MICHAŁ GURDAK

[1.] Personal data:

Michał Gurdak, a Corporal of the Reserve, born in 1913, married, an engine driver by profession.

[2.] Date of deportation:

On 29 June 1940, my wife and I were deported to the Soviet Union, to the settlement of *Bienegajewo* in Siberia, in the Novosibirsk Oblast.

[3.] Method of eviction:

During the night from 28 to 29 June 1940, some NKVD functionaries accompanied by the local militia burst into my flat and ordered me to get ready to leave immediately, ostensibly to Germany, for I was suspected of being a German citizen due to the specific sounding of my surname. We were also informed that we could take up to 80 kilograms of luggage with us.

[4.] Transportation:

Once we arrived at the train station, we were loaded onto filthy goods wagons; the windows were sealed shut, and there was no toilet or washbasin. We were locked up inside for eight days. Exit was denied, and we were given no food. Thereafter we were allowed to open the window, and even leave the wagon, however we were forbidden to walk away to buy foodstuffs. The entire journey lasted 28 days. During this time two of the wagon's occupants died: Maria Dziuba from Kraków and another person, whose surname I have forgotten.

[5.] Living conditions:

Once we reached our destination, we were placed in filthy, bug-infested barracks that used to function as a prison. There were no beds, no pallets, and no toilets or washing facilities.

[6.] Food:

What food you were entitled to depended on the quantity of work performed, that is on your fulfillment of daily quotas. If you met more than one quota, you could buy more food.

[7.] Work norms:

As an engine driver, my daily norm was to work 12 hours without a break. If no machines were available for work, there would be deductions.

[8.] Remuneration:

For carrying out the daily norm, that is for performing 12 hours of work, I would receive six rubles, and so in a month I could earn between 70 and 180 rubles. A daily portion of food cost 3 – 5 rubles.

[9.] Medical care:

Doctors were selected from amongst the deportees, however there were absolutely no medical supplies, so that infectious diseases, malaria, etc., and exhaustion decimated our ranks. Among others, the following perished: 1. Czy[...] from Bydgoszcz, 2. Ms Cilas, also from Bydgoszcz, 3. Balcerowicz (our friend), also from Bydgoszcz, 4. Apolinaria Szydłowska from Bydgoszcz, and a great many besides – in total, some 170 people from the settlement, whose surnames however I don't remember.

[10.] Cultural life and entertainment:

All books and newspapers were confiscated, and it was forbidden to read in the whole settlement. Prayers were also prohibited – if you were caught praying, you would be sentenced to a year of imprisonment, since this was a "practice opposed to Soviet authority". Throughout our period of detention in the settlement, that is from July 1940 to September 1941, there was absolutely no entertainment – no shows, film screenings, or theater performances at all.

[11.] Attitude of the Soviet authorities towards deportees:

All levels of the Soviet administration behaved in a vulgar and abusive manner towards Polish deportees. They would use every occasion to repeat that Poland would be no more, for the Polish nation was incapable of independent existence, being no more than a bunch of exploiters and oppressors of other nationalities.