

# SOBIBÓR: HOLOCAUST PROPAGANDA AND REALITY



**Jürgen H.P. Rieger, \* 11 May 1946, † 29 October 2009**

The lawyer Jürgen Rieger, one of the most brilliant and outspoken representatives of the national right wing in Germany, courageously and ably defended several revisionists in court (among them Thies Christophersen, Ernst Zündel, Germar Rudolf, Horst Mahler). As he would make no concessions to the Big Lie, he himself was prosecuted twice for revisionist heresy. On 29 October 2009 this remarkable man suddenly died from a stroke at age 63.

He will not be forgotten.

**CAVEAT:** The first edition of the present book appeared in 2010. Since that time, the authors have found a wealth of additional documents and testimonies. Most of them are discussed in the two-volume, 1396-page study of 2013 titled *The “Extermination Camps” of “Aktion Reinhardt”: An Analysis and Refutation of Factitious “Evidence,” Deceptions and Flawed Argumentation of the “Holocaust Controversies” Bloggers*, and authored by Carlo Mattogno, Jürgen Graf and Thomas Kues. It deals with all three “Aktion Reinhardt” camps (Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka). Readers interested in a more-thorough study of the present topic are advised to also consult this study, which can be downloaded as a PDF file free of charge at [www.HolocaustHandbooks.com](http://www.HolocaustHandbooks.com) (Volume 28). Most of the new insights presented in that voluminous study were not included in the present revised edition. However, we have included a research update of May 2018 as a Supplement in Chapter 13 starting on page 401.

**Jürgen Graf, Thomas Kues, Carlo Mattogno**

# **Sobibór**

**Holocaust Propaganda  
and Reality**

Dedicated to the Memory of Jürgen Rieger



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(Photo 13 in the Appendix); left: commemoration plaque (Photo 14);  
right: Sobibór Railway Station (Photo 3). Background: Section of a  
1933 map of the area around Sobibór (Document 1).

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## 1. Introduction

On 12 May 2009, John Demjanjuk, 89 years of age, born in Ukraine, and erstwhile citizen of the United States, was deported to Germany where he was immediately jailed at Stadelheim prison in Munich and presented with an arrest warrant charging him with “aiding and abetting murder in at least 29,000 cases.” Five years earlier, the U.S. authorities had stripped him of his U.S. citizenship.

The leftist German news magazine *Der Spiegel* described the background of the matter as follows:<sup>1</sup>

*“As a guard in the extermination camp at Sobibór in 1943, Demjanjuk is said to have aided the Nazis in the mass murder of thousands of Jews. [...] Several documents suggest that Demjanjuk belonged to a unit of some 5,000 foreign helpers – Balts, Ukrainians, ethnic Germans – trained by the National Socialists at the Trawniki training camp east of Lublin in the mass murders perpetrated in the occupied territories.”*

A central position in the indictment is occupied by an identity card according to which Demjanjuk, in 1943, was serving as a guard at the Sobibór Camp. As opposed to this, an expert opinion formed on the basis of a number of elements had concluded as early as 1987 that the identity card was a forgery.<sup>2</sup> Over the next few years the German media largely accepted this view and *Der Spiegel* stated clearly and succinctly in its edition of 2 August 1993:<sup>3</sup>

*“It [the document] had obviously been forged.”*

Even if the identity card were indeed authentic, it would merely attest to Demjanjuk’s *presence* in the camp but would not in the least prove that the Ukrainian had, in fact, participated in any murder, let alone in 29,000 such acts. In the article mentioned initially *Der Spiegel* noted:<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Georg Bönsch, Jan Friedmann, Cordula Meyer, “Ein ganz gewöhnlicher Handlanger,” in: *Der Spiegel*, No. 26/2009, 22 June 2009 ([www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-65794351.html](http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-65794351.html)).

<sup>2</sup> Dieter Lehner, *Du sollst nicht falsch Zeugnis geben*, Vowinckel Verlag, Berg/Starnberger See 1987.

<sup>3</sup> “Mörderische Augen,” in: *Der Spiegel*, No. 31/1993, 2 Aug. 1993 ([www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-13681024.html](http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-13681024.html)).

*“For the German judiciary the case against the alleged SS-guard is a first. For the first time the authorities are attempting to bring to trial a hand from the lowest echelon of the hierarchy, not merely for some instance of excessive cruelty, but because of his participation in ensuring the smooth operation of the machinery of murder.”*

Whereas the “Nazi perpetrators” had been indicted for certain concrete crimes in all previous trials, this was no longer the case for John Demjanjuk: the Ukrainian is to be sentenced for his sole presence as a guard in the Sobibór Camp at a time when, as the prosecution maintains, at least 29,000 people were murdered there! Concerning this monstrous perversion of justice the German judiciary provides us with the following justification:<sup>1</sup>

*“The arrest warrant states that the guard would not have had to participate in the mass murder. Like so many other men from Trawniki, he could have deserted.”*

By itself, the prosecution of an 89-year-old man for crimes which he allegedly committed at age 23 goes very much against the grain of our natural sense of justice and of European legal traditions, but the Demjanjuk case is further poisoned by the fact that the accused has already spent seven years in prison – five of them on death row – only to be declared innocent later on. We must remember that the U.S. authorities had extradited him to Israel in 1986. During his trial there, he was identified by a number of former Treblinka inmates as “Ivan the Terrible,” a Ukrainian whom these witnesses accused of having not only gassed a huge number of Jews with exhaust gases from the Diesel engine of a knocked-out Soviet tank, but also of having committed all kinds of mind-boggling atrocities.

In its verdict the Jerusalem court quoted the former Treblinka prisoner Pinchas Epstein, who had testified as follows:<sup>4</sup>

*“Sometimes he [Ivan] would come with a dagger, sometimes with a bayonet, and he would crack skulls, he would cut off ears. [...] I want to say, honorable court, that it was horrible to look at the corpses when they took them out of the cabins. People with crushed faces, people with stab wounds, pregnant women with stab wounds in their bellies, women with the fetuses hanging half out, young girls with stab wound on their breasts, with eyes gouged out. [...] He would stand and gaze upon the results, what he had done, the stab-*

<sup>4</sup> Criminal case No. 373/86, State of Israel vs. Ivan (John) Demjanjuk, Verdict, p. 182 f. Awkward language here and in the following quotes in the original.

*bing of the girls, the gouging of the eyes, the severing of the girls' breasts – he stood there and enjoyed the scene.[...] This Ivan was a monster from another planet.”*

The witness Yehiel Reichmann testified as follows:<sup>5</sup>

*“I want to tell you what took place next to the well with my friend Finkelstein. While I was still washing teeth together with him, with Finkelstein, this devil Ivan came with a drilling machine for drilling holes. And he rotated the drilling machine for making holes on Finkelstein's buttocks and said to him: if you scream I'll shoot you. He injured Finkelstein; he was bleeding, he suffered great pain, intense pain, but he was not permitted to scream, because Ivan had given him an order: If you scream, I'll shoot you! Ivan was a super-devil, a super-destroyer from Treblinka.”*

On the basis of these testimonies Demjanjuk was sentenced to death by hanging back in 1988. On appeal in 1993, however, he was acquitted and allowed to return to the USA because the witnesses “had been mistaken” (cf. Subchapter 11.3).

The identity card which is now taken to prove Demjanjuk's presence at the Sobibór Camp was in the hands of the Israeli authorities as early as 1986, but the Ukrainian was *never* indicted by the Israelis for any crimes committed at that camp.

Once the Demjanjuk trial had crashed in Israel, the German authorities apparently feared a similar flop. On the German radio service *Deutschlandfunk* a reporter asked the former minister of justice, Sabine Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger:<sup>6</sup>

*“There [in Israel], he [Demjanjuk] has been indicted and sentenced once before in the eighties for aiding and abetting the murder of more than 800,000 Jews at Treblinka. Later, however, the charges were dropped, the death sentence was rescinded. Is there a risk that there will be a repeat performance in Munich?”*

The former government minister replied:

*“I do not believe that what happened in Israel will now repeat itself in Munich. [...] Well now, I think, the possibilities that exist for demonstrating [his guilt] have now surely been examined by the prosecution very, very carefully and over many, many years.”*

Demjanjuk was formally charged two months after his extradition:<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186.

<sup>6</sup> *Deutschlandfunk*, 14 July 2009, [www.dradio.de/dlf/sendungen/interview\\_dlf/998673/](http://www.dradio.de/dlf/sendungen/interview_dlf/998673/).

<sup>7</sup> “Ermittler erheben Mordanklage gegen Demjanuk,” *Tagesspiegel*, 14 July 2009

*“The prosecution of Munich I has indicted the suspected NS-criminal John Demjanjuk on charges of aiding and abetting the murder of 27,900 Jews.”*

Thus the number of murders in which the Ukrainian is alleged to have participated had mysteriously diminished from 29,000 to 27,900, although in the period concerned, i.e. between May and July 2009, no document has surfaced which would in any way justify this revision – a truly disarming proof of the assertion that the German judiciary have examined the matter “very, very carefully and over many, many years.”

Faced with such a situation, *Der Spiegel* could not but note:<sup>1</sup>

*“NS-trials are laborious and delicate. Easily, the defendants appear to be pitiable and decrepit old men who are persecuted mercilessly.”*

Still, the Hamburg news magazine took the oncoming trial of John Demjanjuk to be a necessity by invoking the historian Norbert Frei and asserting:<sup>1</sup>

*“The Germans owe it to the victims and the survivors, but also to themselves, to prosecute Demjanjuk.”*

In other words, the old man *must be* sentenced – regardless of any legal aspects – because the Germans owe this to themselves!

In the last chapter of this analysis we shall discuss in detail the incredible perversions of justice committed by the German judiciary – in line with their American counterparts in earlier days – in the persecution of a defenseless old man. The main part of the present book is, however, devoted to the examination of the elements of proof regarding the alleged mass murders of Jews at Sobibór.

According to official historiography, this camp, together with Treblinka and Belżec, was one of the three “extermination camps”<sup>8</sup> in eastern Poland where more than one and a half million Jews are reported to have been killed by means of exhaust gases from combustion engines. In 2002, two of us (C. Mattogno and J. Graf) presented a thorough documentation on Treblinka,<sup>9</sup> whereas the Belżec Camp was dealt with by Carlo Mattogno two years later,<sup>10</sup> but until now no revisionist mono-

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([www.tagesspiegel.de/weltspiegel/Kriegsverbrechen-Mord-Konzentrationslager-John-Demjanjuk;art1117,2846684](http://www.tagesspiegel.de/weltspiegel/Kriegsverbrechen-Mord-Konzentrationslager-John-Demjanjuk;art1117,2846684)).

<sup>8</sup> The word *Vernichtungslager* (extermination camp) does not appear in any German document dating from WWII. It was coined by the Allies later on.

<sup>9</sup> Carlo Mattogno, Jürgen Graf, *Treblinka: Vernichtungslager oder Durchgangslager?*, Castle Hill Publishers, Hastings 2002; Engl.: *Treblinka: Extermination Camp or Transit Camp?*, Theses & Dissertation Press, Chicago 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Carlo Mattogno, *Belżec. Propaganda, Zeugenaussagen, archäologische Untersuchungen, historische Fakten*, Castle Hill Publishers, Hastings 2004; Engl.: *Belżec in*

graph has appeared on the subject of Sobibór. The present work aims at filling this gap.

To assist us in our endeavor, Carlo Mattogno and I managed to win the help of an extremely able researcher, the Swede Thomas Kues who had in the past written several most pertinent articles on this topic.<sup>11</sup>

Chapters 4 and 5 (except for Subchapters 4.2 and 5.3) the present book have been written in English by Thomas Kues. Carlo Mattogno is responsible for Chapter 3, 5.3. and 7 to 9, whereas I have contributed Chapters 2, 6 and 10 to 12 as well as Subchapter 4.2. The chapters and sections written by Carlo Mattogno and myself have been translated into English by Henry Gardner from the respective original languages (Italian and German).

Jürgen Graf  
30 November 2009

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*Propaganda, Testimonies, Archeological Research and History*, Theses & Dissertation Press, Chicago 2004.

<sup>11</sup> <https://codoh.com/library/authors/kues-thomas/>

## Measurement Conversions

Since all three authors are Europeans, they use metric units throughout the book. Since some U.S. readers might find it difficult to imagine lengths, areas, volumes and weights given in metric units, a conversion list of the most common units is given below:

### Mass

$$1 \text{ kg} = 2.205 \text{ pounds}$$

$$1 \text{ ton} = 1,000 \text{ kg} = 2,205 \text{ pounds}$$

### Length

$$1 \text{ mm} = 0.03937 \text{ inch}$$

$$1 \text{ cm} = 10 \text{ mm} = 0.3937 \text{ inch}$$

$$2.54 \text{ cm} = 1 \text{ inch}$$

$$30.48 \text{ cm} = 1 \text{ ft}$$

$$1 \text{ m} = 100 \text{ cm} = 1.094 \text{ yard}$$

$$1 \text{ km} = 1,000 \text{ m} = 0.6214 \text{ miles}$$

$$1.609 \text{ km} = 1 \text{ mile}$$

### Area

$$1 \text{ m}^2 = 10.76 \text{ sqft/ft}^2$$

$$1 \text{ hectar} = 100 \text{ m} \times 100 \text{ m} = 10,000 \text{ m}^2 = 2.471 \text{ acres}$$

$$1 \text{ km}^2 = 1,000 \text{ m} \times 1,000 \text{ m} = 1,000,000 \text{ m}^2 = 247.1 \text{ acres} = 0.3861 \text{ square miles}$$

### Volume

$$1 \text{ m}^3 = 1.308 \text{ cyd/yd}^3 = 35.31 \text{ cft/ft}^3$$

For more detailed conversions please refer to Internet websites like [convert-me.com](http://convert-me.com)

## 2. The Sobibór Camp and its Historiographic Representation

### 2.1. Sobibór as Described in the *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*

Under the heading “Sobibór,” the *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* has the following text:<sup>12</sup>

*“Extermination camp near the village and railway station of Sobibór, in the eastern part of the Lublin district in Poland, not far from the Chełm-Włodawa railway line. Established as part of the operation of Aktion Reinhard,<sup>[13]</sup> the camp was built in a sparsely populated, woody, and swampy area beginning in March 1942. Local inhabitants and a group of eighty Jews from nearby ghettos were employed to construct it; Obersturmführer Richard Thomalla,<sup>[14]</sup> a staff member of the SS construction office in Lublin, was in charge. In April 1942, SS-Obersturmführer Franz Stangl was appointed camp commandant and assumed responsibility for completion of the camp. In building Sobibór, the Germans drew on experience gained in the construction and operation of the Belżec extermination camp. The camp staff included 20 to 30 German SS men, most of whom had previously taken part in the euthanasia program, as had Stangl. In addition, 90 to 120 Ukrainians served in the camp. Most were Soviet prisoners of war who had been trained for the job at Trawniki, some were Volksdeutsche, Soviet nationals of German origin. The German staff filled most of the command and administrative positions, while the Ukrainian unit acted as a guards and security personnel, their*

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<sup>12</sup> Israel Gutman (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, Vol. 3-4, MacMillan, New York 1990, pp. 1373-1377.

<sup>13</sup> See Subchapter 8.2. about this campaign “Aktion Reinhard(t)”; the spelling in original documents and in the literature varies between Reinhard and Reinhardt. Editor’s remark.

<sup>14</sup> The higher quality German edition gives Thomalla’s rank as Hauptsturmführer; Israel Gutman, Eberhard Jäckel, Peter Longerich, Julius H. Schoeps (eds.), *Enzyklopädie des Holocaust. Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden*, Argon Verlag, Berlin 1993.

*function being, among other things, to quell any resistance offered by the Jews who were brought to the camp and to prevent their escaping. Jewish prisoners were employed as well, on various physical tasks.*

*The camp was in the form of a rectangle 1,312 by 1,969 feet (400 × 600 m) in area, surrounded by a barbed wire fence 9.8 feet (3 m) high, with tree branches intertwined in it to conceal the interior. There were three camp areas, each individually fenced in: the administration area, the reception area, and the extermination area. The administration area consisted of the Vorlager ('pre-camp'; the part of the camp closest to the railway station) and Camp I. The Vorlager included the railway platform, with space for twenty railway cars to be stationed, as well as the living quarters for the German and Ukrainian staff. Camp I, which was fenced off from the rest, contained housing for the Jewish prisoners and the workshops in which some of them were employed.*

*The reception area, also known as Camp II, was the place where Jews from the incoming transports were brought, to go through various procedures prior to their being killed in the gas chambers – removal of clothes, cutting of women's hair, and confiscation of possessions and valuables.*

*The extermination area, or Camp III, located in the northwestern part of the camp, was the most isolated. It contained the gas chambers, the burial trenches, and housing for the Jewish prisoners employed there. A path, 9.8 to 13 feet (3-4 m) wide and 492 feet (150 m) long, led from the reception area to the extermination area; on either side was a barbed-wire fence, and here too branches were intertwined to conceal the path from view. It was along this path that the victims were herded, naked, toward the gas chambers from the shed where they had undressed.*

*The gas chambers were inside a brick building. Each chamber was square, measured 172 square feet (16 sq m), and had a capacity of 160 to 80 persons.<sup>[15]</sup> The chambers were entered from a platform at the front of the brick building; each gas chamber also had another opening, through which the bodies were removed. The gas, carbon monoxide, was produced by a 200-horsepower engine in a nearby shed, from which it was piped into the gas chambers. The burial*

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<sup>15</sup> Note that the number of gas chambers is not given!

*trenches were nearby, each 164 to 197 feet (50-60 m) long, 33 to 49 feet (10-15 m) wide, and 16.4 to 23 feet (5-7 m) deep. From the railway platform to the burial trenches ran a narrow-gauge railway, used to transport persons too weak to make their way to the gas chambers on their own, as well as the bodies of those who had died en route to Sobibór.[...]*

*Several hundred able-bodied Jews were chosen from among the first few transports to form work teams. Some were employed in the workshops as tailors, cobblers, carpenters and so on, to serve the needs of the German and Ukrainian camp staff; all the other work assignments related to the processing of the victims along the route that led from the railway platform to the burial trenches. A total of about 1,000 prisoners, 150 of them women, were eventually put into these teams. One group, numbering several dozen, worked on the railway platform. Its job was to remove from the cars those who were incapable of getting off on their own; to remove the bodies of those who had died en route; and to clean out of the cars the dirt that had accumulated and the articles left behind. [...]*

*In the extermination area, two hundred to three hundred Jewish prisoners were kept, whose task was to remove the bodies of the murdered victims from the gas chambers, take them to the burial ground, and then clean up the chambers. A special team of prisoners, nicknamed 'the dentists,' was charged with extracting gold teeth from the mouths of the victims before their bodies were put into the trenches. Toward the end of 1942, in an effort to erase the traces of the mass killings, the bodies were exhumed and cremated; this task too was carried out by a special team of prisoners. [...]*

**Transports: First Stage.** *The procedure for the reception of incoming transports was based entirely on misleading the victims and concealing from them the fate that was in store for them. When a train arrived, the deportees on board were ordered to disembark and were told that they had arrived at a transit camp from which they would be sent to labor camps; before leaving for the labor camps, they were to take showers, and at the same time their clothes would be disinfected. Following this announcement, the men and women were separated (children were assigned to the women), on the pretext that the sexes had to be separated for their showers. The victims were ordered to take off their clothes and hand over any money or valuables in their possession; anyone who was caught trying to con-*

*ceal any item was shot. There followed the march to the gas chambers, which had been made to resemble shower rooms. Some 450 to 500 persons entered the chambers at a time. Everything was done on the run, accompanied by shouts, beatings, and warning shots. The victims were in a state of shock and did not grasp what was happening to them. When the gas chambers were jammed full of people, they were closed and sealed and the gas was piped in. Within twenty to thirty minutes, everyone inside was dead.*

*The bodies were then removed from the gas chambers and buried, after the gold teeth had been extracted from their mouths. The whole procedure, from the arrival of the train to the burial of the victims, took two to three hours. In the meantime the railway cars were cleaned up, the train departed, and another twenty cars, with their human load destined for extermination, entered the camp.*

*The first stage of the extermination operation went on for three months, from the beginning of May to the end of July 1942. The Jews who were brought to Sobibór during this period came from the Lublin district in Poland, and from Czechoslovakia, Germany, and Austria. The latter - those from countries outside Poland - had first been taken to ghettos in the Lublin district, and from there were deported to Sobibór. Some 10,000 Jews were brought from Germany and Austria, 6,000 from Theresienstadt, and many thousands from Slovakia; all in all, between 90,000 and 100,000 Jews were murdered at Sobibór in this first stage. The transports came to a temporary halt at the end of July, to enable the Lublin-Chełm railway line to undergo repairs.*

*In Sobibór's first three months of operation, the Germans found that the gas chambers, which had a total capacity of fewer than six hundred persons, created a bottleneck in the murder program. The halt in camp operations during August and September of 1942 was therefore used to construct three more gas chambers. These were put up next to the existing chambers under the same roof, with a hallway separating the old chambers from the new. With a new capacity of twelve hundred persons, the rate of extermination could be doubled. At the end of August 1942, Stangl, the commandant of Sobibór, was transferred to the Treblinka extermination camp, and his place was taken by SS-Obersturmführer Franz Reichleitner.*

**Second Stage.** *By the beginning of October 1942, work on the railway line was completed and the transports to Sobibór could be re-*

*newed. Until early November, the arriving transports brought more Jews from towns in the Lublin district; in the winter, following the closing of the Belżec camp, and in the spring and summer of 1943, Sobibór also received transports from Eastern Galicia. [...] From October 1942 to June 1943, a total of 70,000 to 80,000 Jews from Lublin and the Eastern Galicia districts were brought to Sobibór; the number of victims from the Generalgouvernement was between 145,000 and 155,000.*

*By the end of October 1942, 25,000 Jews from Slovakia had been killed at Sobibór. In the second half of February 1943, Heinrich Himmler paid a visit to the camp. While he was there, a special transport arrived with several hundred Jewish girls from a labor camp in the Lublin district. Himmler watched the entire extermination procedure. In March of that year, four transports from France brought 4,000 people, all of whom were killed. Nineteen transports arrived from the Netherlands between March and July 1943, carrying 35,000 Jews. The Dutch Jews came in regular passenger trains, were given a polite welcome, and asked to send letters to their relatives in the Netherlands to let them know they had arrived at a labor camp. After they had written these letters, they were given the same treatment that was meted out to all the other transports. Within a few hours they all perished.*

*The last transports to arrive at Sobibór came from the Vilna, Minsk, and Lida ghettos, in the Reichskommissariat Ostland; 14,000 Jews came on these transports in the second half of September 1943, following the liquidation of the ghettos in these cities. This brought the total number of Jews killed at Sobibór throughout the period of the camp's operation to approximately 250,000.*

*At the end of the summer of 1942, the burial trenches were opened and the process of burning the victims' bodies was begun. The corpses were put into huge piles and set on fire. The bodies of victims who arrived in subsequent transports were cremated immediately after gassing and were not buried.<sup>[16]</sup>*

**Resistance and Escape.** *On July 5, 1943, Himmler ordered the closing of Sobibór as an extermination camp and its transformation into a concentration camp. On a piece of land added to the camp area and designated as Camp IV, warehouses were built to store captured*

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<sup>16</sup> Earlier, it was said that the corpses were unearthed and burned "towards the end of 1942." Author's comment.

*Soviet ammunition, which the prospective camp prisoners were scheduled to handle.*

*Throughout the camp's existence, attempts were made to escape from it; some of them were successful. In retaliation for these attempts, the Germans executed many dozens of prisoners. During the summer of 1943, in order to prevent escapes, and also as a safety measure against attacks by partisans, the Germans planted mines along the entire circumference of the camp. In July and August of that year, an underground group was organized among the Jewish prisoners in Sobibór under the leadership of Leon Feldhendler, who had been chairman of the Judenrat (Jewish Council) in Żółkiew, a town in Eastern Galicia. The group's aim was to organize an uprising and a mass escape from the camp. In the second half of September, Soviet Jewish Prisoners of War were brought to the camp from Minsk; one of them was Lt. Aleksandr Pechersky. The underground recruited him into its ranks and put him in command, with Feldhendler as his deputy. The plan was for the prisoners to kill the SS men, acquire weapons, and fight their way out of the camp. The uprising broke out on October 14, 1943, and in its course eleven SS men and several Ukrainians were killed. Some three hundred prisoners managed to escape, but most of them were killed by their pursuers. Those who had not joined the escape for various reasons and had remained in the camp were all killed as well. At the end of the war, about fifty Jews survived of those who had escaped during the uprising.*

*In the wake of the uprising the Germans decided to liquidate Sobibór, abandoning the idea of turning it into a concentration camp. By the end of 1943 no trace was left; the camp area was plowed under, and crops were planted in its soil. A farm was put up in its place, and one of the Ukrainian camp guards settled there. In the summer of 1944 the area was liberated by the Soviet army and troops of the Polish People's Army (see *Gwardia Ludowa*). [...]"*

## 2.2. Sobibór as Described in Contemporary Documents

The description of the function and the history of the Sobibór Camp, which is found in the *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, relies exclusively on testimony and on trial sentences which, in turn, are based entirely on

the accounts of eye witnesses (and on confessions by defendants). Contemporary documents concerning Sobibór are rare and do not support the official descriptions in any way. The most important of these documents will be analyzed in later chapters. In the way of an introduction to this topic we will summarize them here.

2.2.1. Himmler's Directive of 5 July 1943 and Pohl's Reply  
On 5 July 1943, *Reichsführer*-SS Heinrich Himmler issued the following directive:<sup>17</sup>

*"The Sobibór transit camp, located in the Lublin district, is to be converted into a concentration camp. A dismantling unit for captured enemy munitions is to be set up in the concentration camp."*

The Holocaust literature regularly deforms the contents of this directive. Thus, in the text taken from the *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* quoted above, we read:

*"On 5 July 1943, Himmler ordered Sobibór to be closed as an extermination camp and transformed into a concentration camp."*

It is, however, an undeniable fact that Sobibór, in Himmler's directive, was not referred to as an "extermination camp" but as a "transit camp."

Ten days later, on 15 July 1943, the head of the *SS-Wirtschafts- und Verwaltungshauptamt* (Economic Administrative Main Office of the SS), *SS-Obergruppenführer* Oswald Pohl, in his answer to Himmler's note, suggested to abandon the idea of converting the "Sobibór transit camp in the Lublin district" into a concentration camp, as the dismantling of seized enemy munitions could also be carried out without such a measure.<sup>17</sup> Hence, Sobibór was regarded as a "transit camp" by Pohl as well. The transformation of Sobibór into a concentration camp, originally ordered by Himmler, never took place.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> NO-482. This document is shown as a reproduction in several books about Sobibór, e.g. Thomas (Toivi) Blatt, *Sobibór. The Forgotten Revolt*, HEP, Issaquah 1998 (unnumbered page in the attachment).

<sup>18</sup> In this context it is of interest that Otto Ohlendorf, in his postwar affidavit (PS-2620) and in the context of the so-called gas vans (not discussed here), used the term "transit camp" as well (translated below):

*"Im Fruehjahr 1942 wurde uns vom Chef der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD in Berlin Gaswagen geschickt. [...] Wir hatten auch diese Gaswagen in der Naehue der Durchgangslager [=transit camp] stationiert, in die die Opfer gebracht wurden. Den Opfern wurde gesagt, dass sie umgesiedelt werden wuerden und zu diesem Zwecke in die Wagen steigen muessten."* (Emph. added)

In the official English translation, this term was mistranslated with obvious intent (*Trial of War Criminals before the Nuernberg Military Tribunals*, Vol. IV, "The Einsatzgruppen Case," U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1950, pp. 206f.;

### 2.2.2. Documents about the Sobibór Uprising

Some surviving documents mention the uprising and the mass break-out of Jewish detainees on 14 October 1943. The commander of the security police in the Lublin district sent the following telex to the duty officer at Krakau on 15 October 1943:<sup>17</sup>

*“On 14.10.1943, around 17:00 hours, uprising of the Jews in the Sobibór SS-camp, 40 km north of Cholm. They overpowered the guard detail and fled in an unknown direction after an exchange of gunfire with the rest of the camp personnel. Nine SS-men murdered, 1 SS-man missing, 2 foreign guards shot. Some 300 Jews have escaped, the remainder were either shot or are now in the camp. Military police and Wehrmacht were notified immediately and took over camp security at around 1:00 hours. The area to the south and the southwest of Sobibór is being searched by police and Wehrmacht.”*

Five months after these events, on 17 March 1944, SS-*Untersturmführer* Benda wrote an account of the Sobibór uprising – which he wrongly dated 15 October 1943 – and of the ensuing search for the fugitives, stating that the rebels had “shot an SS officer as well as 10 SS NCOs.”<sup>17</sup>

### 2.2.3. The Höfle Radio Message

A very important document, published only in 2001, gives us precise information concerning the number of detainees deported to Sobibór up to the end of 1942.<sup>19</sup> It is a radio message of 11 January 1943 which was sent by SS-*Sturmbannführer* Höfle, a subordinate of Odilo Globocnik, Head of Police and SS in the district of Lublin. It was addressed to Globocnik’s deputy, SS-*Obersturmbannführer* Heim. The message was

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[http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military\\_Law/pdf/NT\\_war-criminals\\_Vol-IV.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military_Law/pdf/NT_war-criminals_Vol-IV.pdf)):

*“In the spring of 1942, we received gas vehicles from the Chief of the Security Police and the SD in Berlin. [...] We also had these gas vehicles stationed in the neighborhood of the transient camps into which the victims were brought. The victims were told that they would be resettled and had to climb into the vehicle for that purpose.”* (Emph. added)

Although the English terms could be confused (transient ↔ transit), the German terms cannot (*Durchgangslager* ↔ *vorübergehende Lager*), and it is unlikely that the translator chose the false, but uncommon term (transient) by accident instead of the common, correct one.

<sup>19</sup> Peter Witte, Stephen Tyas, “A New Document on the Deportation and Murder of the Jews during ‘Einsatz Reinhardt’ 1942,” in: *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, No. 3, Winter 2001.

intercepted and decoded by the British Secret Service, but the British could not interpret its contents. On the subject of Sobibór the text states that 101,370 persons had been moved to that camp up to the end of 1942. The message contains no indications regarding the fate of the deportees.<sup>20</sup>

#### 2.2.4. Provisional Summary

The few wartime documents which have come down to us prove that, at least through July of 1943, Sobibór counted officially as a “transit camp” and that 101,370 persons had been deported there by the end of 1942. There was an uprising at the camp on 14 October 1943 resulting in a mass escape of Jews. There is no documentary evidence for the mass murder of Jews or for the existence of homicidal gas chambers at Sobibór.

### 2.3. Sobibór in Official Historiography and “Holocaust” Literature

The uninitiated will no doubt assume that a great number of scientific studies have been made on the subject of Sobibór. This is not at all the case, though. The literature concerning this camp is sparse, and most of the existing books are novelistic if not fictional. The book list in the *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* has only four entries under the heading of “Sobibór.”<sup>21</sup> In the light of the enormity of the crimes ascribed to the camp by the official version of history, this is surprising, to say the least.

We will now give an overview of the way Sobibór has been described by orthodox historiography and by the “Holocaust” literature in the period since 1946.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> An extensive analysis of the Höfle radio message will be given in Subchapter 9.4.

<sup>21</sup> Yitzhak Arad, *Belzec, Sobibór, Treblinka* (1987); Miriam Novitch (ed.), *Sobibór: Martyrdom and Revolt* (1980); Richard Rashke, *Escape from Sobibor* (1982); Adalbert Rückerl, *NS-Vernichtungslager im Spiegel deutscher Strafprozesse* (1977).

<sup>22</sup> Because of our ignorance of Hebrew and Yiddish, we have not been able to consider works that have been published only in one of these languages.

### 2.3.1. N. Blumental's *Documents and Materials* (1946)

The first representation of the Sobibór Camp with any claim for scientific procedure dates from 1946. At that time a documentation was edited in Poland by N. Blumental, the title of which, translated into English, is "Documents and materials from the time of the German occupation of Poland." The first volume of this series contains 15 pages dealing with Sobibór: one and a half pages of introduction by the editor followed by the accounts of two former Sobibór detainees, Leon Feldhendler and Zelda Metz:<sup>23</sup>

*"The death camp in the district of Lublin was set up during the first half of 1942. The first transport probably arrived in April or May. It was a typical extermination camp – complete with gas chambers, open-air incineration of the corpses, etc. Furthermore, a specialty of this camp was animal husbandry and the raising of poultry by the camp commander; surviving detainees have stated that during the 'Aktionen' the birds would be excited so that their honking would drown out the people's screams.<sup>[24]</sup> There were workshops in the camp making use of human raw materials, e.g. women's hair for the manufacture of mattresses. The belongings of those murdered as well as the 'products' of the death camp were shipped to Germany. [...] On 14 October 1943 the detainees revolted, as they had done at Treblinka. [...] Due to the complete absence of any official documents it is difficult to say how many people perished in this camp. [...] The figures given by the witnesses range from one to 2.5 million. It is difficult to judge this matter, but if we take into account that the camp operated from April or May of 1942 through October of 1943, we may set the number of persons killed at Sobibór over the whole period of the existence of this camp at about one million."*

Both the succinct character of this description as well as the lack of any significant details are truly astonishing! The introduction says nothing about the number and the structure of the "gas chambers," nothing about the nature of the gas used, whereas L. Feldhendler and Z. Metz, the two witnesses quoted later, assert that the mass killings were done by means of chlorine! According to Z. Metz, the gas chamber had a collapsible floor, allowing the victims to drop right into railway cars locat-

<sup>23</sup> Nachman Blumental (ed.), *Dokumenty i Materiały z czasów okupacji niemieckiej w Polsce. Obozy*. Vol. 1, Łódź 1946, pp. 199-214, here quoted pp. 199f. of the introduction.

<sup>24</sup> The inventor of this silly story is Alexander Aronovitch Pechersky. Cf. Subchapter 4.2.

ed below (cf. Chapter 3, p. 71). Zelda Metz states that the number of victims was around two million (p. 210)!

As we can see, this first “scientific” description of the events at Sobibór differs from today’s version in two fundamental respects: the killing method used and the number of victims.

### 2.3.2. Report by the “Main Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland” (1947)

A ten-page account concerning the “Sobibór extermination camp” appeared in the Bulletin of the “Main Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland” in 1947. It is based on<sup>25</sup>

*“the statements by former Jewish detainees of the camp and by a number of Poles – mainly railway personnel, as well as on experts’ opinions and investigations carried out on site.”*

Concerning the rooms in which the mass murders were allegedly carried out the report by the commission stated (p. 52):

*“Unfortunately it has not been possible to gather any details on the subject of the chambers in which human beings were annihilated. The reason is that none of the former detainees of the camp, which had been questioned during the investigations, were directly present in the vicinity of the chambers; on the other hand, we must stress that workers employed in other parts of the camp did not have access to the part of the camp which comprised the chambers. The evidence collected leads to the conclusion that the chambers were located in a building above ground and consisted of wood on the inside. The outer walls of this building were made of cement. It probably contained 5 chambers, which could accommodate some 500 persons. They were killed by means of exhaust gases produced by an engine located next to the chambers and linked to them by means of pipes.”*

This version is still somewhat at variance with today’s description, according to which the “gassing building” initially contained three and later six rooms.

The number of victims for this camp was given as around 250,000, about a quarter of the figure of one million stated in the series *Docu-*

<sup>25</sup> Z. Łukaszkiwicz, Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Niemieckich w Polsce, “Obóz zagłady w Sobiborze,” (The extermination camp at Sobibór) in: *Biuletyn Główniej Komisji Badania Zbrodni Niemieckich w Polsce*, No. III, Posen 1947, p. 49.

*ments and Materials* a year earlier. This latter figure apparently seemed too unbelievable even to the commission.

In Section 5.1.1. we will consider the forensic investigations which revealed the presence of human remains in the camp and which described the alleged technology of incineration of corpses at Sobibór as presented in the report by the commission.

Once this book was published, Sobibór disappeared from view for a long time. Only two decades later did chroniclers and witnesses come to the fore once more.

### 2.3.3. Yuri Suhl (1967)

A collection of accounts describing the Jewish resistance against National Socialism, edited by Yuri Suhl, appeared in the USA in 1967.<sup>26</sup> It contains, among other items, Alexander Pechersky's account "Revolt in Sobibór." This account had been published in the USSR as early as 1946, but since it had been written in Yiddish, it had remained largely unnoticed. We will discuss the Pechersky report in Subchapter 4.2. in more detail.

### 2.3.4. Adam Rutkowski (1968)

It took 23 years after the end of the war for anything to be published about Sobibór by a historian. Although it was not a book, at least it was a 40-page article. Its author was Adam Rutkowski, a staff member of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw. The title can be translated as "The resistance movement in the Hitlerian execution camp of Sobibór."<sup>27</sup> Rutkowski's article exhibits most clearly certain fundamental contradictions and absurdities which reappear throughout the later literature about the camp. We will now discuss two of them.

#### 2.3.4.1. The knowledge of the "working Jews" about the fate of the other deportees

Rutkowski writes:

*"Initially not even those detainees who had been in Sobibór for some time knew what Sobibór really was due to the internal structure and organization of the camp (the complete isolation of the in-*

<sup>26</sup> Yuri Suhl, *They fought back. The Story of the Jewish Resistance in Nazi Europe*, Crown Publishers, New York 1967; MacGibbon & Kee, London 1968.

<sup>27</sup> Adam Rutkowski, "Ruch Oporu w Hitlerowskim Obozie Straceń Sobibór," in: *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, No. 65-66, Warsaw 1968.

*dividual camp sections, especially of section 3 where the gas chambers stood).*" (p. 5)

A few pages further on, we read:

*"The 'old' detainees who wanted to spare the new arrivals any overly violent discoveries did not tell them the whole truth about Sobibór, especially about section 3, hermetically closed-off, but introduced them only slowly, in a stepwise fashion, to what Sobibór was."* (p. 10)

In contrast to this we have Rutkowski's description of the arrival of new transports:

*"We must stress that the deportees, after having travelled for a long time (e.g. from Holland), were immediately made part of the efficient machinery of annihilation; this machinery would herd the victims from the first into the second barbed-wire cage, accompanied by deafening shouts on part of the SS men as well as by shooting, and would finally chase them into the gas chambers."* (p. 4)

Other authors report that the SS received the new arrivals in a soothing manner, with an SS man giving a deceptive speech describing Sobibór as a transit camp (cf. Section 2.3.19). Thus, the various reports differ radically even at this early stage. If Rutkowski's report were true, the small number of Jews singled out for work would obviously have realized from the very beginning what gruesome fate awaited the deportees.

Rutkowski (p. 3) accepts the figure of 250,000 victims set in 1947 by the "Main Commission for the Investigation of the German Crimes in Poland" as well as the fact that the camp was in operation for only 17 months. Hence he has over 15,000 deportees arriving at the camp each month – at least 500 per day. According to the official reports, the trains departing from Sobibór were always empty. How could any of the working Jews have any doubt concerning the fate that awaited their brethren in Section 3 of the camp?

Thus, Rutkowski's assertion that even long-time detainees were unaware of the real character of the camp is absurd, if we accept the standard account of the events in Section 3 of the camp. The story about "the 'old' detainees who wanted to spare the new arrivals any overly violent discoveries" and thus "did not tell them the whole truth about Sobibór," introducing them "only slowly, in a stepwise fashion, to what Sobibór was," reads like a bad joke.

#### 2.3.4.2. Details of the events in Camp III

On the subject of Section 3 Rutkowski writes on p. 6:

*“All detainees of this section were murdered without exception.”*

Three pages further on we learn:

*“Even in section 3, on the threshold of the gas chamber, so to speak, there was resistance. [...] In the winter of 1942/43 a group of naked women rebelled and refused to enter the gas chambers, even though the SS men and the guards beat them with sticks and poles. Half of them were shot in front of the building with the gas chambers. One time the victims succeeded in lifting the chamber door from its hinges – probably because of a defective gas pipe. The naked people ran all over section 3, which, in fact, was nothing but a large cage made of barbed wire. The SS men shot them with their submachine guns; Erich Bauer was one of them.”* (p. 9)

Esther Raab is named as the source for this. She was a witness for the prosecution at two trials in 1950 (Berlin and Frankfurt-upon-Main; cf. Subchapters 6.2.f.). How could she have known? She could not have learned anything from the detainees in Section 3 because these people, as we know, “were murdered without exception,” and she could not have seen it with her own eyes because Section 3, after all, was “hermetically closed off.”

One of the most revealing passages of this article is the following:

*“A special place in the history of the camp and in the memories of the prisoners is occupied by the project of a mass escape in the summer of 1943, which became known as the Dutch plan or the plan of a Dutch revolt. Over the years this event, as well as its instigator, have assumed fantastic, even legendary traits. Some detainees and some historians who follow them [the statements of those detainees] state mistakenly that the organizer was a captain of the Dutch navy (the Dutch navy or the Dutch merchant fleet).”* (p. 21)

Then Rutkowski tells us in a footnote:

*“Dr. L. de Yong [recte: Jong], a well-known Dutch historian of the Hitler-German occupation, who heads the Amsterdam Rijksinstituut voor Oorlogsdokumentatie [Imperial Institute for War Documentation], states in a letter to the Jewish Historical Institute: ‘at that time there was no Jewish naval officer.’”* (p. 22)

So the story of the “Dutch captain” at Sobibór was a legend, cooked up in the rumor department of the camp. Rutkowski’s article abounds with

such legends, probably without the author realizing this. The same goes for the whole orthodox historiography about Sobibór.

### 2.3.5. Stanisław Szmajzner (1968)

Stanisław Szmajzner, a Polish Jew and former detainee at Sobibór, emigrated to Brazil in 1947 and was a witness for the prosecution in the extradition procedures against the former SS men Franz Stangl and Gustav Wagner (cf. Subchapter 6.7.). He therefore played an important role in the drama of Sobibór, and we have every reason to take a close look at a book he published in 1968 under the title *Inferno em Sobibór*<sup>28</sup> (“Hell in Sobibór”), even though it exists only in Portuguese and was never fully translated into another language.<sup>29</sup> It is easy to understand why it never appeared elsewhere: Szmajzner’s description of the camp is so different from the official picture and contains so many embarrassing passages that even those editors who normally deal with such matters knew better than to make the book known beyond the reach of the Portuguese language.

According to his own indications Szmajzner was deported from Opeln in Upper Silesia to Sobibór in May of 1942 and worked there as a goldsmith, making jewelry for the “Szarfuehrer” (Szmajzner’s spelling) and other SS personnel. For a long time he did not know what was going on in Camp III, but one day he received the following message from his friend Abrão (Abraham) who worked in that section:

*“Dear brother. I asked you to recite the Kaddish not only for your parents but for everyone. You should know that, of all the Jews passing through camp 1 and moving on into camp 2, hardly anyone is alive today. Out of all the transports that have arrived so far, only a small group still exists in order to do the daily tasks; by pure chance, I belong to this group.*

*Once these thousands of Jews have passed through the gate which you spoke of, they cross a long corridor and enter camp 2. At that point their few remaining belongings are taken away, they must undress completely, and they are led to a large barrack under the pre-*

<sup>28</sup> Stanisław Szmajzner, *Inferno em Sobibór. A tragédia de um adolescente judeu*, Edições Bloch, Rio de Janeiro 1968.

<sup>29</sup> On the Internet page [www.holocaustresearchproject.org/ar/sobibor/smajzner.html](http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/ar/sobibor/smajzner.html) is a partial translation into English which seems to have been prepared on the basis of a Polish text. No source is given. Possibly Szmajzner’s book, published in Portuguese, was based on a Polish manuscript.

*text of having to take a bath. Hundreds of people enter this place at the same time.*

*Once the barrack is full, the door is closed and then hermetically sealed. Then a large Diesel engine is started up; its exhaust pipe passes through a hole in a wall, so that the exhaust gases go inside until all of them have suffocated.”* (p. 152f)

A Diesel engine as the murder weapon has been accepted by official historiography for the Belżec and Treblinka Camps,<sup>30</sup> but not for Sobibór. In this case most of the witnesses prefer not to specify an engine type, whereas the late U.S. political scientist Raul Hilberg expressly assigned a gasoline engine to this camp.<sup>31</sup> U.S. revisionist Friedrich P. Berg has shown in a detailed study that Diesel exhaust gases are most unsuitable for the mass murder of people in view of their high oxygen and low carbon monoxide content. Gasoline engines would be far more efficient.<sup>32</sup>

According to Abrão, Szmajzner’s confidant, the Diesel engine was later abandoned and replaced by Zyklon B (p. 190f). As far as we know and apart from Szmajzner, the use of this pesticide for mass killings at Sobibór has only been claimed by a certain Joseph Tennenbaum.<sup>33</sup>

Among the nonsense which Szmajzner asks his readers to believe we have the following stories:

- Franz was an eighteen-year-old Jew who used to live in the Oppeln ghetto and had been a “good boy,” but “once the Nazis made him commander of the Jews in Camp III, his personality changed radically.” He eventually went so far as to believe that he was “a real German, even a staunch defender of Nazism. He believed that the Jewish race had to be eradicated and his visible paranoia was such that he executed his tasks with a degree of sadism not even attained by the Germans.” (p. 192)
- On certain days up to 8,000 Jews were killed at Sobibór; the total number of victims reached nearly two million (p. 270).

<sup>30</sup> I. Gutman et al., *op. cit.* (note 14), p. 176 (Belzec), p. 1428 (Treblinka).

<sup>31</sup> Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 3rd ed., Yale University Press, New Haven/London 2003, p. 936.

<sup>32</sup> Friedrich P. Berg, “Diesel Gas Chambers – Ideal for Torture, Absurd for Murder,” in: Germar Rudolf (ed.), *Dissecting the Holocaust*, 2nd ed., Theses & Dissertation Press, Chicago 2003, pp. 435-469.

<sup>33</sup> Joseph Tennenbaum, *In Search of a Lost People. The Old and the New Poland*, The Beechhurst Press, 1948, p. 285, quoted after Paul Grubach (cf. section 2.4).

- In the fall of 1942 a “Walt-Kommando” (Szmajzner’s spelling) was created; its task was to fell trees and chop wood because with “the oven burning the whole time, it required gigantic amounts of fuel” (p. 207). The members of this “Walt-Kommando” had to perform back-breaking work, but their daily food ration consisted only of a piece of bread, “for the Germans felt that they were strong enough to carry out this momentous work without proper food” (p. 231f).
- The German Jews who had been deported to Sobibór, while having “suffered terribly under Nazism, still believed in the Führer and his gang” (p. 230). Therefore, “they attempted most diligently to work together with the monsters” (p. 231).

Such absurdities notwithstanding, Szmajzner’s book contains a few credible passages, such as the following:

*“I had become, by the way, a hardened consumer of vodka. [...] I had no trouble getting my bottle, and be it through the dangerous barbed-wire fence. I must admit to the reader that, at Sobibór, I drank enough for the rest of my life.”* (p. 222)

If there is one passage in Szmajzner’s book of which we believe every word, it is this one!

### 2.3.6. Adalbert Rückerl (1977)

In 1977 Adalbert Rückerl, long-time head of the German Central Agency for the prosecution of Nazi crimes at Ludwigsburg, Germany, published a book entitled *NS-Vernichtungslager im Spiegel deutscher Strafprozesse*<sup>34</sup> (NS crimes in the light of German criminal proceedings), in which he documents the trials in Germany against former members of the camp personnel at Bełżec, Sobibór, Treblinka and Chełmno. In Subchapter 6.4. devoted to the Hagen trial of 1965/66 we will refer to this book on many occasions (cf. Subchapter 6.4).

### 2.3.7. E.A. Cohen (1979)

In 1979 the Dutch Jewish physician Elie A. Cohen, M.D., who had been interned at Auschwitz and Mauthausen during the war, published a book in Holland entitled *De negentien treinen naar Sobibór*<sup>35</sup> (The nineteen trains to Sobibór). Aside from extensive psychological consid-

<sup>34</sup> Adalbert Rückerl, *NS-Vernichtungslager im Spiegel deutscher Strafprozesse*, dtv, Frankfurt a. M. 1977.

<sup>35</sup> Dr. E. A. Cohen, *De Negentien Treinen naar Sobibór*, B. V. Uitgeversmaatschappij Elsevier Boekerij, Amsterdam 1979.

erations, the work gives us a summary of the orthodox version of the fate of the Jews during the Second World War as well as a résumé of the official depiction of Sobibór, which Cohen had gathered from the literature about the camp – extremely sparse at the time – and from the files of the German trials.

### 2.3.8. Miriam Novitch (1980)

With a certain Miriam Novitch acting as editor, a collection of accounts entitled *Sobibór. Martyrdom and Revolt*<sup>36</sup> appeared in 1980. It consists of an introduction and of uncommented statements by 25 former Sobibór detainees. The year in which these statements were recorded is given only in a few cases. Most of the accounts are surprisingly brief, and some amount to little more than one or two pages. With its 24 pages, the last account, written by Moshe Bahir, is an exception (pp. 139 – 163). The credibility of this key witness can be judged by the following passage:

*“In the month of February, 1943, Himmler visited Sobibór a second time. [...] Two days after the visit I heard a conversation between Beckmann and Bredov. One said to the other that the visit was designed to mark the completion of the first million Jews destroyed at Sobibór.”* (p. 155f)

As we have already mentioned, up to the end of 1942 exactly 101,370 Jews had been deported to Sobibór – but *deported* is not synonymous for *annihilated*.

If we follow Bahir, the deadly gases were fed into the gas chamber by means of the pipe work of a shower; the chamber had a collapsible floor, which was opened after each gassing so that the corpses could fall into the cars waiting below (cf. Chapter 3).

The account given by the witness Hella Felenbaum-Weiss is also in blatant disagreement with the official version of Sobibór:

*“One day, a convoy brought to the camp prisoners in striped pyjamas. They were extremely thin, and their heads were shaved; women and men looked alike and they could hardly walk. Rumors spread that these people, about 300 of them, came from Majdanek where the gas chambers were out of order. When they alighted from the train, they literally collapsed. SS Frenzel met them and poured chlo-*

<sup>36</sup> Miriam Novitch (ed.), *Sobibór. Martyrdom and Revolt. Documents and Testimonies*, Holocaust Library, New York 1980.

*ride on their heads, as though they were already dead. The arrival of another convoy distressed me in the same way. It was thought to come from Lvov, but nobody knew for sure. Prisoners were sobbing and told us a dreadful tale: they had been gassed on the way with chlorine, but some survived. The bodies of the dead were green and their skin had peeled off.”* (p. 50)

Thus, the victims were not gassed in gas chambers but gassed along the way before they ever arrived, and it was not done by means of exhaust gases but with chlorine! As we have seen, this murder tool was also mentioned in the testimonies by Leon Feldhendler and Zelda Metz immediately after the war. The origin of this version of the gassing myth becomes clear when we read the sentence “SS man Frenzel went towards them and poured chlorine over their heads as if they were already dead”: The corpses of dead detainees were indeed treated with chloride of lime (not: “chlorine”) before they were buried in the mass graves to prevent the spread of diseases. This, by the way, has been confirmed by the “Main Commission for the Investigation of the German Crimes in Poland” in their report on Sobibór.<sup>37</sup>

The fact that the former Sobibór detainees contradict one another in crucial respects does not seem to perturb Miriam Novitch in the least. We will give an evocative example: Several witnesses have said that, before they had reached Sobibór, the Polish inhabitants had warned them of the dire fate awaiting them. Itzak Lichtman:

*“We walked from Żolkiewka to Krasnystaw station. Everyone could see that we were Jews [...]. Many children followed us, and Poles said as we passed, ‘Hey, Żydzi, idziecie na spalenie’ (Jews, you are going to burn).”* (p. 81)

Aizik Rottenberg:

*“Włodawa was about eight kilometers from Sobibór. Polish peasants who went to market were saying, ‘Jews, young and old, are being burned in Sobibór.’”* (p. 103)

Yehuda Lerner:

*“On the way to Sobibór, the train stopped in Chelm. A Pole was moving from car to car noting the numbers [of those inside]. We asked him where we were going. He answered: ‘To Sobibór, where prisoners are burned.’”* (p. 112)

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<sup>37</sup> Z. Łukaszkiwicz, *op. cit.* (note 25), p. 55.

Hence, while the Poles in the area are said to have known about the annihilation of the Jews at Sobibór, this was apparently not the case for the detainees in the camp itself – at least if we are to believe the witness Hershel Zukerman. He stated that the gas chambers were so well camouflaged that he believed for ten weeks that the people who had arrived together with him were in a labor camp. It was only by accident that he had learned of a mass extermination going on in Camp III (p. 107; cf. Chapter 4).

We can appreciate the scientific level of this book by the horror stories told by Miriam Novitch's witnesses, such as the following:

Ber Freiberg:

*"Then the Nazis found new entertainment: they sewed up the lower part of the prisoners' trousers and put in rats. The victims were to stand quiet; if one of them moved, he was beaten to death."* (p. 75)

Eda Lichtman:

*"Shaul Stark looked after geese; he fed them and weighed them every day. Once, a goose became ill and died. Frenzel, Bredov, Wagner and Weiss whipped Stark to death. The man's last words were: 'Avenge me, comrades, avenge me.'"* (p. 57)

Moshe Bahir:

*"The first one of them [the camp SS] whom I encountered when I came to the camp was Oberscharführer Gustav Wagner. [...] He would snatch babies from their mothers' arms and tear them to pieces in his hands."* (p. 149)

*"Sometimes Grot would have himself a joke; he would seize a Jew, give him a bottle of wine and a sausage weighing at least a kilo and order him to devour it in a few minutes. When the 'lucky' man succeeded in carrying out this order and staggered from drunkenness, Grot would order him to open his mouth wide and would urinate into his mouth."* (p. 150f.)

*"Oberscharführer Paul Bredov, aged forty, a Berliner, was a human beast in the full sense of the word. His direct assignment was to be in charge of the Lazarett [infirmary], but he had additional jobs in the camp. His beloved hobby was target-shooting. He had a daily 'quota' of shooting and killing fifty Jews, all with his automatic pistol which was never separated from him even for a minute throughout the day."* (p. 153)

In view of the fact that the *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* has accepted this "documentation" as one of only four titles recommended on the

subject of Sobibór, one wonders about the quality of other books not recommended by the *Encyclopedia* authors...

### 2.3.9. Richard Rashke (1982)

The American journalist Richard L. Rashke published a book entitled *Escape from Sobibor*<sup>38</sup> in 1982. He had visited a number of former Sobibór detainees – among them T. Blatt, S. Szmajzner and A. Pechersky – in their homes and interviewed them. The book is a rendition of these interviews – partly in direct speech, partly otherwise. As most of these detainees have made their own statements about their experiences at Sobibór, we see no reason why we should discuss this book in any detail and will merely quote a passage from the book written by Rashke himself:<sup>39</sup>

*“I hated Poland. I couldn’t understand a people who killed and betrayed Jews, who plundered and robbed them. I found it difficult to make distinctions between good Poles and bad ones, between peacetime and wartime, between heroism and the desire to survive, even if that meant selling Jews to the Gestapo for sugar and security. I felt hatred even for that Polish woman living in what was once a Jewish ghetto. And the Jewish Poles were not my people.”*

This suffices to prove that this author of yet another of the four books on Sobibór recommended by the *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* has a strong emotional bias.

### 2.3.10. E. Kogon, H. Langbein, A. Rückerl *et al.* (1983)

Edited by Eugen Kogon, Hermann Langbein, Adalbert Rückerl *et al.*, a collective volume entitled *Nationalsozialistische Massentötungen durch Giftgas* (National Socialist mass killings by means of poison gas) was published in Germany in 1983 and has since been considered the classic book of “Holocaust” literature.<sup>40</sup> In 1993 an English-language edition was published under the title *Nazi Mass Murder: A Documentary History of the Use of Poison Gas*.<sup>41</sup> Below we will quote mainly from this English edition. In the book’s introduction the editors castigate those

<sup>38</sup> Richard L. Rashke, *Escape from Sobibor*, Houghton Mifflin, 1982.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 2nd ed., University of Illinois Press, Urbana/Chicago 1995, p. 357.

<sup>40</sup> Eugen Kogon, Hermann Langbein, Adalbert Rückerl *et al.* (eds.), *Nationalsozialistische Massentötungen durch Giftgas*, S. Fischer, Frankfurt upon Main 1983.

<sup>41</sup> Eugen Kogon, Hermann Langbein, Adalbert Rückerl *et al.* (eds.), *Nazi Mass Murder: A Documentary History of the Use of Poison Gas*, Yale University Press, New Haven 1993.

who “desire to defend the Nazi system” by denying “the killing of millions of victims by gas” while being careful not to mention any such authors or titles. In order to fight such tendencies efficiently and to contain them, the authors will “set down, in a precise and indisputable manner, the historical truth about the massacres perpetrated by means of poison gas.”

In view of such an ambitious endeavor one should expect that the authors of the individual sections would take great care when formulating their theses, but this is not the case at all. In the section entitled “the construction of the Sobibór annihilation camp” we read, in fact:

*“The first gas chambers in Sobibór were housed in a brick building with concrete foundations, in the northwestern part of the camp. Inside were three gas chambers; each measured four by four meters and could hold 150 to two hundred people at a time.”* (p. 112)

Hence it was possible to press together in each chamber nine or even twelve persons per square meter. While the former figure still appears vaguely possible, the latter is not. Ten pages further on we have SS-Oberscharführer Kurt Bolender stating at one of his interrogations (p. 122):

*“I would estimate that it took forty to fifty people to fill a chamber.”*

If that was the case, what is the basis for the figure of 150 to 200 persons per chamber given by the author?

Another eleven pages on, we encounter the following passage:

*“The new building [i.e. the larger one, built in September of 1942] had six gas chambers, three on each side. Its layout was similar to that followed in Belžec and Treblinka, where the entrances to the gas chambers branched off from a central passage. The new rooms here were not larger than the old ones – that is, four by four meters – but the extermination capacity was increased to twelve hundred or thirteen hundred people.”* (p. 133)

This means that in the gas chambers more than 13 persons could be squeezed onto one square meter! There is no witness statement to substantiate this ridiculous assertion.

How this collective volume deals with historical sources is illustrated by the following sentence:

*“On 5 July 1943, shortly before the end of the Jewish transports from Holland, Himmler ordered the Sobibór extermination camp to be transformed into a concentration camp [KZ] for the storage and*

*dismantling of captured enemy munitions.*” (German edition, p. 191)<sup>42</sup>

Actually, Himmler had spoken about a transit camp in his directive and not about an extermination camp (cf. Section 2.2.1). In the section “The Liquidation of the Camps” we read:

*“The terrain of the former extermination centers was plowed up, trees were planted, and peaceful-looking farmsteads constructed. A number of Ukrainians from the camp commandos settled there. No traces whatsoever were to remain as evidence of the atrocities committed in Belżec, Sobibór, and Treblinka, to which, by a conservative estimate, about 1,500,000 human beings had fallen victim.”* (p. 137)

It is obvious that it would never have been possible to obliterate the traces of the burial, the excavation, and the open-air incineration of one and a half million corpses by the primitive plowing methods described above. The editors and the authors of this collective volume never even thought of requesting a forensic investigation of the crime site. They were happy with the accounts supplied by the witnesses, which they “corrected” if necessary, as we have seen in connection with the capacity of the gas chambers: In spite of the fact that the only witness quoted in this respect, Kurt Bolender, stated that the capacity was “40 to 50 persons” per chamber, the Sobibór chapters of the book twice give significantly higher capacities, which are not substantiated by witness statements.

Only the very naïve will accept the assertion in the introduction to the book, namely that the authors have “set down, in a precise and indisputable manner, the historical truth about the massacres perpetrated by means of poison gas.”

### 2.3.11. Yitzhak Arad (1987)

In 1987, the Israeli historian Yitzhak Arad published a book entitled *Belżec, Sobibór, Treblinka. The Operation Reinhard Death Camps*,<sup>43</sup> which is still regarded as a standard in this field. As has been shown in

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<sup>42</sup> In the English edition (p. 137) we read: “Himmler declared that Sobibór was to be converted into a concentration camp.” However, since apparently no revisions were made from the German original in this chapter of the book, we find it likely that the omission of the word “Vernichtungslager” (extermination camp) in the English edition is due to the translator.

<sup>43</sup> Yitzhak Arad, *Belżec. Sobibór, Treblinka. The Operation Reinhard Death Camps*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington/Indianapolis 1987.

a previous study,<sup>44</sup> Arad brazenly falsified a source in connection with his treatment of the Treblinka Camp: He quoted a report from the underground resistance movement in the Warsaw ghetto dating from November of 1942, which described the extermination of the Polish Jews in “steam chambers” but replaced the embarrassing word “steam chambers” quite unabashedly by the term “gas chambers” (pp. 354f). In the case of Sobibór Arad does not use the device of outright falsification. He limits himself to handling witness statements selectively, carefully excluding all passages which disagree with the official version of Sobibór, such as those which describe the killing medium as having been chlorine or a black fluid, or those assigning a collapsible floor to the gas chambers (cf. Chapter 3). This latter contraption, which allowed the corpses of those murdered to drop right down into a cellar, was mentioned in 1944 by the witness Dov Freiberg, a.k.a. Ber Freiberg (cf. Chapter 3, p. 69.). Arad, while quoting Freiberg on three occasions (pp. 75, 128, 129), does not mention this uncomfortable fact, quite obviously because it would immediately discredit Freiberg as a witness in the eyes of any critical reader.

If we follow Arad, “at least 90,000 to 100,000 Jews were murdered” at Sobibór up to the end of July, 1942. (We remind the reader that according to the Höfle radio message, which Arad did not yet know, a total of 101,370 persons had been deported to Sobibór up to 31 December 1942). Still, the SS felt that the capacity of the old gassing building with its three chambers, each 4 meters square, “could not cope with the tasks imposed on this camp,” so that “during the two-month lull in extermination activities in autumn of 1942 [sic], the old gas chambers were partially dismantled and the three additional gas chambers were built.” (p. 123)

We are not told what we are to understand by the “three gas chambers [...] 4 × 4 meters” being “partially dismantled.” Arad goes on:

*“The new six-room gas chamber building had a corridor that ran through its center and three rooms on either side. The entrance to each gas chamber was from the corridor. The three gas chambers were the same size as the existing ones, 4 × 4 meters. The killing capacity of the gas chambers was increased to nearly 1,300 people simultaneously.”* (p. 123)

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<sup>44</sup> C. Mattogno, J. Graf, *op. cit.* (note 9, Engl. ed.), pp. 62f.

Apparently, it was not “the old gas chambers” that were “partially dismantled” but the building in which they were housed. The statement that the six gas chambers, each with a floor area of 16 square meters, could now hold “nearly 1,300 people simultaneously” signifies that 13 persons would have had to stand on one square meter – an impossible thing to achieve, which we have already noted in our discussion of the collective volume *Nationalsozialistische Massentötungen durch Giftgas*. Just as the collective volume, Arad has no source for this assertion.

We should add that ten years before Arad’s book appeared, Adalbert Ruckerl, in the documentation *Nationalsozialistische Massentötungen durch Giftgas*, had assigned to the “six cells” of the new “gas-chamber building” a total capacity of “about 480” or 80 persons per “cell.”<sup>45</sup> This would have amounted to 5 persons per square meter, a figure which is physically possible.

Although it is obvious that Arad cannot present any documentary or forensic evidence for the alleged mass killings at Sobibór, he has witness statements such as the following:

*“In the winter of 1942/43 and in the spring and summer of 1943, transports arrived in Sobibór with Jews from the Lvov district. In some of the transports the Jews were naked. They were forced to undress before entering the freight cars, to make it more difficult for them to escape from the train. [...] In her testimony, Ada Lichtman told of a transport that arrived from Lvov in the winter; nude corpses were removed from the closed freight cars. The prisoner platform workers said that the corpses were frozen and stuck to one another, and when they were laid on the trolley, they disintegrated, and parts of them fell off. These people had had a long voyage [sic] and their corpses crumbled.”*

Normally frozen corpses do not crumble, which means that the “prisoner platform workers” related something that they could not have seen and hence never did see.

We will not go into Arad’s statistics on the Jews that were deported to Sobibór from various countries, because this question will be dealt with in the discussion of the book by Jules Schelvis. Suffice it to say that Arad gives a figure of 145,000 to 165,000 (p. 390f.) for the Jews deported to Sobibór from the General Government (Polish areas occupied but not annexed by the Germans during the war). Actually, the

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<sup>45</sup> A. Ruckerl, *op. cit.* (note 34), p. 173.

maximum was about 54,000 (cf. Section 2.3.19.), which means that Arad's figure is too high by a factor of three.

To put it mildly, Arad's book does not measure up in any way to a "standard" on the subject.

### 2.3.12. Witold Zbigniew Sulimierski (1993)

By 1993, i.e. half a century after the closure of Sobibór, there was still no Polish monograph on this camp. To make up for this, a man by the name of Witold Zbigniew Sulimierski published a brochure during that year, the title of which can be rendered in English as "Sobibór. A Hitlerian Death Camp."<sup>46</sup> This booklet contains neither references nor a bibliography and is nothing but a summary of the usual unproven assertions concerning the camp.

On the subject of the murder weapon, i.e. the type of engine used at Sobibór, Sulimierski is one of the rare authors to opt for a Diesel engine.<sup>47</sup> He writes:

*"The victims were killed by means of exhaust gases, which were fed into the cabins from a separate annex. This annex housed the 8-cylinder Diesel engine of an armored vehicle which K. Frenzl had brought from Lwów. Once the engine was started, the killing process took about 10 minutes."* (p. 19)

A time span of ten minutes between start-up of the Diesel engine and the death of the victims is absolutely impossible, as shown by a barbaric experiment on animals carried out in England in 1957. On this point, Germar Rudolf states:<sup>48</sup>

*"These experiments simulated heavy motor load by limiting the oxygen supply artificially. This was achieved by restricting the air supply at the intake manifold as much as possible without completely killing the motor. This was necessary because the exhaust fumes simply did not cause poisoning in any of the test animals while the engine was idling or operating under light loads. After the gas chamber had been filled with exhaust gas 40 mice, 4 rabbits, and 10*

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<sup>46</sup> Witold Zbigniew Sulimierski, *Sobibór. Hitlerowski Obóz śmierci*, Fundacja "Kamena" w Chełmie, Chełm 1993.

<sup>47</sup> As far as we know, Stanisław Szmajer and Barbara Distel (see note 59) are the only two authors besides Sulimierski who claim that a Diesel engine was used for gassings at Sobibór.

<sup>48</sup> Germar Rudolf, *Lectures on the Holocaust*, Theses & Dissertations Press, Chicago 2005, pp. 279f.

*guinea pigs were exposed to it. The last of the animals had died of a combination CO poisoning after three hours and 20 minutes.”*

### 2.3.13. Jules Schelvis (1993)

In the same year, i.e. 1993, Jules Schelvis, a Dutch Jew who had himself been deported to Sobibór in 1943, published a book entitled *Vernietigingskamp Sobibór*<sup>49</sup> (“Annihilation camp Sobibór”), which is by far the most extensive study of this camp. Eight editions have appeared in Holland to date. As Schelvis has revised his opinion on certain crucial points over the years – such as the number of victims at Sobibór – we shall base our discussion on the latest, 2008 edition.

### 2.3.14. Thomas (Toivi) Blatt (1996)

In addition to Alexander Aronovitch Pechersky, Thomas (Toivi) Blatt, a Polish Jew who was deported to Sobibór in early 1943 when he was 15 years old, is certainly the most widely known Sobibór detainee. He was an advisor for the 1987 movie *Escape from Sobibór*.<sup>50</sup> More than half a century after the end of the war, Blatt wrote a book entitled *Sobibór: The Forgotten Revolt*,<sup>51</sup> which has been praised lavishly by the usual devout audience. A certain Marilyn J. Harran, professor of religion and history at Chapman University, wrote for instance:<sup>52</sup>

*“Thomas Blatt writes in the preface to his book: ‘Witnessing genocide is overwhelming; writing about it is soul shattering.’ Nor can the reader emerge unscathed from this wrenching account of man’s inhumanity to humanity. The account of the killing of 250,000 Jews at the death camp Sobibór is made even more powerful by the fact that the author is one of a handful of survivors of the revolt. To read this book is to risk having one’s soul shattered and one’s humanity put in question. No one who reads it will ever be able to forget Sobibór or Toivi Blatt.”*

As soon as the interested reader opens this overwhelming book that shatters his soul and puts his humanity in question, he learns to his great surprise that the Nazis allowed T. Blatt to keep a diary (or that they were at least so sloppy in their supervision that he managed to do so undetected):

<sup>49</sup> Jules Schelvis, *Vernietigingskamp Sobibór*, De Bataafsche Leeuw, Amsterdam 1993.

<sup>50</sup> T. Blatt, *op. cit.* (note 17), appendix.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* German: *Sobibór. Der vergessene Aufstand*, Unrat Verlag, Hamburg 2004.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, Engl. edition, back cover.

*“After the liberation I was able to collect about a third of the diary pages that I had given to Polish people for safekeeping.”* (p. xi, footnote 7)

After his arrival at Sobibór the boy confided his first impressions to the diary:

*“We stepped down from the trucks. In front of us stretched a long, barbed-wire fence interwoven with fir branches. Hypnotized, my eyes were fixed on the Gothic letters on the top of the gate leading inside: ‘SS-Sonderkommando Sobibór.’”* (p. 38)

Again and again, Blatt cites entries from his diary in which he recorded, with painstaking accuracy, the dramatic events in the death camp. A particularly overwhelming entry reads:

*“A tragic and heroic example of spiritual resistance is recorded in my diary:*

*A transport of Polish Jews had been killed. The distant, dull, drum-like sound of bodies thrown from the gas chamber to the metal frame of the transportation lorry was always heard in the sorting shed. Invisible tension was tormenting us. Wolf was the supervising Nazi of the Himmelstrasse. I attached myself to the cleaning crew. I had never been in the dreary, fenced and camouflaged alley. I was curious to explore the camp, and this gave me the opportunity to trace the road to the gas chambers. At the entrance I picked up a rake and, watching the others, I began to rake the white sand, transforming the hundreds of footprints, human refuse and blood into an innocent, spotlessly even surface. While raking up bigger objects, I noted a trail of tiny green and red specks between the teeth of the rake. I bent down to collect them by hand and to my surprise and disbelief, I discovered paper money – dollars, marks, zloty and rubles – money torn into pieces too small to recollect [sic].*

*I thought... How must the victims have felt when they acted in this way? In the last minutes before a tortured death they could still sabotage the Nazis. Their world was disappearing, and the lonely Jew takes his time to tear the banknotes into irreclaimable tiny pieces, making them unusable to the end.”* (p. 55)

Fate willed it that the Poles to whom Blatt had entrusted his diary returned to him at least a third of it. We can be sure that this literary marvel, written by a fifteen-year-old boy, an inestimable account of the Holocaust, once specialists had attested to its genuine character, was translated into all the languages in the world, from Albanian to Zulu,

and sold dozens of millions of copies, to be quoted in every work of the Holocaust literature. It is certainly a gem in the museum of Yad Vashem, well protected by thick panes of glass that shield it from vicious attacks by Holocaust deniers and other vandals. Or is it?

Not at all. It is quite perplexing that up to the present day Toivi Blatt has neglected to publish his diary or at least to include a photocopy of a page or two in his book!

As if keeping a diary in an extermination camp were not by itself a miraculous achievement, Toivi Blatt also managed to preserve at the last moment the diary of another detainee, written in another extermination camp:

*“On June 26, 1943, all Sobibór prisoners were suddenly locked in their barracks with strict orders to stay away from the windows so as not to observe the outside. As we found out later, a transport of the last 300 Jews from Belżec had arrived in Sobibór. While being unloaded, the Jews, realizing what was going to happen and aware that there would be no salvation, resisted by running in all directions, choosing to be shot rather than gassed. This act of defiance was in vain: they were shot at random throughout the camp. The bodies were later collected by the Bahnhofkommando and delivered to Lager [camp] III for cremation.*

*While sorting their clothing and burning the documents, I found a diary written up to the last minute which revealed that the transport was made up of workers from the Belżec death camp. The anonymous author states that, after the closure of Belżec in December of 1942, the surviving Jews had burned the corpses and dismantled the camp in the period until June of 1943. The Germans told them that they were being transferred to a new work place. They suspected a trap.”* (p. 56)

Blatt states that he handed this diary to Leon Feldhendler, his co-detainee. Feldhendler allegedly confirmed this in Lublin in 1944 (p. 56, footnote 3). As Feldhendler was shot to death in a street of Lublin at the end of 1944 by a Polish anti-Semite, he unfortunately could not make this irreplaceable piece of evidence for the Belżec Holocaust known to the rest of the world...<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Shaindy Perl, *Tell the World: The Story of the Sobibór Revolt*, Eastern Book Press, Monsey (NY) 2004, p. 244. Jules Schelvis (*op. cit.* (note 49), p. 234) dates Feldhendler's death to 6 April 1945.

The reason why Toivi Blatt allowed five decades to pass after his liberation before he finally published a little book about his adventures is probably the fact that he had to thoroughly study the literature about Sobibór and the trial files – fortunately, not an overly taxing effort. We must admit, though, that he did this very diligently and serves his readers all the potboilers that can be found in the earlier works about the camp, beginning with Shaul Stark, killed by the SS because one of the geese he had been entrusted with suddenly died (p. 51), moving along to Barry, the fiendish hound who would, on command, chew up the detainees' genitals (p. 52; see on p. 106 of this book), right up to the old Jew who, before being gassed, picked up a handful of dirt, threw it into the wind, and said to an SS man: "This will happen to your Reich!" (p. 57). More down to earth, but quite surprising, Toivi Blatt has this to say about the capacity of the gas chambers:

*"A quick estimate tells us that over a working day of 14 hours, between 12,000 and 15,000 people were killed."* (p. 20)

Let us assume that this applies to the period after September 1942, when the original three gas chambers, each 16 m<sup>2</sup>, were doubled by the addition of a further three chambers of the same size. This means that the capacity of the former chambers was around 6,000 to 7,500 persons per day. Hence, the old chambers could have handled the 250,000 Sobibór victims within 42 days, and we wonder why it was necessary to build the new chambers at all. It is all the more astonishing that the Germans, two months after the start-up of Sobibór, set up another death camp, Treblinka, which needed more than a year to do away with 870,000 Jews. It would have been possible, after all, to kill the lot of the victims of both camps, (870,000 + 250,000 =) 1,120,000 persons, in the three old 16 m<sup>2</sup> chambers at Sobibór within (1,120,000 ÷ 6,000 =) about 187 days without going through the trouble of building yet another death camp!

Blatt goes on to tell us:

*"The prisoners were ordered to learn German military songs, clean the barracks and the yard, or were called to perform 'exercises,' exhausting drills performed for the sadistic pleasure of the Nazis. Many committed suicide; others were killed at the whim of the SS. Workers could always be replaced from the abundant supply in the next transport. The grueling work schedule was not simply the whim of the Sobibór administration. It was official policy issued by SS-Obergruppenführer Oswald Pohl to all camps: 'Time of work (for*

*prisoners) should be in no way limited, it should depend on the organizational and structural purpose of the camp, and the type of work performed.”* (p. 46f.)

These assertions should be compared with the contents of a circular issued by the same Oswald Pohl on 26 October 1943 and sent to the commanders of all 19 concentration camps:<sup>54</sup>

*“In former years, and within the scope of the educational policy then in force, it could be regarded as unimportant whether a detainee was doing useful work or not, But now, the work capacity of the detainees has become significant and all measures taken by the commanders, the heads of the V-services<sup>55</sup> and the physicians have to aim for the health and efficiency of the detainees. It is not out of sentimentality, but because we need their arms and legs, because they have to contribute their share to the fight for the victory of the German people, that we must be concerned about the well-being of the detainees. My first priority is: No more than 10% of all detainees should be disabled because of diseases. This objective must be achieved by the joint effort of all concerned. Thus, it is necessary to ensure:*

- 1) good and proper diet*
- 2) good and proper clothing*
- 3) use of all natural health agents*
- 4) avoidance of all unnecessary efforts not immediately connected with the tasks in question.”*

So much for the credibility of Thomas or Toivi Blatt. The only value of the book is in the reproduced documents and the photographs.

Aside from *Sobibór: The Forgotten Revolt*, Toivi Blatt has written another book, entitled *From the Ashes of Sobibór*,<sup>56</sup> which we will briefly discuss in Chapter 4 of this study.

### 2.3.15. Shaindy Perl (2004)

In 2004 a book entitled *Tell the World: The Story of the Sobibór Revolt*<sup>53</sup> and written by a certain Shaindy Perl was published in the USA. It is entirely based upon the recollections of a former Sobibór detainee,

<sup>54</sup> Archiwum Muzeum Stutthof, I-1b-8, p. 53.

<sup>55</sup> Food service.

<sup>56</sup> Toivi Blatt, *From the Ashes of Sobibór: A Story of Survival*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston 1997.

Esther Raab, and is another warmed-up version of the revolt of 14 October 1943 and the usual silly horror stories:

“‘Ah, a baby,’ he [Oberscharführer Wagner] said with an evil grin, carelessly grasping the crying child by its clothing. [...] ‘You know what? Because I am in a good mood today, I will let you live. I will only take the baby, and you can continue working for us here.’ Defiantly, the woman snatched the child from his arms and spit [sic!] in his face. Enraged, the SS man whipped out his gun and promptly shot her. As the others watched in horror, he pointed his weapon at the child and shot him, too.” (p. 81)

In spite of this, the book is valuable because it enables us to judge the credibility of Esther Raab, a witness for the prosecution who appeared in 1950 at the two Sobibór trials (cf. Subchapters 6.2.f.).

### 2.3.16. Michael Lev (2007)

The English translation of a novel entitled *Sobibór* has been published in Israel and the USA. The original was written in Yiddish sometime in the 1960s (the exact date is not indicated) by the Soviet writer Michael Lev.<sup>57</sup> The hero of the novel is a Polish Jew named Berek Schlesinger who is deported to Sobibór by the Germans, takes part in the uprising of 14 October 1943, and joins the Soviet partisans after his escape. Literary criticism not being our specialty, we have no reason to discuss this “masterpiece of historical fiction” the cover of the book promises us.

### 2.3.17. Dov Freiberg (2007)

The same year saw the publication in the USA of the English version of a book that had appeared twenty years earlier in Hebrew, written by the former Sobibór detainee Dov Freiberg (who used to call himself Ber Freiberg) and entitled *To Survive Sobibór*.<sup>58</sup> The fourth chapter of our book is devoted to the analysis of witness testimonies, and Freiberg’s statements will be discussed there in the necessary detail.

### 2.3.18. Barbara Distel (2008)

Before the year 2008 no German historian had mustered up enough courage to write an article, let alone a book, about Sobibór. The world had to wait for Barbara Distel, long-time head of the Dachau memorial

<sup>57</sup> Michael Lev, *Sobibór*, Gefen Publishing House, Jerusalem and New York 2007.

<sup>58</sup> Dov Freiberg, *To Survive Sobibór*, Gefen Books, Lynbrook (NY) 2007.

site, who squeezed a 30-page article entitled “Sobibór”<sup>59</sup> into the eighth volume of a series she and Wolfgang Benz have been editing. Barbara Distel’s text marks the intellectual and moral low point of the literature about this camp.

Concerning the number of victims ascribed to Sobibór, Barbara Distel starts out by saying that this figure “is taken to be 150,000 to 250,000” (p. 375). At the end of her contribution she opts for 250,000 (p. 402). Even if going along with orthodox historians in a dogmatic way by assuming that all but a few detainees deported to Sobibór were murdered there, such a figure is fundamentally impossible. Thanks to the Höfle message published seven years before Distel’s article we know that 101,370 Jews were deported to Sobibór by the end of 1942. Moreover, all researchers agree without exception that the number of deportees was considerably less in 1943 than the year before. Barbara Distel either does not know the Höfle message or ignores it deliberately in order to arrive at a high number of victims. The former would make her an ignoramus, the latter a fraud.

Concerning the murder weapon Barbara Distel has this to say:

*“In camp 3 there was the stone building with the gas chambers. Next to it stood a wooden shed housing a 200 HP Diesel engine, the exhaust gases of which were fed into the hermetically sealed chambers by means of pipes.”* (p. 378)

The poor suitability of Diesel exhaust gases for mass murder being widely known and accepted, it is truly astonishing that Barbara Distel would choose this version without the slightest necessity. We remind our readers of the fact that most authors do not specify the type of engine (allegedly) used at Sobibór and that Raul Hilberg speaks explicitly of a gasoline engine.

Even the most primitive inventions of black propaganda are faithfully repeated by Barbara Distel, down to the silly story of the flock of geese that would be “excited so that their ear-splitting honks would drown out the screams of the victims” (p. 381). On p. 389 she refers to Ada Lichtman and writes:

*“Each SS man had his own way of killing. [...] They all waited for the arrival of the transports. Bredow was always on the lookout for young girls whom he would always whip sadistically. Gomerski*

<sup>59</sup> B. Distel, “Sobibor”, in: Wolfgang Benz, Barbara Distel (eds.), *Der Ort des Terrors. Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager*, Verlag C. H. Beck, Munich 2008.

*killed the prisoners with a stick spiked with nails; Groth and Bolender had their dogs. When they said to a detainee: 'Ah, you don't want to work,' the dog ripped the victim to pieces."*

We can judge the level of German "Holocaust research" by this book.

### 2.3.19. Jules Schelvis (2008)

Ever since it first appeared in the Netherlands in 1993, Jules Schelvis' book *Vernietigingskamp Sobibór* has seen no fewer than eight editions. In 1998 it was translated into German,<sup>60</sup> and an English edition appeared in 2007.<sup>61</sup> The latest Dutch edition<sup>62</sup> was published in 2008. The various editions differ considerably in critical points. In the discussion below we will proceed as follows: Wherever the English edition agrees with the latest Dutch edition, we will quote from the English version or indicate the corresponding page number. In case of discrepancies we consider the latest published edition to be valid, as one may assume that it reflects the latest views of the author. In each particular case we will indicate what version the quotation was taken from.

Jules Schelvis' interest in Sobibór has a very personal and tragic background. On 1<sup>st</sup> June 1943 he was deported to that camp together with his wife Rachel and other relatives. They were part of a group of 3,006 Dutch Jews. Within a few hours of his arrival at the camp he was moved to the Doruhucza labor camp together with some 80 other detainees. After a two-year Odyssey through Poland and Germany, he was eventually liberated by French troops in the south German town of Vaihingen on 8 April 1945. He claims to have been the only survivor of his transport (p. 4).

With its vast bibliography and its wealth of footnotes, *Sobibór – A History of a Nazi Death Camp* formally satisfies all criteria of scientific work. In contrast to nearly all of his predecessors, Schelvis, in his description of the "extermination camp," turns out to be an intelligent pragmatist who throws out all manner of useless junk found in the traditional literature. By and large he dispenses with horror stories of the kind which immediately disqualify the tale of someone like Miriam Novitch in the eyes of a critical reader. His SS men do beat the Jews with whips and sticks when they do not work hard enough, but they refrain from sewing rats into their trousers, urinating into their mouths or

<sup>60</sup> Jules Schelvis, *Vernichtungslager Sobibór*, Metropol Verlag, Berlin 1998.

<sup>61</sup> Jules Schelvis, *Sobibór. A History of a Nazi Death Camp*, Berg Publishers, Oxford 2007.

<sup>62</sup> J. Schelvis, *Vernietigingskamp Sobibór*, De Bataafsche Leeuw, Amsterdam 2008.

ripping babies apart. While the prisoners regarded SS man Bredow “as a violent person who ill-treated them incessantly” (German version, p. 299), they do not say – as Miriam Novitch does – that he had a daily quota of fifty detainees which he would kill with his gun.

When dealing with the accounts of eye witnesses, Schelvis takes care to discard all obviously incredible passages. Hence, he does devote a lot of space to Alexander Pechersky, the key witness, and lists the 1967 English translation of his 1946 report in his bibliography. On the other hand he carefully eliminates statements which would appear dubious to an attentive reader who knows the standard version of the history of Sobibór – such as Pechersky’s bizarre description of the extermination process or his assertion that, as late as September 1943, a transport of new arrivals was exterminated every other day (cf. Subchapter 4.2.) – something which is anachronistic even from the point of view of orthodox historiography. In other words, Schelvis handles his witness accounts selectively in such a way that a reader who does not have access to the original sources does not learn about the absurdities contained in them.

This pragmatic approach also applies to Schelvis’ estimate of the number of victims. In contrast to Barbara Distel and authors of her ilk, he does not stubbornly cling to the old figure of 250,000 victims, which has become untenable ever since the discovery of the Höfle message. While he still spoke of some 236,000 to 257,000 Sobibór deportees (who were all killed there except for a handful of them) in the German version, the 2008 Dutch version says:

*“For many years it was believed that between 200,000 and 250,000 Jews were deported to the Sobibór extermination camp. New investigations have shown that the figure must be revised downward. The [new] figure is based on a radio message from Hermann Höfle, an SS-Sturmbannführer, who was one of the leading actors of Aktion Reinhardt in Lublin.”* (p. 266)

The year 1942 saw deportations to Sobibór from the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, from Slovakia, Germany (including Austria) and from the General Government. The English version of Schelvis’ book has the following entries for the Jews deported to Sobibór from the areas mentioned:

Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia:	10,000 (p. 210)
Slovakia:	28,284 (p. 215)
Germany, incl. Austria	23,500 (p. 224)

On the subject of the General Government Schelvis does not provide figures of his own and simply quotes estimates of other authors (English version, pp. 225f). Since the total of deportees arriving at the camp in 1942 is known from the Höfle message, a simple subtraction tells us that – if Schelvis’ figures are otherwise correct and complete – (101,370–(10,000+28,284+23,500)=) 39,586 Polish Jews must have arrived at Sobibór over the year of 1942.

Page 198 of the English version has the following list for the deportations of 1943:

– <i>Ostland</i> (Lida, Minsk, Vilnius):	13,700
– General Government:	14,900
– Holland:	34,313
– France:	3,500
– Skopje: <sup>63</sup>	2,382
<b>Total:</b>	<b>68,795</b>

Thus, Schelvis gives us the following grand total (English version, p. 198):

<i>COUNTRY OF ORIGIN</i>	<i>1942</i>	<i>1943</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
Holland	–	34,313	34,313
Skopje	–	2,382	2,382
France	–	3,500	3,500
Ostland	–	13,700	13,700
General Government	39,586	14,900	54,486
Slovakia	28,284	–	28,284
Protectorate	10,000	–	10,000
Germany, incl. Austria	23,500	–	23,500
<i>Grand total</i>	<i>101,370</i>	<i>68,795</i>	<i>170,165</i>

We wish to point out that Schelvis’ figure for the French Jews is higher by about 1,500 persons than the one given by Serge Klarsfeld in his standard work *Le Mémorial de la Déportation des Juifs de France*, which speaks of a total of 2,002 French Jews deported to Sobibór.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>63</sup> At the time Skopje belonged to Bulgaria.

<sup>64</sup> Serge Klarsfeld, *Le Mémorial de la Déportation des Juifs de France*, Beate and Serge

With respect to the Occupied Eastern Territories (German occupied areas of the Soviet Union) Schelvis relies exclusively on witness accounts. He believes that there were six transports and “possibly” a seventh and an eighth transport (p. 97f, English version). We may thus conclude that there is no documentary evidence concerning these transports – which does not necessarily mean, of course, that they did not take place. No one may doubt the presence of Alexander Pechersky and other Soviet Jews in Sobibór, even though the respective transport cannot be identified in documents, but one should note that A. Rutkowski speaks of only one train of deportees from Minsk which arrived at Sobibór on 19 September 1943 with 2,000 Jews on board, including Pechersky.<sup>65</sup>

On this basis we may surmise that Schelvis’ figure of 68,795 Jews who came to Sobibór in 1943 – and thus his total of around 170,000 deportees – is too high and should probably be reduced by several thousand. On the other hand, there is no doubt that his order of magnitude is correct.

In order to prove that the deportees were actually gassed except for a handful of them, Schelvis has to show, first of all, that Sobibór was indeed equipped with homicidal gas chambers. Let us now examine how he approaches this problem in his chapter on “The Gas Chambers.”

On the first four pages of this chapter he sketches the origins of the (alleged) Bełżec gas chambers on the basis of witness testimonies. He starts out with a statement made in 1945 by Stanisław Kozak, a Pole who claimed to have participated in the construction of the first gas chambers at Bełżec. According to Kozak it was a building 12 by 8 meters in size and some 2 meters high, subdivided into three rooms by wooden partitions (p. 97f., English version). Schelvis then quotes several witnesses and goes on to say:

*“The first gas chambers at Sobibór were built to the same specifications as the original ones at Bełżec. [...] A big engine, which was to produce the toxic gas, was picked up from Lemberg and connected to the pipelines. Erich Fuchs, who collected the machine, remembered [...]”*

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Klarsfeld, Paris 1978. Klarsfeld’s book has no page numbers. In a “chronological table of the deportation trains,” he mentions two transports from France to Sobibór, the first one leaving on 23 March 1943 and carrying 994 persons, the second leaving on 25 March and carrying 1,008 deportees.

<sup>65</sup> A. Rutkowski, *op. cit.* (note 27), p. 27.

Then we have the statement made by E. Fuchs, a former SS man, during his interrogation at Düsseldorf on April 2, 1963 (p. 100f., English version).

This statement is followed by others made by former members of the Sobibór camp personnel in the 1960s, among them a statement by Erich Bauer made on 6 October 1965 during the Sobibór trial at Hagen. Schelvis comments on Bauer's explanations in the following manner:

*"From his account it can be deduced that the gas chambers at Sobibór were indeed identical to those at Belżec. Towards the end of April 1942 further trial gassings took place at Sobibór."* (p. 101, English version)

The witness with respect to these "trial gassings" is, once again, Erich Bauer. The major part of the footnotes in the chapter about the "gas chambers" refers to legal proceedings in Germany. It would not be possible to demonstrate any more clearly that the "evidence" for homicidal gassings at Sobibór was fabricated by the German judiciary decades after the war.

Schelvis is actually unable to refer to statements made by witnesses during or immediately after the war, because none of these witnesses have spoken of a gassing building subdivided into several rooms in which people were killed by engine-exhaust gas. If these initial witnesses had anything at all to say about the murder weapon, they spoke of entirely different methods, primarily chlorine or (in the case of Pechersky) a nondescript "black fluid" (cf. Chapter 3). The present-day version of the detainees being killed by means of engine-exhaust gases in a building with several gas chambers was proposed in 1947 by the "Main Commission for the Investigation of the German Crimes in Poland" not on the basis of witness testimony, however, but based on the Gerstein report *about Belżec!* (Cf. Chapter 3)

At the very beginning of Schelvis' book, we have the following, truly astounding passage:

*"Shortly after the liberation of Poland in 1944, a number of survivors gave statements about what happened in the camp, and the criminals who operated there. Still so traumatized by the torture they had endured, they referred to some of their torturers by name in relation to specific crimes which, years later, they felt less sure about. Some knew only first names. These testimonies should be regarded as contemporary documents rather than legal indictments where each and every comma and full stop or period must be in the*

*right place. Despite their inaccuracies, they are of great value because they were given fresh from memory rather than being influenced by later writings or statements by others.*" (p. 3, English version)

Without realizing it, Schelvis, in saying this, rejects outright the value of witness statements concerning Sobibór. If we accept the thesis that the witnesses for the prosecution, who had come forward as early as 1944 or shortly thereafter, no longer knew which SS-man had committed which (alleged) specific crime, how then can we ascribe any value at all to statements made during the Hagen trial, which took place in 1965-1966, i.e. over twenty years after the events? After all, the verdicts against the indicted SS-men, who had been accused of specific crimes, were based exclusively on eyewitness testimony. Everybody knows that human memory tends to become less and less reliable as the years go by.

There is yet another, very revealing aspect hidden in Schelvis' thesis that the declarations by the early witnesses are valuable because "they were given fresh from memory rather than being influenced by later writings or statements by others." If that is true, one may conclude that the witnesses who appeared at the trials of the 1950s and 1960s were indeed "influenced by later writings or statements by others." That this was actually the case is borne out by the fact that not one of the witnesses who testified in the immediate post war period spoke of a building in Sobibór which was subdivided into several chambers and was used to kill Jews by means of engine-exhaust gases.

In line with other orthodox historians, Schelvis states that the corpses of the Sobibór victims were unearthed and burned in the open from the fall of 1942 onwards. He obviously does not realize the enormous technical problems the open-air incineration of 170,000 corpses would have posed (cf. Subchapter 5.3). It is interesting to note that Schelvis, even in the 2008 Dutch edition of his book, does not refer in any way to the archeological soundings and digs carried out in the former camp by professor Andrzej Kola seven years earlier (cf. Sections 5.1.3., 5.2.3). It is simply inconceivable that Schelvis, a recognized expert on Sobibór, would have been unaware of such a fundamental study.

Jules Schelvis' book is undoubtedly the best which the defenders of the orthodox view about Sobibór have been able to muster, but then, at times, the best is not good enough. Just like his predecessors, Schelvis is unable to proffer even the shadow of a proof that the Jews deported to

Sobibór were killed in gas chambers in that camp – this is simply beyond the possibilities of any researcher, be he an honorary doctor of Amsterdam University or what have you.

Obviously, the revisionists must confront the question of what happened to the up to 170,000 Jews who were taken to Sobibór. The key to this mystery is supplied by Schelvis himself,<sup>66</sup> as we can see from the following extract taken from his chapter “Arrival and selection”:

*“The process following the arrival of a transport at the camp soon became routine. [...] After exiting the sorting barracks, the men were separated from the women and directed to the undressing area in Lager [camp] 2; the women to another part of the camp. Unless it had already been done at the platform, this was the point at which an SS man would give a short speech. Usually – until his transfer to Treblinka – it was given by Oberscharführer Hermann Michel. Dubbed ‘the doctor’ by the Arbeitshäftlinge [inmate workers] because of his habit of wearing a white coat, he delivered his speech in rapid German [...]. Michel’s words ran along the following lines: ‘In wartime, we must all work. You will be taken to a place where you will prosper. Children and the elderly will not have to work, but will still be well fed. You must keep yourselves clean. The conditions under which you have travelled, with so many of you in each wagon, make it desirable that hygiene precautions are taken. This is why you will shortly have to undress and shower. Your clothes and luggage will be guarded. You must put your clothing into a neat pile, and your shoes must be paired and tied together. You must put them in front of you. Valuables such as gold, money and watches must be handed in at the counter over there. You must remember carefully the number the man behind the counter calls out, so that you will be able to retrieve your possessions more easily afterwards. If we do find any valuables on you after your shower, you will be punished. There is no need to bring a towel and soap; everything will be provided; there will be one towel for every two people.’ [...]*

*Michel was so full of conviction when he delivered his speech, even as he was pulling the wool over the victims’ eyes, that the Arbeitshäftlinge also dubbed him ‘the preacher.’ Sometimes he would make out [sic] that the camp was a transit camp, that the journey to Ukraine was only a matter of time, and that the Jews would even be*

<sup>66</sup> In a certain way Schelvis delivers this proof in his own fate, as Sobibór had been a mere transit camp for him.

*granted autonomy there. Other times he would tell them they would all be going to Riga.*" (English version, pp. 69f.)

Soon after, Schelvis tells us, the deluded people would march into the gas chambers.

What was the use of this entire gobbledygook? Was it necessary to avoid attempts at breaking out? Such a thing would have been hopeless from the start, because the Ukrainian guards who "were, generally speaking, overzealous, displaying a fanatical loyalty to their duty as guards" and "often surpassed their German instructors in cruelty." They would "form a cordon to prevent the newcomers from escaping." (English version, pp. 34f., 62)

Was the speech needed to prevent any kind of resistance? Hardly, for the deportees were much too tired after the long trip and too scared to fight. Without fail, they would have obeyed any orders that would have been barked at them by the guards.

Then why harangue them? Why did the SS man tell them that Sobibór was a transit camp and that they would soon move on into Ukraine or to Riga?

Anyone in possession of his mental faculties can find the answer by himself.

### 2.3.20. Conclusions

The official version of the history of the camp, still in effect to the present day, was essentially defined by the 1947 report edited by the "Main Commission for the Investigation of the German Crimes in Poland": Sobibór was an extermination camp for Jews from various European countries. Except for a small number of "working Jews," the new arrivals were immediately killed by means of engine-exhaust gases in a "gassing building" subdivided into several chambers. The corpses were burned on pyres in the open. The number of victims amounted to some 250,000.

Since then, the Sobibór literature has, by and large, adopted this version, even though some authors, such as S. Szmajzner, claimed far higher numbers of victims. The only major revision on the part of any orthodox historian is due to Jules Schelvis. He reduced his figure to 170,000 when the Höfle message became known.

The attentive reader will have noticed that over a period of twenty years (between 1947 and 1967) not a single book, not even an article of any serious nature was written about Sobibór. Among novelists and his-

torians an interest in this camp increased only at the end of the 1970s. The reason for this phenomenon is obviously the increasing Jewish influence in the world. Its most noticeable characteristic has been the intensification of “Holocaust” propaganda. When we look at this literature, we see right away that the publications repeat over and over again a mass of unproven assertions, a never-ending line of the same horror stories and anecdotes, and promote to exhaustion the heroic tale of the uprising on 14 October 1943. Indeed, the available material does not provide the defenders of the “Holocaust” story with any more information than this.

The only work by any orthodox historian which commands a certain respect (in view of its impressive bibliography) is Jules Schelvis’ *Vernietingskamp Sobibór*, but as far as the central question of this topic is concerned – the search for evidence of the mass exterminations – it is no better than the pitiable products of charlatans like Stanisław Szmajzner or Toivi Blatt. Like its predecessors, it provides not even a shred of forensic or documentary evidence for such mass exterminations and relies exclusively on testimony or on the “confessions” of defendants, which, on closer inspection, turn out to be useless.

## 2.4. A Revisionist Article about Sobibór

Aside from Thomas Kues,<sup>11</sup> the U.S. writer Paul Grubach has been the only revisionist to have seriously approached the problem of Sobibór before the publication of the present book. In August of 2009 he published an excellent article entitled “The ‘Nazi Extermination Camp’ Sobibór in the Context of the Demjanjuk Case.”<sup>67</sup>

The starting point of Grubach’s argument is a statement by Elie M. Rosenbaum, the head of the “Nazi-hunting section” of the American Department of Justice:

*“Thousands of Jews were murdered in the gas chambers of Sobibór, and John Demjanjuk helped seal their fate.”*

Grubach explains that there is no evidence for the existence of any gas chambers at Sobibór and that it is thus impossible to indict Demjanjuk

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<sup>67</sup> Paul Grubach, “The ‘Nazi Extermination Camp’ Sobibór in the Context of the Demjanjuk Case,” in: *Inconvenient History*, 1(2)(2009); [www.inconvenienthistory.com/1/2/1908](http://www.inconvenienthistory.com/1/2/1908).

for having pushed even a single Jew into these phantom installations. Among others, he treats the following aspects of the question:

- The failure of demonstrating the existence of gas chambers by means of archeological investigations.
- The contradictions in the testimonies regarding the killing method.
- The contradictions in the testimonies regarding the number, the size, the structure and the capacity of the gas chambers.
- The contradictions in the testimonies regarding the disposal of the corpses.
- The wildly divergent figures given by the various authors and witnesses regarding the number of victims.

Grubach summarizes his findings very convincingly:

*“As we have shown here, the traditional extermination story at Sobibór has no authentic war-time documentation to support it, nor does it have any forensic or physical evidence to prove it. It is based exclusively upon the testimony of former Sobibór inmates and the post war testimony of former German and Ukrainian soldiers who served at Sobibór.*

*There are good reasons for even the most hardcore believer in the Holocaust to be very skeptical of the Sobibór extermination story. As the Scottish philosopher David Hume pointed out centuries ago, the veracity of human testimony is undermined when the witnesses contradict each other; when they are but few, or of a doubtful character; when they have an interest in what they affirm; when they deliver their testimony with hesitation, or on the contrary, with too violent asseverations, etc.*

*As we have shown here, the ‘eyewitnesses’ to Sobibór do contradict each other; they are of a doubtful character, and they do have an interest in what they affirm. The German officials who ‘confessed’ to the existence of the Sobibór ‘gas chambers’ had a vested legal interest in promoting this falsehood. They could not do otherwise in the judicial system they were entrapped in. Former Sobibór inmates had a burning desire to see the Third Reich go down in defeat. For sure, former Sobibór inmate Zelda Metz admitted that: ‘We [prisoners] all wanted to escape and tell the world the crimes of Sobibór. We believed that if the people knew about it, Nazi Germany would be wiped out. We thought that if mankind knew of our martyrdom, we would be admired for our endurance, and revered for our sufferings.’ Many of these Jewish survivors from Sobibór put forth testi-*

*mony that is truly doubtful, and they did have an interest in promoting horrendous atrocity stories about Sobibór. This would help to defeat and forever degrade their hated enemy, National Socialist Germany, and they would come away as heroes in the eyes of the world. These former Sobibór inmates were embroiled in the German-Jewish hatreds of the war, and their testimonies must be evaluated with this in mind.”*

## 2.5. Heinrich Himmler’s Visit to Sobibór

Documentary evidence allows us to say that the *Reichsführer* SS, Heinrich Himmler, visited the Sobibór Camp on two occasions. The first visit – about which we know little more than that it was extremely short – took place on 19 July 1942.<sup>68</sup> The date of the second visit is not known precisely, although it did take place in March of 1943. On 13 April 1943 the head of SS and police of the Lublin district, Odilo Globocnik, noted in a letter to SS-*Gruppenführer* Maximilian von Herff that, on the occasion of his stay (in Lublin) in March, Himmler had inspected “installations of ‘*Aktion Reinhard*.’”<sup>69</sup> On the same date, a person whose signature on the corresponding document is illegible sent a letter to SS-*Obersturmführer* Kuno Ther saying, i.a.:<sup>69</sup>

*“The Reichsführer SS, after visiting the Sobibór camp, basically approved the promotion of the deserving Führers [i.e. SS officers] and men.”*

Hence, Himmler’s visit to Sobibór must have taken place in March of 1943. The document itself does not supply any more detailed information about the visit.

Orthodox historians do not get tired of claiming, on the basis of “eye witnesses” that Himmler attended a mass gassing of Jewish women and girls on the occasion of his second visit to Sobibór. The volume *Documents and Materials*, which appeared in 1947, has this to say:<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> According to the schedule for the visit, there was only a total of one hour and a half for Himmler to be taken from Chełm to Sobibór and to inspect the camp; [www.holocaustresearchproject.org/ar/sobibor/docs/rfss%20visit%20programm.jpg](http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/ar/sobibor/docs/rfss%20visit%20programm.jpg).

<sup>69</sup> Christopher R. Browning, “Evidence for the Implementation of the Final Solution: Electronic Edition,” expert report introduced during the libel trial of D. Irving v. D. Lipstadt and Penguin Books, 1999; [www.hdot.org/browning/#browning\\_553\\_n157](http://www.hdot.org/browning/#browning_553_n157)

<sup>70</sup> N. Blumental (ed.), *op. cit.* (note 23), p. 199.

*“Himmler visited Sobibór, as he did the other death camps. In his honor, 300 (other testimonies have 500) Jewish girls were gassed; they had been specially brought to the camp for this festive occasion. Himmler himself stood behind a little window and watched the girls as they were dying from the poison gas.”*

The same volume contains the testimonies by Leon Feldhendler and Zelda Metz, who also speak of this non-event. Here is Feldhendler’s account:

*“A special event for the camp was Himmler’s visit in March of 1943. Two hundred women had been brought in from Lublin for this day. They were locked up in a special barrack for two days, waiting to take part in a spectacle for the supreme henchman. [...] The bath which was serving as a gas chamber had a little window on top through which Himmler could view with satisfaction the effect of a new gas.”* (N. Blumental, *ibid.*, p. 206)

Zelda Metz reports:

*“Himmler came to Sobibór in late summer of 1943. In order to show him how efficiently the extermination camp was operating, 7,500 beautiful young girls were brought in from [the Jewish camp on] Lipowa Street and executed in front of him.”* (*ibid.*, p. 211)

While Leon Feldhendler has Himmler’s visit take place correctly in March of 1943 and is happy with 200 women gassed for the occasion, Zelda Metz dates the visit to “late summer of 1943” and makes the number of the victims a full 7,500!

If we follow Toivi Blatt, the victims did not come from Lublin but from Włodawa. He writes:<sup>71</sup>

*“SS-Oberscharführer Erich Bauer, in charge of the gassing process at Sobibór, concluded a demonstration gassing of over 300 specially selected young Jewish girls from the nearby city of Włodawa.”*

Yet another version is provided by Moshe Bahir, according to whom the “several hundred” victims came neither from Lublin nor from Włodawa but from Trawniki.<sup>72</sup>

Nearly every book about Sobibór mentions Himmler’s presence at the gassing of Jewish girls, although the dates and the number of victims vary. Claiming to quote from witness statements, B. Distel<sup>73</sup> and J.

<sup>71</sup> T. Blatt, *op. cit.* (note 17), p. 12.

<sup>72</sup> M. Novitch, *op. cit.* (note 36), p. 156.

<sup>73</sup> B. Distel, *op. cit.* (note 59), p. 391.

Schelvis<sup>74</sup> give the date of the visit as 12 February 1943, although the documents cited have it take place in March. This matter is symbolic, showing as it does how the orthodox historians operate. The story of the *Reichsführer's* presence at a gassing of Jewish ladies also crops up in connection with Treblinka. The Polish Jewess Rachel Auerbach tells us:<sup>75</sup>

*“It is said that on the occasion of his visit to Treblinka towards the end of February of 1943, a very special show was arranged for Himmler. A group of young women who had been specially selected for this event were herded into the ‘bath house’ – naked, so that the SS-Reichsführer might enjoy the view of their bodies – leaving it as corpses.”*

It does not speak for the honor of orthodox historians that they accept such products of sick minds as historical truth.

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<sup>74</sup> J. Schelvis, *op. cit.* (note 60), p. 111.

<sup>75</sup> Alexander Donat (ed.), *The Death Camp Treblinka*, Holocaust Library, New York 1979, p. 48.

## 2.6. Sobibór's Claimed Number of Victims

**Table 2:** Victim numbers claimed for Sobibór

2,000,000	Zelda Metz, <sup>76</sup> Stanisław Szmajzner <sup>77</sup>
1,000,000	N. Blumental <sup>78</sup>
800,000	Kurt Ticho, <sup>79</sup> Ch. Engel and S. Engel-Wijnberg <sup>79</sup>
600,000	Yuri Suhl <sup>80</sup>
500,000	I. Ehrenburg, V. Grossman <sup>81</sup>
*350,000	Erich Bauer, 1962 <sup>82</sup>
300,000	Léon Poliakov <sup>83</sup>
250,000	<i>Encyclopedia of the Holocaust</i> , <sup>84</sup> Wolfgang Scheffler <sup>85</sup>
200,000	Raul Hilberg <sup>86</sup>
170,000	Jules Schelvis <sup>87</sup>
*110,000	Karl Frenzel, 1987 <sup>82</sup>
*50,000 to 70,000	Karl Frenzel, 1966 <sup>82</sup>
30,000 – 35,000	Jean-Claude Pressac <sup>88</sup>
*25,000 – 30,000	Hubert Gomerski, 1950 <sup>82</sup>
* Victim numbers given by SS personnel formerly stationed at Sobibór	

Table 2 is an incomplete list of the numbers of victims assigned to Sobibór by various witnesses and historians. As we have seen, Schelvis' figure of 170,000 corresponds to the maximum possible number of detainees *to have reached* Sobibór – but does not tell us anything about the ensuing fate of these deportees.

We will present our own estimate of the victims of Sobibór elsewhere in this book (cf. Subchapter 5.7).

<sup>76</sup> N. Blumental (ed.), *op. cit.* (note 23), p. 210.

<sup>77</sup> S. Szmajzner, *op. cit.* (note 28), p. 270.

<sup>78</sup> N. Blumental (ed.), *op. cit.* (note 23), p. 200.

<sup>79</sup> Statement by Kurt Ticho (Thomas), ROD (Rijksinstituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie, Amsterdam), c[23.62]09, p. 6.

<sup>80</sup> Yuri Suhl, *Ed essi si ribellarono. Storia della resistenza ebraica contro il nazismo*, Milano 1969, p. 66.

<sup>81</sup> Ilya Ehrenburg, Vasily Grossman (eds.), *The Black Book*, Holocaust Library, New York 1981, p. 443.

<sup>82</sup> J. Schelvis, *op. cit.* (note 60), p. 238.

<sup>83</sup> Léon Poliakov, *Bréviaire le la Haine*, Calman-Lévy, Paris 1979, p. 387.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Subchapter 2.1.

<sup>85</sup> Wolfgang Scheffler, *Judenverfolgung im Dritten Reich*, Colloquium Verlag, Berlin 1964, p. 40.

<sup>86</sup> Raul Hilberg, *Die Vernichtung der europäischen Juden*, Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, Frankfurt 1986, p. 956.

<sup>87</sup> J. Schelvis, *op. cit.* (note 62), p. 267.

<sup>88</sup> Valérie Igounet, *Histoire du négationnisme en France*, Editions du Seuil, Paris 2000, p. 640.