

Report of László Popper, written in 1998 about what happened to him in the years of destruction

I was called up to the forced labour camp of Nagykáta in 1942 together with István Brüller and Sándor Schwarcz grocers. Soon our company was established and on 20 November we went to the front. The commander of the company was Dr. István Eissen gunner lieutenant. Before startup we were allowed to write letters and our families could come to say good bye. Number of the company was 101/21.

First we arrived at Ukraine, villages Alexejevka then Nyikolajevka; we were accommodated here and we did our work here, too. We were woken up at 3 o'clock in the morning then we had breakfast. Our work was to carry limestones for building of stands. It was very hard. In addition also the guard was very cruel, they hit us with gunstock. Work finished at 4 in the afternoon, then we marched to our barracks. Food was good because the commandant of the company didn't allow to steal from it, e.g. four workers got a 1 kg tinned meat for dinner.

This was the situation till 10 January 1943., then a command came: to fall back! Certainly we had to go on foot. We were five when reached the town of Bugyonij. In the meantime we ran out of the food. Then I fell away and left alone. I got ill and was carried to a hospital in Kiev, where I met Endre Deutsch from Monor. He had got frost-injury. Also I had got frost-injuries and abscesses as a consequence of lack of vitamins. Anyway I got to Kiev because when I was already alone in Nyezsín and went to the local hospital with my injuries, Dr. Mácsai doctor ensign examined me and gave an open order to go to the hospital of Kiev. In addition a guard hit my chest with gunstock I got ill more and trudging on the way I lost my consciousness. Two Russian girls saw me, they stopped a German truck and the driver allowed to put me on the platform. Before arrived to Zsitomir the driver had stopped and told me he couldn't carry me farther because he would get in trouble for me, a Jewish. In any way I got to the local gendarme army-post from where I was carried away to the military hospital of Korosztény. I could stay there for a short time then I was carried to Dorosicz. I got to a big room where dying people were lying. I met there Gábor Huppert from Monor who had got typhous, also he was dying. In a short time he died and it was me who closed his eyes. Here in the hospital I met my cousin who helped me to get in the main building. The head physician of the hospital was Dr. Gergely, he was good with his patients. Then at night of 29 April the soldiers burnt down the hospital. News started circulating that the ill Jewish spread typhous so they must be massacred in order pathogens will be eliminated. Result was terrible. Those who were able to go tried to escape...but at the exits soldiers stood and killed them with machine guns. We came out from the other barrack and helped the escaping people, so my cousin and me could rescue abt. 25 burning people. Between the two barracks there was a well and we put out fire with water of that well. So, the hospital burnt down and many hundred Jewish inmates of forced labour camp died painfully there. The remaining survivors were collected and sent back to Korosztény. I – as an attendant – went with this group, too. In Korosztény soldiers waited for us, they were cruel with the poor suffering people, they made people wash themselves in a stream as disinfection. They were cruel, every day two-three inmates of forced labour camp were stricken dead. The most cruel was a Ziegler named. Once he wanted to kill also me but I referred to my mother who was waiting for me at home. He let me go away.

Finally I got home with approx. 8 000 inmates of forced labour camps who stayed alive from the 50 000 people who were called up.

But, staying at home was soon over because I got a new call up to Bor in Yugoslavia where new tribulations waited for me and my fellows. In Bor I met László Keleti, actor, László Tabi, journalist-humorist, Dr. Pál Rubányi, surgeon-professor...

Finally the Yugoslav partisans set us free from power of German and Hungarian fascists. I got to Temesvár then to Monor. From my family my parents died, my sister and her 6 year-old son died, too. Only the husband of my sister, Dezső returned...