

Concentration Camp **Majdanek**

A Historical and Technical Study

Jürgen Graf and Carlo Mattogno



Castle Hill Publishers

P.O. Box 243, Uckfield, TN22 9AW, UK

October 2016

HOLOCAUST HANDBOOKS, Volume 5:

Jürgen Graf, Carlo Mattogno:

Majdanek Concentration Camp: A Historical and Technical Study.

Main text translated by Victor Diodon; Mattogno's supplement translated from Italian by Santiago Alvarez; Graf's second supplement translated from German by Thomas Dunksus.

Reprint of the 3rd, expanded edition of May 2010

Uckfield, East Sussex: CASTLE HILL PUBLISHERS

P.O. Box 243, Uckfield, TN22 9AW, UK

October 2016

ISBN13: 978-1-59148-160-7 (print edition)

ISBN10: 1-59148-160-0 (print edition)

ISSN: 1529-7748

© 1998, 2004, 2010 by Jürgen Graf, Thomas Kues, Carlo Mattogno

Distribution worldwide by:

Castle Hill Publishers

P.O. Box 243

Uckfield, TN22 9AW

UK

Set in Times New Roman

www.holocausthandbooks.com

Cover illustrations: top: the new crematorium at Majdanek, reconstructed after the war, once falsely claimed to have contained a homicidal gas chamber (Goku122, 17 March 2006, Wikipedia Commons); center left: shower room in Barracks No. 41, once falsely claimed to have been used as a homicidal gas chamber; center right: clothing-fumigation chamber close to Barracks No. 41, still falsely claimed to have been used as a homicidal gas chamber. The blue staining originates from exposure to hydrogen cyanide (Zyklon B) during fumigations; bottom: Majdanek "Mausoleum" near the crematorium allegedly containing ash from victims (Jolanta Dyr, 16 June 2013, Wikipedia Commons).

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Introduction

1. Concentration Camp Lublin-Majdanek

In July 1941 the National-Socialist occupation administration decided to set up a large concentration camp near the city of Lublin. As of October of that year the camp developed in the southeastern outskirts of the city. The Poles called it “Majdanek” from the start; the name can be traced back to the city district Majdan Tatarski. Eventually the name came to be generally used, and it is also the name of choice today in academic historiography.

In time, Majdanek became by far the largest concentration camp on the territory of the General Government.¹ Non-Jewish and Jewish Polish citizens made up the bulk of the inmates, but prisoners from many other nations were also detained there, as well as a number of Soviet prisoners of war.

On July 23, 1944, Majdanek was overrun by the Red Army, which, however, discovered only some 1,500 inmates there;² the others had been evacuated to the west in the preceding months.

It was not long after the capture of the camp that the Soviets and their Polish allies began reporting about horrific mass murders which Germans had allegedly committed there. In a Lublin Special Court’s indictment of six guards who had failed to flee in time, it was averred that 1.7 million people had been murdered in Majdanek.³ At the Nuremberg Tribunal in early 1946 there was talk of 1.5 million victims.⁴

No serious student of the matter accepts these figures anymore; today they are considered unanimously to be fantastic exaggerations. But official historiography continues to hold that aside from those inmates who died of ‘natural’ causes and those who were individually tried, convicted, and then executed by shooting or hanging, there were very great numbers of (mostly Jewish) people who were murdered in Majdanek by gassing, or by execution without having been tried or convicted.

¹ Auschwitz, in Upper Silesia, was not located in the General Government, but in the area that was annexed to the German Reich after Poland’s defeat in 1939.

² This is the figure given in the Polish literature (e.g. see Anna Wiśniewska and Czesław Rajca, *Majdanek. Lubelski obóz koncentracyjny*, Państwowe Muzeum na Majdanku, Lublin 1996, p. 32). Gerald Reitlinger cites a higher figure, namely 6,000 (*Die Endlösung. Hitlers Versuch der Ausrottung der Juden Europas 1939-1945*, Berlin: Colloquium Verlag, 1983, p. 512).

³ *Sentencja wyroku. Specjalny Sad Karny w Lublinie*, December 2, 1944 (Reasons for Sentence in the Trial of Hermann Vogel *et al.*), Archiwum Państwowego Muzeum na Majdanku (Archive of the State Museum in Majdanek, henceforth abbreviated as *APMM*), sygn. XX-1, p. 100.

⁴ *IMT*, vol. VII, p. 590.

Let us first examine how Majdanek is represented in official western historiography, in Polish historiography, and in Revisionist historiography.

2. Majdanek in Official Western Historiography

According to official western historiography, Majdanek served concurrently as labor and extermination camp.⁵ The inmates there, it is claimed, were differentially processed by selection; those who were judged fit to work were put to forced labor, those who were unfit to work were “liquidated.” As of early fall 1942, Jews were allegedly murdered *en masse* in gas chambers, some with Zyklon B and some with carbon monoxide. Further, some 18,000 Jews were allegedly shot in Majdanek on November 3, 1943.

The well-known anthology *Nationalsozialistische Massentötungen durch Giftgas*, edited by Kogon, Langbein, and Rückerl, states:⁶

“Much like in Auschwitz – if not for quite as long and to as shockingly great an extent as there – the administration of the Majdanek concentration camp near Lublin made use of gas chambers to murder great numbers of people. As soon as these chambers had been installed, the Jews were subjected to selection upon arrival: those who appeared unfit to work were escorted off to be gassed.”

Somewhat more cautiously, but along the same lines, the *Enzyklopädie des Holocaust* states:⁷

“Some prisoners were taken to the gas chambers immediately upon arrival: in this respect Majdanek was an extermination camp.”

Since 1945 tens of thousands of books have been published about the ‘Holocaust’. The focal point of the ‘Holocaust,’ it is claimed, were six so-called ‘extermination camps’ in Poland. One would therefore expect to find veritable mountains of literature about all these ‘extermination camps’ and consequently also about Majdanek, but far from it: western historiography has completely neglected the Lublin camp. Since 1945 not one West European or American historian has been moved to author a work about Majdanek which even remotely approximated to scientific and academic standards!

Aside from the memoirs of former inmates, which are necessarily subjective and can never take the place of historical research striving for objectivity, Heiner Lichtenstein’s work *Majdanek. Reportage eines Prozesses*⁸ is the only

⁵ The German term for this – “*Vernichtungslager*” – does not appear in so much as one German war-time document. It arose from Allied terminology and is a direct translation of “extermination camp.”

⁶ E. Kogon, H. Langbein and A. Rückerl (eds.), *Nationalsozialistische Massentötungen durch Giftgas*, Frankfurt/M.: S. Fischer Verlag, 1983, p. 241.

⁷ Eberhard Jäckel, Peter Longerich and Julius H. Schoeps (eds.), *Enzyklopädie des Holocaust*, Berlin: Argon Verlag, 1993, p. 918.

⁸ Heiner Lichtenstein, *Majdanek. Reportage eines Prozesses*, Frankfurt/M: Europäische Ver-

German-language book about this camp which has achieved notable circulation. Categorically the book is in no way a scientific analysis. Lichtenstein accepts the mass extermination of human beings in Majdanek as an axiom and takes the Düsseldorf trial of former members of the camp staff (1975-1981) as an opportunity to rail in journalistic style against the National Socialist system, the defendants, their defense counsels, and the Federal German justice system, which he feels was too lax in prosecuting National Socialist offenders. Emotional outrage takes the place of sober historical inquiry in this work.

There are perhaps two main reasons for the total neglect Majdanek has experienced in western historiography:

- The almost complete domination of the ‘Holocaust’ debate by the Auschwitz camp;
- The reluctance of historians to master the Polish language, without which serious work in this field is impossible.

3. Majdanek in Polish Historiography

Since the Majdanek camp was located in Poland, it is only logical that numerous books and studies on this topic were published there. Some of the literature in question is of excellent historiographical quality – except on two vital and closely related issues, namely the number of victims of the camp and the matter of the mass extermination of inmates by gassing or shooting. As we shall see in the following, the evidence presented for these issues does not stand up to critical examination.

Aside from a few titles which have been translated into western languages, this literature is unknown outside of Poland. We shall refer to it frequently in the following.

The Polish researchers, just like the western ones, portray Majdanek as a combination labor and extermination camp. The fact that under Communist rule historiography had to adhere to political guidelines and handicaps is freely admitted in Poland today; for example, Czesław Rajca of the Majdanek Museum conceded in a 1992 publication about the number of victims of the Lublin camp that these numbers had been inflated, not only by the Soviets but also by Zdzisław Łukaszkiewicz, the author of the first historical study of Majdanek.⁹

The figure of one and a half million or even more victims of Majdanek was so incredible that it fell into disuse soon after the war. In 1948 Łukaszkiewicz

lagsanstalt, 1979.

⁹ Czesław Rajca, “Problem liczby ofiar w obozie na Majdanku,” in: *Zeszyty Majdanka* (Majdanek Periodical; henceforth abbreviated as *ZM*) XIV, 1992, p. 127-132.

spoke of 360,000 dead. Of those, some 60% “succumbed to camp death,” a euphemism for death due to epidemics, debilitation, malnutrition etc.; 25% were said to have been murdered in the gas chambers, and the remaining 15% were killed by other means (shooting, hanging, lethal injection, etc.).¹⁰

For decades, Łukaszkiwicz’s figure was considered final, but for some years now historians no longer hold to it. In his aforementioned article, Rajca suggests that approximately 235,000 people actually died in Majdanek. This figure has also been adopted by the authorities of the Majdanek Memorial.

We shall show later how the Polish historians arrived at their statistics, and we shall compare these completely untenable figures with those which we ourselves have calculated on the basis of the relevant documents.

Neglecting Majdanek is not something of which one can accuse the Polish contemporary historians – quite unlike their western colleagues. Their basic weakness is that they have not been able to shake off the fetters of doctrinal Stalinist historiography, which created a propagandistically distorted picture of the camp from the start. The Polish reductions in the victim count, first in 1948 and then again in the early 1990s, are nothing more than reluctant and utterly inadequate steps towards overcoming a historiography tied to the marionette strings of politics.

4. Majdanek in Revisionist Literature

Just like orthodox western historians, the Revisionists have completely neglected Majdanek. As of the late 1990s, this side had produced only one single German language book devoted exclusively to this camp. Its title is *Majdanek in alle Ewigkeit?* (Majdanek in All Eternity?), and it was written by Josef Gideon Burg, an anti-Zionist Jew. This work was published in 1979 against the background of the Majdanek Trial taking place at that time in Düsseldorf, and made no claims to academic status; Burg relied primarily on eyewitness accounts and newspaper articles. He accused the Zionists of misusing the tragic events in Majdanek for purposes of moral and financial blackmail of the German people, and insisted that there had been no gas chambers in that camp. Writing rebelliously in German – his mother tongue was Yiddish – he stated:¹¹

“During my stay at the Breslau training school for propagandists, where we were shown soap made from Jews and were taught the gas chamber and extermination theories, a young man there drew my attention by his courageous honesty. I

¹⁰ Zdzisław Łukaszkiwicz, “Obóz koncentracyjny i zagłady Majdanek” (The Concentration and Extermination Camp Majdanek), in: *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni Niemieckich w Polsce* (Bulletin of the Commission to Investigate the German Crimes in Poland), v. 4 (1948), pp. 63-105.

¹¹ Josef Gideon Burg, *Majdanek in alle Ewigkeit?*, Munich: Ederer Verlag, 1979, p. 96.

later met him again during a commemorative campaign in Hildesheim. He complained that his completed form had already been returned to him twice and that he had been threatened that he would be prevented from emigrating to the United States unless he reported 'in detail' about his work in the gas chambers. R.W., now 30 years of age, told me in tears that he could not lie, not even to the detriment of goyim. He, being an orthodox believer, was forbidden to do that by the commandment of Exodus 20:16, which states: 'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.' He told me that he had been in charge of a delousing chamber in Majdanek and later in Birkenau. Even at that time he already had trouble with his Jewish supervisors because he had refused to participate in stealing items delivered for delousing. R.W. complained that in the questionnaires he was supposed to turn lice into people and the misappropriated bundles of clothing into witnesses to the extermination."

In the structure of its argument and in its highly emotional and polemic tone, Burg's book is the Revisionist counterpart, so to speak, of Heiner Lichtenstein's. Burg also dealt partly with Majdanek in another German language book which he titled *Zionazi Zensur in der BRD*.¹²

The Revisionist side has published two studies of the alleged execution gas chambers of Majdanek. In his famous expert report of 1988, the American Fred Leuchter focused primarily on those structures in Auschwitz I and Birkenau which the standard literature calls "gas chambers," but the last section of his report also dealt with the gas chambers of Majdanek. Leuchter concluded that for reasons of construction engineering the structures in question could not have been used to gas human beings.¹³

Whereas Leuchter's conclusions with regard to Auschwitz prompted several replies, only one author – the Frenchman Jean-Claude Pressac – responded to the section of the *Leuchter Report* devoted to Majdanek.¹⁴

In the context of the discussion of the alleged 'gas chambers,' we shall refer to the portion of the *Leuchter Report* relevant to this topic, as well as to Pressac's critique of the same.

And finally, Germar Rudolf, a German, has dedicated four pages in an article about homicidal gas chambers to those allegedly operated in Majdanek.¹⁵ In his view, toxicological, chemical, and structural factors as well as the contradictory nature of the eyewitness testimony speak against the factuality of the alleged execution gassings in these facilities. We shall come back to this study later as well.

¹² Josef Gideon Burg, *Zionazi Zensur in der BRD*, Munich: Ederer Verlag, 1980.

¹³ Fred A. Leuchter, *An Engineering Report on the Alleged Gas Chambers at Auschwitz, Birkenau and Majdanek, Poland*, Toronto: Samisdat Publishers Ltd., 1988.

¹⁴ Jean-Claude Pressac, "Les carences et incohérences du rapport Leuchter," in: *Jour J*, December 12, 1988, pp. I-X.

¹⁵ Germar Rudolf and Ernst Gauss, "Die 'Gaskammern' von Auschwitz und Majdanek," in: Ernst Gauss (ed.), *Grundlagen zur Zeitgeschichte*, Grabert, Tübingen 1994, pp. 276-279.

5. The Purpose of the Present Study

As we have shown, 52 years after the war's end there still exists not one comprehensive study of the Majdanek camp – neither by the orthodox nor by the Revisionist side – that measures up to scientific and academic requirements. We intend the present volume to fill this significant gap. In doing so we shall draw on the findings of the voluminous Polish literature on this subject, but we shall also deal critically with the weaknesses inherent in this literature.

The starting point for this study was a visit to Lublin in June 1997. Naturally, the state of evidence for the alleged mass extermination of human beings and the related question of the number of Majdanek victims are the main emphasis of our work.

The fact that we have chosen the conservative title *Majdanek Concentration Camp: A Historical and Technical Study* for this work indicates that we do not in any way claim this to be a history of the entire Majdanek camp. That, incidentally, would be quite a difficult task, since unfortunately the events in the camp are poorly documented; many documents were destroyed prior to the camp's dissolution or have disappeared since. For this reason many important aspects of the history of Majdanek will remain forever unclear, unless documents which have been lost or, for whatever reason, have been kept hidden, will one day turn up. For example, the fundamental question of how many inmates were sent to the camp during its entire existence cannot be answered precisely under the conditions at hand, so that estimates must suffice for the time being.

Our book cannot reveal 'the truth about Majdanek,' but it shall help us to come a good step closer to that truth. That many a long and widely accepted idea will fall by the wayside in the process can hardly be avoided.

Carlo Mattogno assumes responsibility for chapters IV, V, VI, VIII and IX of our book. Jürgen Graf is responsible for chapters I, II, III, X, the Introduction and the Conclusion. Chapter VII was written by both authors jointly.

*January 7, 1998
Carlo Mattogno
Jürgen Graf*

Chapter I: A Brief Overview of the History of the Majdanek Camp in Historical Context

1. The Function of the Concentration Camps in the Third Reich

During the six years of peace that the Third Reich was granted, the concentration camps had no economic significance. Their purpose was to isolate habitual criminals, as well as opponents of the regime who were considered incorrigible, from the general population, and to reform those regarded as re-educable to become good citizens in the spirit of National Socialist ideology. In pre-war times the number of concentration camp inmates was relatively small; in the summer of 1937, for example, the population of all concentration camps, including the criminals and the “anti-socials” (vagrants, beggars etc.), totaled 7,500.¹⁶

After the war broke out, more and more concentration camps were set up and the number of inmates skyrocketed. The war brought an internationalization of the camps; aside from resistance fighters from the nations under German occupation, ever-increasing numbers of prisoners-of-war were also committed, and as of 1941 numerous Jews also joined the inmate population.

Constantly more Germans were called to fight at the front as the war dragged on. Manpower shortages became a problem of paramount importance for the economy of the Third Reich. This resulted in a change of the concentration camps’ function. The re-education function was pushed into the background, and the economic aspect grew in importance.

On April 30, 1942, SS-*Obergruppenführer* Oswald Pohl, Chief of the WVHA (*Wirtschaftsverwaltungshauptamt*, the SS Economic-Administrative Main Office), wrote to the *Reichsführer*-SS Heinrich Himmler:¹⁷

“The war has brought a visible change in the structure of the concentration camps and has fundamentally altered their responsibilities with regard to the use to which the inmates may be put. The detention of inmates solely for security, educational or preventive reasons is no longer in the fore. Emphasis has shifted to economic concerns. Mobilizing all inmate labor, first of all for war-related tasks (increased armaments production) and later on for tasks of peacetime, is becoming more and more important.”

¹⁶ Arno Mayer, *Der Krieg als Kreuzzug*, Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1986, p. 245.

¹⁷ R-129.

This realization results in certain necessary measures requiring a gradual restructuring of the concentration camps from their former, one-sidedly political form into an organization appropriate to the economic tasks."

Jews in particular were detailed to work in the camps. In a letter to SS-*Gruppenführer* Richard Glücks, the inspector of the concentration camps, Himmler stated in late January 1942:¹⁸

"Be prepared to admit 100,000 male Jews and up to 50,000 Jewesses into the concentration camps in the next four weeks. Great economic orders and tasks will be put to the concentration camps in the next weeks."

A wealth of documents demonstrates the role of the Jews in the National Socialist war economy.¹⁹ On May 11, 1944, for example, Adolf Hitler personally ordered 200,000 Jews employed within the framework of the Fighter Plane Construction Program.²⁰ Of course the extremely high death rates in the camps, resulting primarily from diseases but also from inadequate rations and clothing as well as from overwork, detracted severely from the economic efficiency of the camps. For this reason, Richard Glücks sent a circular to all concentration camp commandants on December 28, 1942, making them personally responsible for maintaining the inmates in a work-fit condition. Glücks wrote:²¹

"The First Camp Physicians are to use all means at their disposal to effect a considerable decrease in the mortality figures in the individual camps [...]. The camp physicians are to pay greater attention to the inmates' rations than heretofore, and shall submit proposals for improvements to the camp commandant, in agreement with the administration. These improvements must not remain on paper only, but must be regularly verified by the camp physicians. Further, the camp physicians shall see to it that working conditions at the various work sites are improved as much as possible [...]. The Reichsführer-SS has ordered that mortality absolutely must decrease."

In fact, this order did result in a very considerable improvement in the conditions in most camps, and mortality decreased by almost 80% within eight months.²²

Aside from the economic significance of inmate labor to the Third Reich, security considerations were the second most important reason for the expansion and consolidation of the concentration camp system. In many occupied nations the Germans found themselves faced with growing and increasingly active resistance movements. To these activities they responded by protecting their troops and facilities just as every occupation power has responded before

¹⁸ NO-500.

¹⁹ Carlo Mattogno mentions numerous relevant documents in *Il mito dello sterminio ebraico*, Monfalcone: Sentinella d'Italia, 1987.

²⁰ NO-5689.

²¹ NO-1523.

²² PS-1469.

and since, namely by increasing repression. One main instrument of repression was the camp.

Armed resistance was particularly powerful in Poland, and most especially in the vicinity of the city Lublin. A Polish source comments:²³

“As of early 1942 a partisan movement also began, within the framework of which some 20,000 armed soldiers from various underground organizations fought in 1944 in several dozen partisan units: AK [Armija Krajowa, Home Army], [...] AL [Armija Ludowa, People’s Army]. Among them there were also Soviet partisan units who came, invasion-style, from beyond the Bug River or who consisted of prisoners-of-war who had escaped from Hitler-camps [...]. Together with aerial units (they operated in treeless regions) as well as garrisons, they tied up extensive enemy resources and inflicted heavy damage. This forced the occupiers to employ especially numerous police and army units in the Wojwoden area [county]. Even though the occupiers combated the resistance movement with the most drastic of measures (pacification, burning of villages, executions, deportations etc.), they failed to bring the situation under control. We shall only point out that, according to German sources, no fewer than 27,250 ‘attacks’ of various kinds were committed in the territory of the [Lublin] District from July 1942 to December 1943, that several great partisan battles were fought there [...], that 254 trains were derailed or blasted, 116 train stations and rail facilities were attacked, and 19 transports were stopped or shelled, in the first months of 1944 alone.”

For the time from January 1, 1941, and June 30, 1944, the American historian Richard C. Lukas details the damage inflicted on the Germans by the Polish resistance as follows:²⁴

Locomotives damaged	6,930
Locomotives delayed in overhaul	803
Trains derailed	732
Railroad cars destroyed	979
Railroad cars damaged	19,058
Railroad cars set on fire	443
Disruptions of electric power in Warsaw	638
Military vehicles damaged or destroyed	4,326
Railroad bridges blown up	38
Aircraft damaged	28
Aircraft destroyed	68
Tons of gasoline destroyed	4,674
Oil refineries incapacitated	3
Carloads of wood burned	150
Military warehouses burned	122

²³ Zygmunt Mankowski, “Obozy hitlerowskie – Majdanek – Lubelszczyna. Ruch oporu” (Hitler camps – Majdanek – Lublin area. The Resistance Movement), in: Tadeusz Mencel (ed.), *Majdanek 1941-1944*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Lubelskie, 1991, p. 35.

²⁴ Richard C. Lukas, *The Forgotten Holocaust. The Poles under German Occupation*,. Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1986, pp. 67ff.

Military food storage warehouses burned	8
Production in factories brought to halt	7
Factories burned	15
Defective parts for aircraft engines produced	4,710
Defective cannon barrels produced	203
Defective artillery shells produced	92,000
Defective aircraft produced	107
Defective parts produced for electrical appliances	570,000
Important plant machinery damaged	2,872
Various acts of sabotage	25,145
Attacks on Germans	5,733

General Eduard Bor-Komorowski, the leader of the 1944 Warsaw Uprising (who, after being taken prisoner, was well treated on the personal order of Adolf Hitler, and survived the war), commented on this listing as follows:²⁵

“This summary gives only the more characteristic acts of sabotage and is only half the picture of the scope of our activities.”

Faithful to the time-honored pattern of terror and counter-terror, these activities of the armed resistance resulted in ever harsher and more extensive reprisals against the civilian population: not only people suspected of co-operating with the partisans, but hostages as well, were arrested *en masse* and sent to the concentration camps.

2. The Lublin Region in National Socialist Polish Policy

This is the backdrop against which the origin and history of the Majdanek camp near Lublin must be seen. But first, a few words about National Socialist Polish policy for the region in which the city of Lublin is located.

In 1939 Lublin fell into German hands after Poland’s military collapse and partition. Where the Lublin region was concerned, National Socialist Polish policy alternated between two diametrically opposed goals, neither of which succeeded beyond the initial stage.

On the one hand, this region was supposed to become a German settlement area. The National Socialists planned a step-by-step Germanization of the region, basing this on the city of Lublin’s original, pronouncedly German character. In 1942 Ernst Zörner, Governor of Lublin District, wrote in his preface to a book about the city Lublin:²⁶

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

²⁶ Fritz Schöller, Max-Otto Vandrey, *Führer durch die Stadt Lublin*, Cracow, 1942, p. 5. Quoted as per Marszałek, “Geneza i początki budowy obozu koncentracyjnego na Majdanku” (Genesis and Beginnings of the Construction of the Majdanek Concentration Camp), in: *ZM*, I, 1965, p. 22.

“Fully six centuries ago German artisans and merchants began developing this area. As late as the mid-15th century, old Lublin still had a mostly German majority, a German city council, and it lived in accordance with German law.”

As initial step and focal point of the Lublin region’s Germanization, large SS settlements were to be established there, intended not only for the SS members themselves but for their families as well. Further, ethnic Germans from Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Rumania were to be settled there.²⁷ And finally, Poles of German extraction were to be identified and incorporated into the German ethnic whole. In a July 21, 1942, letter which we shall quote in the following, Himmler described this as “a search for German blood.”

On the other hand, the Lublin region was also supposed to become a catch basin for Jews. In July 1942 Himmler ordered an acceleration of the resettlement (already in progress at the time) of the General Government’s Jewish population into a few collection zones:²⁸

“Lublin, July 19, 1942

*To the
Higher SS and Police Chief East
SS-Obergruppenführer Krüger
Cracow.*

I hereby order that the resettlement of the General Government’s entire Jewish population is to be completed by December 31, 1942.

As of December 31 no persons of Jewish extraction may remain in the General Government, unless they are in the collection camps of Warsaw, Cracow, Czestochowa, Radom and Lublin. All other work projects employing Jewish labor forces are to be completed by that time, or, if completion is not possible, are to be transferred into one of the collection camps.

These measures are necessary towards the ethnic separation of races and peoples in the interests of the new European order, as well as towards the security of the German Reich and its spheres of interest. Every violation of this regulation represents a danger to law and order in the entire German sphere of interest, a starting point for resistance movements, and a moral and physical center of disease.

For all these reasons a complete resolution is necessary and thus to be implemented. Any cases where the deadline is expected not to be met must be reported to me so that I may remedy the matter promptly. All applications from other offices, requesting exclusions or exemptions, are to be submitted to me personally.

Heil Hitler!

[sgd.] H. Himmler”

Originally the Lublin District was to take in not only Polish Jews but also Jews from all of Europe. This plan had been drawn up as early as 1939. With

²⁷ The decision to bring in ethnic Germans from these countries was made in mid-July 1941 at an NSDAP conference in Zamość (*Krakauer Zeitung* of July 17, 1941, quoted as per Marzałek, *op. cit.* (note 26), p. 25).

²⁸ NO-5574.

reference to Adolf Hitler, Reinhard Heydrich, the Chief of the RSHA (*Reichsicherheitshauptamt*, the Reich Security Main Office), announced on September 21, 1939, that the part of Galicia located east of Cracow and north of the Slovakian border was to become “a Jewish state under German administration.”

In October of the same year, the chief of the Gestapo’s resettlement department, Adolf Eichmann, who had set up an office in Prague for the emigration of the Jews from the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, organized the first small-scale deportations of Jews from the Protectorate to Nisko, a town in the Lublin District. Nisko was to serve as transit camp for the distribution of the arriving Jews. The deportations were halted on the order of Friedrich Wilhelm Krüger, the Higher SS and Police Chief of the General Government, and in April 1940 Nisko was closed.

In an April 1940 meeting with Hans Frank, Hermann Göring and Arthur Greiser, the Reich Governor of the Warthegau, Himmler again brought up the plans for a Jewish reservation in Lublin, and deportations were scheduled for August of that year. After Hitler expressed doubts about the suitability of this project, it was dropped and more distant areas were considered for taking in the Jewish masses to be banished from Western and Central Europe.²⁹ Indeed it was difficult to see how one and the same region should have been Germanized and transformed into a reservation for the European Jews, both at the same time!

3. Establishment of the Majdanek Camp

The internal contradictions of National Socialist Lublin policy is one of many examples that show how little the cliché of the Third Reich as a perfectly organized state construct under a tight, centralized leadership actually reflects reality. The history of the camp which is the subject of our study was no less conflicted than the National Socialist policy for the Lublin region. There was no sense of clear and consistent planning: rivalries between various institutions as well as the ever-changing wartime situation resulted in the Majdanek concentration camp never being assigned a clear-cut purpose. It remained a stop-gap measure until the end.

In our discussion of the origins of the Lublin camp we refer first of all to German war-time documents which have been discovered in the Majdanek Museum and in the Lublin City Archive, and then, to an even greater extent, to an important article which Józef Marszałek, for many years the head of the

²⁹ Regarding the Lublin Plan, cf. *Enzyklopädie des Holocaust*, *op. cit.* (note 7), pp. 1011-1013.

Majdanek Memorial, has written on this topic.³⁰ However, we shall disregard Marszałek's obtrusive comments about Majdanek's role as 'extermination camp'; the reason why we simply ignore these outright will become perfectly apparent later on.

As far as one can tell based on the incomplete documentation available, the starting point for the genesis of the Lublin camp seems to have been Heinrich Himmler's visit to Lublin in July 1941. A memo dated the 21st of that month notes the following instructions by Himmler:³¹

"On the occasion of his inspection of Lublin and Zamość on July 20, 1941, the Reichsführer-SS has ordered the following:

1. *The representative of the RFSS sets up a concentration camp for 25,000 to 50,000 inmates as labor force for workshops and buildings of the SS and Police. The concentration camps are converted to secondary camps, depending on location. Is the concentration camp to be set up by the Camp Inspector?*
2. *German equipment manufacturing plants.
The camp as it has existed to date is to be converted to serve exclusively as automobile repair and carpentry shops.
A new labor camp with the required shops for clothing, metalworking, tannery, cobblers, cartwright's workshop (sled manufacture) is to be set up east of Lublin.*
3. *The uniform store of the Waffen-SS shall fill its requirements from the Lublin workshops for clothing of all kinds. The uniform store at Berlin shall set up a branch office in Lublin which will see to all supply matters.*
4. *In accordance with the suggested plan, the new buildings of the SS and Police Quarter will be erected on the grounds of the former Lublin airfield. The old German city is to be incorporated into the overall construction plan for the SS and Police Quarter. Within the framework of the general construction plan, work is to begin at once on the renovation of the old buildings, as far as technically and economically feasible, as well as on construction for the new Quarter. Amt III will provide the necessary technical manpower with police reservists. The SS houses are to be included. [...]*
8. *The equipment manufacturing plants are responsible for training bricklayers, carpenters etc. (construction workers) for employment in the east. Further, large tailors' workshops are to be set up, and staffed with Jewesses. [...]*
11. *The operation 'Search for German Blood' will be expanded to include the entire General Government, and a large settlement area shall be established in the German colonies near Zamość. [...]*
13. *Until fall of this year, the Reichsführer's representative shall implement primarily command measures with regard to the establishment of the SS and Police bases in the new eastern territory. Especial consideration is to be given to the creation of the necessary accommodations for the family members of the SS and Police. [...]"*

³⁰ Marszałek, *op. cit.* (note 26), pp. 15-59.

³¹ NO-3031.

The “representative of the RFSS” was SS-*Brigadeführer* Odilo Globocnik, a close acquaintance of Himmler’s, whom the latter had appointed on July 17, 1941, as his authorized representative in matters relating to the establishment of the SS and Police bases in the “new eastern territory.” In spring of 1941 Globocnik had established an SS Special Unit in Lublin, consisting of young architects, demographers etc.; these were to redesign the city and its environs.³²

The “camp as it has existed to date” referred to the so-called ‘Jewish camp,’ which was located on Lipowa Street in the city of Lublin and which was probably a sort of prison with adjoining workshops. Jewish soldiers from the Polish army who had fallen into captivity worked there in plants of the German equipment manufacturer DAW. – The grounds of the former airfield mentioned by Himmler, where new buildings for the SS and Police Quarter were to be erected “in accordance with the suggested plan” (i.e., probably a project designed by Globocnik’s team), eventually became the site of the so-called ‘airfield camp,’ a branch of Majdanek.

Amt II (Construction), responsible for the construction of the new buildings on the grounds of the old airfield, was part of the SS Main Office for Budget and Construction. Its Chief was SS-*Obergruppenführer* engineer Hans Kammler. This *Amt II* was subordinate to the local Central Construction Office of the Waffen-SS and Police of Lublin.

The question raised by Himmler – “Is the concentration camp to be set up by the Camp Inspector?” – is significant. This would have been the normal procedure. Evidently Himmler was considering putting his personal friend and representative Globocnik in charge of establishing the camp. This inevitably brought him into conflict with Hans Frank as well as with the civilian administration of the city Lublin, neither of whom could have wished to see Himmler and his man Globocnik manage things whichever way they saw fit.

Lublin’s Governor Zörner expressed displeasure at Globocnik’s excessive authority. In an August 30, 1941, letter to Globocnik he protested against the fact that the ‘Jewish camp,’ located in the city of Lublin, was evidently to be replaced by a concentration camp, and without his permission.³³

The camp whose construction was begun in early October 1941 was initially called “Prisoner-of-war camp of the Waffen-SS Lublin” (*Kriegsgefangenenlager der Waffen-SS Lublin*, abbreviated as *KGL*); this name appears for the first time in a document dated October 7, 1941.³⁴ The term concentration camp (*Konzentrationslager*, abbreviated as *KL*) was not used. Marszałek hypothesizes that Globocnik hoped to appease Zörner with this alternate name,

³² Marszałek, *op. cit.* (note 26), p. 21.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

³⁴ *WAPL*, Central Construction Office of the Waffen-SS and Police Lublin, henceforth referred to as Central Construction Office, sygn. 58.

since the construction of a prisoner-of-war camp was nothing unusual, given the great numbers of Soviet soldiers who had fallen into German captivity; at that time as well, several POW camps had already sprung up in the Lublin district.³⁵

Since the captured Red Army soldiers could not be put to work in POW camps – or could be used as a labor force only to a very limited degree – it was a logical measure to send some of them to help set up the Lublin camp and to put them to work there later in the planned industries as part of the war effort. And indeed, Soviet POWs who were brought in from the local POW camps were among the first inmates of Majdanek. Łukasziewicz gives their number as approximately 5,000,³⁶ which is probably too high. Aside from the Red Army soldiers, Jewish prisoners from the camp on Lipowa Street had to help in constructing the camp.

Himmler belatedly confirmed the camp's dual function in an April 14, 1942, letter to the Reich Ministry of Transport, stating that the POW camp served also as a concentration camp.³⁷

It was not until April 1943, when the prisoners of war had long been a minority among the inmates, that the camp was officially renamed “Concentration Camp Lublin.”

We recall that Himmler had originally announced that the camp should be able to accommodate 25,000 to 50,000 inmates. However, when the construction of the “prisoner of war camp” was formally ordered, there was already talk of 125,000 inmates. On November 1, 1941, in other words after the first prisoners had already arrived at the camp-to-be, SS-*Obergruppenführer* Hans Kammler, Chief of *Amt II* (construction) of the WVHA's Main Office for Budget and Construction, wrote to the Central Construction Office of the Waffen-SS and Police Lublin:³⁸

“The order is hereby given to set up a prisoner-of-war camp in Lublin to house 125,000 POWs. An initial funding installment of RM 5,000,000 is being provided by Chap. 21/7. Application for the total amount required is to be submitted without delay to Amt II, together with the relevant documentation.”

Five weeks later, in a December 8, 1941, addendum to this letter, Kammler spoke of “150,000 POWs” and ordered the provision of supply, economic and production facilities required for the camp, for example “high-capacity laundry, delousing facilities, incineration plant, large workshops, etc.”³⁸

In his note of July 21, 1941, Himmler did not commit himself to the precise location of the camp to be set up. It was established south-east of Lublin, some 5 km from the city center on level ground sloping slightly south and

³⁵ Marszałek, *op. cit.* (note 26), p. 28f.

³⁶ Z. Łukasziewicz, *op. cit.* (note 10), p. 64.

³⁷ Marszałek, *op. cit.* (note 26), p. 27.

³⁸ APMM, Central Construction Office, sygn. 120.

west, and was bordered in the south by the villages Abramowice and Dzie-siata.³⁹

The choice of this location was probably motivated by practical considerations. The camp's proximity to the Lublin train station meant that inmate transports could be marched in, obviating the need to construct a rail line to the camp. Further, the grounds of the former airfield, where a large SS settlement as well as DAW production plants were to be built, were only a few hundred meters from the camp boundary. In other words, very close to the quarters of those inmates who were to build these structures.

Of course the existence of this camp could not have remained hidden from even the most superficial observer. Accordingly, Marszałek states clearly:⁴⁰

"The entire region is completely open. There are no natural obstacles in the form of larger rivers or forested areas. By the nature of its location, the camp could be seen into from almost every direction. Its northern boundary lay along the heavily traveled road Lublin-Chelm-Zamość-Lvov; the southern one ran along the northern outskirts of the settlements Dzie-siata and Abramowic; the western edge almost abutted the first buildings of the suburb Kosminek; only the eastern side crossed the fields of the village Kalinowka. The reasons for the decision to locate the camp here, of all places, have not been clearly established, but an intent to hide it from the eyes of the public certainly did not play a part in this decision."

The first surviving plan of Majdanek dates from October 7, 1941,⁴¹ and shows the camp as "prisoner-of-war camp."⁴² It provided for the construction of ten compounds of inmate barracks covering a total of 62.9 hectares (155.4 acres); the five western compounds are rectangular, the five eastern ones irregularly trapezoidal. A double barbed-wire barrier as well as 25 guard towers 110 to 140 meters apart were to prevent breakouts.

The plan provided for a total of 236 barracks, including 207 residential barracks.⁴³ If one assumes a population of 250 inmates per barrack, this would indicate a total camp population of just over 50,000 inmates, which agrees with Himmler's note of July 21, but not with Kammler's order of November 1, 1941, which mentioned 125,000 prisoners. Nonetheless the plan of October 7, 1941, was in force at least until March 1942. This conclusion follows from the fact that the projects from February and March 1942 to connect the camp to the city's sewer system are based on precisely this first plan.⁴⁴

³⁹ See Document 1 and Photographs I, II.

⁴⁰ Marszałek, *op. cit.* (note 26), p. 32.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁴² See Document 2.

⁴³ There were three kinds of barracks: the "Schneider Barracks," which measured 30 m × 10 m × 2.60 m, the "Schönbrunn Barracks," 32.50 m × 12.50 m × 2.70 m in size, and the "Werner Barracks," which measured 32.05 m × 12.50 m × 2.60 m. The reason for this was the lack of prefabricated parts for a consistent barrack style; construction had to be done with the materials at hand. Marszałek, *op. cit.* (note 26), pp. 37f.

⁴⁴ Marszałek, *op. cit.* (note 26), p. 35.

Meanwhile, construction of the first camp was in full swing. The first inmate transports, consisting of Soviet as well as Polish-Jewish prisoners of war, as mentioned before, were assigned the task of leveling the terrain and erecting the barracks on the first compound. In late November, when the first Polish functionary inmates⁴⁵ arrived from camps located in the Reich, such as Dachau, Buchenwald, Auschwitz, and Gusen (a satellite camp of Mauthausen), the southern row of barracks as well as some of the barracks in the northern row on Compound I were already set up.⁴⁶ For the prisoners assigned to this work, the working conditions were very harsh and inhumane, since they had to sleep under the open sky until the first barracks were completed, and were thus exposed to the autumn cold as well as to the rain.

The Central Construction Office normally commissioned private firms with the work to be performed. Generally the commissions were given to whichever firms tendered the best cost estimate. The private firms usually provided only the skilled labor; simple manual labor requiring no special training was often performed by inmates. The Central Construction Office was responsible for providing the private firms with construction materials.

A summary drawn up by the Central Construction Office in September 1941 about the construction bills of that month lists no fewer than 22 such private firms, the majority of them Polish ones.⁴⁷ One permanent employment relationship which the Central Construction Office entered into was with the Polish carpenter and building contractor Michał Ochnik. Ochnik, a member of the United Guilds of Construction Workers in Lublin, applied for commissions on October 13, 1941.⁴⁸

"I hereby offer you my services for construction work and would cordially ask you to consider my firm when giving out these commissions. I have performed numerous jobs for the local authorities to date: in the past year I was commissioned with various tasks for the SS and Police Chief, Major General of the Police, Globocnik [...] I employ a work force of 20 and can assure you that any work you may give us will be done well, promptly, and in accordance with your deadlines."

Evidently a large part of the Polish civilian population had come to terms with the occupation forces.

Several Polish firms were commissioned with construction tasks inside the Majdanek camp. Michał Ochnik's firm was one of them; as we shall see later, this firm contributed to the construction of the delousing chambers which, ac-

⁴⁵ Functionary inmates were inmates who served as liaison between their fellow prisoners and the camp administration – for example, interpreters. That Polish prisoners from camps located farther west were sent to Majdanek in late 1941 was no doubt due primarily to the fact that they were needed as interpreters. Also, there were many doctors among them (cf. Chapter III).

⁴⁶ Marszałek, *op. cit.* (note 26), pp. 36f.

⁴⁷ *WAPL*, Central Construction Office, 30, p. 3.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 9, p. 27.

ording to the official account of Majdanek, also served to mass-murder human beings.⁴⁹

At least some of the construction contracts assigned to these firms were considered secret, as dervies from a document they had to sign.⁵⁰

"The firm agrees that any news, even if minor, which it may learn and which may harm or hinder completion of the secret construction contracts assigned to it, will be immediately reported by the firm to the military authority issuing these secret construction contracts."

In light of the circumstances – a state of war, as well as resistance activity – this sort of stipulation was not out of the ordinary and in no way indicates that Majdanek had any function as an extermination center. Even more so than the camp's proximity to the city of Lublin, the constant presence of Polish civilians on the camp grounds categorically ruled out any clandestine mass murders.

Important clues as to Majdanek's real functions may be found in a letter that Deputy Reich Minister of Transportation Kleinmann wrote to Himmler on March 7, 1942. This letter was prompted by practical difficulties resulting from the strain of excessive demand on the Eastern Railroad and the Lublin train station.

Kleinmann's letter indicated that a camp for 150,000 inmates was being built in Lublin. For the moment it was still a POW camp, but was to be reconfigured into a concentration camp in the future. The inmates were to be employed in the manufacture of clothing, shoes etc. intended for the SS in the eastern territories.

According to Kleinmann, the SS group in Lublin needed so much construction material that jams and congestion had occurred ever since late November 1941 in unloading the wagons. Discussions with representatives of the SS had indicated such extensive construction plans of the SS for Lublin that at present neither the capacity of the Eastern Railroad nor that of the Lublin train station sufficed to bring in all the needed materials. Therefore, Himmler wanted to hold off on these construction projects.

According to the information available to him, Kleinmann said, Lublin was to become a junction in a network of SS bases in the east. Plans called for a veritable city with barracks for three regiments of the Waffen-SS as well as accommodations for their families. This SS city was to have its own sewer system and electrical net and would have numerous large arms depots.

On April 14, Himmler responded to this letter. He wrote that as a consequence of the shortage of raw materials and the transportation difficulties, the capacity of the camp would be reduced. He also mentioned that the planned bases of the Waffen-SS, as well as of the Police in Lublin, were intended for

⁴⁹ See Chapter VI.

⁵⁰ *WAPL*, Central Construction Office, 14, p. 266.

after the war. For this reason, he wrote, he had halted the preparations for their construction and ordered their postponement.⁵¹

We do not know when Himmler issued this order to stop preparations for the construction of the SS city. In any case, this project was a subject for discussion as late as January 1942, at a conference in Berlin attended by representatives of the WVHA as well as of the Lublin City Council and the Lublin Central Construction Office. On that occasion the Chief of the latter organization, Naumann, announced that the future SS city would have a population of 60,000.⁵²

While this SS city remained a castle in the sky, the construction of a supply camp in Lublin for the region of Russia-South was purposefully hurried along. On April 24, 1942, the Central Construction Office of the Waffen-SS and Police issued a report to the Higher SS and Police Chief for Russia-South in Lublin, stating:⁵³

“According to the construction order of November 26, 1941, the representative for the construction of the SS and Police bases in the new eastern territory, SS-Brigadeführer Globocnik, commissioned the Central Construction Office of the Waffen-SS and Police Lublin with the construction of a transit supply camp for the Higher SS and Police Chief for Russia-South in Lublin. This camp includes a total of 11 camp barracks and one administrative and housing barrack. [...] Except for the water supply and drainage system, the supply camp is 75% complete, and the remaining work will be finished in approximately six weeks, since most of the materials required have already been delivered.”

To summarize: the German documents which have survived (and which are consistently reproduced correctly in the official Polish literature) verify without the slightest doubt that the Lublin camp was intended to meet economic needs, especially such as related to the war effort. It was intended on the one hand to supply the SS units stationed and fighting in the east, specifically in southern Russia, with a constant supply of clothing, shoes, materiel of war, etc., and on the other hand, to contribute to the construction of the planned SS city near Lublin.

Not so much as one single document gives even the slightest indication that Majdanek was to function as an ‘extermination camp’. And it was profoundly unsuitable as such anyhow, since its close proximity to the city of Lublin as well as the constant presence of Polish civilian workers on the camp grounds would have made it utterly impossible to keep any extermination efforts secret.

⁵¹ The correspondence between Kleinmann and Himmler is quoted as per Marszałek, *op. cit.* (note 26), pp. 39ff.; pp. 50f.

⁵² Marszałek, *op. cit.* (note 26), p. 40.

⁵³ *WAPL*, Central Construction Office, 168, p. 10.

4. The Structure of the Lublin Camp

In September 1941, SS-*Hauptsturmführer* Hermann Heinrich Hackmann and two other SS officers were transferred from Buchenwald to Lublin to take over the organization of the camp being built there. SS men from other concentration camps followed; they were to make up the garrison of Majdanek. This was structured in accordance with the guidelines set up by the Concentration Camp Inspectorate. The organization consisted of six divisions and several auxiliary divisions.⁵⁴

Division I: Command Headquarters

Management of the concentration camp was the responsibility of the camp commandant, who was appointed by the Chief of the Concentration Camp Inspectorate. He was in charge of staffing the administrative positions within the camp as well as of the inmates' work details.

In the course of its scant three years' history, Majdanek had no fewer than five commandants.⁵⁵ The first was SS-*Standartenführer* Karl Otto Koch, who had served in Esterwegen during the first years of National Socialist rule and in Buchenwald from 1937 to 1940. In August 1942 he was arrested by the SS for crimes committed in Buchenwald (corruption and murder), and replaced as commandant of Majdanek by SS-*Obersturmbannführer* Max August Koegel, who had previously been posted to Ravensbrück in October 1942 after a brief intermezzo in the Lublin camp. His successor in Majdanek was SS-*Hauptsturmführer* Hermann Florstedt, who had been brought in from Sachsenhausen. This arrangement lasted until September 1943, when Florstedt was arrested by the SS for embezzlement. He was temporarily replaced by SS-*Hauptsturmführer* Markus Melzer who, however, never officially bore the title of camp commandant.⁵⁶ In November 1943 the fourth camp commandant took up the post: SS-*Obersturmbannführer* Martin Weiss, who had formerly been commandant of Neuengamme and Dachau. He was recalled in April 1944 and replaced by SS-*Obersturmbannführer* Liebehenschel, who had previously been the head of the Auschwitz camp, where he had succeeded Rudolf Höß. Liebehenschel had command of Majdanek until the end, in July 1944.

None of the five successive commandants of Majdanek was granted a happy end. Karl Otto Koch was sentenced to death by an SS court in 1945 for his misdeeds in Buchenwald, and executed. Max August Koegel was sentenced to

⁵⁴ Józef Kasperek, "Organizacja. Komendatura" (Command), in: T. Mencil, *op. cit.* (note 23), pp. 59f.

⁵⁵ Regarding the various commandants of Majdanek and their fate, see Józef Kasperek, "Oddział I – Komendatura (Komandatur). Komendant obozu" (Division I – Camp Commandant), in: T. Mencil, *op. cit.* (note 23), pp. 60ff., as well as: District Court Düsseldorf, *Urteil Hackmann u.a., XVII 1/75*, v. 1, pp. 65f.

⁵⁶ J. Kasperek, *op. cit.* (note 55), p. 62.

death by a British military court in the course of the Ravensbrück Trial. The verdict of the Düsseldorf court in the Majdanek Trial states that Koegel committed suicide in June 1946;⁵⁷ according to the Polish historian Czesław Pili-chowski, however, that was the month in which his death sentence was carried out.⁵⁸ Regarding the fate of the third commandant, Hermann Florstedt, we found three different accounts. The Düsseldorf court states that he was executed by the SS shortly before the end of the war.⁵⁹ Burg reports that Florstedt was hanged in Majdanek before the assembled inmates.⁶⁰ If this version is correct, then the execution must have taken place considerably earlier than “shortly before the end of the war.” And finally, Pilichowski claims that Florstedt survived the war and lived in the Federal Republic of Germany, where the public prosecutor’s office of Cologne investigated him, without a case ever coming to trial.⁶¹ This version seems to us to be the most unlikely.

Martin Weiss was sentenced to death by the Americans in Dachau, and was executed in May 1946. And Arthur Liebehenschel was tried in Cracow in 1946 for his activities in Auschwitz, and was executed by hanging in January 1947.

Division II: Political Section

This division included the Security Police and incorporated functionaries from the Gestapo and the criminal police. It punished crimes committed by the inmates⁶² as well as by the camp guards and was authorized to hand down death sentences. Political prisoners were interrogated by the Gestapo functionaries. Division II also maintained the inmate card file where the inmates’ personal data was recorded.⁶³

Division III: Protective Detention Camp

The third division was responsible for housing, clothing and rations for the inmates. Together with the camp physician, it decided on the inmates’ fitness for manual labor, and supervised their work. It also supervised civilians employed in the camp. Hierarchical levels of offices (camp office, compound office, block office) kept track of the numbers of inmates. The records keeper in charge of the camp office had to give daily reports on changes in the inmate population.

⁵⁷ District Court Düsseldorf, *op. cit.* (note 55), v. I, p. 66.

⁵⁸ Czesław Pilichowski, “Zbrodniarze z Majdanka przed sądem” (The Majdanek Criminal in Court), in: T. Mencel, *op. cit.* (note 23), p. 428.

⁵⁹ District Court Düsseldorf, *op. cit.* (note 55), v. I, p. 65.

⁶⁰ J. G. Burg, *op. cit.* (note 11), p. 28.

⁶¹ C. Pilichowski, “Zbrodniarze z Majdanka przed sądem,” in: T. Mencel, *op. cit.* (note 23), p. 428.

⁶² *I.e.* actions considered crimes by the SS.

⁶³ Regarding Division II, see Zofia Leszczyńska, “Oddział II – Polityczny,” in: T. Mencel, *op. cit.* (note 23), pp. 64-66.

In Majdanek every compound had a “camp elder,” appointed by the camp commandant. Initially these camp elders were mostly German inmates who were deemed trustworthy, and their task was to maintain discipline among their fellow inmates in their respective compounds. The “block elders,” who had to ensure order in their respective blocks, were one level down from the camp elders. Every work detail was under the charge of a so-called *Kapo*. At first the *Kapos* were predominantly German criminal inmates, but Slovakian Jews were also put in these positions later; they were assisted by foremen.⁶⁴

Division IV: Administration

This division saw to the camp’s supply of food, clothing and heating materials. It was in charge of the supply depot and saw to the safekeeping of the cash and valuables confiscated from the inmates. Placing orders for the insecticide Zyklon B was also one of its responsibilities. And finally, this division had to ensure the maintenance of the technical equipment in the camp.⁶⁵

Division V: Camp Physician

The SS garrison physician was the highest medical authority, to whom the troop physician, the camp physician, the dentist and the camp pharmacist were subordinate. He was responsible for conditions of hygiene and sanitation in the camp, and had to be present at executions as well as when corporal punishment was administered.⁶⁶

Division VI: Ideological Studies

The sixth and last division organized world-view training courses, social events, artistic exhibitions, as well as the camp personnel’s attendance of movie and theatre events; it also maintained the camp library, which was also accessible only to the camp staff.⁶⁷

Auxiliary Divisions

These included the postal service, court, transportation (*i.e.*, the pool of motor vehicles), as well as the *SS-Totenkopf-Sturmabteilung*. The latter saw to the organization of the camp guards, which were 130 in number in mid-1943 and 240 in fall of the same year and also included non-Germans (Lithuanians,

⁶⁴ Regarding Division III, see Zofia Leszczyńska, “Oddział III – Obóz więźniarski,” *ibid.*, pp. 66-70.

⁶⁵ Regarding Division IV, see Józef Kasperek, “Oddział IV – Administracja,” *ibid.*, pp. 70-72.

⁶⁶ Regarding Division V, see Zofia Leszczyńska, “Oddział V – Lekarz obozowy,” *ibid.*, pp. 72-74.

⁶⁷ Regarding Division VI, see Józef Kasperek, “Oddział VI – Propaganda,” *ibid.*, p. 74f.

Ukrainians, Rumanians). A total of 1,160 guards, both male and female, served in Majdanek in the scant three years of its existence.⁶⁸

Central Construction Office

The Central Construction Office of the Waffen-SS and Police Lublin deserves special mention. On August 9, 1941, it already had 22 members.⁶⁹ In February 1942 it was subdivided as follows:

- Division I: General
- Division II: General building matters
- Division III: Building administration
- Division IV: Structural engineering
- Division V: Civil engineering
- Division VI: Machinery
- Division VII: Higher offices, correspondence
- Division VIII: SS Construction Offices
- Division IX: SS-V Construction Offices
- Division X: Police Construction Offices.⁷⁰

The Central Construction Office's main task was the construction and development of the Lublin concentration camp, but its authority extended into four other areas as well:

1. Work for SS and Police on the SS properties in the Zamość and Lublin districts;
2. Work for the SS Research Center for Housing in the East in the southern zones of the Lublin region;
3. Construction tasks for the supply camp of the Higher SS and Police Chief Russia-South and the Caucasus;
4. Construction of labor camps in the Lublin district as well as of SS-led factories, including fur and clothing industries in the city of Lublin.

From October 1941 to September 1943 the Central Construction Office employed a daily average of 5,000 inmates in construction projects; as of October 1943 this number decreased to 1,000. Further, the Central Construction Office depended on at least 35 civilian companies with some 1,000 employees, and maintained supply relationships with at least 78 civilian suppliers.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Regarding the auxiliary divisions, see the chapters by Józef Kasperek, Zofia Murawska, Henryka Telesz, *ibid.*, pp. 75-83, 91.

⁶⁹ *WAPL*, Central Construction Office, 4, p. 3.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 6, p. 1-5. Plan of the Central Construction Office of the Waffen-SS and Police Lublin, of Feb. 12, 1942.

⁷¹ cf. the two detailed studies by Marszałek, "Centralny Zarząd Budowlalny SS i Policji w Lublinie," in: *ZM*, VI, 1972, pp. 5-41, and "Rola Centralnego Zarządu Budowlanego SS i Policji w Lublinie w budowanie obozu na Majdanku," in: *ZM*, VII, 1973, pp. 51-89.

5. Development of Majdanek in 1942-1944

When Karl Otto Koch assumed his post as the first commandant of the Lublin camp in fall 1941, he found himself faced with other tasks besides the camp's construction. He had to expand the clothing manufacturing plants of the Waffen-SS Lublin branch, to organize the supply camp Russia-South, and to assume control of the so-called 'V-camp' on the grounds of the former air-field 500 m northwest of the camp. In the absence of any documents on the subject, we do not know what this V-camp was all about. While the V-camp and supply camp were incorporated into the Majdanek concentration camp, the clothing manufacturing plants continued on their own for the time being. In February 1942, transports of Polish Jewesses arrived there who were put to work in the production of the clothing.⁷²

For the civilian city administration of Lublin, the development of such a large camp was a thorn in their side. On January 16, 1942, at a discussion in which both the representative of the Central Construction Office and the deputy Mayor of Lublin, Dr. Steinbach, participated, it was decided that during the first stage of the construction projects the city would have to provide 1,500 m³ of water daily for the camp (400,000 gallons); the Central Construction Office would see to laying the water pipes. At first, Steinbach approved the connection of the camp to the municipal sewer system. At a follow-up conference on February 12, however, he announced that the city administration would make its agreement to this project dependent on its approval by the Governor-General.⁷³

It seems that this condition was related to a dispute between Globocnik and the Governor of Lublin. Testifying as witness at the Nuremberg Tribunal in February 1946, Josef Bühler, secretary-of-state in the administration of the General Government, stated that Zörner had opposed the establishment of a camp for 150,000 inmates because it required so much coal, electricity and gas that the supplies to the city suffered because of it. Furthermore, there was the danger of epidemics.

To what degree Bühler's testimony was accurate may remain an open question. In any case, the city administration informed the Central Construction Office on March 3 that, as long as the plan for the camp's expansion had not been submitted to Governor Hans Frank and been approved by him, the Central Construction Office could not expect any support from the municipal authorities. At the same time, Steinbach forbade the Central Construction Office to perform any work within city limits aimed at connecting Majdanek to the municipal sewer system.⁷⁴

⁷² Marszałek, *op. cit.* (note 26), p. 45.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 46f.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 47f.

For the inmates these quarrels had dire consequences: the sanitary conditions in Majdanek defied description and resulted in an incredibly high mortality rate.⁷⁵

We do not know if the plans were ever submitted for the Governor's approval.

Himmler's confidant Globocnik, with whom both Frank and Zörner were on poor terms, was recalled from his position on March 31, 1942, and assigned to the leadership of Operation Reinhard.⁷⁶

Meanwhile the number of Majdanek inmates grew steadily. Aside from Polish inmates, numerous Czech and Slovak Jews arrived there as of late March.⁷⁷ On March 23, 1942, a new camp plan was submitted; this time it corresponded to the dimensions envisioned by Kammler on December 8 the previous year.⁷⁸ It provided for a subdivision of the camp into three parts:

1. The Prisoner-of-War Camp. 16 rectangular compounds – 14 larger, 2 smaller – were to be set up in four sections covering a total of 120 hectares (296.4 acres). Sections 1 and 4 were to include five compounds each, and Sections 2 and 3 three compounds each. 24 barracks (22 housing barracks, one kitchen and one laundry and toilet barrack) were to be set up on each of the larger compounds. 16 barracks (14 housing barracks, one kitchen and one laundry and toilet barrack) were planned for each of the two smaller compounds.

Given a population of 250 inmates for each of the 336 housing barracks, this puts the capacity of the prisoner-of-war camp at some 85,000 inmates. Large workshops, a food storage depot, a hospital, a high-capacity laundry etc. were to be built in the center of the camp.

2. The POW Camp Annex. This was a building complex east of the Prisoner-of-War Camp. The Annex in turn was to be divided into three parts, the first and third of which included workshops and other buildings for productive purposes; the second section consisted of eight rows of 16 housing barracks each, for approximately 350 inmates per barrack, which amounted to a total capacity of about 45,000 inmates.
3. The Clothing Manufacturing Plants of the Waffen-SS Dachau, Lublin Branch. 102 barracks were planned here, 80 of them housing barracks for 250 prisoners each, totaling 20,000 inmates. The clothing manufacturing plants were separated from the POW Camp Annex by the railway line to Chełm.

In total, then, the camp could have taken in approximately 150,000 inmates, just as Kammler had envisioned on December 8, 1941. (In several

⁷⁵ See Chapter II.

⁷⁶ As far as the incomplete sources would indicate, "Operation Reinhardt" seems to have involved the confiscation of Jewish property.

⁷⁷ See Chapter II.

⁷⁸ *WAPL*, Central Construction Office, 63. See Document 3.

places Marszałek speaks of 250,000; however, this figure is not based on any documentary evidence but merely on the theoretical maximum capacity of the camp under conditions of extreme overcrowding of the barracks.) This figure was never approached even remotely, since the plan of March 23 remained on paper only. Already on May 14 it was decided that only Compounds I through VIII would be built – the first five in one construction stage and the last three in a second.⁷⁹ Aside from the shortage of raw materials and the transportation problems, the uncertain situation at the eastern front probably also contributed to this decision.

Meanwhile, the efforts to connect the camp to the municipal Lublin sewer system were finally being pursued with vigor. On May 15, 1942, the Central Construction Office submitted an appropriate construction proposal to Construction Inspectorate East of the Waffen-SS and Police in Cracow. The cost estimate was based on Polish prices and set at one million Reichsmark. The Central Construction Office noted:⁸⁰

“If inmates and prisoners [i.e., prisoners of war] can be extensively employed in the excavation of culverts in the city streets, construction costs will be significantly reduced. The number of inmates required would be up to 500 men per day, but they could only be engaged in individual groups of 50 to 100.”

The intolerable sanitary conditions in the camp had been sharply criticized by a team of experts whom the Berlin Sanitation Institute of the SS had sent to Majdanek. In a report provided to the Central Construction Office on May 29, 1942, the sanitation officers stated that the well by the Infirmary (Hospital Block) on Compound I was in a most unsuitable location since the sick people’s excretions could contaminate it. The second well, located near the camp physician’s quarters, must be closed immediately since it was crawling with e. coli bacteria. The camp, they said, was courting an epidemic. The only way to effectively eliminate this danger would be to connect the camp to the municipal sewer system, and this should be done with utmost urgency.⁸¹

The construction proposal, submitted on May 15, was not approved until July 27;⁸⁰ those responsible took their time for another two and a half months. Regarding implementation of the project, the Central Construction Office turned to several private firms, among them the Continental Society for Trade and Industry in Cracow and the Technical Engineering Office for central heating and sanitation facilities in Warsaw. The building materials were also purchased from these firms,⁸² while all construction work not requiring special

⁷⁹ Marszałek, *op. cit.* (note 26), p. 54.

⁸⁰ *APMM*, Central Construction Office, sygn. 120.

⁸¹ Marszałek, “Budowa obozu na Majdanku w latach 1942-1944” (Construction of the Majdanek Camp in 1942-1944), in: *ZM*, IV, 1969, pp. 70f.

⁸² 495 tons of pipe sections, 50,000 bricks, 230 tons cement, 50m³ mortar, 30 tons lime, 160m³ wood and 17 tons iron and steel were needed.

skills was performed by inmates, whom the Central Construction Office rented out to the firms in question for 60 pfennigs a day.

Due to the constant shortage of transportation, completion of the work was endlessly delayed: trucks and trains were needed for the eastern front, and there were not enough wagons to transport the required building materials to Lublin. It took until January 1943 for the connection to the municipal sewer system to be completed,⁸³ and it was not before fall of that year that every barrack finally had running water.

Aside from the scarcity of raw materials and transportation, manpower shortages were another chronic problem for the SS, so that efforts were made towards a more judicious application of inmate labor. Himmler issued the following instructions in a May 20, 1942, circular to all Central Construction Offices and Building Inspectors of the Waffen-SS and Police:⁸⁴

“As per the order of the Chief of the Main Office, effective immediately, the entire inmate population will be centrally managed. Consequently it is absolutely necessary that all offices report by May 30, 1942, how much inmate or POW labor they require for the projects under way. Manpower requirements are to be detailed by subject areas, separately for each construction project. In the own best interest of the Construction Administrations, this deadline must be met, since otherwise the required inmates may be reassigned without notice. In future, the raw materials requisition for every construction proposal is also to include the inmate manpower as per the above.”

The highest authority in the allocation of concentration camp inmate laborers was *Amt DII* of the WVHA under SS-*Standartenführer* Gerhard Maurer. In this capacity, Maurer was authorized to order the transfer of inmates from one camp to another or to facilities of the civil or war industry. On March 2, 1943, for example, Maurer ordered that 2,000 Polish inmates physically fit to work were to be transferred from Majdanek to the Reich.⁸⁵ As already mentioned, in the Lublin camp itself the allocation of inmate labor was within the province of Division III (Protective Detention Camp). From April 1942 to April 1944 it was under the leadership of SS-*Hauptscharführer* Troll, who was succeeded by SS-*Oberscharführer* Herbert Abraham.⁸⁶

As in other concentration camps, the inmates who were assigned to labor projects fell into two main categories, the ‘inside units’ and the ‘outside units’. The former had to build and expand the camp itself; they were put to work in excavation, construction and transportation. 280 buildings were built in Majdanek altogether.⁸⁷ Other units had to see to camp maintenance (cleaning, gardening, kitchen, laundry, delousing chambers, etc.). There was even a unit as-

⁸³ Cf. the report of SS-*Hauptsturmführer* Krone, quoted in Chapter III.

⁸⁴ *WAPL*, Central Construction Office, 54, p. 12.

⁸⁵ Anna Wiśniewska, “Praca więźniów” (The Inmates’ Work), in: T. Mencil, *op. cit.* (note 23), p. 172.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

⁸⁷ Marszałek, *op. cit.* (note 81), p. 82.

signed by SS-*Obersturmführer* Anton Thumann to the artistic beautification of the camp; this unit was under the charge of the Polish sculptor A.M. Boniecki.⁸⁸

The 'outside units' worked for various firms. Sometimes these maintained workshops on the camp grounds. If the workshops were located at a distance from the camp, the inmates were quartered in company facilities; otherwise, they returned to the camp after work.

In the following we shall give a brief outline of the various construction stages in Majdanek, with primary reference to a 1969 article by Marszałek.⁸¹

The construction plan of May 14, 1942, which provided for the construction of barracks on eight compounds, was modified in July of that same year. According to the new plan (which was already the fourth!) buildings were now planned for only the first five compounds. Between Compounds IV and V, two new intermediate compounds were planned, the first of which was to become the site of the crematorium and the laundry building. The economic section was to be set up west of the inmate compounds, where barracks would be built to store the possessions confiscated from the internees; further buildings included baths, four large economic and administrative barracks, sheds for storing potatoes, a riding arena, a shooting gallery, and finally, the construction yard, a complex of several buildings to store building materials.⁸⁹

A camp constructed on the basis of this plan could have held some 50,000 inmates – again, the figure Himmler had mentioned a year before. But not even this population level was ever attained: as we shall see in the next chapter, there were never more than approximately 22,500 inmates in Majdanek at any one time.

Construction on the various compounds proceeded as follows:

Work on Compound I was begun in October 1941 by the first inmate transports to arrive in Majdanek, and was completed in early 1942. It was the site of two rows of 10 barracks each. Compounds II through V had 22 barracks each. Compound II was completed by early 1942, Compounds III and IV in spring and summer respectively, and Compound V in September 1942. In total, therefore, there were 108 barracks on these compounds by the last-mentioned date.⁹⁰

On Compound VI – which had not figured into the plan of July 1942 – barracks were built much later, between fall 1943 and early 1944, while the plans for Compounds VII and VIII were never implemented.⁹¹

Each compound was a separate administrative unit. Majdanek was the only camp structured in this way; no other National Socialist concentration camp

⁸⁸ A. Wiśniewska, *op. cit.* (note 85), p. 178.

⁸⁹ Marszałek, *op. cit.* (note 81), p. 22.

⁹⁰ See Document 4.

⁹¹ Regarding the genesis of the various compounds, see Marszałek, *op. cit.* (note 81), pp. 32ff.

had a comparable system of compounds. The SS officer in charge of a compound bore the title *Feldführer*, or compound leader; he was responsible for maintaining order, carrying out roll calls, and managing the compound office. As already mentioned, he was assisted by a “camp elder,” *i.e.*, a trusted inmate. The next administrative level down were the “block elders,” who were each responsible for one block and were in turn assisted by trusted inmates with lesser responsibilities (block leader, block secretary, *Kapos*).⁹²

A brief summary of the population of the various compounds follows.

Compound I

Initially, Compound I housed those Soviet POWs who, together with the Polish-Jewish POWs from the ‘Jewish Camp’ on Lipowa Street, carried out the first construction projects on the Lublin camp grounds. Civilian inmates were added later. As early as November 1941 an “infirmary” (hospital block) was set up there, which grew constantly and eventually took up all 10 barracks comprising the northern side of the compound; the southern row continued to be inhabited by inmates fit to work. In September 1943 the infirmary was transferred to Compound V and the male prisoners who were fit to work were moved to Compounds III and IV. Compound I was now reserved for female inmates; the Women’s Hospital, consisting at first of 6 and later of 11 barracks, also became established here.⁹³

At this point some remarks on the female inmates of the Lublin camp are in order. While Majdanek had originally been intended exclusively for men, the construction of a separate women’s camp was proposed in July 1942. The project was approved by Glücks. On October 29, 1942, Kammler wrote to Krüger:⁹⁴

“In the aforementioned letter, the Chief of Amtsgruppe D, SS-Brigadeführer and Major General of the Waffen-SS Glücks, has submitted to me the October 6, 1942, proposal of the commandant of the Lublin POW camp to construct a new women’s concentration camp on the grounds of the clothing manufacturing plant of the Waffen-SS in Lublin.

In view of the urgency of this matter, the appropriate construction office is to be instructed to work together with SS-Obersturmbannführer Koegel, commandant of the Lublin POW camp, to draw up the required construction proposal and to submit it without delay. The camp plan submitted together with the abovementioned request is enclosed herewith.”

The first female inmates had already arrived in Majdanek on October 1, in other words before the request to set up the Women’s Camp had even been formally made. At first they were housed on Compound V. As Kammler’s letter to Krüger shows, Koegel envisaged the clothing manufacturing plant on

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 38.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 40ff.

⁹⁴ WAPL, Central Construction Office, 95.

the former airfield as the location for the Women's Camp. 22 barracks were to be added to the camp beside the workshops, which amounts to a capacity of approximately 5,000 inmates. In November 1942, the women who had arrived in Majdanek the previous month were transferred to the grounds of the clothing manufacturing plant. It is typical of the chaos reigning in the Lublin camp that this decision was soon reversed again, in early January 1943. As of the 8th of that month, newly arrived transports of women (initially these inmates were mostly Polish political prisoners, later also Jewesses and Soviet nationals) were once again quartered on Compound V in Majdanek, so that now there were again two Women's Camps. In September of that year, the Women's Division of Majdanek was transferred to Compound I.

The total of 25 female guards were mostly brought in from the women's concentration camp Ravensbrück. Head guard among them was Elsa Ehrlich.⁹⁵

Compound II

Compound II was primarily populated with Jewish inmates. Later, a special "field hospital for war-disabled Soviet Russian ex-servicemen" was established there; these were Soviet soldiers who had gone over to the German side and then been crippled at the front. Himmler personally ordered the establishment of this field hospital on January 6, 1943. He decreed that the barracks were to be equipped like hospitals and only Russian doctors and orderlies should serve as care-givers. The humane treatment of the Russian war-disabled was to be highlighted appropriately in propaganda reports.⁹⁶

Compound III

At Compound III as well, a large proportion of the inmates were Jews. In spring 1942 the first "hostages" were also brought in. (As we have seen, the activities of the armed Polish Resistance against the occupation power resulted in the internment of civilians as well, even if it could not be proven that they had assisted the resistance movement. In many cases these hostages were released again after only a short time.)

The so-called 'Decrepit Block' (*Gammelblock*) was also set up on Compound III. 'Decrepits' or 'Muslims' were terms in camp jargon for sick inmates in the last stages of emaciation, for whom there was little hope of recovery. And finally, some barracks on this compound were set aside from time to time for inmates suffering from typhus.

⁹⁵ Zofia Murawska, "Obóz kobiecy" (The Women's Camp), in: T. Mencel, *op. cit.* (note 23), pp. 84-86.

⁹⁶ Henryka Telesz, "Lazaret dla inwalidów – byłych jeńców radzieckich" (The Field Hospital for Former Soviet Prisoners of War), in: T. Mencel, *op. cit.* (note 23), pp. 88-91.

Compound IV

Initially, Compound IV housed political prisoners and Soviet POWs. As of fall 1942 a special section there was set up to house hostages. This section was called the “Overflow Camp.”⁹⁷

Compound V

As mentioned before, Compound V served at first to house women (and children). After these had been transferred to Compound I in September 1943, a hospital for male patients was set up on Compound V with a final total of 22 barracks, including ones for surgery, tuberculosis patients, inmates suffering from infectious tuberculosis, and rehabilitation.

Initially, the command headquarters were in the city of Lublin, at 12 Ogrodowa Street in a house that had previously been under Church ownership. The camp guards also lived in Lublin at first. The plan of March 1942 did not yet provide for separate accommodations for the camp administration and staff on the Majdanek camp grounds. They were not built until the second half of 1942, southeast of Compound I. A total of 12 barracks housed the camp administration, while a separate block to the west of these provided 14 barracks for the guards, three for SS officers, SS NCOs, and SS men employed in the administration; one additional barrack was provided for the female guards.⁹⁸

All these buildings were constructed by inmates. Aside from the total of 280 buildings on the camp grounds, they also set up the sewer system and built the roads inside the camp complex. The first street connected the block housing the Administration with the road from Lublin to Zamość; the second ran from this same block to the inmate compounds, and the third from the inmate compounds to the Lublin-Zamość road. All in all, 4,500 meters of roads were built.⁹⁹

The Polish historian Anna Wiśniewska has examined the surviving documents to determine what percentage of the Majdanek inmates were employed in the construction and maintenance of the camp itself. In September 1942, 42% of the inmates were assigned to construction projects, while 18% served as cleaning staff, gardeners, cooks, laundry personnel etc. as part of camp maintenance. In September 1943, when new barracks were being built only on Compound VI, the proportion of inmate labor in construction had dropped to 18%, while all of 42% were now employed in maintenance work; in other words, the relationship had reversed. For March 1944, the figures were 10% and 65%(!), respectively.¹⁰⁰ 40% of the inmates worked for outside firms in

⁹⁷ Henryka Telesz, “Obóz dla zakładników” (Security Overflow Camp), in: T. Mencil, *op. cit.* (note 23), pp. 91f.

⁹⁸ Marszałek, *op. cit.* (note 81), pp. 59ff.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 79f.

¹⁰⁰ A. Wiśniewska, *op. cit.* (note 85), p. 186.

September 1942 and September 1943, but this figure had dropped to 25% by March 1944. Since one can assume that by far the most inmates were sent out for construction work in the beginning, these figures indicate that only about a third of all the man-hours of work performed in Majdanek were economically productive. In practice, therefore, the camp had become largely an end in and of itself. That was certainly not what Himmler had had in mind when he gave the go-ahead for the camp's construction in July 1941!

The most significant firms to profit from inmate labor were the fur and clothing manufacturers, DAW, and Eastern Industries, which the SS established only in March 1943. The clothing manufacturing plants produced clothing and shoes for the soldiers at the eastern front; DAW maintained the workshops of the Jewish Camp in Lublin, as well as facilities on the grounds of the former airfield; and Eastern Industries owned workshops on the former airfield where weapons were repaired. Further, their plants manufactured brushes, ammunition baskets, etc. Women had to contribute to this work, as did children.

These three firms were also represented on the Majdanek camp grounds. In 1943, almost half of all the barracks on Compound IV were put to economically productive use. On Compound VI, the DAW converted several barracks into cobblers' shops where worn-out shoes, shipped in from the front, were repaired.¹⁰¹

During the entire existence of the camp, Jewish laborers from various countries, particularly from Poland itself, played a decidedly important role. In spring 1943 Jewish laborers were transferred, for security and strategic reasons, from Warsaw to Majdanek and its satellite camps. On March 31, 1943, a representative of Eastern Industries wrote to the Central Construction Office of Lublin:¹⁰²

"As per the order of the Reichsführer-SS, those factories essential to armaments production which are located in the Warsaw ghetto and operate with Jewish labor shall be relocated without delay, for security reasons and in the interests of an increase in the utilization of Jewish labor. Relocation shall be to Poniatowa, Trawniki and Lublin, into buildings already extant."

We conclude with a few words about Majdanek's satellite camps.

Reports of their number vary, since the boundaries between a satellite camp and an 'outside unit' were fluid. The Polish historian Czesław Rajca postulates a total of "13 subcamps" of Majdanek.¹⁰³

In Puławy, Radom and Blizyn the inmates worked in DAW plants. In the city of Lublin, prisoners were put to work in the local DAW branch as well as in several smaller work details. The Heinkel Works were in Budyn, where

¹⁰¹ Marszałek, *op. cit.* (note 81), p. 48.

¹⁰² WAPL, Central Construction Office, 268, p. 1.

¹⁰³ Czesław Rajca, "Podbozy Majdanka" (The Satellite Camps of Majdanek), in: T. Mencil, *op. cit.* (note 23), pp. 379-398.

mostly Jewish inmates manufactured airplane parts. In Trawniki, which served jointly as labor camp and as training camp for SS-men, construction and excavation work needed to be done. In Piaski near Lublin, the inmates worked in a sawmill. And finally, in April 1944, the concentration camp Warsaw, which had been set up in May 1943, was subordinated to the Lublin camp. Primarily non-Polish prisoners were interned there, and put to work such as tearing down the ruins of houses on the territory of the destroyed Jewish ghetto and salvaging reusable building materials such as bricks.

Neither the inmates in the main camp nor those in the outside units would have hurried to complete their work. When the Polish sculptor Boniecki and his team of artists were put to the task of beautifying the camp, they created, among other things, a pillar with three eagles as well as a concrete lizard and a tortoise.¹⁰⁴ The eagles symbolized the idea of freedom and the lizard that of conspiracy and going underground, while the tortoise embodied the principle of 'work slowly and poorly'. No doubt the Majdanek inmates lived up to this principle wherever they possibly could.

At the time when Warsaw was subordinated to Majdanek, the latter camp was already approaching dissolution. The eastern front was drawing inexorably closer, and the evacuation was in full swing: one inmate transport after the other left for the west. On July 23, 1944, the arrival of the Red Army heralded the end.

The history of National Socialist policy for the Lublin region and the Majdanek camp is the story of a long sequence of ambitious projects, hardly any of which could be realized. The region surrounding Lublin was to be Germanized, an SS-city with 60,000 inhabitants was to be established; both plans remained wishful thinking. Other plans called for making this area a catch basin for European Jewry, but this concept also did not make it past the beginning stage. In Majdanek, 150,000 inmates were supposed to create a dynamic economic center which would supply the German wartime armies (and, after their victory, the German civilian industries) with an endless flow of products, but the hoped-for number of inmates was never even remotely approximated. The greatest part of the forced laborers' efforts went towards the consolidation and maintenance of the camp itself – a camp that ultimately became a giant complex of ruins and which cost a very great number of people their lives.

The reason for the high death toll claimed by this ugly runt at the outskirts of Lublin was not so much brutality and sadism (though no doubt there was some of this as well among the lower-ranking SS personnel and especially the *Kapos*) as the lack of planning (for example, the frequent change of commandants, which rendered a long-term and goal-oriented leadership policy in the camp impossible) as well as rivalries among the various authorities who, for example, kept postponing the camp's badly needed connection to the municipi-

¹⁰⁴ Marszałek, *op. cit.* (note 81), p. 40.

pal sewer system. And finally, the poor living conditions and thus the high mortality rate were also exacerbated by factors which one cannot blame on the camp administration and the Central Construction Office, such as the lack of transportation facilities resulting from the developments on the eastern front, which caused additional delays in bringing in the materials needed for building the sewer system.