



JÓZEF GUGAŁA

Corporal Józef Gugała

Following the Soviet and German invasion, I was captured by the Bolsheviks on 17 September 1939 in Ostróg nad Horyniem. We were transferred from Ostróg to the concentration camp in Kozielszczyzna; there were some ten thousand of us police officers and rank and file functionaries. The Soviets detained us at this location for four weeks, and we suffered cold, hunger, and other deprivations. Thereafter I was assigned to an ore mine in the township of *Rudnik* [*Rudniki?*]. The conditions in that accursed mine were absolutely terrible, while if anyone refused to work, he was immediately sent to the Far East. Such were the methods of the NKVD. I was incarcerated there for six months. Thereafter I was transferred to the far North, to the camp of *Libiu* in the Arkhangelsk Oblast. Once we arrived in that northern desert, we were forced to live in the open, surrounded by a throng of guards. Initially, we worked to rid ourselves of the vermin that had stuck to us, and this was no easy job. Subsequently we labored in the forests, forced to do so by the NKVD. Throughout this time the NKVD would tell us that Poland had come to an end, but we laughed at them, especially as our group of prisoners of war, some 15,000 strong, included many who kept up our spirits and reinforced our belief that Poland had not perished. Shortly after our arrival there, the Soviets started forcing us to work. Dressed in rags, we were all hungry and frozen, for we had to live in the open. The severity of our conditions drove us to rebel, and we marched right at the Soviets, shouting "We want to live!". NKVD reinforcements immediately turned up and broke us down into groups or columns of more or less a thousand men each. Having pacified us, they commenced an investigation that lasted two or more days; during this time we received no food. Thereafter the columns were sent to some nearby barracks, however these were just empty shells, completely unfurnished. The hygienic conditions were beyond insufferable. When the frosts set in, we somehow managed to survive, but when it got warm, typhoid fever



and other diseases appeared immediately. The Russian soldiers would keep on telling us that our commanders had no idea how to lead us “masters”, and we had therefore lost the war.

As regards medical care, it was non-existent. If anyone reported to the doctor, the Soviets would surround the ambulance and seal the man off from his colleagues. And if the poor soul was sent to hospital, he would invariably return dead, his body being brought in cold and lifeless by friends. During our period of detainment there, one quarter of us died of hunger, the cold, and physical maltreatment. Had I not been at the camp myself, I would have thought that such a terrible place could not exist.

And when the order came to free all us Poles, I was convinced that we would die on the roads along which the Soviets drove us, on foot, with ferocious dogs at the rear. Stragglers were finished off by the guards (but I don't remember the surnames of any of the victims). This is my whole account [illegible].