



JAN POKORA

Corporal Jan Pokora, born in 1899.

I was deported with my family to Siberia, Russia, for work in the forest [illegible] – I was hidden from the world for one and a half years. I was taken on 10 February 1940 together with my wife Aniela, my son Edward, and daughters Janina and Leokadia. I, Jan Pokora, head of the family, was born in 1899; my wife Aniela was born in 1901, my son Edward in 1925, Janina in 1931, and Leokadia in 1937.

Five Soviet soldiers arrived at our place in one sledge on the morning of 10 February. It was 6.00 a.m., and the oldest of them ordered a search of our house. My family and I were seated on the floor, they ordered us to raise our arms and searched us, and then they proceeded to search the flat, and finally they told us to get ready to go. I asked that oldest one where we were going to, and he replied, "In half an hour I want to see you and your family ready and your belongings packed". We had but one cart. We took all the clothes we could, and left the rest behind. I asked the one who escorted us where and why they were taking us, and he told me, "You, Polish settlers, are traitors to the Soviet government, and we are moving you to Siberia for hard labor". They transported us to Russia, to Barnaul Oblast, Altai Krai, Kuryinsky District, to a *lestranskhoz* [timber transport management], *uchastok* [region] no. 2, and we toiled at felling trees there. My wife and I had to work, and so did our 15-year-old son, as otherwise he would receive only 300 grams of bread, and when he worked he got 600 grams. Besides, they put those who didn't go to work in jail. We lived in a room four by four meters large; three families, that is, 22 people, had to share it. When we went to sleep, we had to lie one close to the other, so that it was impossible to go out at night, and we slept on bare boards, so we could hardly bear it till morning, but what could we do – we, Poles, had no say in anything.

Life in the barracks was lousy, as we didn't have a kitchen but had to go five kilometers to get some dinner, and sometimes when the children went there they were told there was nothing left, and they came back in tears, hungry, and there wasn't anyone older with them



as we had to work 10 kilometers away from the barracks. We had work, but still we couldn't make a living; a laborer earned three rubles per day, which was enough for dinner, but to buy anything else he had to sell his clothes. When he didn't have anything to sell, he and his family had to perish.

Finally the day came when we were released from forced labor – this was on 12 August 1941 – and each was issued an *udostoverenie* [certificate of release], but they didn't want to pay us what they owed us for our labor. In short, they didn't want to release us. We heard, however, that the Polish Army was being raised somewhere in the south, in Kazakhstan, and I went to Lugovoy with my entire family by our own means. On 20 February 1942 my son and I joined the Polish Army, 10th Division, 10th Light Artillery Regiment, and to this day I have been serving in the army, in the Staging Area Command [illegible] company.

11 March 1943