

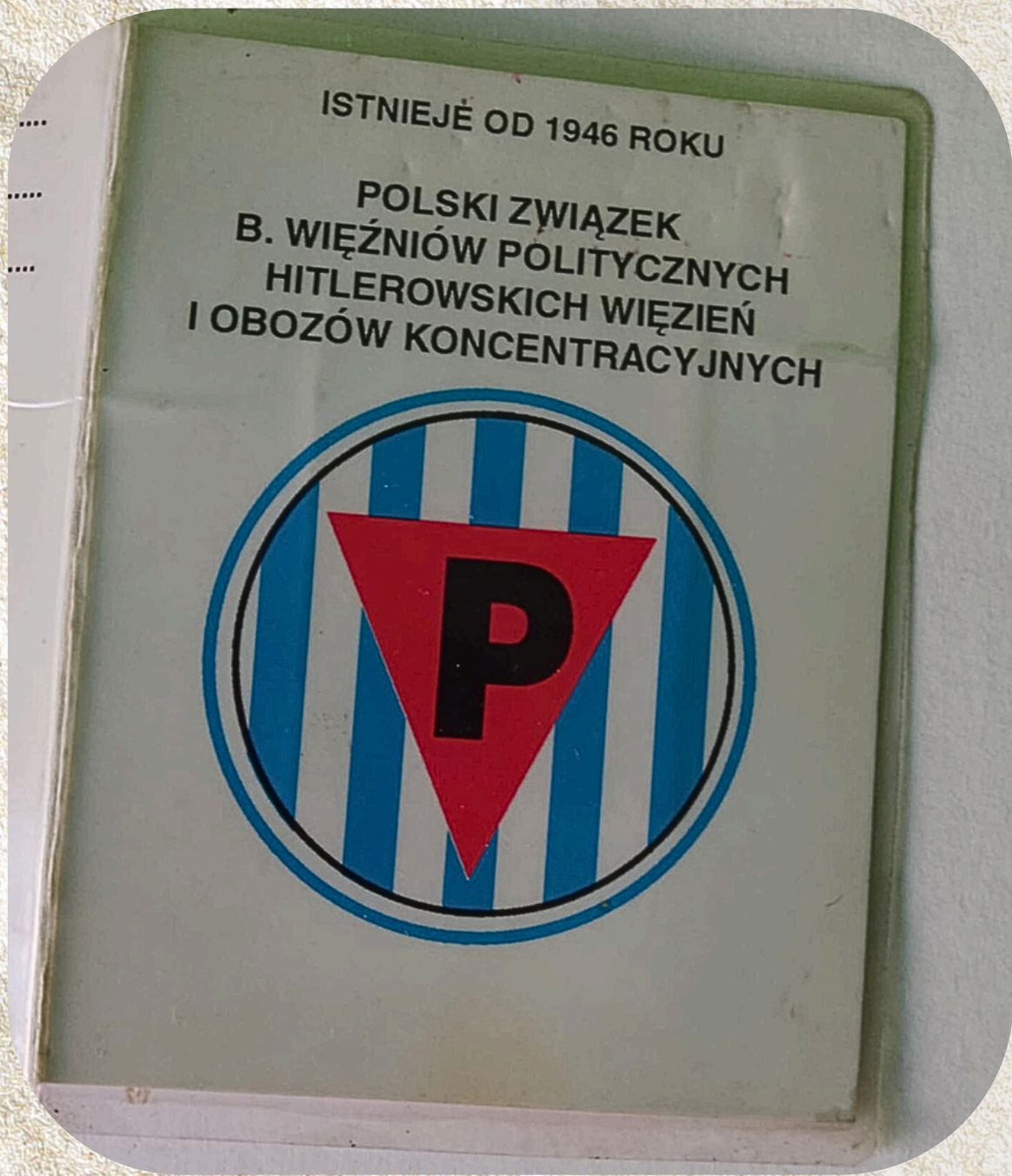
Grandparents. Grand stories.

THE CLOSEST STORIES FROM WORLD WAR II

On August 31, 1939, officers of the German Security Service, disguised in Polish uniforms, seized the radio station building in Gliwice and broadcast a speech calling for an anti-German uprising. At the scene, they left the bodies of supposed Polish soldiers, who were, in reality, murdered concentration camp prisoners. This event, known as the Gliwice provocation, was a parform used by Hitler to justify the claim that Poland attacked Germany on September 1, and that from 4:45 AM, Germany was merely responding to aggression. The fighting began with the shelling of the Polish military outpost at Westerplatte by the battleship Schleswig-Holstein. The battles continued until the night of September 16-17, when the Soviets invaded Poland and declared that the Polish state no longer existed. The Soviet Union (USSR) thus fulfilled its part of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact. Our country was devastated, and mass murders, rapes, and forced displacements occurred. A part of this tragic history is my uncle, Franciszek Kulawik, born on January 18, 1936, from Borzyszkowo, Sępólno County, who, on September 1, 1941, was sent to the labor camp in Potulice as a 5-year-old child, along with his sister and brother, both under the age of 12. On February 1, 1941, a resettlement camp was established in Potulice. Initially, it operated as a subcamp of Stutthof, which was the first and longest-existing German concentration camp in what is now Poland. In January 1942, Potulice was administratively separated and became independent. It is estimated that about 25,000 people were held there. The Germans sent Polish families to the camp as part of their plan to destroy the Polish nation, taking over their farms and giving them to German settlers. Poles were forcibly evicted from their homes and land, stripped of property rights, and allowed to take only personal belongings—blankets, kitchen utensils, money, and a supply of food. These deportations were brutal, carried out at night to maximize fear. At the time, the camp consisted of the Potulicki family palace, an annex, and a former monastery workshop building. There was no furniture—only straw on the floors. There was no heating, no sanitation, and very limited access to running water. Meals consisted of coffee (made from grains, pine cones, or nettles), dry black bread, and thin soup. Prisoners spent a few days in these conditions before most were sent to the General Government. During this period, the camp was guarded by 14 armed men, and its commander was SS-Hauptsturmführer Waldemar Tennstaedt. Malnutrition, lack of medical care, and terrible hygiene conditions led to the spread of disease and epidemics. Lice, fleas, and bedbugs were everywhere. Mortality was high, especially among the elderly and children. According to my uncle's account, his younger sister died of pneumonia due to the terrible conditions, and nothing is known about his brother's fate. Physical punishments were common. A dungeon was set up in the palace basement, and a penal labor unit (Strafkolonne) was created. Adults were forced to work inside the camp in various workshops (aircraft wing repair, fur processing, wickerwork) or sent to work in agriculture or armament factories in other locations. In 1941, my uncle's parents were sent to different camps. His mother, Zofia Kulawik, was deported to Mainz for forced labor in the Third Reich. His father, Franciszek Kulawik (Franz), a farmer, was imprisoned in Radom, later transferred to the Auschwitz concentration camp, where he was assigned the prisoner number 137457, and then sent to Sachsenhausen. In 1944, he returned to Potulice, where he found his children and other elderly prisoners. The children also had to work to survive.

Both adults and teenagers over the age of 15 were assigned to labor, while younger children, aged 13 and up, were given lighter tasks. Children between the ages of 6 and 12 were forced to gather forest resources, such as nettles, pine cones, berries, and mushrooms. My uncle often recalled how children were subjected to height measurement, using a marker built by the Germans for selection purposes. Those who could walk under the marker were sent to collect nettles, while taller children were assigned to pick berries and raspberries. Since my uncle was short, he tried to join the taller group by standing on his toes as he passed under the marker. He knew that by going into the forest to pick fruit, he would have a chance to eat and bring some food to his younger sister. People living near the camp sometimes threw bread or potatoes over the fence for the children. However, my uncle had to be extremely careful not to be caught—if he was seen, he risked being beaten or even executed by firing squad. During one such attempt to get food, an SS officer struck him on the head with a rifle butt, causing hearing damage and a skull fracture. The harsh realities of camp life taught him resourcefulness and survival skills. Breakfast was served very early in the morning and consisted of black coffee and a tiny portion of bread. After some time, my uncle realized that standing at the end of the line meant that his coffee would contain not only liquid but also grounds, which made it more filling. Lunch varied depending on the season and available crops. Soup was made from nettles, sugar beet leaves, rutabaga, beet pulp, or green tomatoes. Potatoes were never seen in the soup. Dinner consisted of bread made from sawdust from deciduous trees, potatoes, chestnuts, and rye flour. If the guards found that a child had a larger amount of food than what was distributed, or any food other than what had been issued that day, they were beaten until they lost consciousness and then locked in the basement. If the child survived, they were released; if not, their body was taken to the cemetery on the other side of the camp. Unlike in other camps, the children in Potulice were not tattooed with prisoner numbers. Instead, they were given tags or patches with their parents' camp numbers. After three years in the camp, in 1944, my uncle was found by his father, whom he did not recognize because he had no memory of him. His father identified him by the prison number tattooed on his own body. This is how my uncle avoided the fate of many other children who were never claimed and were likely executed. The camp was liberated on January 21, 1945. As a young man, my uncle met Maria Kulawik (née Mzyk), the youngest sister of my great-great-grandmother, Michalina. They married and settled in Bytom. He worked as a miner until his retirement.





RODZAJE I OKRESY ZALICZANE DO UPRAWNIEŃ USTAWOWYCH

Okresy		Wyszczególnienie	Przepis ustawy
od	do		
09 1941	08 1944	HITLEROWS. WIĘZNIENIE	04

Łącznie: lat 03 miesięcy 00
Zmiana: lat 00 miesięcy 00

URZĘD DO SPRAW KOMBATANTÓW I OSÓB REPRESJONOWANYCH
do Spraw Kombatantów i Osób Represjonowanych

Jacek Dębski
Naczelnik Wydziału Ewidencji

Identification card confirming time spent in the camp.



Medal commemorating the 50th anniversary of the camp's liberation.

POLSKI ZWIĄZEK BYŁYCH WIĘŹNIÓW POLITYCZNYCH HITLEROWSKICH WIĘZIEŃ I OBOZÓW KONCENTRACYJNYCH ZARZĄD OKRĘGU W KATOWICACH

Kol. FRANCISZEK KULAWIK

W związku z osiągnięciem roku życia

prosimy przyjąć
nasze najserdeczniejsze życzenia
długich lat życia w dobrym zdrowiu
i pomyślności.
Życzenia te przekazujemy w imieniu
Koleżanek i Kolegów naszego Związku

Za Zarząd Okręgu:

SEKRETARZ Zarządu Okręgu Katowice
mgr J. K. K. K.

PREZES Zarządu Okręgu Katowice
mgr J. K. K. K.

Katowice, dnia 18.01.2006 r.

ODPIS

DECYZJA

Kierownika Urzędu do Spraw Kombatantów i Osób Represjonowanych z dnia 25.01.2006 Nr DO/K0671 /0590274/001

o potwierdzeniu okresów i tytułów działalności kombatanckiej

Na podstawie:
Art.04 ust.01 pkt.01 lit.a ;

Ustawy z dnia 24 stycznia 1991 r. o kombatantach oraz niektórych osobach będących ofiarami represji wojennych i okresu powojennego (Dz.U. z 1997r. Nr 142, poz.950 z późn. zmianami) stwierdzam, że

Franciszek KULAWIK
imię ojca FRANCISZEK
urodzony 18.01.1936 / BORZYSZKOWO
zamieszkały 41-902 BYTOM OLIMPIJSKA 25 - 22

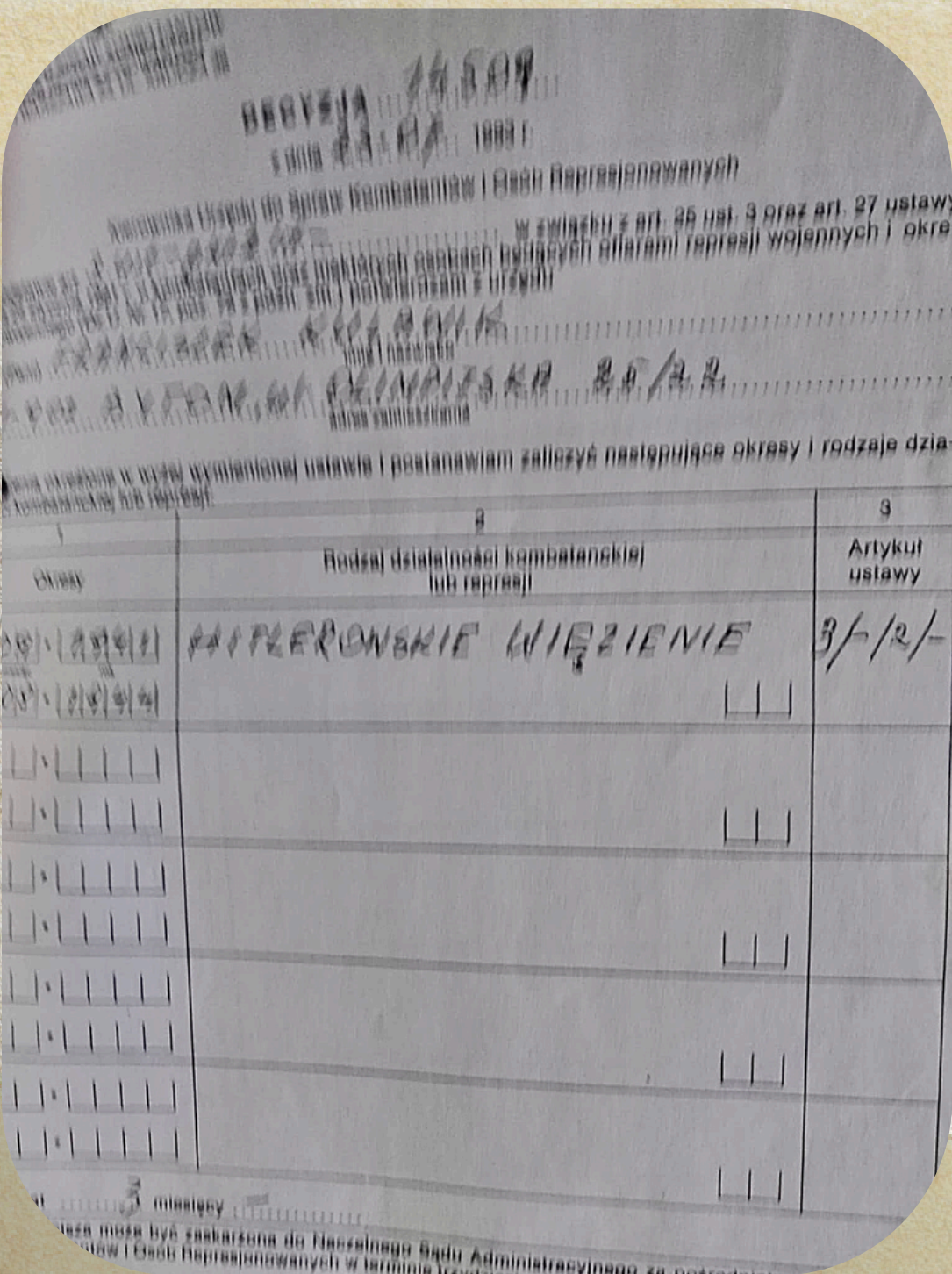
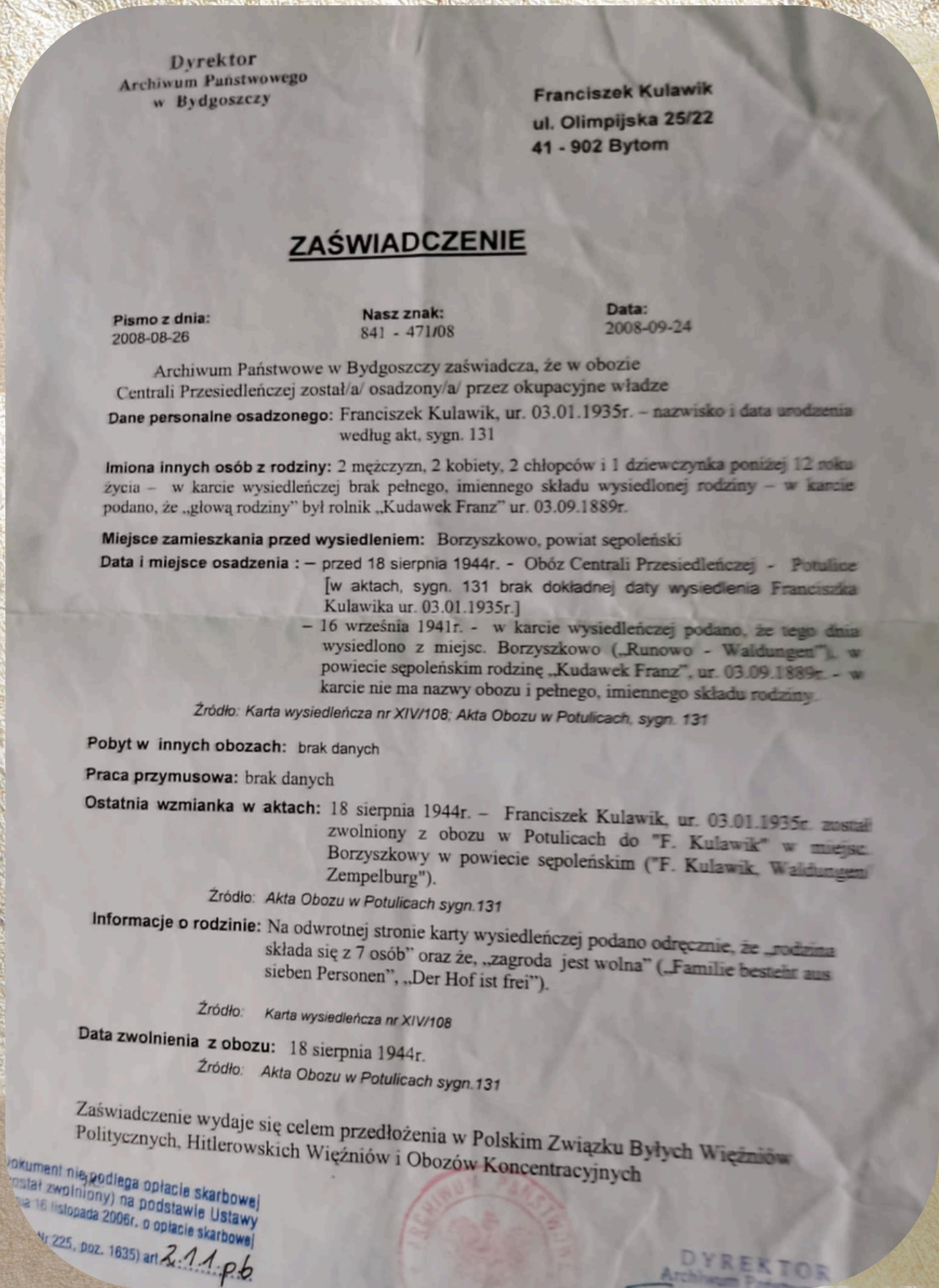
spełnia warunki, o których mowa w art.21 wyżej wymienionej ustawy i w związku z tym przyznaje uprawnienia kombatanckie z następujących tytułów:

Okres	Rodzaj działalności kombatanckiej lub represji	Artykuł ustawy
od 09.1941	HITLEROWSKIE WIĘZNIENIE	04
do 08.1944		

Łącznie : lat 03 miesięcy 00

Strona niezadowolona z decyzji może zwrócić się w terminie 14 dni od dnia jej otrzymania do Kierownika Urzędu o ponowne rozpatrzenie sprawy.





Informacje o prześladowaniach

Źródło: [Urząd do Spraw Kombatantów i Osób Represjonowanych](#)
K0590274

uwięzienie przeżył

rodzaj więzienia

miejsce osadzenia HITLEROWSKIE WIĘZIENIE

data osadzenia 1941-09-01

data zwolnienia 1944-08-01

Źródło: [AAN, zespół: Fundacja Polsko-Niemieckie Pojednanie w Warszawie](#) [Inr zespołu 26801](#)
160572

uwięzienie przeżył

rodzaj obóz pracy uwięzienia

data zatrzymania 1941

miejsce osadzenia TORUŃ

data zwolnienia 1941

Link to the website:
<https://straty.pl/szukaj-osoby.php>



straty.pl



INSTYTUT
PAMIĘCI
NARODOWEJ

Dane osobowe

nazwisko KULAWIK

imię FRANCISZEK

imię ojca FRANCISZEK

imię matki ZOFIA

data urodzenia 1936-01-18

miejsce urodzenia BORZYSZKOWO



FRANCISZEK KULAWIK AND MARIA KULAWIK

*AUNT VIOLETTA,
MY
GRANDMOTHER'S
SISTER*



*MY
GRANDMOTHER
SABINA*

UNCLE FRANCISZEK

*IN MEMORY OF FRANCISZEK KULAWIK - MY UNCLE
JANUARY 18, 1936 - FEBRUARY 12, 2025*

