

USZER KLAJER

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

Gunner Uszer Klajer, born in 1923, no profession, unmarried.

2. Date and circumstances of arrest:

I was arrested on 17 June 1940 for refusing to become a Soviet citizen and intending to return to my parents.

3. Name of the camp, prison, forced labor site:

I was arrested in Mołodeczno, and sent away to a labor camp in Komi ASSR, Ukhta, by the Izhma River.

4. Description of the camp, prison:

The conditions in the prison were terrible, cells were overcrowded with people – Poles – there was lots of dirt everywhere, lice crawled on our bodies. [We were allowed use of a] bathroom once every two weeks (for ten minutes). The hygiene was better in the labor camp.

5. Compositions of prisoners, POWs, exiles:

Prisoners of the labor camp mostly consisted of Russian criminals; Poles were only 15 percent of the overall number. Among 3,000 prisoners, there were around 500 Poles, half of them of Jewish ethnicity. Moral standing was low. Mutual relations were bad.

6. Life in the camp, prison:

Life in the camp was terrible; we would work from 5.00 a.m. until 6.00 p.m. Food depended on our remuneration. Whoever completed 100 percent of the quota would get 900 grams of bread, but it was almost impossible to fulfill such a quota. Clothing was poor.

7. Attitude of the local NKVD towards the Poles:

Attitude of the local NKVD towards the Poles was horrible. I was interrogated in a really rough way (threatened to be executed by shooting). I had no news about Poland.

8. Medical assistance, hospitals, mortality:

Medical assistance was poor. One would only get to a hospital when they were already dying.

9. Was there a possibility to contact one's country and family?

I didn't have any contact with the country or family.

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

I was released on 5 September 1941. A whole transport of 5,000 Polish labor camp prisoners were sent to Buzuluk, where the Polish army was being formed.