

WŁADYSŁAW SZARGA

Rifleman Władysław Szarga, born in 1922, the village of Bartoszków, Czortków District, Tarnopol Voivodeship.

I was interned with my whole family, six people. On 10 February 1940 at 7 a.m., the NKVD arrived, searched the house, and, with guns in their hands, they took us to the Biała station, where they loaded us into freight cars, 40 people in each. On our way to Russia, they made sure no one escaped. Once, a woman asked why they were taking us away. An NKVD officer replied that if they had not taken us away, we would have murdered the Ukrainians and then bothered the NKVD. Finally, he told my colleagues and me that when we got there, they would get even with us for belonging to the Military Training organization.

We were cold and hungry on our way to Russia because the cars had holes so big that you could stick your head outside. After five days, we received 20 grams of bread and half a liter of thin soup with flour. This was repeated constantly, and we received such meals every few days until we arrived. On 6 March 1940, we arrived at a hamlet called Usckokol, Kosa region, Molotov Oblast.

As soon as we arrived, the Poles were abused again. We worked in the woods, in snow that reached up to our waists. We had one day off every 14 days. The work quota was set at ten cubic meters. The food was poor: a kilogram of bread, barley groats, and bitter tea, which I had brought from home because it was impossible to get it there. One day, the NKVD commander arranged a meeting for the Poles. First off, he shouted at us, asking why we were doing such a lousy job. He told us that if we continued to work like that, we would die. Finally, he said that Poland was gone forever and that the Polish Eagle had been shot down by Soviet soldiers. I told him that the time would come and Poland would crush their sickle and hammer, for which I was hit so hard in the head by an NKVD officer that I saw all the stars in the sky.

The attitude of the local community was very vile, because they told us that if they were the NKVD, they would have locked us all up.

On 21 December 1940, my father died of grief and lack of food.

On 12 June 1941, it was Corpus Christi. I did not go to work because I wanted to celebrate that feast day in accordance with the old Polish custom. For this reason, I was to be tried and placed in jail, but this was forestalled thanks to the amnesty.

On 27 August 1941, the amnesty was announced. The situation improved a bit and now if someone did not go to work, they had no right to tell him anything. The men wanted to join the Polish Army, but the commander told them it was not being organized yet, so we continued working until an appeal from the Commander-in-Chief to the Polish people arrived. On 12 December 1941, I left to join the army. The NKVD made it difficult for us to do so because they wanted us to continue working for free. The journey was hard; we walked 150 kilometers to the Solikamsk railroad station, suffering from hunger. From Solikamsk we went by train to Farab. We arrived in Farab on 1 January 1942. On 5 January 1942, we attended a mass. We went through Kermine and Samarkand to Jizzakh, and back to Kermine, where I got sick at the station and ended up in a hospital. On 4 February, I returned from the hospital to the assembly point in Kermine. On 18 February 1942, I was drafted into the Polish army, the 7th Infantry Division, 23rd Infantry Regiment.

The description above is [truthful].