

JÓZEF ŚMIESZEK

Senior Rifleman Józef Śmieszek, 41, farmer.

Until I was arrested, I was living with my family in the village of Dąbki, Horodenka district, Stanisławów voivodeship. 10 February 1940 at 4:00 AM, six armed men came to my apartment – two in uniforms of Soviet NKVD soldiers and four in civilian clothes – with red armbands on their sleeves. The team mentioned above began a search for weapons. During the search, me and my family of nine people were told to prepare to leave the apartment within 15 minutes. After this time, we were ordered to leave. We were allowed to take clothes and food for five days. After leaving the apartment, we were taken to the village, to the school building, where all colonists from all over the village were brought in as well. When 370 people were gathered, they took us by peasant carts to the Horodenka railway station. After loading the whole transport, cars were locked. They were transporting us to Soviet land for 23 days. During this journey they gave us a warm meal once every two to three days. We were in 15-ton cars, 33 people: men, women, and children together. They did not allow us to leave the cars to do physiological needs – we had to do it inside. After 23 days of journey, we were unloaded from the train and loaded into cars. They brought us to Majkainska, Pavlodarsk Oblast, Bayanaul, Siberia. We were working there very hard in the gold mine, and the salary was small (it was not enough for modest food); in addition, they deducted ten percent of it for the NKVD *ochrana* [protection]. We were living in four by six [meter] barracks, with 22 people [in one].

We were living in such conditions for two years. Among the Poles, the mood was very good, despite difficult conditions of vegetation, we were living with the hope that we would return to our free homeland.

After the Polish-Soviet agreement, and announcing the mobilization by the Polish authorities, I left my family, and on 27 February 1942, I left for Lugovoy [an urban type estate in the USSR, in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug – Jugry], where I joined the Polish Army on 19 March 1942.

15 March 1943