

LEON RASTENIS

On 29 June 1940 in Świąciany, the Soviet militia arrested me and put me in a local jail. I was arrested because I was accused of espionage after I came back from German captivity. During the investigation, which lasted about two months, the former Polish government and everything that is Polish was mocked. What's more, I was called a *kulak*. The court sentenced me to five years in a labor camp. From Świąciany I was transported to Wilno, and then to Vorkuta in the Komi Republic by the Usa River. I was working there at constructing the airport. I was living in dark, damp barracks, and we were given food two times a day: soup and a piece of bread. We were working fourteen hours a day.

Cold, emaciation, and lack of clothing caused many deaths. I can't remember the names of the dead.

In September 1941 I was released and sent to southern Russia, and thence to a kolkhoz in Kongrod by the Amu Darya River in the Karakalpak Republic. Food in the kolkhoz was meager.

In March 1942, under the surveillance of the NKVD, we set out for Chardzhou via the Amu Darya River, and then we went to Kermine where I joined the Army.