



## KONSTANTY KORSZUN

### 1. [Personal data:]

Lieutenant Konstanty Korszun, born in 1910, technician, married.

### 2. [Date and circumstances of arrest:]

I was arrested in my home on 19 December 1939, at night, after my house had been searched. I was charged with engaging in counter-revolutionary activity.

### 3. [The name of the camp, prison, and place of forced labor:]

Mołodeczno prison – 6 months.

Połock prison – 4 months.

The Ukhta–Krutaya forced labor camp in the Komi Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic – a year.

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

Mołodeczno prison – a former warehouse repurposed as a prison. The cold, damp, and louse-infested cells were small – up to 9 square meters, holding 10–15 people.

Połock prison – an orthodox temple (formerly a church) holding 600 people. We had to relieve ourselves on the spot.

The forced labor camp – forests, humid terrain. Wooden buildings covered with clay, bunk beds made out of poles. Some camps consisted solely of tents. There was no wood in the winter, so it was cold.

### 5. [The composition of prisoners of war, inmates, exiles:]

Prisoners of various nationalities – Poles, Belarusians, Jews, Ukrainians. Those incarcerated in the prisons were mostly political criminals. We were deliberately placed among Russian criminals who had committed murders, thefts, and political crimes. The intellectual level varied. There were no friendly relations due to the lack of trust.

### 6. [Life in the camp, prison life:]

We woke up at 5.00 a.m., at 5.30–6.00 a.m. was the so-called *razvod* [dividing into brigades] and at 6.00 a.m. we left for work through the gate. We carried out the following tasks: operating drilling machines to extract natural gas, building a factory to produce soot from natural gas, clearing forests, and building service roads. The hardest kinds of labor, due to the quotas, were forest clearing and road construction, since other tasks such as drilling and factory construction were done with the use of machines which would often malfunction, causing long breaks from work. Wages were undetermined. The food: a spoonful of oat kasha for breakfast, oat soup, thin kasha, and foul-smelling fried fish for dinner. 500 grams of under-baked bread. Clothes were mainly distributed among the Russian criminals, for they performed various administrative functions in the camps and helped out their colleagues. Relations between colleagues varied among individuals and depended on the level of trust. Due to exhaustion from work, which lasted 10–12 hours, there was no cultural life.

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

An interrogation began with the prisoner's account of his life story. Based on that, the NKVD men would identify his crime and have him sign the indictment act. Next, the investigating officer would write down the charges and force the prisoner to sign them. There was a permanent group of witnesses who would always confirm whatever the investigating officer needed. If a prisoner refused to sign whatever the investigating officer told him to sign during the investigation, he was detained in a punishment cell. His record would then state that he had exhibited "inappropriate behavior during the interrogation". In winter, detainees in a punishment cell were made to strip down to their shirts. They were given half a liter of water and 300 grams of bread a day. Punishments in the forced labor camps were the same. The NKVD spread communist propaganda by means of film screenings and readings of pre-selected newspaper articles conducted by the so-called *vospitatel's* [tutors]. They did not give us any information about Poland.

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

Medical assistance was insufficient due to a shortage of medicine, and to the requirements that the camp authorities placed on the doctors. The sick had to go to work. The food was unacceptable. The mortality rate was high – for instance, in May 1941, 49 out of 1,700 people died within 15 days. Blin from Lebedziew (district of Mołodeczno, Wileńskie Voivodeship) – aged about 34 and blind in one eye – died in February 1941.



**9. [What, if any, was your contact with the home country and your family?]**

We were allowed to correspond with our families, but the letters did not come through.  
We could send some messages only via a third party.

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

The amnesty was announced on 27 August 1941. We were transported to the place of our release on 1 September. In a transport consisting of 40 wagons, we departed for Totskoye to join the army.

28 March 1943