TEODOR KOWALSKI

Platoon Leader Teodor Kowalski, born in 1918, professional non-commissioned officer, unmarried.

On 19 September 1939 I crossed the Polish-Lithuanian border and was then interned. When the occupation of Lithuania by the USSR began, I was transported by the NKVD to the Yukhnovo camp in the USSR, and then on 30 May 1941 to the Kola Peninsula. At the end of July I was deported to the Vyazniki camp.

Accommodation in the Yukhnovo camp: old buildings in need of renovation, infested with a multitude of bedbugs. Sanitary conditions were terrible. There were about 3,000 men in the camp – non-commissioned officers, riflemen, youth laborers, and several police officers. Mutual relations and social life were good.

Life in the camp: We woke up at 6.00 a.m., the NKVD men counted us at 6.30 a.m., breakfast was at 7.00 a.m. At 7.30 a.m., labor details left for work renovating and constructing buildings on the camp premises. Dinner at 12.00 and free time until 2.00 p.m. From 2.00 to 5.30 p.m. we worked the same as before noon. Supper was at 7.00 p.m. and the last post at 9.00 p.m.

Food rations: 800 grams of bread; breakfast and dinner – fish soup; supper – tea and 20 grams of sugar.

The attitude of the Soviet authorities was hostile. Interrogations by the NKVD were conducted day and night. They threatened us with prison, beat us, etc. We were promised freedom or money in exchange for providing names of those who were fighting communism in Poland.

Communist propaganda was spread in the form of talks, lectures, film screenings, books – all concerning political and anti-religious subjects. The NKVD men spoke about Poland in an insulting way. Especially on the subject of the government. As for the Polish state and its

future, they claimed that it would never come into being and even if it did, it would merely be a communist USSR republic.

Medical care was very good, because it was run by Polish doctors. There were two instances of death. I don't remember the names of the deceased.

The only contact with the home country was through letters – a couple of words long – which we were allowed to write only once a month. Letters would arrive irregularly and with considerable delay.

Conditions of work carried out on the Kola Peninsula.

Accommodation: in the open air.

Food: at first – one kilogram of flour a day for ten people.

After a dozen or so days, we would be given fish soup twice a day, and 200–230 grams of bread – not even every day.

Work: 14 hours a day, building an airport. The attitude of the NKVD toward the Poles was very hostile. They forced the sick to work – even those who had been exempted from labor by a doctor.

I was released in August [1941] and with a transport, which was under Polish command, I arrived in Tatishchevo on 8 September to join the 5th Infantry Division.