

Lernen aus der Geschichte e.V.

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Das mehrsprachige Webportal publiziert fortlaufend Informationen zur historisch-politischen Bildung in Schulen, Gedenkstätten und anderen Einrichtungen zur Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts. Schwerpunkte bilden der Nationalsozialismus, der Zweite Weltkrieg sowie die Folgegeschichte in den Ländern Europas bis zu den politischen Umbrüchen 1989.

Dabei nimmt es Bildungsangebote in den Fokus, die einen Gegenwartsbezug der Geschichte herausstellen und bietet einen Erfahrungsaustausch über historisch-politische Bildung in Europa an.

Maria Szewera, born 1929

It was cold outside, snow was falling. My parents had woken up, they had been troubled by the increased car traffic. They had never heard such noise before. They watched worriedly as the Germans closed in on Skierbieszów, preventing anybody from leaving. The Germans started to knock at the doors, they gave everybody 5-10 minutes to leave the house. They were supported by "Volksdeutsche" who spoke Polish. We were only allowed to take with us what we could carry at once. Nobody was allowed to go back into the house to fetch more things.

Horse carts came. They did not take us along the main road to Zamość as the new settlers were already coming along that way.

They took us through Huszczka, Pańska Dolina and Udrycze. In Udrycze we joined the main road, after the news had been received that the settlers had arrived at Skierbieszów.

When we came to the gate of the camp at Zamość, my brother escaped. Nobody saw him among all those many people; he just disappeared into the crowd.

At the camp, everybody was divided into groups. They separated children from their mothers, the old people and the sick ones. There was terrible wailing and lamenting. Our family was assigned to the Reich by the commission. We were going to be »germanised«. They brought us to another shack, where we slept. The next day, we were once more called before a commission. And it was probably a miracle that there was a doctor from Skierbieszów on that commission, who had been deported together with us. His name was Józef Rębac. I don't know how it came about, but I think it was thanks to him that we were not taken to the Reich, but to shack no.11, where the children and old people were... [...]

The shacks were made from very thin planks, like those which are used for building barns today. There were only pallets, and as many people as possible squeezed onto them to sleep. They covered themselves with what they had brought along from home. There were lice and scabies. [...]

Father was very ill, so mother had to look after us and after him. Once, the commission came, and they started yelling at us to be quiet. We thought they were going to release us, so we were quiet. One of them said, "You Poles, listen. We are telling you what you are to us. You aren't worth more than chickens." And then the other one said, "Chickens!? Oh no, you aren't worth more than rats, because a chicken is slaughtered for eating, but you have as much value as rats. Poles are not worth a thing to us."

We stayed in this shack for about two weeks. Around 13 December we were called to be taken to the train station at Zamość and later to Żelechów by train. There were different kinds of wagons: for goods, for cattle and for passengers. We drove through the night and through the following day without any food or drink. At Siedlce, the Germans threw about 40 dead children from the train. We arrived at Sobolew only the next night. [...] In the morning, people came and took the children to their homes to give them food. Those who could not be taken along by people were brought to a so-called children's home where they were being looked after by nuns. I was taken along by a woman. [...]

When the war was over, we returned to Skierbieszów. All that was left of our property was the barn roof on its pillars. It was the end of July 1944. We spent the entire summer under this roof. Father and our uncle built a field kitchen, and that was where we cooked our meals. In the winter we slept in a German house that had been built from two dismantled houses, our house and that of a neighbour. There were no casements, so we put tobacco stems into the window cases. There wasn't a floor, either. There were other people living, too – a total of eleven persons, and we had only one room and a kitchen.