

## BRONISŁAW GRENDNO

### 1. Personal data:

Artillery Officer Bronisław Grendno, born on 6 July 1905, career non-commissioned officer, married.

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

My brothers, my brother-in-law, and I were arrested on 22 March 1940 in Tarnopol. Then, we were put in the local prison, where we were held until [no date].

### 3. Name of the prison:

Before I was transferred deep into the USSR, I was held in the Tarnopol prison all the time.

### 4. Description of the prison:

The prison where I was kept was quite well furnished, but the order established by the new hosts was terribly stupid. They destroyed everything that was well organized in order to torment the prisoners.

There were about 80 prisoners in our prison cell. It was extremely cramped and, above all, there was not enough air, because in Polish times the cell was intended for 20 people. We slept on the floor in three rows, head to toe.

That was because there was not enough space. The consequences of the cramped conditions were awful. First of all, it was impossible to keep the place clean and tidy, as confirmed by the presence of lice, fleas, etc. We used the prison bathhouse once a week. The situation was worse when it came to washing underwear – for 17 months we had it roughly rinsed with water only twice. We usually did the washing in the cell, trying by various measures to get some water.

### 5. Social composition of prisoners:

We [Poles] constituted quite a large group – about 30 percent of the total number of prisoners. In the cell with me was Father Lubomirski from Chodorów, Count Zalewski from the Skałat district and many other criminals who suffered the same fate. We stuck together

and we would very often sit in a corner to listen to Father Lubomirski who talked in a very interesting way about his experiences and the countries he had visited. He also told us about society in other nations. Later we would compare that to our own traditions and way of life. Thus the days passed by, hopelessly long and grim, but the struggle of our Polish hearts was becoming more and more fierce and persistent. Today we can say that we owe a lot to Father Lubomirski, who kept our spirits high.

Poles and Ukrainians frequently quarreled because they, as nationalists, claimed the right to the Polish areas occupied by the Bolsheviks. One day in May a fight broke out. The deputy head of the prison was summoned, and he started mocking and taunting Poles and Poland. Among other things, he said, "If Sikorski didn't manage to hold onto his horse's mane, he won't hold on to its tail either. Don't think you'll ever see Poland again," etc.

There were about 50 Ukrainians in our cell and they belonged to a Ukrainian organization established in 1933.

#### **6. Life in the prison and attitude of the NKVD towards Poles:**

We were woken up at 6.00 a.m. We were given half a liter of soup for breakfast, 600 grams of bread and half a liter of soup for dinner, half a liter of tea and 20 grams of sugar for supper. At 9.00 p.m., we all had to be asleep. Packages from home were limited to one package per month if you were lucky. We were sent underwear, soap, and 75 rubles. Once every six weeks we were allowed to buy 300 cigarettes, a kilogram of onion, half a kilogram of garlic, and a kilogram of sausage in the prison store. We went for a 10-minute walk in the prison yard every other day.

On the same night I was arrested, I was taken before an investigating officer called Nawrodzki.

He interrogated me for three days, mostly at night. The next officer who interrogated me was a Jew called Feldman. He treated me well and gave me cigarettes. He slept during the interrogations, and told me to watch out and wake him up if anyone came. I examined the indictments while he was sleeping.

After three weeks I was taken before the head of the NKVD, Wadis. He interrogated me for several nights, constantly accusing me of belonging to a Polish organization, and forced me to explain how it had been formed and to talk about its members. I could not confess to it,

because a lot of people would have ended up in prison. I was interrogated regularly for seven months. Then there was a six-week break. Afterwards, I was transferred to a different cell, where I learned about the capitulation of France. And the interrogations started again. Below us, there was a death cell, where prisoners awaited execution. Senior Sergeant Wujnicki from the 54th Tarnopol Infantry Regiment and Sergeant Kozak from the Czortków Border Protection Corps died in that cell. Those cells had no medical care or the 10-minute walk.

On 6 January 1941 I was taken away for interrogation. NKVD chief officer Wawroczenko, a Russian, hit me in the face and ordered me to remain in a squatting position for hours on end. The way he tortured me was unbelievable. He ordered me to sit on the edge of a chair all day long, or stand on one leg for hours at a time. When I fainted, they took me to a tap and poured water on my head. On 15 March 1941 I signed the verdict and my files were sent to Kiev. As a Polish nationalist, I was sentenced pursuant to clause 54.13. On 21 June, I found out about the ultimatum issued by the Germans to the USSR. We were told about it by Miss Zator, who was imprisoned in the neighboring cell. On 25 June, they rounded us all up in one cell. There were only Poles and Jews there.

After three days we were driven out into the yard with our belongings, and we set off into the unknown under very strong escort. We marched in the direction of Volochysk. Along the way, those who were unable to keep up were beaten with rifle butts and kicked. There were those who fainted, and they were shot dead in front of our group of 1,500 prisoners. Mrs. Zielińska walked with us and her legs were covered in blood – she was barefoot. On 1 July, we were loaded onto a train and taken to Magnitogorsk. On the way we were given 100 to 150 grams of bread, 20 grams of sugar and a liter of water from a puddle or the locomotive. We ate like that for 33 days. About fifteen people died during the journey, among them Kukulewski, a railroad man from Tarnopol.

On 12 August I was transferred to the town of Verkhneuralsk. There was a prison outside the town, surrounded by a high fence and lit up with floodlights. At the corners were watchtowers with guards in them. I spent some time in the prison hospital there. Murzyn from Tarnopol, and Twardochlib and Repata from Zbaraż, died there.

I was held at that prison until 13 February 1942, because on that day I was released. I was given a pair of pants, a hat, and seven rubles. We were assigned two trucks and an NKVD

officer who took us to Chelyabinsk train station. There we were handed over to the Polish authorities, who then took care of us. After a few days I arrived in Lugovoy, where on 14 March 1942 I was enlisted into the 10th Light Artillery Regiment of the 2nd Infantry Artillery Battalion, where I became the head of a battery.