

HENRYK GANSINIEC

1. Personal data (name, surname, rank, age, occupation, and marital status):

Platoon Officer Henryk Gansiniec, 31 years old, professional non-commissioned officer, bachelor.

On 19 September 1939 I was disarmed and taken prisoner by the Soviets in Łuck. I was kept there in the barracks until 25 September, when about two thousand people were loaded onto a train and transferred to Shepetivka. Fifty people were loaded into each railcar. For the journey, we received 500 grams of bread and about 100 grams of lard. We traveled like that for five days. On the third day of travel, everyone received 300 grams of rusks, but we had to get water by ourselves, putting canteens outside the windows during stops and asking passers-by for some water to drink.

The day after we arrived in Shepetivka we received 300 grams of bread and a quarter liter of soup. On 5 October 1939, about five thousand people were taken outside and led as far as Ostrog. Many of us collapsed along the way because of hunger and exhaustion. People were also beaten and kicked, and were then left to fate's mercy on the road. Five people died, but I do not know their names.

After arriving at Ostrog, at the barracks of the 19th Cavalry Regiment, we spent the night in a stable that was wet from horse manure. We slept on one another's legs. After one night in Ostrog we were each given 400 grams of bread and were marched further, to as far as Zdołbunów. There, we were loaded onto a train, 60 to 70 people in a single dirty railcar that still had manure in it, and taken to Dubno. After we'd been unloaded we were taken to a hop house, where civilians brought us something to eat – we hauled it upstairs using a rope, as they were not allowed to get close to us. On 13 October, about one thousand people (after we had received 500 grams of bread each, because we did not want to go) were escorted to Verba. Having spent a night in a sawmill, we were escorted to Radziwiłłów.

From 15 October I was in Radziwiłłów (a railroad building), from 25 May 1940 – in Sitno (tents), from 9 August – in Brody (castle), on 16 August I went by train to Rohatyn, and from 21 August I was in Rohatyn (pigpens). February 1941 – Janów Lwowski (a wooden barrack), from 7 May to the outbreak of the Soviet-German war – Lwów-Skniłów (a wooden barrack).

The location selected was usually away from settlements, fenced off with 2.5-meter high barbed wire. We lived in tents or wooden barracks, so when it rained water poured onto our heads and we were unable to sleep (we were marched to work in the morning). From 300 to 400 people lived in such a barrack. We had no soap and no change of underwear, and we rarely bathed or were sent for disinfection.

There were Poles, Ukrainians, Belarusians and Jews in the camps. The level of intellectual standing was mediocre, moral standing was satisfactory, and the camaraderie between us was all right.

Life in the camps was very hard. Its quality depended on the quotas, which were difficult to meet. We were woken at 4.00 a.m. and at 5.30 a.m. we set off for work, where we then spent 10–12 hours. We had to walk 15 km to get to work. On our way to work we were forced by the escorts to march faster, and they set their dogs on us. When we reached the destination we were unable to work, having walked for several kilometers. The guards mocked us, saying, for example, "Let God work instead of you." There was often a shortage of tools for the work, and when we did not meet the quota (unloading stones – that had been looted – from 18 to 20 three-ton trucks in the space of 10 to 12 hours, and taking 8 meters of dirt to a spot 200 meters away in wheelbarrows, etc.), we were given 400 grams of bread and some watery soup. Those who met the quota were given goats at work at the so-called *prembliudo*, for propaganda. Remuneration was for those who met the quota – at 20 to 30 rubles per month; those who did not meet the quota were forced to pay for the food they received. Sundays and Saturdays were not days off. After we got back from work in the evening and had dinner, which was not enough to satisfy our hunger, we were not even allowed to have a rest, because political guards called us over for communism-related talks and tried to convince us of how great the situation in their country was.

News concerning Poland was that Poland would no longer exist; [we were told that] laborers in Poland had been badly treated, beaten, etc., which caused our indignation, and we argued about that.

The medical assistance was very poor, there were no medications, and the hospitals were overcrowded. As for mortality – in the camp in Radziwiłłów, Szczepański from Silesia was shot dead. He was buried at the cemetery in Radziwiłłów. During the evacuation from

the Polish territory to Russia there were cases of execution by shooting and deaths from exhaustion, about 20 people – I do not know their names.

On the way to a camp near Zborów six people who had been murdered in a horrible way were found. They had marks left by knives, their eyes had been gouged out, etc. The corpses were found in a basement, in water.

The evacuation was very difficult. We went on foot from Lwów to Zolotonosha, covering up to 40 km a day. The food – up to 200 grams of bread, sometimes a little soup, quarter a liter. If the local people tried to give us some water to drink we were not allowed to take it, and we were forced to drink water found on the road, or we dug holes in the ground during stops and waited until they filled with water. We marched from 23 June to 17 July 1941. On 17 July we were loaded onto a freight train in Zolotonosha, with 70 or more people per railcar.

We were unloaded in the forest beyond Poltava station, and we stood there for four days in the mud and rain. Sleeping was out of the question, because we were not even allowed to break off branches to sleep on. People were swelling from exhaustion.

We did not have much contact with the home country. I received three letters, although I sent many more.

On 28 July 1941 we were unloaded at Starobilsk, where on 25 August 1941 I joined the Polish Army.

Place of stay, 24 February 1943