

JAN STAWINCZUK

Private Jan Stawinczuk, 43 years of age, farmer, married.

I lived in the village of Radoł, Młynów commune, in Dubno district. On 19 September 1939, Soviet troops entered my village. On the third day, at 8:00 PM, three Militia officers came to my apartment, telling me to go to the school with them. There was a village meeting at the school; three Soviet military leaders presided. As soon as I came in, everyone present began to shout that here comes the enemy of the Soviet people and demanded that I be killed immediately. I was brought to the military men who asked me what my duties had been. I replied that I was *soltys* [village elder] of that village and that I followed the orders of my superiors. After this interrogation, they ordered me to be released despite the objections of those present, saying that they would pay attention to my behavior in the Soviet Soyuz.

After a week, the NKVD officer came to me again and conducted a search to look for weapons. I explained to him that I had given up my weapon and showed him my receipt. He left after this.

After two weeks, I was ordered by the *predsedatel'* [head of kolkhoz (collective-owned farm)] to go to the station at night to collect refugees. I obeyed the order, taking the old sleigh, as my new sleigh was not shod. For this reason, the *predsedatel'* called me a *sabotazhnik* [saboteur] and a Polish idiot and took me to court. After three weeks, there was a court hearing and I was sentenced to three months of forced labor. I served my sentence in Klesów, Równe district, where I worked in a quarry for money.

After two months of this work, I was arrested again and taken to prison in Równo. There, another investigation started. I was again accused of being a *sabotazhnik*, a Polish patriot, and that I had turned communists in [to authorities]. The investigation lasted for two months. Two Ukrainians testified against me: Prokop Naczko and Prochur Jarmolczyk.

After five months, I was taken to prison in Dubno, where I stayed until 21 March 1941. From Dubno, I was transferred to Starobilsk, where I stayed in prison for nine months. On 17 June

1941, they took us to a labor camp in Vorkuta, where there were no barracks, [just] tents. The ground was watery and swampy so you couldn't sleep on it – so we made “bunks” for ourselves. After two days, everyone was assigned their jobs according to their professions. As a carpenter, I was appointed to build barracks.

In this labor camp, there were around 2,000 people of Polish and Ukrainian nationality, nearly all suspected of alleged political offenses. There were farmers, teachers, government officials, police officers, and two priests. We all had to work two shifts, day and night, and we were supervised by the *strelaks* [escort guards]. The workday was 12 hours with a one-hour lunch break. The food was divided into different categories (in pots), numbered one [to] ten. They assigned categories according to the work performed. Whoever met one hundred percent of the quota was entitled to get food from the first category. Those that made more than one hundred percent got food from the second one. Each rise in the fulfilled quota entitled us to receive a higher category. The first category was [primarily] watery soup and 500 grams of bread, sometimes with a few potatoes in skin and boiled fish. The second was a soup with a little bit of fat, 700 grams of bread, a few potatoes, and boiled fish. The third category was the same soup as in the second category, a bit of kasha, 700 grams of bread roll, and a fish cutlet twice a week. Other categories were intended for *desyatnyk* [supervisor of ten prisoners] and others in higher positions.

You had to work regardless of the weather. In terms of personal hygiene, it was so-so: we received a bath and a change of underwear each week. There was a health center operated by our doctors. Your body temperature determined whether you were considered a patient. That meant you had to have [a temperature of] at least 39 degrees. Only then were you entitled to get some time off work. In the tents, we lived in groups of people from one nationality. The working brigades [also] consisted of people from one nationality. The brigadier was a Pole and the *desyatnyk* was a Russian. The brigadier was a man called Chaczewski. He came from the district of Dubno, [missing] commune, and treated his workers badly, requiring very high quotas, which meant poor nutrition.

The authorities of the NKVD limited themselves to [maintaining] discipline, order, making sure prisoners were working, and preventing escape. Two, sometimes three, times a week a meeting took place where they preached communist propaganda; the speakers were officers of the NKVD.

We did not get any information from Poland. We were banned from using postal services. When someone did not work or was not obedient to the orders of the brigadier or *desyatnyk*, he was subject to the penalty of *izolator* [isolation]. This penalty entailed getting 300 grams of bread and one soup per day. Depending on the crime, you [either] came out to work or remained in the tent. Fatal accidents occurred frequently in *izolator*, and they frequently used torture and physical punishments.

I was released on 15 September 1941 and transferred to Tashkent, and from there to beyond the river Amu Darya, where we stayed for three weeks. I was then transferred to a *kolkhoz* in Samarkand. On 10 February 1942, I went to the Polish Army in Samarkand, and then to Kerman.