



## FERDYNAND BIEL

Personal data:

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Lieutenant of the Reserve Ferdynand Biel, 45 years old, a mechanical engineer by profession, married, with two sons, one of whom has died in Tehran, and with a girl helper for the other.

Address: Polish Forces, Paiforce no. 195

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In consequence of the events of war, I and my family (five persons) sought refuge in Lwów, where we lived in the house of my brother-in-law (Lwów, Zamkowa Street 4). On 29 June 1940 at 1.00 a.m. the NKVD appeared, declaring that they must search the flat. After this was performed – brutally – they ordered us to pack in two hours, all the time under guard. Thereafter carts drove up and I loaded all the things that I had been able to pack onto them. The remainder of our belongings, including the furniture and a number of household items, were left to fate. The carts took us to the Lwów-Podzamcze train station, where we were loaded onto a goods wagon that at the time of our arrival already contained 35 people. The wagon was then sealed.

We were transported to Siberia. The journey lasted three weeks. Throughout this period the door was opened only thrice, in order to give us food. Basically, we had to survive on our own provisions. After a few days, the wagon began to stink, for we were forced to relieve ourselves inside it. A few people fell ill.

The destination point was the station of Soiva in the Sverdlovsk Oblast. When we finally arrived, we were put onto barges and taken some one hundred kilometers upriver to a completely depopulated settlement. There, I was forced to perform physical labor – first in the fields (raking and mowing, gathering potatoes), and then in the forest. Since they knew that I was an engineer – and therefore a “bourgeois pig” – they assigned me the most difficult work, such as moving heavy, long blocks of wood (this was towards the end of



autumn and in the beginning of winter) and carrying logs through the swamps; the latter weighed so much that they forced me down into the bog right up to my nose. During the thaws I would stretch ropes along the river bank, walking over drowned bodies. Generally speaking, the Soviets wanted to wear me out, especially as in the course of meetings I would be mentioned as one who is obstructive and must therefore die in the taiga.

The quotas, imposed administratively, were so high that I could only fulfill them in 10 or 15 percent. Our wages were disproportionately low. I received five or ten rubles for half a month of work. Since I had sold everything over a short time, this in order to save my family, from January 1941 we were gripped by a crisis. A slice of dry bread and some warm water were all the food that we had for a day.

Work lasted from eight in the morning until sundown. My clothes were light and full of holes, while my legs were covered in rags. My family's plight was just as pitiful. If not for the amnesty in the summer of 1941, we would all have perished. The objective of the authorities was clear: to destroy, wipe out the Poles, and above all the intelligentsia. We were ridiculed at the meetings, with the Soviets stating that Poland will be no more, or that if any such country is established, it will be governed by the USSR.

When I received my amnesty certificate, I learned that I had been sentenced in absentia to five years of forced labor as a "deportee earmarked for special treatment". The amnesty allowed us to extricate ourselves from the settlement and get to the railway line. We and some other Poles booked a whole wagon, to this end selling the remainder of our clothes (rags), and traveled through Novosibirsk and Alma-Ata to Taraz.

I enlisted in the Army on 29 January 1942, when they started forming the 10th Division in Lugovoy.