



## LUDWIK BILIŃSKI

### 1. Personal data:

Ludwik Antoni Biliński, second lieutenant in permanent active service, 24 years old, unmarried, 6th Tank Unit.

### 2. Date and circumstances of arrest:

I was arrested in Mizun, Dolyna district, upon crossing the Hungarian border.

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

I was incarcerated in prisons in Stanisławów, Starobilsk, Artyomovsk, Kharkiv, and the labor camp of Yertsevo, Alexeyevka I and II.

### 4. Description of the camp, prison etc.:

The prison (its living conditions) is best described by the following example: in Stanisławów, there were 18 of us in a double cell, and in other prisons it wasn't possible to lie down, one had to either sit with crouched legs or stand. Food, devoid of any fat, was issued irregularly, we were in need of underwear and couldn't get virtually anything from home. Despite the fact that the temperatures fell to 35 degrees below zero, they would keep us out in the cold for an hour after a hot bath, when some wore nothing but a shirt, and as a result a lot of people fell gravely ill. The prison in Artyomovsk remembered the times of Catherine II – no window panes, concrete, 190 people per cell, everyone sitting on what they had with them, no medical assistance – some medical care only for those who dropped from exhaustion.

Transport to the camp in the winter of 1940 – no coal, draughty wagons, no hot meals. On the way to the camp we received [...] grams of bread and water from melted snow.

In the labor camp there were wooden barracks with pallets, and although we worked in the woods, we didn't have any firewood in the barracks, and we were also short on foodstuffs, especially after the outbreak of the war.



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

The prisoners were of various nationalities and intellectual levels; the majority were political prisoners. The moral standing was rather low, as evidenced by thefts and even murders. There were cases of playing for people's lives: the one who lost had to murder a given person; this happened in Alexeyevka I. Mr. Duda, a clerk in the excises and monopoly office, was murdered in the camp [in this way].

## **6. Life in the camp, prison:**

In the prison the day began at 5.00 a.m. with a roll-call, then at 6.00 a.m. we had breakfast, dinner at noon, and supper at 5.00 p.m. Absolute silence was required – loud conversation or singing resulted in incarceration in the dark cell, preceded with sound beating. Regardless of the season, in the dark cell the prisoner wore only underwear and had to survive on 300 grams of bread. In theory, we had a 10-minute walk every day, but in practice we had a walk once every two to three weeks.

A day in the camp looked as follows: in winter, the wake-up was at 6.00 a.m., setting off for work at 7.00 a.m., and returning at 5.00 p.m., and in summer the wake-up was at 4.00 a.m., setting off for work at 5.00 a.m., and returning at 7.00 p.m. The work was very hard, as shown by the work quotas: 6.5 fm [?] of sawed lumber, 4.5 fm [?] of firewood, clearing a passage through the snow or stump-clearing – 32 running meters.

Food: breakfast – half a liter of soup (colored water without any fat) and two spoons of groats; supper – a liter of soup and groats; the amount of bread we received depended on meeting the work quota and varied from 300 to 900 grams, and during the war from 200 to 700 grams.

We worked without gloves, shoes or warm clothes. We didn't go to work when the temperatures fell to 45 degrees below zero. During my six-month stay in the camp ten people died: one was murdered, and two were shot. I don't remember any surnames apart from the murdered Mr. Duda. There was a considerable speculation in prices. For a bunch of carrots worth 40 kopecks we had to pay 120 rubles.

## **7. The NKVD's attitude towards Poles:**

There were various methods of punishment and interrogation. I myself was punched in the face and beaten about the head with the butt of a Nagant during an interrogation, but it



was nothing in comparison with others, who were brought back beaten unconscious after three days and an hour later taken for another interrogation. Knocking people's teeth out or breaking their bones was nothing out of the ordinary. We heard at every step, "your Poland is lost, and France and England are prostitutes". It was common practice that sentences were passed without trial.

#### **8. Medical assistance, hospitals, mortality rate:**

Medical assistance in the prison was limited to administering drugs, and in extreme cases patients were taken to the hospital, where the conditions were often worse than in the cell, and sometimes we had to go on a hunger strike to make them take a sick person there.

#### **9. Was there any possibility to get in contact with one's country and family?**

We had contact with our country only through new people, who came to the prison in great numbers. We had virtually no contact with our families. We lost all contact by mail in February 1941.

#### **10. When were you released and how did you manage to join the army?**

In the camp where I was incarcerated, the NKVD's attitude towards Poles worsened after the amnesty: we were assigned to the worst labor and had to work until the very end. Although we staged two strikes, we were still driven out to work and told that such was the agreement with the Polish government.

I was released on 17 October 1941. I came to the army on 11 November. Before we set off we were issued 15 rubles each for four days, while the journey itself lasted 27 days.