

STANISŁAW BIBIK

Rifleman Stanisław Bibik, Prańczykowo commune, Gródek county, Vilnius voivodeship.

On 12 April 1940 at 4.00 am five armed soviets (probably NKVD) entered the home occupied by my parents, and without explaining the reasons for entering house, they began a detailed personal and domestic search. The residents were forced to stand over in one corner in their underwear, under the threat of bayonets, forbidding the slightest movement.

After the search, which did not yield any result, the leader of the thugs stated: "Your son Józef served your *Polsha* (enrolled in police service on 1 September 1939), he was a policeman and for that you should be moved to another *oblast*." Then, given 30 minutes to get dressed [and] herded by rifle butts, we were loaded onto the waiting carts. In the freezing cold, my whole family and I (mother: 45, brother: 23 years old and my other siblings—five people all together) were taken away to Lachnowicze railway station, where for three days we stood on the tracks in closed wagons, without food or water.

During the two-week journey, we were deprived of any warm stew, bread was handed out every few days with breaks, and the wagons were barred and sealed with screws.

We arrived in Kazakhstan on 28 April 1940 and placed us in Tavalzhan settlement, where we were forced to work on salt extraction from the lake. The work was hard and exhausting. We extracted salt from the lake, standing in the water above our knees, without proper protection, boots, which afflicted terrible wounds and pain. There, my whole family and I contracted terrible rheumatism.

Medical care was under the jurisdiction of the settlement's authorities. Patients reporting to the doctor were mocked and persecuted, exposing themselves to various forms of repression such as reducing their bread allowance, etc.

The settlement authorities, including the NKVD, carried out frequent interrogations and at night only—using the butt of a gun.

Wages were disproportionately low, causing desperate poverty in more numerous families.

After 1 September 1941, the conditions improved somewhat—but not so much that you could earn a living. Conduct towards people was somewhat better on the part of the administration.

I left for the Polish army together with my brother Jan in March 1942 and I reported to the 10th Division in Lugovoy, while my family stayed put.

Army base, 11 February 1943.