

## ELŻBIETA SERWATKA

### 1. [Personal data:]

Section Leader Elżbieta Serwatka, age 33, married.

### 2. [Date and circumstances of arrest:]

I was arrested by Soviet authorities on 13 April 1940 in Bibków, Stanisławów Voivodeship.

### 3. [Name of the camp, prison, place of forced labor:]

[I was] taken to Siberia with 36 fellow Poles to Kostanay Oblast, Fyodorov District, Andrzejowka [Andreyovka or possibly Andreevka] village

### 4. [Description of the camp, prison:]

Every house owner was forced to take in three to five people. We lived with them for nearly eight months, then they would juggle us between different places until the amnesty [in 1941, for Polish citizens in USSR]. Some people would treat us in a fairly decent way, but these were exceptional cases.

### 5. [Life in the camp, prison]

They forced us to work every day. The types of required work varied. Deconstruction of old shacks was very difficult: one brick weighed between 10 to 15 kg. We had to separate them very carefully with pickaxes, then clean them, and put them in stacks. If there was some other work to be done, they either made us walk or transported us into the steppe, where we worked from 7:00 AM until sunset, having only some groats soup and dry bread (50 g) to eat. If there was anyone who couldn't go to work due to illness, they wouldn't receive their portion of food. We worked very hard, often hungry. If it wasn't for the help from the families, in money and food, we would've died from starvation.

### 7. [The NKVD's attitude towards the Polish people:]

The attitude of the authorities was neutral [or] unsympathetic. We were often reproached for being bourgeois. During the first days, meeting these people in the post office was a very

distressing experience for us. What we were accused of, was that we never worked in Poland, only exploited the poor working-class people who sweated and bled for us. Now it was going to be different, now they were going to show us the work – this time we weren't brought there to watch, but to do the work.

**8. [Medical assistance, hospitals, mortality rate:]**

It was difficult to get any medical assistance; the hospital was 14 km away from the place where we lived. Carriages were constantly occupied or out of service, horses died or stopped mid-way – such trips to a doctor to receive treatment was a great risk.

**9. [Was there any possibility to get in contact with one's country and family?]**

There was some possibility of communication with one's family, but for a price of great fear – both ours and of our families. We feared for them, and they – as they were sending us food packages, money, or letters – sent them from entirely different towns than the ones they lived in. Often they would write, "Don't write to us or else they will do the same to us and then who's going to help you and send you packages? We know how much you all suffer."

**10. [When were you released and how did you manage to join the army?]**

After the amnesty had been proclaimed by the Polish office in Kostanay, I was directed to Totskoye, where I joined the army on 1 January 1942, and there, I worked for the field theater of the Army Organization Center.

Place of stay, 4 March 1942