



BOLESŁAW GIECOLD

1. Personal data:

Second Lieutenant of the Reserve Bolesław Giecold, 33 years old, an elementary school teacher by profession, married.

2. Date and circumstances of arrest:

I was arrested on 11 June 1941 by the NKVD in the township of Lubcz nad Niemnem, district of Nowogród. Until the time of my arrest I worked as a geography teacher at a (ten-year) Byelorussian school in Lubcz. Before noon on that day I attended a grade award meeting at the school, from where I and the director were summoned to the school inspectorate (RONO), where I was instructed to elaborate a paper (during the holidays) on the following topic: "Methods of assessing and grading students in the teaching of geography". The inspector asked me to accompany him and the director from the inspectorate to the local club, where some school show was to be held. While we were passing the NKVD building, the inspector and director turned into its courtyard, calling me to come with them under the pretext of taking care of some small matter. I tried to explain that I would wait in the street, but they insisted. And then I noticed that I had walked into a trap: two NKVD agents in civilian clothes were standing in the street observing me. In the corridor, I met the deputy head of the local NKVD, Sokolov, who summoned me to his office, while director Borysienko and inspector Kurylenko were called to the office of the commandant. I had a brief discussion with the deputy: had I finished my term's work at school, and did the students have any complaints? Where do I plan to spend the holidays? He then instructed me to accompany him to the room next door, where I was to receive a *propusk* [pass]. There I was met by the NKVD commandant, Senior Lieutenant Ciuleniov. Having verified my surname, he assumed a triumphant air and stuck a printed document (which also contained some hand-written annotations) right under my nose, ordering me to read it out. The contents: "We, the undersigned, school director ... and inspector ..., hereby inform that we have delivered one Bolesław Giecold to the local NKVD authorities and undertake, this under pain of criminal and court liability, not to inform anyone of this fact", duly signed and dated. This marked the beginning of an interrogation that lasted until 13 June, with only a few short nightly breaks of no more than three to four hours. On 11



June, the commandant spent eight hours – from 11.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m. – trying to convince me that I had nothing to be afraid of, that all he wanted was for me to tell him, openly and sincerely, about my counterrevolutionary activities, and agree to cooperate with the NKVD, whereupon I would be released. His argumentation: “You can have a career with us, just tell me the truth. Keep in mind that you have a wife and children. Silence would be your undoing. Admit, and I will let you go right now – no one will even know where you were the past few days”. I was given a large number of surnames of people who had already been arrested, and ordered to say what I knew about them and what our relations were. I, in turn, attempted to convince the commandant that I simply knew those people – we were not jointly engaged in any activity. But my efforts were unsuccessful. And I said nothing as regards his questions. At around 7.00 p.m. the commandant, angered, tried to persuade me once more, declaring that by my refusal to talk I was endangering both myself and my family: “You’ll die, and never see your family again”, “You are bogged down in mud, and all I want to do is help you get out” – to which I responded: “Just don’t help me and don’t sink me down further”. Upon hearing these words, he jumped at me and hit me on the face, twice, with his open palm, shouting that I had just insulted the USSR, for the country doesn’t punish the innocent. He took a file from his desk and started reading out the denunciations that he had received, however interrupting his delivery to lecture me about the erroneous Polish policy of trying to steer a middle course, instead of joining an alliance with the USSR. He criticized the Polish-English treaty with particular derision, stating that England was bent on profiting from the war, and also cunning and experienced enough to use others to pull its chestnuts out of the fire, however this time it would not succeed. The USSR was connected with Germany by a strong and lasting peace, he declared. On 13 June at 3:00 a.m., I was transferred to the prison in Nowogródek, while on 22 June, following the outbreak of the Soviet-German war, I and the other prisoners – some 200 in all – were loaded onto two goods wagons and transported deep into Russia, to the prison in Tambov.

Conditions on the train were terrible: we traveled for 19 days in sealed wagons, one hundred people to each. Throughout this odyssey we only received half a kilogram of bread, twice, and half a liter of soup – once. Each wagon would get two or three buckets of water daily, however only if anyone fainted. A wheat trader from Nowogródek, one Brajdo, died during the journey. Along the Baranowicze – Orsha route, our transport was attacked between five and seven times by the German air force; luckily, there were no losses amongst the prisoners.



3. Name of the camp, prison, place of forced labor:

Prison no. 1 in Tambov is a complex of old gaol buildings dating back to Tsarist times.

4. Description of the camp, prison, etc. (grounds, buildings, living conditions, hygiene):

There were some 3,000 prisoners, including a few hundred Soviet children aged 10 to 15. We were locked up in cells with an area of approximately 25 square meters each, more or less 35 – 40 people to a chamber.

5. Social composition of POWs, prisoners, deportees (nationality, category of crimes, intellectual and moral level, mutual relations, etc.):

The social composition of prisoners (although only with reference to the group from Nowogródek, which I knew): 50 percent Poles, 50 percent Jews and Byelorussians – all of them political prisoners; the majority had not yet been sentenced, while some had received sentences ranging from five to ten years of imprisonment. The moral fiber of and relations between detainees were on the whole good, with the exception of a few snitches.

6. Life in the camp, prison (the course of an average day, working conditions, quotas and norms, wages, food, clothing, social and cultural life, etc.):

The hygienic conditions were terrible: lice and bugs, walks lasting no more than 10 minutes, and we were allowed to visit the lavatory only twice daily. Food: in the morning we would receive 400 – 450 grams of semi-baked bread, and for dinner one half liter of soup, millet ([illegible]) with green, rotten tomatoes or rotten cabbage leaves, while very infrequently – with spoiled fish. The majority fell ill with dysentery. While in hospital, the owner of the Girdówka estate near Nowogródek, one Kmito, died, while another man, Mr Chutorowicz, went mad. We were not used to perform any work. We didn't receive any clothes or underwear.

7. Attitude of the authorities, NKVD towards Poles (methods of interrogation, torture, punishments, Communist propaganda, information about Poland, etc.):

Throughout my period of detention in prison, I was interrogated only once, in November 1941 – it went by peacefully.



8. Medical care, hospitals, mortality rate (provide the surnames of those who perished):

I have already mentioned those who died. First aid and medical care were limited to the doctor making a visit in the most urgent cases. Treatment: antityphoid injections and antidyenteric tablets, bitter salt. Those who were seriously ill would be sent to the hospital, where as I heard the conditions were tolerable.

9. Was it at all possible to keep in touch with the home country and your family? If yes, then what contacts were permitted?

No.

10. When were you released and how did you get through to the Polish Army?

I was released on 3 December 1941 and sent to work in the Ural, however during my journey I learned that the Polish 5th Infantry Division was stationed in Tatishchevo. I arrived there by train on 14 December 1941 and together with a group of some 5 men went to the Recruitment Committee, which assigned me to the 14th Infantry Regiment.