

Popular Science Summary of the Project

The research objective is a comprehensive examination and demonstration of the role and the meaning of the Zamosc transit camp (UWZ-Lager Zamosc) during the expulsion-colonization action carried out in Zamojszczyzna from 27/28 November 1942 to 15 August 1943 and up until the liquidation of the camp (19 January 1944). This action was an element in the implementation of General Plan East (General Plan Ost)--establishing the Germanization of all of Eastern Europe and the shifting of the ethnic border of the Reich approximately 1,000 km to the east. Zamojszczyzna occupied a specific place as the first German region for colonization in the General Government. The expelled populace was brutally thrown out of their homes and directed to transit camps: first to Zamosc and from June 1943- to Zwierzyniec. An essential part of the research concerns the issue of racial segregation of the expellees, carried out in the UWZ -Lager Zamosc, as well as the fate of the imprisoned population. Particularly tragic was the fate of the children who were recognized as being of no value racially. The children were taken from the camp in unheated cattle cars into the unknown. After the war they became a symbol of the martyrdom of Polish children during World War II. The research conducted with the framework of this project will have as an objective, the gathering, analysis, and interpretation of source materials (archival and printed/published) including the postwar accounts and testimony of former prisoners, assembled in the framework of the GKBZN/GKBZH investigations in Poland, and the tribunals engaged in the punishment of German war crimes. They will permit for the recreation of the genesis of the camp and the varied aspects tied to its functioning. The purpose of the research will be to present a picture of camp life through the prism of the prisoners living conditions, indicators of the rhythm of every day life in the camp, punishment and terror by the camp staff, the issue of healthiness, emaciation, and mortality of those imprisoned in the camp, the movement and number of transports, and assistance actions by the RGO.

The undertaking of the above mentioned research arises from the fact that despite the passing of over 75 years, this issue has continued to await a fuller elaboration. Provided that the current state of research on the fate of the residents in the lands which were incorporated into the III Reich, permits for the establishment of a synthesis, and insofar as the research concerning the fate of residents expelled from Zamojszczyzna, their stay in the Zamosc and Zwierzyniec transit camps and their fates after their departure from the camps have not, as a rule, been examined. The majority of research available presents this issue in a fragmentary manner. From this arises the need for the conduct of fuller, honest research. This is also the final opportunity to reach the aged remaining eye-witnesses, the former prisoners of the camp, and to record their personal experiences. These biographical narrations will allow for a picture of the camp to be created, with the perspective of time and the impact of the experiential trauma. The implementation of this project is a continuation of the research efforts by this author conducted in 2005. The research concerned the fate of the residents expelled from Zamojszczyzna (with particular consideration given to the children) to the Warsaw district. There was a need to fill in this blank spot in historiography. As a result of the author's personal efforts on this issue and her broad contacts with the Children of Zamojszczyzna community, there came about the need to conduct further queries--mainly field research, but also archival in these areas of planned research. The research project also has as an objective the desire to enter into essential current social discourse, such as the disburdening discourse in German political history.