

## SZMUL FLINT

### 1. Personal data:

Gunner Szmul Flint, 23 years old, tailor, bachelor; 3rd Carpathian Regiment of Light Artillery, 5th battery.

### 2. Date and circumstances of the arrest:

During the night from 20 to 21 May 1940, two militiamen came to my apartment in Białystok, and ordered me to get dressed and go with them to the station to sign something. My sister wanted to pack some supplies for me, but one of the militiamen said it was unnecessary because I would be released in 10 minutes. I have not seen my sister since then.

I was taken from the militia station to the prison in Białystok, where I spent six weeks in quite bearable conditions. There were also other prisoners in the cell – refugees from Warsaw.

Interrogations took place at night. Until the first questioning I did not know what I had been arrested for. It turned out that I had been accused of refusing to accept a Soviet passport. During the six weeks I spent in prison, we never bathed or shaved. On 27 November 1940, after bathing and after being searched, when 275 rubles were taken from me, we were loaded in groups of 18 into a six-person prison truck and taken to the railway station. There we were loaded onto 50-ton freight cars, 70 people in each.

### 3. Name of the camp, prison, or place of forced labor:

We traveled for about a month until we reached Komi ASSR, OLP no. 4, *Niefto Szachty*, zone no. 31.

### 4. Description of the camp:

There were about six thousand people in the camp, including four thousand Poles, about one and a half thousand people belonging to Soviet minorities, and 500 Russians.

The Poles were political prisoners and people sentenced for crossing the border. The Soviet citizens – mostly common criminals, sentenced for thefts, banditry, etc. The Soviet criminals

stole from Poles and beat them, taking advantage of the fact that the latter did not know what the camp life looked like.

### 5. Life in the camp:

During the initial two weeks, I worked in the forest and there was no quota, so I received 700 grams of bread from the so-called second cauldron, but after two weeks, everything changed: I had to meet a quota at work.

A day in the camp looked as follows: we were woken at 3.30 a.m., had breakfast at 4.00 a.m. – half a liter of water, and if we were lucky enough, we could find five or six rye-flour dumplings in that water. Bread was distributed according to our work results from three days previously. Those who met 100 percent of the quota were given 900 grams of bread, but if our results were worse, we received correspondingly less. The bread was very moist, it was about half water. Due to the small amount of bread and hunger it was difficult for us to split the bread into three meals during the day. Despite our determination, we often ended up eating the bread set aside for lunch on our way to work.

At 6.00 a.m. the commandants chased us to work; they beat those who lingered. It was sometimes from five to eight kilometers from the zone to the place where we worked. The work itself varied. I often dug pits, and I was never able to meet even 50 percent of the quota. After work, between 5.00 and 7.00 p.m., we received dinner consisting of half a liter of very watery oat soup and a few spoons of thick and poorly purified oats. Depending on work results, there were four cauldrons: I, II, III, and the one for Stakhanovites. Poles rarely received food from the third cauldron, and if they did it was usually because they had given an item of clothing to some commandant. I usually received food from the second cauldron. After dinner, we went to bed in the barrack, which housed about 180 people, mostly Poles and about twenty Russians – professional criminals, the so-called *zhuliks*, who stole from the Poles.

In July 1941, an epidemic of bloody dysentery broke out, resulting in a lot of Poles dying. On the whole I cannot remember the names of the deceased. I only remember that Wiernik from Zgierz, about 28 years old, died. The medical assistance was insufficient due to the lack of medicines.

**9. Was it possible to keep in touch with the home country and your family?**

Some prisoners received letters and packages from home. The letters were very late in arriving. We were allowed to write letters to families if they lived in areas occupied by the USSR.

**10. When were you released and how did you join the army?**

Finally, that happy day came and I will never forget it: 27 August 1941. We did not go to work that day, all the Poles were gathered in a single yard, where release documents were signed. We had the right to settle in Siberia, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan. Nothing was said about the Polish army. I received a Kazakh passport. For a three-day journey, I was given 75 rubles. On the way, after eight days, I found out that a Polish army was being organized in Buzuluk, so I went there instead of to Kazakhstan. I joined the army on 12 September 1941.

Place of stay, 21 January 1943