



JADWIGA POBOL

1. Personal data:

Senior Leader Jadwiga Pobol, 23 years old, pharmacy student, unmarried.

2. Date and circumstances of arrest:

On 10 February 1940 I was arrested upon crossing the Lithuanian-Soviet border.

3. The name of the camp, prison, or forced labor site:

Prisons: Głębokie, Berezwech, Grodno, Sverdlovsk, Novosibirsk. Name of the camp: Merinsk, Novosibirsk Oblast.

4. Description of the camp, prison:

In Głębokie, military barracks had been converted into a prison. The old monastery couldn't hold such a great number of Poles within its walls, so the living conditions were worse than primitive. The small cells were so overcrowded that you couldn't even lie down flat. The walled-up windows didn't let in any light or air. So, the atmosphere was very oppressive, and we constantly suffered from a lack of water. In Grodno the living conditions were better, and the hygienic conditions were miles ahead of Berezwech.

On 21 March 1941 I was deported to the USSR, to the labor camp in Merinsk, Novosibirsk Oblast, where I remained until the proclamation of the amnesty and my release. Before I ended up in the camp, I had spent a few weeks in *peresylny* [transit] prisons, which we called hotels (Sverdlovsk and Novosibirsk), and where you could meet the worst murderers, thieves, prostitutes etc. Several hundred women of various nationalities, completely destitute, did their best to pester us Polish women and show us the wretchedness of their existence. After I came to the camp the conditions were slightly better, because, for instance, I could move freely within the fenced area of the camp.

5. The composition of prisoners of war, inmates, exiles:

Life in prison was limited to an internal life, to personal experience. This moral suffering led not only to nervous breakdown or mental collapse, but even to suicide attempts. After we



arrived at the camp, physical activity, work, and exhaustion alleviated the internal struggle, and a sound sleep restored the strength of our overworked bodies.

6. Life in the camp, prison:

The camp in Merinsk comprised various workshops: [illegible], weaving and spinning mills, tanneries, brickyards etc. We worked for 12 hours with a two-hour dinner break. The work quotas were very high and therefore difficult to meet. Remuneration was very low and it was difficult to make them pay you. Both clothes and food were below par. Social life was limited to a few persons. Even among the Polish women cordiality and solidarity were lacking; maybe mistrust and fear prevented them from bonding and sincerity. Hard work, a few hours' rest and dreams about a free and independent Poland filled our lives.

7. The NKVD's attitude towards Poles:

The NKVD was rather hostile towards Poles. Both in the prison and in the camp, their attitude depended on their performance in the war. When they were winning, they were more favorably inclined, but otherwise it would get worse. The interrogation methods were very sophisticated. Since I had attempted to cross the border, I was accused of espionage. They would interrogate me a dozen or so times during a single night, place me in the punishment cell, threaten and beat me etc. After the investigation was completed, on 21 February 1941, I was sentenced to three years of forced labor and a month later I was deported.

8. Medical assistance, hospitals, mortality rate:

In the prison, medical assistance left much to be desired; in the camp this issue was given more attention, but it all depended on the camp commandants and their humanitarianism.

9. Was there any possibility of getting in contact with one's country and family?

Only in the camp was I able to get in contact with my family who had stayed in Poland, and they provided me with both moral support and material assistance. When the Soviet-German war broke out, I lost all contact with my parents, and I haven't heard from them since.

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



I was arrested on 10 February 1940 and released on 4 September 1941 as a result of the amnesty. I applied to the army on 17 November 1941 in Buzuluk.

6 March 1942