfactory.
- h) Working hours. We were required to work from 7.00 a.m. to 6.00 p. m., but it was necessary for us to work longer.
- i) Clothing conditions. We received only shoes, padded pants and a padded long-sleeved vest. The price of the clothing was deducted from our pay.
- j) Entertainment and cultural life. Films and propagandistic books.
- k) Contact with your country. I received four letters and one food package.
- l) The local authorities' attitude towards displaced persons. Being treated like prisoners, we weren't allowed to go around freely. No passes were issued. We were cunningly interrogated by special agents: what we were doing back in Poland, what were the social and political relations in our country, what organizations we belonged to.
- m) Remuneration. We were paid up to 70 rubles for two weeks' work.
- n) Communist propaganda: Massive propaganda efforts. Films and books aside, meetings to spread communist propaganda were held two or three times a week.
- o) The mortality rate was rather low, but there wasn't a single man in good health.

3. Life upon release from your settlements. The assistance of the Soviet authorities.

The severe hardship I suffered in Russia actually began upon my release from the settlement in which we stayed. Having been told that it was necessary for me to leave, I was thrown out of my lodging and deprived of the right to buy bread or anything else to eat. It was at the end of May 1941. Forced to sell the rest of the bedding, I managed to set some money aside to go to Buzuluk in order to join the army there and to consign my wife and children to the care of the Polish authorities. Upon reaching my destination, I learned that the Polish army



units in Buzuluk had already been fully assembled. I was advised to go to Tashkent. There is no space here to describe all the nights spent on the streets in Samarkand (about three weeks). The Soviet authorities saw the Poles walking around but offered them no help. My family and I had run out of all the material means we had at our disposal, having been left with no other option but to search the streets and marketplaces for some leftovers still fit for consumption – lost potatoes, vegetables etc. We also had to look for tree branches to get a fire going and cook the "products" we had found. It is easy to imagine that under such conditions we were full of lice. Lice, physical exhaustion, hunger, dirt and cold – these are all factors likely to result in typhus fever. We all fell ill, even though I was at that time living in the kolkhoz near Samarkand. My children were the first to develop the disease, then my wife and myself. My wife never recovered. She died on 21 January 1942. My children, following a period of ill health, emaciated and starving, were sent to the Polish orphanage. They went alone. Still burning with fever, I remained. I had no strength to stand up. The orphanage was twelve kilometers away from where I was staying. Two weeks after my children's departure, the crisis of my illness was over and, thanks to people's help, I recovered to the point of being able to go to Kermine and join the Polish army there.

I wish to add that at that time typhus had already reached epidemic proportions, but the Soviet authorities offered us no help.