

My Story of the War, 1939 to 1945 –
From Lwów, to the Siberian Gulag,
Monte Cassino, Loreto and Lago di
Como



By

Ludwik Karol Pisarski

Foreword – By Henryk Pisarski

On the eve of World War Two, my father, Ludwik Karol Pisarski, had already completed his military service in the Polish cavalry. He had resumed work as a hairdresser when the Germans invaded Poland from the West. This was soon followed by invasion from the East by Soviet Russia. He was called up to carry out police duties in his hometown of Lwów. His story starts from this time in 1939 and goes on to describe his arrest and sentence of hard labour in a Soviet Gulag prisoners' camp located in Siberia (in January 1940), his release from captivity and recuperation and training in the Middle East and Palestine in preparation for battles in Italy. He describes the fight for Monte Cassino in which he participated and survived unharmed, and how he was wounded in the battle of Loreto, near Ancona. The story then moves on to his convalescence and recovery and romantic meeting of a young woman in Tremezzo who was to become my mother. The story ends with their decision to marry and accept the invitation, extended to the Polish army by the British government, to go to resettlement camps in Great Britain in 1946.

The story also includes his quest for his brother Henryk. He belonged to a Polish military organization. In 1941 he was convicted for “counter revolutionary” and “anti-Soviet” activities. Although he was sentenced to death by shooting, it is not known if the sentence was carried out (according to my father) and if it was, the location of his final resting-place is not known. Despite attempts made during and after the war, his whereabouts and final resting place have never been traced.

The story was written by my father at Villa Anna in Tremezzo, Lago di Como. The manuscript was completed on 9 October 1996. My daughter Sarah together with the help of my wife Margaret then transcribed it. During a visit my parents made to us in 1997, Sarah discussed the editing of the document with my father and modifications were made. Subsequently, further editing was carried out by myself with the assistance of my daughter Helen.

Subsequently, I have attempted to identify the places he visited and, where possible, use their current names. Furthermore, I have added some historical background to better help to identify the events he describes. My comments and additions are in italics within face brackets. The books that I consulted in researching the background

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are listed in the bibliography at the end of the document. I have added photographs and documents that were in my father's possession which help to illustrate his story, but which also provide background to his life in Poland before the war. To illustrate his time in the Soviet Gulag I have included sketches from the WW2 2 Korpus Polski Facebook site and photographs from the Internet. I have also included photographs of my Polish grandparents and great grandmother.

Henryk Pisarski, Balsham, Cambridge, January 2021.

Background

My father, Ludwik Karol Pisarski, was born in Lwów (present day Lviv in the Ukraine) on 10th December 1913 to Maria Pisarska (nee Metz, born 1879) who was married to Karol Marian Edward Pisarski (born 1882). At that time Poland did not exist as a country and was in the region of Galicia within Austria. Lwów was known as Lemberg and, at another time, as Leopoldis. Poland was established as a republic in 1918 after the First World War. However, the establishment of its frontiers was complicated and took place from 1918 to 1921. Eastern Galicia, in which Lwów was then located, was disputed territory within the West Ukrainian Republic but was occupied by the Polish army. It was awarded to Poland by the League of Nations in 1923. Lwów was located in the eastern region of Poland known as Kresy. In 1931 Lwów had a population of 312,231, of which 65% were Poles, 22% were Yiddish and 11% were Ukrainian. During World War II, Stalin was keen on annexing eastern Poland into the Soviet Union along the Curzon line (named after Lord Curzon of Kedleston, who was the British Foreign Secretary at the end of World War I). There were two versions of the Curzon line: one included Lwów within Poland and the other was in Soviet Russia. It had always been a Polish city. During the meeting of the Allies held at the Teheran Conference in 1943 and Yalta Conference in 1945, there was some confusion as to where the Curzon line lay. However, Stalin was able to convince Roosevelt and Churchill that it lay to the west of Lwów. (The Polish government in exile in London was not included in these discussions. Their position was that the frontiers should be decided at the end of the war. Indeed, as late as 26 August 1944 at a meeting between General Anders and Prime Minister Churchill in Fano, Italy, Churchill assured General Anders that the frontiers of Poland would be decided at a peace conference at which Poland would be represented). So, the city now known as Lviv was incorporated into the Soviet Union and it is now in the Ukraine.

Karol Pisarski fought in the Polish-Soviet war in 1919-1920. However, he died on the operating table in an attempt to remove a brain tumour. Maria worked as a seamstress and brought up the two boys alone. After my father and his brother had been arrested by the NKVD, she must have had a difficult time. Her daughter in law, Henryk's wife, Cecylia, had given birth to my cousin Boguslaw (Bogus) Henryk Pisarski on 4 September 1939 (Germany began the invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939). Somehow, the two women and baby, survived the war and four years later ended up in Krakow. In 1950 my aunt married Jan Bazan and had two sons (Zbigniew and Krystof); Bogus shared his life with them until he married

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Ewa Wladyslawa Ziernicka. Zbigniew remembers my grandmother as a “....very intelligent person...she always had some book in her hand....she was very smart and good looking...”. My father was not able to visit his mother until well after the end of the war. He was able to see her just before the Berlin Wall was erected which divided East and West Berlin, so it must have been 1959 or 1960. He was apprehensive about the visit because he thought he might be detained behind the Iron Curtain, as the Communist countries under Soviet dominance were known then. However, by then he had gained British citizenship by naturalization and everything turned out fine. My grandmother died in Krakow, where she is buried, in 1967. Bogus died on 11 July 2013. At the time of writing, Ewa still lives in Krakow and her daughter Mariola Ewa Pisarska (born 26 February 1964) lives in the provinces.



Maria Metz prior to her marriage to Karol Pisarski



I believe this to be the wedding photograph of Maria Metz and Karol Edward Pisarski; they were married on 5th February 1910 in Lwów.

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RESPUBLICA: POLONIA.

Dioecesis: *Leopolensis* Palatinatus: *(Leopolensis)*
 Parochia: *Banica Metrop* Districtus: *Leopolensis*
 N-rus: *731/37*

Testimonium natiuitatis et baptismi.

Ex parte officii parochialis rit. lat. Ecclesiae sub tit. *Assumpt. B. M. V.* notum testatumque fit
 in libris metricalibus natorum hujus Ecclesiae destinatis pro *urbe*
 Tom. *III* Pag. *258* reperiri sequentia:

Annus Mensis Dies natiuitatis	Locus natiuit. et N-rus domus	NOMEN	Religio Sexus Thori	Parentes: Nomen, cognomen et conditio	Patrini: Nomen, cognomen et conditio
Anno Domini Millesimo <i>nonagesimo</i> <i>tercio</i> die <i>decima</i> <i>decembris</i> <i>natius</i>	<i>Leopolis, p. Popernia 38.</i>	<i>Ludovicus</i> <i>Larobus</i> <i>(biu)</i>	<i>Polon. cath.</i> <i>Chrysostomus</i>	<i>Pisarski</i> <i>Larobus, Mariae, Ladislaus</i> <i>Eduardus (Snu)</i> <i>et Laurentius</i> <i>et Josephus</i> <i>Martinae</i> <i>Maria</i> <i>et Larobinae</i> <i>Podowska</i>	<i>Joannes</i> <i>Ladislav</i> <i>Metz</i> <i>et</i> <i>Hejlor</i> <i>Valeria</i>
baptisatus die <i>30. XII 1913</i>					
Sacerdos baptizans: <i>P. J. Gerardus Szmyd, Vic. Gm.</i>					
Obstetrix: <i>Ludovica Thiel</i>					
Annotationes: <i>-</i>					
Quas testimoniales manu propria subscribo et sigillo Ecclesiae parochialis munio <i>Leopolis</i> die <i>23 Novembris</i> A. D. 19 <i>37</i> <i>H. Chmielowiec</i> <i>Vic. Cur. B. M.</i>					

Z drukarni Tow. „Biblioteka Religijna”, we Lwowie.

My father's birth and baptismal certificate. He was born in Lwów on 10 December 1913, but the certificate was re-issued 23 November 1937.

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Maria, Henryk (standing with a trumpet in hand), Ludwik (standing on a stool with a ball in hand), and grandma

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Ludwik, Maria and Henryk in Lwów, 1927

My father trained as a hairdresser and completed his apprenticeship in 1934. However, he probably started his military service in the cavalry before then, when he was 18. He was keen on sports and was a member of the sports club in Lwów; the membership card shows that he joined the club in 1935 and remained a member until at least May 1938.

Izba Rzemieślnicza we Lwowie

 **Świadectwo
Czeladnicze**

Pan Pisarski Ludwik Marcin
ze Lwowa
urodzony dnia 10 grudnia 1913 r.
w Lwowie powiat Lwów
złożył egzamin czeladniczy w zawodzie frzyjerskiego go-
larskiego i stosownie do art. 155 Rozp. Prez. Rzpłtej
z dnia 7. VI. 1927 roku o prawie przemysłowem (Dz. U. R. P.
Nr. 53/1927, poz. 468) ma prawo używać tytułu czeladnika
frzyjerskiego golarzkiego
Lwów dnia 23 Lipca 1934 r.

Komisja Egzaminacyjna Czeladnicza
dla zawodu frzyjerskiego i'powe
przy Izbie Rzemieślniczej we Lwowie

Przewodniczący:
Doruch

Dyrektor Izby
Hamanki
Nr. 33/34
12.154

Józef Michał
Włodzisław
Prezes Izby
Przewodniczący

Certificate received on being qualified as a hairdresser in 1934

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Ludwik with his mother Maria in Lwów in the late 1930's



Ludwik's sports club membership card dated 1935

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Photos of my father (on the left) and his brother Henryk. These photos were probably taken in the late 1930's



My father in dress uniform when he was in the 7th Cavalry Regiment

Ludwik Karol Pisarski - My Story

On 1 May 1939, I found myself employed by Mr. Purcel from the Hotel George in Lwów as a hairdresser in a spa town, called Morsztyn, for the summer season. Morsztyn was in the Carpathian Mountains surrounded by pinewoods. The weather was lovely. It was like being on holiday and I met up with my brother's friend, who was engaged as bandleader. The band played in the park for morning patients who, on doctor's advice, attended sessions of drinking the bitter, sulphurous water from a natural spa. This season the spa was full of people, as the weather was good so early in the year. The days went by quickly. In June my mother came to see me for one day in my digs, which I rented from a local chap. We spent the evening in the park listening to the band.

{Hotel George was opened in 1901 and completely renovated in 1923. It stood on the site of an older hotel of the same name. It had a number of notable guests which included Franz von Liszt, Maurice Ravel, Richard Strauss. It is a luxury hotel still in operation and is located in Mickiewicz Square, Lviv. Morsztyn is actually Morshyn – or in Polish times Morsyn-Zdroj. It is a popular spa town now in the Ukraine.}

On the radio we heard that our Foreign Minister was having talks with the German Minister about the Northern Corridor as they call it, Pomerania. The significance of this talk was not clear to everyone but by the end of July we knew that war with Germany was imminent. On 1 September 1939 Germany invaded Poland without any declaration of war. Poland, therefore, was not ready. The overwhelming technical superiority of the German army and airforce broke Polish resistance in less than four weeks. Then Soviet Russia attacked Poland; a tragedy for millions of Polish people had started.

It was that fateful September 1939 when I was called to military service in Lwów to control the streets and the security of some places. I went into the police force because in the town there were many Ukrainians who were not friendly to the Polish government. It was a lovely, sunny, golden autumn and I had orders to control the railway carriages that were full of bread destined for the Polish army. When I arrived at the main rail station, Dworzec Główny, I saw that local people were grabbing the bread already. It was impossible to stop them, so I ordered that everybody have four loaves of bread. Before I left, all the wagons were completely empty. At that moment the anti-aircraft sirens also started wailing and everybody scattered. I heard Stukas, the German warplanes, diving from the sky and heard the scream and whistle of the bomb. I looked up to see a bomb falling

straight at me; I was thrown into the air with my rifle on my shoulder. I fell onto the ground and was covered with hot earth that flew from the crater of the unexploded bomb. I was lucky to survive! I did not realise that I was covered with mud until I had walked a mile to the nearest house and asked for a glass of water because my throat was dry with dust. I was shaking. I was in shock. The people let me sit down and rest, but I wanted to go home because my duty had ended at midday. That was my first experience with death. *{Lwów surrendered to the Germans on 19 September 1939.}*

After that, at the end of the month, Lwów surrendered to the Soviet army *{22 September 1939}* and the German army withdrew to the West. Nothing more happened until 15 January 1940. We were discussing with friends what would happen and what we were going to do, but on 15 January 1940 I was arrested at the home of my brother, Henryk Pisarski, by the Soviet Secret Police⁽¹⁾ and sent to Zamarstynow, a prison. I was in a cell that normally took four people, but now contained fifteen people⁽²⁾. They were a mixed bunch. We were kept there for six months. It was the first time I found myself with strange people, but slowly we got organised so as not to get depressed and to keep as near to normal as possible. We had morning prayers, exercised and to keep ourselves clean we swept every morning and carried out delousing. Some of the inmates started telling stories about the old days in Poland when there were Kings to keep our morale high because sometimes, we were near desperation. So, to not go mad, we supported each other with some nice stories about travel and books we had read. We only had walking exercise outside, in the prison yard, once a week.

After nearly one year in prison, on 18 December 1940 our whole group was taken to the Military Court (at Str Kazilrzowska⁽³⁾). The proceedings went on for twelve hours. I listened to the verdicts, which sentenced my brother Henryk to death because he was head of the camp. They said he was anti - revolutionary and they believed he wanted to overthrow the Soviet government in Poland. They sentenced me to ten years hard labour and the other colleagues to between eight to ten years. It was a parody of a court. Since then I have never seen my brother again. In the last moments together, we promised ourselves that whoever was freed first should contact our mother.

On 12 February 1941 other prisoners and I left Lwów in cattle wagons to Charkow, stopping in Kiev on the way. During the journey, which lasted three days, we only had water, half a barrel of salted fish and two loaves of bread for ten prisoners. We changed in Moscow and were taken in another train to the Republic of Commi (Komi) SSR Kotlas⁽⁴⁾. After that we travelled by lorry to a place called Kuchta⁽⁵⁾ near the Arctic Circle, arriving on 2 March 1941. There we worked clearing the forest to prepare other

camps. It was difficult work with not much food, only salted herrings, oats and 200 grams of half-baked bread a day⁽⁶⁾. My body began to swell. I was told that I had scurvy due to a lack of essential vitamins and I started losing my teeth.

- (1) This was most probably the NKVD -Peoples' Commissariat of the Interior (Narodny Komissariat Vntrennich Diel) whose headquarters were located at 1 Pelczynska Street.*
- (2) The overcrowding in the prison is corroborated by the testimony of Aleksander Wat who is quoted by Jan T. Gross in the book "Revolution from Abroad – The Soviet Conquest of Poland's Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia". Aleksander Wat reports that in a cell of 11.5 sq m. there were 29 prisoners.*
- (3) This the name of a street in Lwów.*
- (4) Kotlas was the transit centre for the transportation of prisoners to camps in Komi Autonomous Socialist Republic.*
- (5) I am unable to locate Kuchta, but I can find Uchta (also known as Ukhta) which is located in the Komi Republic in present day Russia. In 1929 it was named Chibyu and renamed in 1939. The town web site is: mouhta.ru but the text is in Russian. However, there is no mention of the prison camp. Searching gulag.online shows a map of the Soviet camps. It identifies Ukhta as a Soviet prison camp, together with other satellite camps nearby, but no further details are given. After my father was in hospital (see text a few paragraphs on) he says that healthy prisoners were moved to another camp in Ukhta, implying that there was more than one camp in the area; this appears to be corroborated by the testimony of Sergeant Major Izydor Michalski where he describes the Chibyu-Ukhta camp, see ⁽⁶⁾ below. In an earlier note written by my father he describes the place as "Uhita" and "Uhta-Czibin" elsewhere, so I think it must Ukhta..*
- (6) Sergeant Major Izydor Michalski was imprisoned in Chibyu-Ukhta forest site No3 (implying more than one camp). He reports that it held 400 prisoners of which 60% were Polish. He spent 14 hours per day logging and was given 400gm of bread, soup twice a day and fish, usually herring, once a day.*

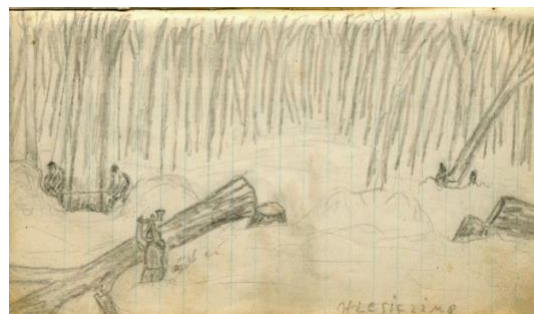
I had a mishap when my military boots were stolen. I always slept with my boots on, only one night I took them off, so as to have a real rest, but when I awoke next morning, they were gone. The following morning, I was woken for work by the soldiers on duty. I was on my feet but without any boots. They shouted and accused me that I did not like work and that I had sold my boots in order to feed myself with bread. Eventually, they gave me

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boots made from old rubber car tyres. I could hardly walk, and my feet started bleeding. I walked very badly so I was sent to the Lazarett (military hospital) nearby, managed by other prisoners. I must point out that in all the camps there were all sorts of people not only Polish.

In the camp hospital they had a very limited stock of medicine. *{In another document my father appears to indicate that he arrived in hospital on 18 July 1941}*. After a few days the swelling got worse and I could not walk. I was in a wooden bed without a mattress, only one blanket had been given to me. I lay there for a few days due to malnutrition. A Tartar doctor painted my bad feet and my backside with a green lotion, disinfectant I was told. The dried blood was pulled off with tweezers - that doctor was more of a vet than a doctor!

For two days nobody came to see me because I was the only one in the room. Through the window I saw a hole had been dug for graves for the patients who did not manage to recover; that was a bit of a grim sight. Eventually, on the second day a woman came to see me, she brought some soup and bread. When she saw my condition and that my whole body was swelling, she said that the next time that she was free she would go to the nearest forest and bring me some wild fruit. To my surprise she returned the next day and gave me a bowl of fruit, which was very sour but after a few days the swelling had gone. I was very pleased despite my condition, and glad that I was alive and had not died. I thanked the woman. She told me she was also a prisoner who came from Odessa where she had entertained some people and had been caught.



Drawings made by a Polish prisoner (Mr Kurweil) when in Siberia, 1940



Polish deportees to Siberia, 1941. Polish lumberjacks in Siberia, 1940

News reached us by radio, that Germany had just invaded Russia. Everybody in the camp (Polish, of course) was excited and filled with new hope that we should soon be free. *{Hitler's troops invaded the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941}*. In the hospital a special police force arrived, and we were told that we would all get papers, but my documents were in the hands of the camp Commander (Capo). Those who were in good health would be evacuated to the other camp in Ukhta. I was lucky because they found my documents in order and the local doctor asked me if I was strong enough to manage the journey, of course I said I was, despite my condition. *{In another document my father says that they were moved to a new camp near the river "Vercuta"; he adds that it could be "Lagier No 38"}*.

{According to Norman Davies, the decree giving "amnesty" to the Polish prisoners was issued by the Soviets on 12 August 1941. The Polish-Soviet Convention formalizing the decree was signed by Stalin and Sikorski on 14 August 1941. However, General Wladyslaw Anders emphasises the "Stalin-Sikorski Declaration", was signed 4 December 1941. My reading of it is that both are valid since each was concerned with different aspects of the agreement between Poles and the Soviets. Apparently, diplomatic relations commenced in London on 30 July between Sikorski and the Soviet Ambassador}

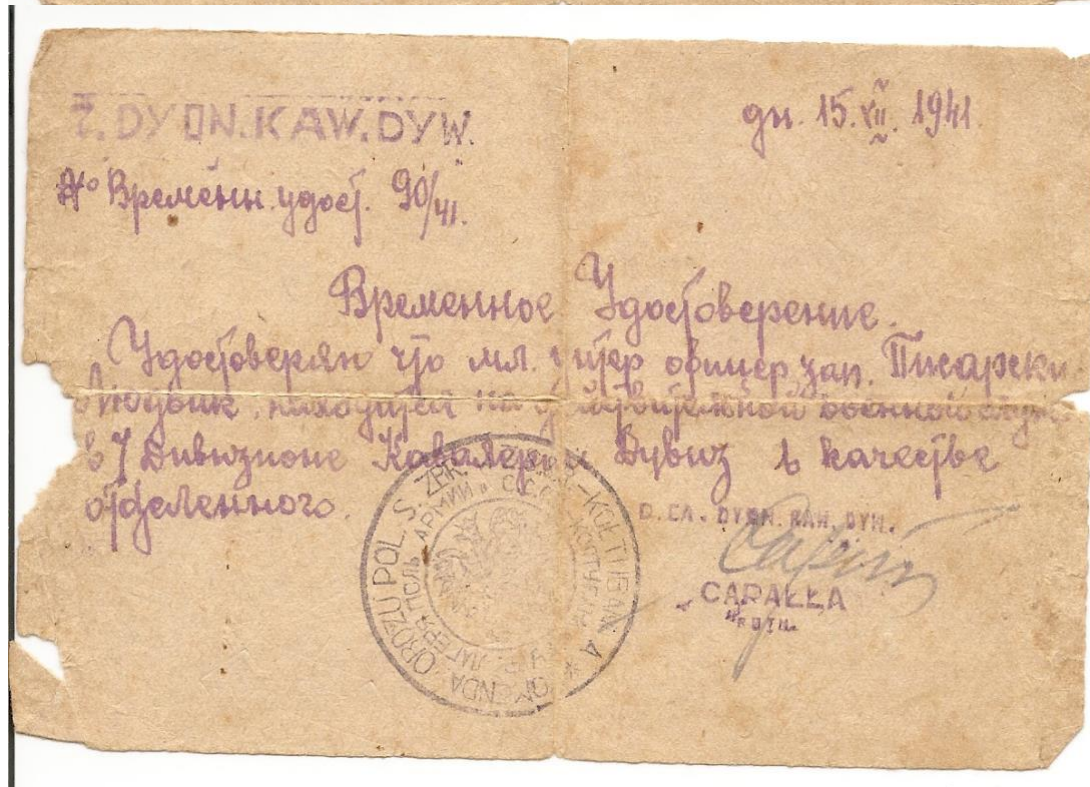
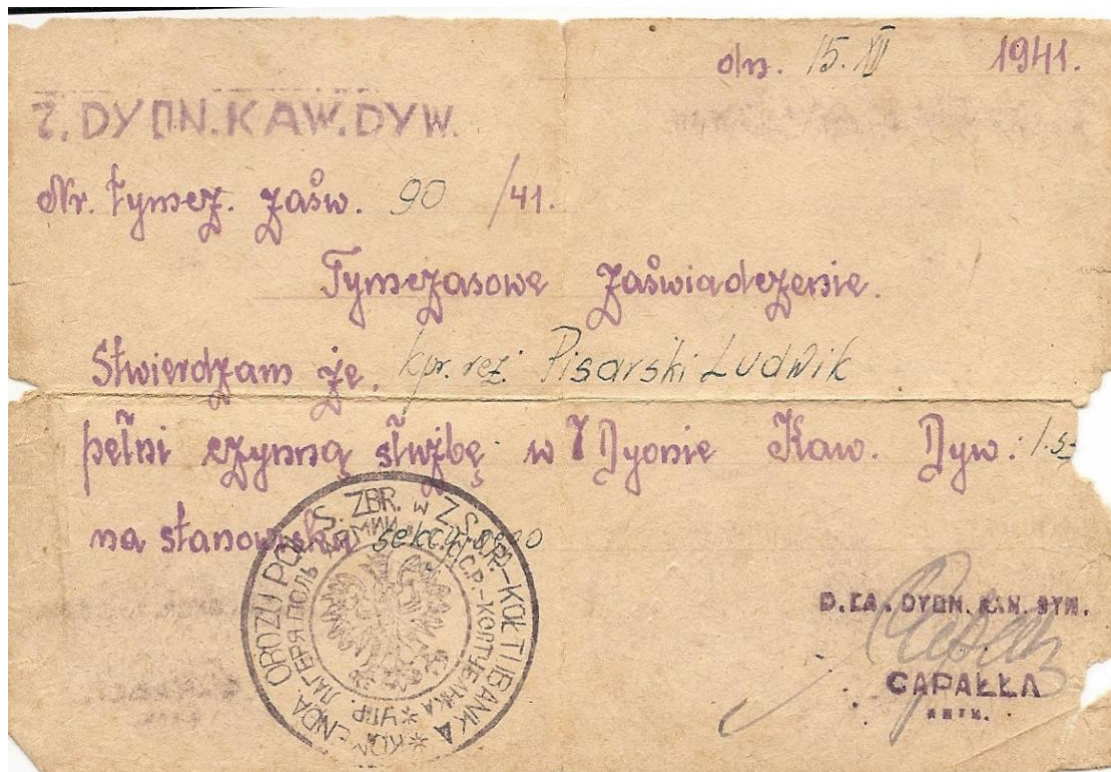
We departed from Camp Ciripicny hospital (Ciripicny was a brick making place) by train on 29 July 1941 for Kuibishev *{Kubyshev?}*. *{In another document he says it was 29 August 1941, which seems more plausible.}* We arrived in Tochie/Tockoy on 17 October 1941. There were about 40 people in the wagon. Once on the train we did not have any food. At the next stop we waited for another connection. As it was taking hours, we decided to go into town to find some bread. In the shop there was an enormous queue of people who were also queuing for bread. After a long time, we decided that two of us should go back to the train. To our surprise all the trains had

gone, when we asked the stationmaster when the next train would be, he said that he did not know because of the war!



Lieutenant-General Waldyslaw Anders, C.B. C-in-C. Polish Forces in the USSR. Commander Second Polish Corps in Italy.

Anders secured the release of Polish prisoners in USSR and formed the 2nd Polish Corps which fought in Italy.



This document dated 15 December 1941, in Russian and Polish, “proved” that my father was in the Polish army, 7th Cavalry Battalion; Signed by Captain Edward Capalla and stamped in Kolubanka.

We decided to wait and to our surprise we saw a passenger train passing by, but it did not stop. So, my friend and I jumped on the train, which was moving slowly at that moment. We decided not to go into a compartment

but stay between two wagons. A few minutes later a Soviet soldier appeared and shouted that we were not allowed to stay, then he tried to push us off the train. We tried to explain that we were Polish soldiers but to no avail. We still resisted and asked to see a Soviet officer. At that moment the door of the next compartment opened, and a Russian major asked the soldier what was going on. Of course, it was a difficult situation. We were in rags and did not look like soldiers, but I tried to explain our situation: why we were on another train trying to reach Kuibishev {*Kuibyshev*}. He invited me to his compartment where his wife was.

There was a female attendant making tea and she gave me a glass of strong Russian tea. I explained that we had to reach our destination as soon as possible. The Major was very considerate and told me that we were now friends again and that we were going to fight the Germans. Eventually we reached the station, Tockoy, where Polish representatives in full Polish uniform waited for us. I mean that it was British battle dress with Polish badges. In the camp I found my old possessions in a bag, a towel and old coat which my dear mother had given to me in Lwów on her last visit to prison.

I was very hungry, as I had not eaten for days. I went to the camp kitchen where the cook gave me some thick soup, it smelt marvellously good. Afterwards, I looked for someone who might have known me or my brother but there was only one person I knew, Sergeant Sasasdeusz from Lwów where I had served in the police force during the autumn of 1939. He helped me to find my way and directed me to the unit, which had begun to form. As I had been in the cavalry in Poland during my military service, I was sent to the 1st Regiment {*1st Krechowiecki Lancer Regiment*}.

I found nobody from our group of partisans who knew where my brother was. Sergeant Sasasdeusz told me that after my police service in Lwów, I had been promoted to Corporal. After a few weeks we were deloused in a steamy bath. We put on clean shirts and our battle dress and we went by lorry to a place called Koutubanka {*Koltubanka; he arrives there on 19 October 1941*}. So, for the first time since my arrest in Lwów prison I was free from the lice, but my old trouble remained; my skin was in a sorry state because of the lack of vitamins and it did not heal quickly. I could not sit down properly because my backside was full of encrusted dried blood. I went to see the doctor in the camp, he did not have much medicine, but he gave me vitamin C. He said it would work, but slowly. We worked in the forest to cut wood, but we were still supervised by Soviet soldiers. In the approach to Christmas, we were seen by the only Polish priest he was also in prison as well; that was 24 December 1941.

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{The document above, dated 15 December 1941 and written in purple ink on yellow paper, records the fact that my father was a corporal in the Polish Army. It was issued after his release from the Soviet labour camp. My father says that this was his “pass to freedom”. He treasured it throughout his life and especially towards the end of his life I had to keep reassuring him that the document was safe}.

{According to Norman Davis in “Trail of Hope”, Kuibyshev was the location of the newly formed Polish Embassy in the USSR. The embassy was charged with assisting all Polish citizens on Soviet territory.

Totskoye, was a POW camp where Polish soldiers were being held. It became the Polish Army HQ formed by General M. Tokarzewski; and later taken over by General W. Anders.

Koltubanka was a Polish military base.}

After the New Year, in 1942, we moved to Kazakhstan, this time by train. *{According to the map shown in Norman Davis’ book “Trail of Hope”, this was probably Lugovoye in South Kazakhstan. However, in another document my father says they left on 2 February 1942 for East Kazakhstan and arrived in a place called “Otar”. On 18 February they were in a camp near Alma Ata}.* The weather was atrocious, 45 degrees below zero. The journey took a few days to reach our destination, which was windy and dry. The local people, Kazak, lived in tents half dug into the earth. They were friendly people. In my free time, after morning exercise, I just wandered around the small village and met some of the local inhabitants. We were always hungry since being in prison, and then in the Russian camps. Now the Russian authorities gave us soldiers dry, dark bread (like a biscuit) all the time and limited the amount of food. We drank tea three times a day. I decided to try and exchange tea from our kitchen for some Kazak bread. That was the time when I met a local girl in a tent where her mother gave me a loaf of bread saying that she hoped that someone, somewhere, will give bread to her son who was in the Russian army. These Kazaks did not like the Russians at all because they were Muslims. I was very pleased that she gave me bread, so I visited them often and brought tea and talked to her daughter. Of course, her mother was always present, and she was never allowed to go out with me! Before leaving she gave me her photo to remember her by. She spoke Russian with me but at home they spoke some sort of Chinese or Tartar.



This may be the photograph that my father is referring to. There is no date or name on the back.

Before changing our camp, I went to a bigger town nearby, to see some Polish families who had been evacuated by the Soviets to that part of Russia, Siberia. I met two Polish sisters. They were in a bad state: poorly dressed and hungry. They told me that they were from Lwów, and that their father was a retired Polish General, Linde. I had met him in the prison in Lwów, so I helped them to contact our officer and they were taken to another Polish family camp. Later I heard that both of them were in camp in Kenya (east Africa). I was pleased that I could help them. I promised that as soon as I was out of prison, I would let the rest of Linde family know of their situation and, somehow, they could provide help. The last I heard from them they were in London in 1945.

We were staying near Alma Ata (a city where films were made) in Kazakhstan. After two months in wintry weather there, we were informed that we were going to “Krasnowock”, a port on the Caspian Sea. *{In another document he says that he departed on 25 March 1942. Krasnovodsk is on the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea}*. We embarked early morning onto a boat with more than one thousand Polish soldiers. We spent all night at sea and the next morning we landed in Port Pahlevi *{Pahlavi}* on Persian territory; at last we had said goodbye to the USSR. Shouting for joy, we sang patriotic Polish songs. We were free and also on British pay. *{The Polish Army in the USSR now passed to British command under Lt. Gen. Sir Henry Pownall.}* I must point out that until then, we did not have any money, just food and water. We had been given pay books that also served as identity as well. When we left Russia, they did not give

us any identification papers. We were nobody...people without names. *{According to his discharge certificate, he served in the Polish Forces under British command from 1 April 1942 until 13 February 1947. However, his pay book gives a starting date of 2 June 1942}.*

The first night we slept on the beach, it was 3 April 1942. *{According to Norman Davis, he must have been amongst the first batch of evacuations from USSR.}* We had been told that from now on we were under British command. After a few days, Persian soldiers took us in lorries to Tehran. We passed enormous mountains and places with breathtaking views and narrow roads. We spent the night on a high plateau. On a shaped rock was a tablet of Emperor Darius. It was 3,000 years old and fresh as if it had been sculpted yesterday.

{General Anders made sure that the Polish civilians could leave the "inhuman land" – meaning the Soviet Union- with the army. In two evacuations between March and November 1942, over 115,000 people – 78,500 soldiers and 37,000 non-combatants, including ca. 18,000 children – departed for Iraq.}

Another thing I remember, after prison and suffering, was that I began to feel like I was on a holiday tour. We travelled again; this time with British drivers because we now entered Iraq territory, stopping in a place called Bakuba. The weather was hot and dry, we saw palm trees and scorpions, from now on we were in the desert. We received a cotton uniform and tablets against malaria. We stopped for the night near an Indian camp where we were given food; rice and curry.

We crossed the river Euphrat *{Euphrates, but it could be the Tigris if he was approaching the city from the east}* and arrived at the capital of Iraq, Baghdad. The town looked as we imagined: minarets and lots of people. The Arabs were very colourful it was as though you had opened a book about Ali Baba. The next stop was in Oasis Palms, near Lake Habbania. We were given lots of pressed dates, so much so that we all had diarrhoea! In Habbania *{al-Habbaniya ?}* we found Polish units with a kitchen which followed us on every step of our journey. We rested in that camp for three weeks. Afterwards, we continued by lorries, this time with Polish army drivers. It was a long way and the desert was dusty. We had travelled 260 km when we reached a place called Hamadan on 24 April 1942.

We stopped again at Kermanshah, a rocky place. We saw another historic monument on the rock; we saw the name Alexander the Great and the date proclaiming that he had conquered Persia. The next stop was at the border

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of Trans Jordania; we were now in Palestine. We entered a big camp in a place called Gedera, where we stayed for six months. We found ourselves in paradise with lovely food, tinned ham and tinned cheese. In the shops we bought heavy, sweet caramel wine and we were on British rations. That meant we had the same food and pay as British Colonial soldiers. We were allowed to go out on local buses, the nearest place was Tel Aviv. We had changed places from the hell of Russia to the paradise of Palestine.

We also listened to Radio London with the news in Polish. We heard about the situation from the Eastern front that Hitler's army was advancing through Russian territory. Some more transport arrived from Persia with Polish soldiers. I tried to meet somebody who might have heard from my brother, Henryk, but unfortunately there was nothing. I met some friends from our group in prison, Brigidki, Lwów, Edward Iankowski, Marek Szapiro and a friend of Henryk, Janek. In June 1942 we were visited by an army commission to check our health, I got a grade A. We moved to another camp, Barshid. There was nothing special happening, apart from morning exercise, gymnastics, and basketball with our commanding officer and carrying out night duty around the camp.

(1) SOLDIER'S NAME and DESCRIPTION on ATTESTATION.

66/P/193/D/8.B

Army Number

Surname (in capitals) **PISARSKI**

Christian Names (in full) **LUDWIK**

Date of Birth **10. 12. 1913.**

Place of Birth { Parish **[REDACTED]**
In or near the town **[REDACTED]**
In the county of **[REDACTED]**

Trade on Enlistment **czeladnik wyrobniczy**

Nationality of Father at birth **[REDACTED]**

Nationality of Mother at birth **[REDACTED]**

Religious Denomination **Wym. kat.**

Approved Society

Membership No.

Enlisted at **Podolsk** On

For the :-
* Regular Army.
* Territorial Army.
* Strike out those inapplicable.
* Supplementary Reserve.
* Army Reserve Section D.

For years with the Colours and years in the Reserve.

Signature of Soldier **Ludwik Piskorski**

Date **1. 6. 1948**

3

DESCRIPTION ON ENLISTMENT.

Height **1.74** ft. ins. Weight **105** lbs.

Maximum Chest **97** in. Complexion

Eyes **c. mel** Hair **c. blond**

Distinctive Marks and Minor Injuries

CONDITION ON TRIAL


Found fit for

Defects or History of previous Enquiries if called up for

Date 19.....

Initials of M.O. i/c.....

DISCHARGED



Army Book 64. Soldier's Service and Pay Book. Dated 2 June 1942

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MEDICAL CLASSIFICATION.				Initials of Medical Officer.	
Date.	Category or Grade.	Medical Examiner of Recruits, or other Medical Authority.			
2.6.1942	2nd Lt	2nd Lt		W. Demel	
grouped blood group				O	
PRESCRIPTION FOR GLASSES.				Date of Exam.:	
R	Vision without Glasses.	SPH	CYL	Axis Standard Notation.	Vision with Glasses.
L					
Signature of M.O.				Date of Issue:	
				Optician's Initials.	
VACCINATION.				Initials of Medical Officer.	
Date Vaccinated.					
23.11.44				W. Demel	
PROTECTIVE INOCULATIONS.					
Nature of Vaccine. "T.A.B." Cholera, Plague, etc.		Date.	Initials of Medical Officer.		
Tetanus Toxoid 1cc		26.8.1943	W. Demel		
T.A.B.C		26.8.1943	W. Demel		
Tetanus Toxoid 1cc		26.8.43	W. Demel		
Typhus pluvialis 1cc		8.5.44	W. Demel		
Typhus pluvialis 1cc		28.1.44	W. Demel		
T.A.B. 0.25		2.10.44	W. Demel		
T.A.B. 0.25		8.5.44	W. Demel		
T.A.B. 0.25		12.11.46	W. Demel		
T.A.B. 0.25		12.11.46	W. Demel		
PARTICULARS OF NEW ARTIFICIAL DENTURES SUPPLIED.					
Particulars.	Dental Centre.	Date.	Initials of Dental Officer.		

Medical record in Army Book 64. Soldier's Service and Pay Book.

On 10 June 1942 we received very exciting news. We were going to see Jerusalem and Bethlehem. With a friend, Josef Waluszewski I also visited Golgotha and other holy places. I felt an enormous spiritual elation, especially at the tomb of Jesus Christ, and at the place where Christ was born. The old town seemed never to have changed; smelly streets, stone-

built houses, Arabs trading in the markets and a boy selling water from a nearby corner; everything was strange to our eyes.

Altogether we were getting better every day, more strength, recovering from all the past bad days in concentration camps. Of course, the British did not feed us for nothing, we were being prepared to fight again, somewhere on the Western front. However, for the moment we were enjoying ourselves, swimming in the Mediterranean Sea with friends, going to Tel Aviv and Jaffa talking to Polish Jews that had emigrated. We met some Australian soldiers in the pub, drinking a lot of beer; one of them was descended from a Pole. His family had settled, many years ago in Australia. It was nice to meet him and talk to him about life there. Soon they returned home, to prepare to fight the Japanese, together with the USA forces.

As I mentioned previously, I stayed in Palestine. On 25 June 1942 it was the Regimental Holiday. After Mass we had a big dinner in the camp. In the late afternoon, our Captain Karpinski and 10 soldiers, including myself, played basketball on the sand. It was his hobby every morning before six o'clock to play. After that the day was free, because it was hot I and two colleagues of mine went to the sea for a swim in the evening. I bought kilos of grapes and invited them to eat with me.

At last we got the news from our Captain that we were going by sea to Iraq. Again, this time near Mosull, near the big oil fields. First, we went by train to El Cahtara, Egypt down to the Suez Canal on the British Navy ship called Banfara; embarkation was swift. Altogether, including the British soldiers, we were over three thousand men. The 11th October was our first full day at sea, and the first exercise for abandoning ship. This was carried out every day at ten o'clock. Every soldier had to wear a life belt. The weather became very hot and sticky. We met some British soldiers going to India. Apart from morning exercise we were not doing much, just watching dolphins swimming along side the boat. We also saw Meduze (jellyfish) whose stings, when emerging on the surface of the sea, looked like flowers. On the tenth day at sea we stopped at port Aden, from now on we were escorted by two Cathr Torpedo Boats, they were moving very quickly because the Japanese navy was somewhere in the Indian Ocean. We saw big whales spurting jets of water. I became friendly with some British soldiers; they wanted to learn some Polish and I English. Our first comradeship. A lot of soldiers became seasick because of the big waves and our boat began to wobble. I found that the best position was not to look at the horizon, instead it was better to lay on your back and look at the sky. The food on the boat was very poor, all thin stuff. In the canteen, which

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opened at six in the evening, you could get a 'glass' biscuit, so called because they were so hard and a small bottle of warm, dark Guinness beer.

On 23 October we landed in Basra, a Persian port, and embarked on the train to Baghdad, Iraq. Afterwards we were taken by lorries to the desert near the town of Kanakin. It was very hot and dry. We were now separate, in a completely Polish army, called the Second Corps. We began to learn to drive cars and explored the surrounding desert. We had been told that we were near an ancient place, Babylon, but we only saw empty canals dug about two thousand years ago to supply water from the river Euphrat {*Euphrates*}. On that day I was stung by a big hornet so badly on the leg that I fell to the ground and had an anti poison injection from the medic.

On 30 October I was in the field hospital in Quisel Rabat with British doctors, but Indian staff, for a check - up. I met some Polish soldiers from the Carpathian Brigade and I also met Sergeant Iasmian, a journalist he was from the Polish paper, the White Eagle newspaper issued in Baghdad.

On 24 December 1943 I spent Christmas in the desert but in my thoughts I found myself back in Poland in 1939, the last Christmas I had spent with my Mother and brother, Henryk. I wondered if I would ever meet him again.

New Year, 1944. I made a new friend, Josef Waluszewski. He was a young chap, about twenty years old, from Lwów. We talked a lot and it looked as though we were related somewhere through our grandfather Pisarski from Zamarstynow and Pestowa (family name). Another surprise, I met Marek Szapiro from our partisan group. The last time I had seen him was during our military court in Lwów. I asked him if he knew anything about my brother, Henryk, unfortunately he had never met him. He had only heard that somebody had seen him working in the gold mine in Camczatka, but nobody could confirm this.

Unfortunately, being in the desert was not good for my health and it made me ill. I was sent to rest in Lebanon in Syria in a Polish camp near Beirut. It was a lovely country with famous Lebanese pine trees. Whilst walking in the port, I met Polish sailors from the torpedo boat, called Zbik. At the local British canteen, they invited me to see their living quarters in the boat. As it was eleven o'clock in the morning the sergeant offered them a gill of rum, as was their habit in the British navy during the war. It was nice to see our sailors. They survived an early attack from Italian U-boats. They told me how they had remained under sea for a long time during the attacks.



Tram tickets from Cairo and Damascus (?) and railway ticket from Baghdad

Afterwards my friend, Walus, and I invited two of the Polish soldiers for a pint of beer in a British NAAFI. Those two weeks I spent visiting the French part of Beirut, which was divided before occupation because the French had been here before the war. From here they had reconstructed the Free French Army. Visiting the gold market in that quarter of town, one could see the enormous value of the goods and fortunes changing hands. So far that part of the world had not yet been touched by war. We also visited an interesting museum in Lebanon. It contained the archaeology of the Syrian Kings. The beautiful Lebanese girls walked in the streets but were always accompanied by their mothers.

Back in the desert our regiment got a new name: 2nd Tank Division, Krechoweacki, 3rd Squadron. From Iraq we returned to Palestine. On that day I received wonderful news, a letter through the Red Cross said that my

mother was well and was now living in Krakow. The news raised my hopes that maybe my brother was also alive, somewhere in Russia.

By order of my commanding officer, I was sent on a three-month radio telegraphist course next to the British units, in a place called Qusasin near to Cairo, but close to the Egyptian military camp. We saw Egyptian soldiers marching all day. We settled in barracks in the British Telegraph Section. For the first few days we were free to go to the city by tram and saw a famous hotel and garden which was out of bounds for British soldiers.



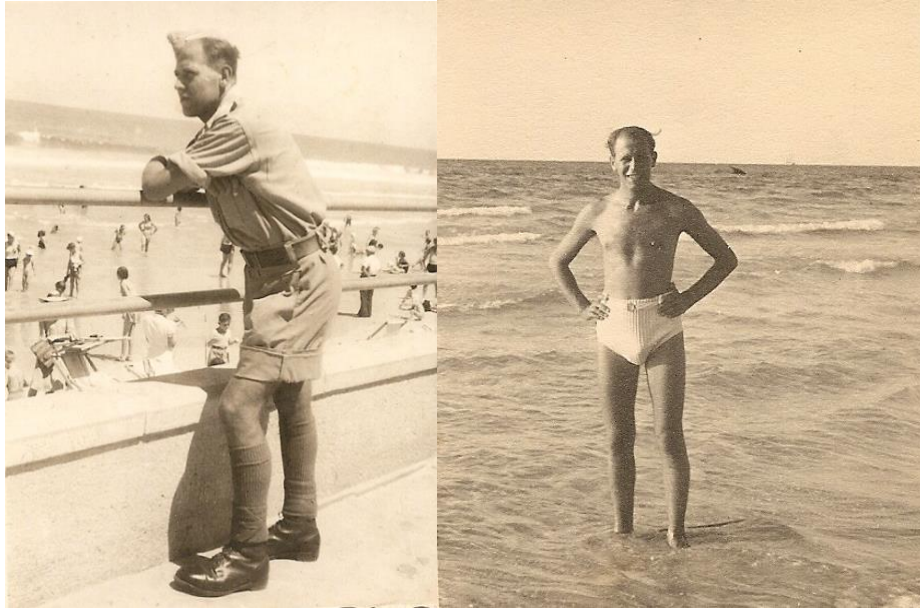
These photographs of my father were taken in Cairo. In the one on the left he looks rather gaunt whilst he looks healthier and fitter in the one on the right. Perhaps the one on the left was taken when he first arrived or soon after he had been ill with white fever.

On that day we went to be examined by the British doctor, as was routine for any newcomers. I fainted during my visit and was taken to the South African camp hospital. They told me I had white fever. I lost consciousness for about twelve hours. This was later explained to me by a doctor, with the help of a Jewish girl soldier as translator (into Polish), as the doctor only spoke English. She explained everything to me. I stayed for one week under observation. The dentist pulled two teeth, which were hard for him to extract.

Afterwards I started to learn Morse telegraph. We travelled by jeep with an English instructor. We started at 8 o'clock and went on until 2 o'clock. We were located by the Nile. We saw Egyptian peasants coming to collect water from the well with donkeys in order to irrigate the fields. After work we were free to go swimming in a pool in Heliopolis, a posh part of Cairo.

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Later we went to the pictures, mostly for Allied soldiers. We also saw American soldiers. On one of our free days we went to Alexandria, named after a Greek General, Alexander the Great who defeated the Egyptians.



My father enjoying life once again at the seaside in Palestine.



My father in Egypt (right of the camel) and Alec Waisek (front towards middle)

I was still in search of my brother, so I put an advert in the soldier's newspaper, the Eagle, and had a reply that a Henryk Pisarski, born in 1912, was in the Polish camp of the Carpathian Brigade. So, my hopes rose again, and I quickly went to the camp to see him. Although this man was the same age and shared my brother's name, the first glimpse of him proved he was not my brother as, unlike my brother who had blonde hair, this man had

black hair. He had no connections to the Pisarski family in Lwów. This was another big disappointment.

A lot of excitement: we were told that we were moving again, this time to Italy. We sailed from Port Said across the Mediterranean and disembarked in Napoli. We had been at sea for six days, escorted by four anti-torpedo boats. On 9 March 1943 we passed the island of Capri, the famous palace of Roman kings, Patricious Iberrius *{to be historically correct, emperors rather than kings}*. We saw lovely greenery, very different to what we had been used to in the deserts of Africa and Iraq, it felt more European. When we disembarked in Napoli, the weather was beautiful.

We quickly dispersed because of the Germans' attack. It looked as though the Jerries still held the power in the air. After a few minutes everything went quiet. In the camp I found some colleagues from Lwów, Eduard Janowski and his brothers, who had been arrested with our group. They had survived Russian camps. We chatted about how lucky we were to be alive after all the suffering. It was the 25th of March, so I thought of my mother to keep my memory of her fresh; it was her patron saint's day.

We were now attached to the British Eighth Army and camped in a place called Afragola. *{Afragola is just south of Caserta and north of Napoli and on the road to Sassine}*. We met the first Italian women coming to the camp to ask for chocolate and cigarettes, but there were not many Italian men. We went to visit Napoli to see the Royal palace and Opera House. We had been told to be careful in the evenings in the town because of the local boys, who were pickpockets and were very quick thieves. But we were also told to be friendly with the local people, so we began to learn Italian which seemed easier than English. We were taken by lorries to a little village in the hills called Pratella. Our tank went separately by transporter, so we moved near to Cassino. We heard artillery fire. There was a concentration of many regiments of Allied forces near Cassino. We were next to Canadian units; on our left we also saw the Indian division.

{My father was in the 1st Krecowiechi Lancers Regiment, 2nd Squadron, Pluton 1. The code name for his tank was "Zbir"- all code names in the 2nd squadron began with the letter "Z". The marking on the side of the tank was a green square with a yellow ring in the middle. He was the radio operator. The others in that tank were: Jan Kalicki, Adolf Sobolewski, Wincenty Saniuk and Wladyslaw Wajcik. It likely that the platoon was formed some time when they were in Palestine or Egypt. I believe that their tank was a M4 Sherman, as he and his comrades are photographed posing in front of one at the end of the war}.

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Pluton 1. c.d.

Czołg "Zbir".

poh. Kalicki Jan	d-ca czołgu.
kpr. Pisarski Ludwik	radio op.
uż. Sobolewski Adolf	kier.
uż. Saniuk Wincenty	pom. kier.
st.uż. Wójcik Władysław	strz.

Colleagues in my father's tank "Zbir"

Italian units supplied ammunition to artillery by mules because the terrain was very difficult. They moved during the night. We saw German planes bombarding some positions, but we had orders not to respond by fire so as not to betray our position. Before going into action, our Sherman tanks were reinforced with extra steel plates. On our way to Monte Cassino we saw ruined houses at Pratella, especially along the main road. It was heavily shelled by German artillery positions, which were hidden in the rocky hills near Monte Cassino. Our tanks were camouflaged against German planes. The Cavendish Road, the fictitious name given to this narrow, winding strip, was the route chosen by Allied forces opposite the German position, the famous Hitler line hailed as impregnable by their army experts. *{The Hitler line was behind the Gustav line and behind Cassino. It was later named the Senger line. The Hitler line ran through the hill-top town of Piedmonte, which they were aiming for.}* Unfortunately, we were exposed to enemy fire because observers from Monte Cassino could see every movement of our forces.

At night we moved near to Monte Cassino. We had a tent for two people, half dug into the terrain. We were told we were going into action. We were first reserves, going into action as the 4th Regiment. On the road there were a number of tanks, destroyed by German anti-tank artillery but the order was to take Monte Cassino in any way possible.

So, on 11 May 1944 all Allied artillery opened fire from the surrounding hills. *{Here, my father is describing the start of the fourth battle for Monte Cassino, which began at 11pm; the general attack started at 1am the following day}*. About one thousand guns started bombarding the monastery plus Allied air forces started bombing from the air. Our section, second Polish Corps was engaged in forcing the way. *{2nd Polish Armoured brigade. This comprised: 1 and 2 Polish Armoured regiments, 6 Kresowa Armoured regiments}*. Every inch of ground was bitterly contested by special SS suicide squads. They defended their ground from pillboxes and foxholes that had been dug into the rock. After waves of Allied troops, all

Regiments, including my Fourth Polish regiment and Polish infantry, perished during attack *{I think my father means that many perished during the attack not "all"}*. It was all over. We moved with tanks over the hill into action.

After the battle was over, we had a rest and a thanksgiving mass was held in a nearby field. We saw a lot of tanks; German tanks and ours lay destroyed by gunfire. We saw how meticulously the Germans had constructed their defences. Hitler had boasted that that line would never be taken by Allied forces!

After a week's rest, all of our two Polish Corps moved to the Adriatic coast, so we said goodbye to the local Italian women in Pratella *{this is a small village some 26km south east of Cassino}* where we had spent all of May. We saw poppy blossom at that time on the local hills and locals predicted that lot of peoples' blood was going to be wasted. So, on 17 June 1944 we left our Italian friends, they wished us good fortune in the future and good health and hoped that the terrible war was going to finish soon. They also wished us a safe journey back to our homes in Poland (but that was never to happen). Towards the end of our rest, we went to the Napoli theatre to see the opera Pagliacci *{opera by Ruggero Leoncavallo}*, especially open for the Allied troops. Of course, there were a lot of Americans there. The next visit was with our Commanding Officer to Pompeii. The town had been destroyed by the eruption of the volcano Vesuvius. Lava had destroyed the entire town in the 6th century BC. We could see straight streets with canals for refuge. We saw a baker's shop and a wealthy banker's house with pictures on the walls.

This time we moved with the tanks to a town called Civitanova on the hill *{Civitanova Alta, inland from the port of Civitanova}*. On the other hill the town was called Recanati with fine views of vine groves. We were greeted by German gunfire as we approached another town Castelfidardo. *{Castelfidardo is just north of Loreto. Here I think my father is describing the beginning of the battle of Loreto, which was from 2nd to 9th July. Castelfidardo was taken by Polish forces on 4 July. This battle preceded the battle and capture of the strategic port of Ancona which started 17 July and ended on 18th.}* At about eleven o'clock I was wounded on the head by a piece of German shrapnel. I was unconscious and was taken by an American plane to the field hospital at Bari. It was a Polish hospital. Here I found another friend from our regiment. I stayed for one month. *{He was in hospital from 5 to 25 July 1944}*. I did not like the hospital surroundings and I wanted to go back to our regiment, which was like a family to me. That was what I thought. But I returned to my regiment by lorry. It was a

long way from Bari to my unit, and the journey took all my strength away, so I arrived shaken. At night, in the dark you could see the light from the tracer bullets and an enormous noise.

{According to Anders in his book "An Army in Exile", the 3rd Division of the II Polish Army started pursuing the Germany Army on 17 June. They made contact with the enemy on 21 June at the river Chienti, which reaches the sea at Civitnova, but found it strongly manned and were unable to cross. Then the enemy withdrew but had mined the roads which were in a damaged state. The pursuit continued to the river Potenza where the enemy with dislodged. The next river, Musone, was crossed on 1st July. The next day the battle of Loreto started. Anders describes the battle as follows: "The fighting was very stubborn, and the objectives changed hands several times. There were difficulties in bringing up supplies of ammunition, as great quantities were used and the distance from the supply depots were considerable". He goes on to say that the attack on the Gothic line started on 19 August 1944 with the 2nd Armoured Brigade comprising four tank regiments supported by infantry. The Gothic Line ran through Pesaro, along the river Goglia, over Saaso Corvaro, Bagno, Scarperia and Pistoia. It was a belt 6km wide with well-developed artillery positions, protected by anti-tank obstacles and minefields. I wonder if this attack was what my father was describing of what he saw when in returned to his unit after his first stay in hospital in Bari?}.

I was taken back to hospital. At the rest centre I did nothing. I went to see the opera, Tosca *{opera by Giacomo Puccini}* at the opera house in Bari. Walking along at the front of the port we saw a lot of British naval ships sunk by German bombers in the first year of assault. I went back to the unit again to see them, but my nerves were not better. Our squadron leader, Captain Karpinski, said I had better go back to hospital. The doctors there told me that I needed calm and more rest. So, I spent another month in the rest camp in Bari.

From Bari I went back to our unit, the first Regiment Krewiecki, this time by lorry. This time it looked as though I had recovered well. On the way to Osimo *{this is a small town between Loreto and Ancona}* we stopped in Roma. We saw lots of American soldiers. We went to see the Vatican and to the Copula of Saint Peter. After we had been allowed to see the Sala Concestoriale, the Holy Father Papa Pacelli *{Pope Pius XII, born Eugenio Pacelli. Pope from 1939 to 1958}* received some officials from the Allied forces. Lots of soldiers of all nationalities wanted to see Papa. Everybody surged forward to the Holy Father. Suddenly, I found myself kneeling in front of the Holy Father. He asked me my nationality, I replied, Polish, then

I repeated Polska, he gave me the sign of the cross. All these things went by so quickly, it was like a dream. I had never expected to be so close to the Holy Father.



A token from Rome

In the evening we went to the Royal opera to see *Aida* {opera by Giuseppe Verdi}, again there were a lot of Americans and only two of us Polish soldiers. The next day we visited the Catacombs of Terme Caracala at the Forum Romanum. I was surprised how life can change. After all these things that had happened to me, it looked as if I was very lucky after all. I was now able to see all these beautiful things all around me. Still in Rome, where we spent one week, we went to see Palace Venetia. We also saw the Palace Spagnia, where Mussolini made his famous speech to the Romans. We saw Fascist emblems (in the form of terracotta tiles, like a mosaic). The room contained paintings by Rafaele, Titian and other famous painters. I felt much better; time helped make my recovery. I was now working in the Squadron office typewriting.

One day I went to see the regimental doctor. He said that I had yellow fever. Again, I found myself in hospital, this time in Ancona. I had to travel by boat to Bari where I met a doctor who understood me better than the others had done. I was in hospital for six weeks. {*This seems to be his third hospital stay in Bari.*}

Christmas 1944. On 12 January 1945 I met Sister Elisa in our department. Osimo, 15 January 1945 coming back from hospital I found that my squadron had settled in the old town. I found my digs through my friend from our unit. It was a quiet place in the centre of the town at the house of a local mayor, Signor Pasquale. He invited us for supper together with the previous occupier, a British officer who had lived in the same room. We also met his niece who lived there as well. She attended the local German

school; her name was Anita. She was a bit fat - not my type - but it looked like she liked me. The mayor's wife did not like me at first. She did not like me staying at their house because she was very nervous. I explained to her that I was also suffering from the same things and I needed a quiet place to recover from my illness.

Once I invited Anita and her mother to the local theatre in Osimo. It was a special troop of Italian artists sent to entertain us. I took a box for four people because it was empty. After we had taken our seats, I heard that one of our officers wanted the box for his guests. I found myself in a tricky situation. One soldier told me that I had better lock the door with the key and not let him enter. It was a critical situation and I did not know the consequences. Anyway, everything remained calm and we enjoyed the show. But I did not expect any sort of vendetta from this officer. After the show Anna told her friend how she had enjoyed being in my company and also said that I was a Cadet officer who lived in her house. Soon the news reached the officer to whom I had refused entry to the box. He went to our commanding officer and asked if Ludwik Pisarski was in fact a cadet. So, the true story was a shock to Anna's family, all because of the girls talk. In the end her mother told me to leave the house because she was so indignant. It was more or less a scandal for the mayor of Osimo. Perhaps her mother was thinking about a future husband for her daughter.

Anyway, soon we were on the move again, this time near Bologna. So, I said goodbye to the family Pasquale, after all they had been good to me. The mother was in tears when she bid me farewell. We camped in Bodrio on 1 April 1945. *{I am unable to locate "Bodrio", but there is a town called Budrio just to the east of Bologna}*. I had a visit from two friends of mine; Julio Walustewski and Alek Wasiek. They told me that they were Cadet Officers and had finished their course.

Then we were in reserve. Our second corps, together with the British, attacked the German last line of defence on the river Po. After two days, Bologna fell and was taken by British and Polish Second Corps. The next day we entered the town to see if any damage had been done by the fighting. It looked as though the Germans had left it undamaged and next, we heard that the German Field Marshall Kieselring had surrendered with all his staff. So, it looked like our war in Italy had finished, that was 26 April 1945. *{The end of the war in Europe, VE Day, was declared on 8 May 1945.}* After this we entered a period of rest. We stayed in a tent near a place called Brisigliera. *{I am unable to find "Brisigliera"; the nearest name is Brisighella, which is roughly between Ravenna and Firenze}*.

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My Dad in front of a M4 Sherman tank. I suspect that this was taken after the end of the War, as he is smartly dressed (note the shiny shoes) and looks relaxed.



My father with comrades posing with a Sherman tank



My father with comrades. I do not know when this taken; but it was possibly before they went to Italy.

Doing not much, I heard that I had been promoted a grade higher to Sergeant and Radio Instructor. I also started a new course for my colleagues, soldiers of our squadron. After a month they moved me to the second squadron of supply tanks, so I said goodbye to my colleagues. Another officer was also transferred. By chance I was taken by our unit's truck to collect some soldiers who had been on holiday leave in Venezia. After a long journey we arrived in the evening, we saw a beautiful sight; the war had never touched the town. We saw the cathedral of San Marco, one of the marvels of the world. The fantastic mosaics made a very big impression on me - everything looked as though I was watching a film or dreaming. The Venetians were friendly to the Allied soldiers because they spent all their pay packets readily, as if tomorrow would never come. We lived for the day because thousands of soldiers who were not injured or who had only been in the second line, not the front line, had never seen a real battle. Whilst we were here everything which had passed was forgotten. Looking back at what I had seen and what had happened since 1940, the day of my arrest in Lwów, all the bad things and marvellous things that had happened made me wonder.

We took our soldiers back to camp, which this time was in a place called Fonte Spina between Recanati and Porto San Giorgio. *{I am unable to locate "Fonte Spina"}*. Only a few old friends were left now because I was the instructor for the radio operator in the second tank supply squadron. After a few hours of lessons and practice I was free to go to the nearby Port San Giorgio cinema to pass the time. We were now told that we were to stay here in Italy for one more year as occupation forces. From time to time working in squadron office typewriting I made friends with Sergeant Deiter. We also took some new soldiers who had been freed from the

German Army and had joined the Poles. They had been forced to work under a German directive in various sorts of work and also as soldiers.

We received some good news from Headquarters. They offered Polish soldiers some places for a holiday in Hotel Bellevue, Cadenabbia in Lago di Como *{This is one of the oldest hotels in this part of the lake. It is now known as Grand Hotel Cadenabbia}*. Nobody seemed interested to go there so I volunteered and packed my bag. I found myself in for a long journey to Como. The lake looked peaceful and beautiful; the smell of flowers made it indeed a place to rest. The hotel I had booked was very elegant. In the restaurant a waitress was serving. The chef was Polish. It was luxurious living after years of living in a tent not to mention Russia.



My father with friends outside the Hotel Bellevue, Cadenabbia, and in uniform

Those two weeks passed like a dream. During that time, I also visited Villa Carlotta. It had been owned for many years by a German or Austrian Prince. There was a lovely park, full of exotic shrubs and flowers. There I met an Italian girl. As I had begun to learn Italian, I started a conversation and eventually I invited her to the hotel for a dance. Every evening an orchestra played. Her name was Gianna, her father was head gardener in the Villa.

I returned to Fonte Spina where our squadron was based. Coming back, it was a grey life after Como. I was thinking when, if ever, I would see that lovely place again. I was lucky again, after six months I found out from the squadron office that there was again a place for one in Cadenabbia. Full of anxiety I approached my commanding officer to get permission to go because nobody seemed to want to go there.

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I returned to the Bellevue Hotel, I found the same room and also met Gianna again. It felt as if we had known each other for a long time. I found her character agreeable; we liked the same things and we found it easy to talk and understand each other, things just clicked! I went to her house, which was above Villa Carlotta. She had three sisters and four brothers. Gianna invited me into the house where she introduced her mother and father. They were very friendly and understanding when I told them my story of the past, Poland and the war.



This is the earliest photograph I have found of my mother and father together. It was taken in Como, December 1945

At our camp we heard a story that after a pact between the three big powers (USA, England and the Soviet Union) we, as Polish forces in exile, would not be able to return to Poland as an army because it was in the Soviet Union's sphere of influence. That news was very bad for our morale. We had been sold to Russia; therefore, we were told that those who wanted to go back to Poland could and those that did not could go to England and be demobilised and work in England.

{The pact between the three big powers that my father is referring to is the Yalta Conference held in the Crimea from 4 to 11 February 1945. On 27

February 1945, Churchill told the House of Commons that the Russians claimed the boarder in eastern Poland was defined by the Curzon line. Under the definition proposed by Molotov and Stalin, this meant that the cities of Lwów and Vilno would be included in Soviet Russia. He said that the Russian offer was ample compensation for new land that Poland was to acquire at the expense of Germany in north and west. – In fact, this had already been tacitly agreed by the big three powers at the Teheran conference at the end of November 1943. However, at a meeting between General Anders and Churchill in Fano, Italy on 26 August 1944, Churchill said that the frontiers of Poland would be decided at a peace conference at which Poland would be represented. This wasn't to be. Since many in the 2nd Polish Army came from eastern Poland and had suffered prison in Soviet Gulag, it is not surprising that morale was low and that they felt that they had been “sold” to Russia. However, here I think that my father is describing events happening in early 1946. At this time a Soviet inspired government had been set up in Warsaw. On 20 February 1946, they declared that the Polish Armed forces in the west “no longer existed”. If they wished to return to Poland they could but would have to apply to consulates aboard as individuals. General Anders set up a special camp in Cerinara, near Naples to facilitate return of soldiers. Of the 112,000 in the 2nd Polish Army Corps, 14,200 applied for repatriation of which 8700 being men who joined up after hostilities ended. Of those who came from Russian prison camps only 310 applied. In Britain, the new government lead by Clement Attlee hoped that the Poles would return to rebuild Poland and take part in forthcoming elections. However, they did say that no Polish soldier would be repatriated against his will. Ernest Bevin, British Foreign Secretary, made a statement to House of Commons to that effect on 20th March 1946. On the same day, a “Keynote Message” describing their options was issued to each Polish soldier in Italy. According to Anders it was translated into “a queer sort of Polish which was indicative of the haste in which the decision was made”. He says that the reaction of the soldiers was “stupefaction”; why should they agree to return to Poland based on an agreement between Britain and the Provisional Polish Government – selected by the Soviets?

It may be noted that the VE parade, celebrating the end of war in Europe, was held in London on 8 June 1946. The Polish forces were not invited to take part. Anders put it very graciously: “... that would not have been politically expedient”. He goes on to say: “The attitude of the British authorities caused the Poles, and especially the Polish soldiers, to feel more embarrassment than anger towards an ally to whom they had been bound by brotherhood of arms. We did not feel offended.” According to Norman Davis, an invite was sent to the Government in Warsaw by some

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“idiotic British bureaucrat”. Typical, never blame a politician for a mistake, make a civil servant take the blame – my comment.

On 22 May, Bevin announced in Parliament the formation of the Polish Resettlement Camps in UK, where the Polish forces and their families would be de-mobilised in an orderly fashion. The order for the transfer was made by the War Office on 5th June 1946. From the notes made by my mother, see below, her journey to UK started on 21 July 1946. It looks as if my father was already in England and located in Hardwick, Derbyshire.}

After that I began to ask myself what I should do. I did not want to be a clown and made a decision to get married, but not to a Polish girl because the choice was from Polish women who served in the transport company. They were the same as we were and had had the same sort of life in the USSR. We were told that many of the Polish girls already had Polish officers as friends, therefore the next time I visited Tremezzo I went to Gianna's house and asked her to marry me. I must point out that during that time we had written letters to each other, so we were not strangers to each other. We found it a bit difficult at first. My commanding officer asked me, “Why not a Polish girl?”



My mother and father on the shore of Lago di Como; dated 16 April 1946 (“Con affeto tua Gianna”)

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My parents on their engagement at Villa Carlotta, Tremezzo, Lago di Como, April 1946

Gianna needed permission from the local officials, but nothing stopped my determination to get married. On 19 June 1946 we were married in a local church of San Lorenzo, Tremezzo. In August we left for England as Polish troops in reserve.

**Written by Ludwik Karol Pisarski in Villa Anna, Tremezzo,
9 October 1996.**

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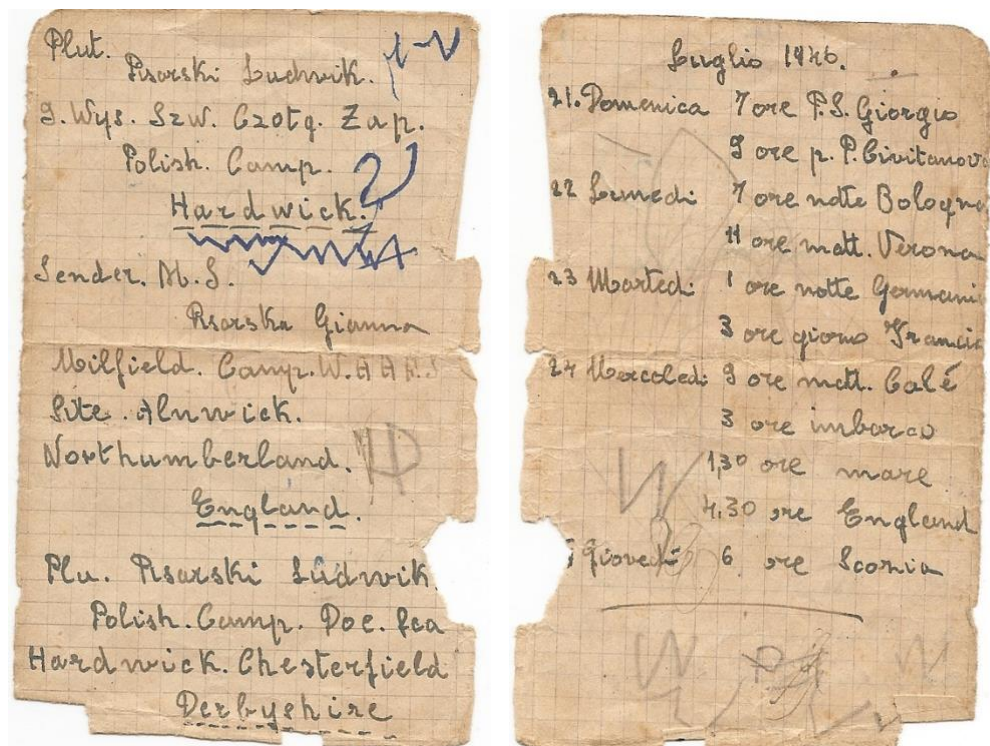
Wedding at San Lorenzo, Tremezzo on 19 June 1946



My mother told me that she wasn't allowed to wear a white dress because her mother said it would be disrespectful to the people who had died during the war. I believe her wedding dress was navy blue.



A note written by my mother on a leaf on 17 July 1946 just before she left Italy



My mother's itinerary for her journey from Italy to England starting on 21 July 1946

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My father's medals



Insignia of 1Pulk Ulanow Krechowickich



The Armoured Arm (tank arm insignia)

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P.R.C. RECORD OFFICE,
WITLEY CAMP
NR GODALMING, SURREY.
Tel. Godalming 1520, Ext. 109.
Ref. No. 2135/1619/48

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN :

28 MAY 1948

This is to certify that according to the records in possession
of this Office :
300/6001 - SGT - - - PISARSKI - - - LUDWIK - - -
No. Rank. Surname & Christian name.
served in Polish Forces under British Command from : 1.4.1942. to : 13.2.1947.
and has not been convicted of any crime or misdemeanour.
His character : VERY GOOD....

R. Jan
Record Officer
P.R.C. Records
Officer Evidencyjny
Biura Ew. P.K.P.

S.J.

DISCHARGE CERTIFICATE. Army Form B108J
(If this CERTIFICATE is lost no duplicate can be obtained.)

64978
for J. Cywinski 2/24
Signature and Rank, Officer in Records.
Date 12 FEB 1949 Place WITLEY

POLISH RESETTLEMENT CORPS
RECORD OFFICE
1. 2 FEB 1949
WITLEY CAMP
SOMERSET

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Photograph of Maria Pisarska. It was taken in Krakow in either the late 1950's or early 1960's.

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Grave of my Polish grandmother in Krakow, Poland



Graves of my father and mother in Tremezzo, Lago di Como, Italy

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