



KAZIMIERZ BARTOSZKO

Platoon Sergeant of the Reserve Kazimierz Bartoszko, a pensioned officer of the tax inspection service, born on 9 October 1898, married, with two children.

After the Soviet Red Army entered Wilejka in the district of Wilno, Wilno voivodeship, during the night from 1 to 2 October 1939 my flat was visited by two NKVD lieutenants who were accompanied by two policemen and ten soldiers.

They demanded that I give up my weapons. When I replied that I had none, they proceeded to search my household. They found nothing, however they took my private letters, photographs and documents, and then arrested me. I was taken to the NKVD building in Wilejka Powiatowa. After leading me into one of the rooms, they started taking down my personal details, whereafter one of the NKVD men declared that I was a partisan and a spy, and that I had encouraged people to join the partisans in order to kill Bolsheviks. When I responded that this was a whopping lie, one of them kicked me in the stomach so hard that I lost consciousness.

Having come to, I determined that I was in a cellar of some sort, while when I sat up one of the NKVD men entered and ordered me to get up and walk to another room. There were two more NKVD men in that room, and they had just started writing poems (of all things!). When I started saying that I knew nothing, they would hurl abuse at me, shouting: – *You Polish fuck, you Polish swine – you want Sikorski, do you now? You will die like the whore that you are.*

They kept me in the cellar for nearly two months, whereafter I was taken to prison. There were many arrestees in the prison, so there was hardly enough place to sleep, for 48 or 50 people would be crammed into a cell which before the War housed no more than 12 to 16. The food was terrible, while medical care – although officially existing – was poor, because they would admit you to the infirmary only if they were sure that you would die the next day.



Initially, the detainees were civil servants and local government officials, but they were soon followed by local civilians, military men, people arrested for various crimes, and former Polish soldiers who had managed to escape from German captivity and return to their homes by declaring that they were of Belorussian nationality.

Mutual relations between prisoners were on the whole friendly.

Before the German-Russian war broke out, the Soviets arrested all the pharmacists, doctors, teachers and, in general, all people of Polish descent. On 24 June 1941 our entire group, exactly 1,848 men, were thrown out of the prison. Next, they detached a few arrestees from the group. These were the following men: Abakanowicz, a former railwayman from Zalesie in the district of Mołodeczno; secondary school student Bielewicz, the son of the accountant of the Wilno Regional Diet; Tarasiewicz, the son of a landowner from Kurzeniec; Tarasiewicz from Wilejka; and Jankiewicz, the son of a watchmaker from Wilejka. They were executed by firing squad on the spot in Wilejka. Along the way, one of the Soviet policemen said something like this: – *You will die like those left behind in the prison – shot dead.* We were driven on foot along the road from Wilejka to Barysaw for seven days, without any hot food, bread, or water; on occasion, when our column was not being bombed by German aircraft, they would give us a little bread and water.

During the march many of ours were killed by the NKVD, for whenever someone collapsed by the roadside from exhaustion, he would be shot. And thus I witnessed the murder of Hranicki from Wilejka Powiatowa and Babicz, a pensioned officer of the State Police who had a shop in Woropajewo. The son of Mironowicz, an Orthodox priest from Wilejka, died immediately upon our arrival in Barysaw, and his body was thrown out of the wagon by the NKVD. More than 846 of us made the journey to Ryazan from Wilejka, however the rest died of hunger or were killed by the NKVD (those who were unable to walk on).

The medical care, hygienic conditions and food in Ryazan prison were just as poor as in Wilejka.

On 1 September 1941, I was summoned to the prison office, where I was informed that I had been amnestied by the Supreme Soviet and was presently being asked to agree to work in a factory somewhere, or perhaps in a kolkhoz. When I declared that I would not take up work, for I would probably be arrested again in a week or so, the prison director said: – *If so, then you shall be sent to join the Polish Army.* I was issued a railway ticket and a loaf and a half of



bread, and sent to Buzuluk. I arrived at my destination on 9 September 1941 and directed to Totskoye, where I was conscripted into the Polish Army.

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