

= Treblinka extermination camp =

Treblinka (pronounced [tr??bl?inka]) was an extermination camp , built by Nazi Germany in occupied Poland during World War II . It was located in a forest north @-@ east of Warsaw , 4 kilometres (2 @.@ 5 mi) south of the Treblinka train station in what is now the Masovian Voivodeship . The camp operated between 23 July 1942 and 19 October 1943 as part of Operation Reinhard , the deadliest phase of the Final Solution . During this time , it is estimated that between 700 @,@ 000 and 900 @,@ 000 Jews were killed in its gas chambers , along with 2 @,@ 000 Romani people . More Jews were killed at Treblinka than at any other Nazi extermination camp apart from Auschwitz .

Managed by the German SS and the Eastern European Trawniki (also known as Hiwi guards) , the camp consisted of two separate units . Treblinka I was a forced @-@ labour camp (Arbeitslager) whose prisoners worked in the gravel pit or irrigation area and in the forest , where they cut wood to fuel the crematoria . Between 1941 and 1944 , more than half of its 20 @,@ 000 inmates died from summary executions , hunger , disease and mistreatment .

The second camp , Treblinka II , was an extermination camp (Vernichtungslager) . A small number of men who were not killed immediately upon arrival became its Jewish slave @-@ labour units called Sonderkommandos , forced to bury the victims ' bodies in mass graves . These bodies were exhumed in 1943 and cremated on large open @-@ air pyres along with the bodies of new victims . Gassing operations at Treblinka II ended in October 1943 following a revolt by the Sonderkommandos in early August . Several SS Hiwi guards were killed and 200 prisoners escaped from the camp ; almost a hundred survived the subsequent chase . The camp was dismantled ahead of the Soviet advance . A farmhouse for a watchman was built on the site and the ground ploughed over in an attempt to hide the evidence of genocide .

In postwar Poland , the government bought most of the land where the camp had stood , and built a large stone memorial there between 1959 and 1962 . In 1964 Treblinka was declared a national monument of Jewish martyrology in a ceremony at the site of the former gas chambers . In the same year the first German trials were held regarding war crimes committed at Treblinka by former SS members . After the end of communism in Poland in 1989 , the number of visitors coming to Treblinka from abroad increased . An exhibition centre at the camp opened in 2006 . It was later expanded and made into a branch of the Siedlce Regional Museum .

= = Background = =

Following the invasion of Poland in 1939 most of the 3 @.@ 5 million Polish Jews were rounded up and put into newly established ghettos by Nazi Germany . The system was intended to isolate the Jews from the outside world in order to facilitate their exploitation and abuse . The supply of food was inadequate , living conditions were cramped and unsanitary , and the Jews had no way to earn money . Malnutrition and lack of medicine led to soaring mortality rates . The initial victories of the Wehrmacht over the Soviet Union inspired plans for the German colonisation of occupied Poland , including all territory within the General Government . At the Wannsee Conference held near Berlin on 20 January 1942 , new plans were outlined for the genocide of the Jews , known as the " Final Solution " to the Jewish Question . The extermination programme was codenamed Aktion Reinhard in German , to differentiate it from the Einsatzgruppen operations in territories conquered by Nazi Germany , in which half a million Jews had already been killed .

Treblinka was one of three secret extermination camps set up for Operation Reinhard ; the other two were Be??ec and Sobibór . All three were equipped with gas chambers disguised as shower rooms , for the " processing " of entire transports of people . The lethal agent was established following a pilot project of mobile killing conducted at Soldau and Che?mno extermination camps that began operating in 1941 and used gas vans . Che?mno (German : Kulmhof) was a testing ground for the establishment of faster methods of killing and incinerating people . It was not a part of Reinhard , which was marked by the construction of stationary facilities for mass murder . Treblinka was the third extermination camp of Operation Reinhard to be built , following Be??ec and Sobibór ,

and incorporated lessons learned from their construction . Alongside the Reinhard camps , mass killing facilities using Zyklon B were developed at the Majdanek concentration camp in March 1942 and at Auschwitz II @-@ Birkenau in September .

The Nazi plan to kill Polish Jews from across the General Government during Aktion Reinhard was overseen in occupied Poland by SS @-@ Obergruppenführer Odilo Globocnik , the deputy of Reichsführer @-@ SS Heinrich Himmler in Berlin . The Operation Reinhard camps reported directly to the Reich Main Security Office (German : Reichssicherheitshauptamt or RSHA for short) , which was also headed by Himmler . The staff of Operation Reinhard , most of whom had been involved in the Action T4 euthanasia programme , used T4 as a framework for the construction of facilities . All of the Jews who were killed in the Reinhard camps came from ghettos .

= = = Location = = =

The two parallel camps of Treblinka were built 80 kilometres (50 mi) northeast of the Polish capital Warsaw . Before World War II , it was the site of a gravel mining enterprise for the production of concrete , connected to most of the major cities in central Poland by the Ma?kinia ? Soko?ów Podlaski railway junction and the Treblinka village station . The mine was owned and operated by the Polish industrialist Marian ?opuszy?ski , who added the new 6 @-@ kilometre (3 @.@ 7 mi) railway track to the existing line . When the German SS took over Treblinka I , the quarry was already equipped with heavy machinery that was ready to use . Treblinka was well @-@ connected but isolated enough , halfway between some of the largest Jewish ghettos in Nazi @-@ occupied Europe , including the ghetto in Warsaw and the ghetto in Bia?ystok , the capital of the newly formed Bezirk Bialystok . The Warsaw Ghetto had 500 @,@ 000 Jewish inmates , and the Bia?ystok Ghetto had about 60 @,@ 000 .

Treblinka was divided into two separate camps that were 2 kilometres apart . Two engineering firms , the Schoenbronn Company of Leipzig and the Warsaw branch of Schmidt ? Munstermann , oversaw the construction of both camps . Between 1942 and 1943 the extermination centre was further redeveloped with a crawler excavator . New gas chambers made of brick and cement mortar were freshly erected , and mass cremation pyres were also introduced . The perimeter was enlarged to provide a buffer zone , making it impossible to approach the camp from the outside . The number of trains caused panic among the residents of nearby settlements . They would likely have been killed if caught near the railway tracks .

= = = Treblinka I = = =

Founded officially on 15 November 1941 , Treblinka I was a forced @-@ labour camp (Arbeitslager) , initially for Poles and Jews captured nearby . It replaced an ad hoc company set up in June 1941 by Sturmbannführer Ernst Gramss . A new barracks and barbed wire fencing 2 metres (6 ft 7 in) tall were erected in late 1941 . To obtain the workforce for Treblinka I , civilians were sent to the camp en masse for real or imagined offences , and sentenced to hard labour by the Gestapo office in Soko?ów , which was headed by Gramms . The average length of a sentence was six months , but many prisoners had their sentences extended indefinitely . Twenty thousand people passed through Treblinka I during its three @-@ year existence . About half of them died there from exhaustion , hunger and disease . Those who survived were released after serving their sentences ; these were generally Poles from nearby villages .

At any given time , Treblinka I had a workforce of 1 @,@ 000 ? 2 @,@ 000 prisoners , most of whom worked 12- to 14 @-@ hour shifts in the large quarry and later also harvested wood from the nearby forest as fuel for the open @-@ air crematoria in Treblinka II . There were German , Czech and French Jews among them , as well as Poles captured in ?apankas , farmers unable to deliver food requisitions , hostages trapped by chance , and people who attempted to harbour Jews outside the Jewish ghettos or who performed restricted actions without permits . Beginning in July 1942 , Jews and non @-@ Jews were separated . Women mainly worked in the sorting barracks , where they repaired and cleaned military clothing delivered by freight trains , while most of the men worked

at the gravel mine . There were no work uniforms , and inmates who lost their own shoes were forced to go barefoot or scavenge them from dead prisoners . Water was rationed , and punishments were regularly delivered at roll @-@ calls . From December 1943 the inmates were no longer carrying any specific sentences . The camp operated officially until 23 July 1944 , when the imminent arrival of Soviet forces led to its abandonment .

During its entire operation , Treblinka I 's commandant was Sturmbannführer Theodor van Eupen . He ran the camp with several SS men and almost 100 Hiwi guards . The quarry , spread over an area of 17 hectares (42 acres) , supplied road construction material for German military use and was part of the strategic road @-@ building programme in the war with the Soviet Union . It was equipped with a mechanical digger for shared use by both Treblinka I and II . Eupen worked closely with the SS and German police commanders in Warsaw during the deportation of Jews in early 1943 and had prisoners brought to him from the Warsaw Ghetto for the necessary replacements . According to Franciszek Z?becki , the local station master , Eupen often killed prisoners by " taking shots at them , as if they were partridges " . A widely feared overseer was Untersturmführer Franz Schwarz , who executed prisoners with a pickaxe or hammer .

= = = Treblinka II = = =

Treblinka II (officially the SS @-@ Sonderkommando Treblinka) was divided into three parts : Camp 1 was the administrative compound where the guards lived , Camp 2 was the receiving area where incoming transports of prisoners were offloaded , and Camp 3 was the location of the gas chambers . All three parts were built by two groups of German Jews expelled from Berlin and imprisoned at the Warsaw Ghetto (a total of 238 men from 17 to 35 years of age) . Hauptsturmführer Richard Thomalla , the head of construction , brought in German Jews because they could speak German . Construction began on 10 April 1942 , when Be??ec and Sobibór were already in operation . The entire death camp , which was either 17 hectares (42 acres) or 13 @.@ 5 hectares (33 acres) in size (sources vary) , was surrounded by two rows of barbed @-@ wire fencing 2 @.@ 5 metres (8 ft 2 in) tall . This fence was later woven with pine tree branches to obstruct the view of the camp . More Jews were brought in from the surrounding settlements to work on the new railway ramp within the Camp 2 receiving area , which was ready by June 1942 .

The first section of Treblinka II (Camp 1) was the Wohnlager administrative and residential compound ; it had a telephone line . The main road within the camp was paved and named Seidel Straße after Unterscharführer Kurt Seidel , the SS corporal who supervised its construction . A few side roads were lined with gravel . The main gate for road traffic was erected on the north side . Barracks were built with supplies delivered from Warsaw , Soko?ów Podlaski , and Kosów Lacki . There was a kitchen , a bakery , and dining rooms ; all were equipped with high @-@ quality items taken from Jewish ghettos . The Germans and Ukrainians each had their own sleeping quarters , positioned at an angle for better control of all entrances . There were also two barracks behind an inner fence for the Jewish work commandos . SS @-@ Untersturmführer Kurt Franz set up a small zoo in the centre next to his horse stables , with two foxes , two peacocks and a roe deer (brought in 1943) . Smaller rooms were built as laundry , tailors , and cobblers , and for woodworking and medical aid . Closest to the SS quarters were separate barracks for the Polish and Ukrainian serving , cleaning and kitchen women .

The next section of Treblinka II (Camp 2 , also called the lower camp or Auffanglager) , was the receiving area where the railway unloading ramp extended from the Treblinka line into the camp . There was a long and narrow platform surrounded by barbed @-@ wire fencing . A new building , erected on the platform , was disguised as a railway station complete with a wooden clock and fake rail terminal signs . SS @-@ Scharführer Josef Hirtreiter who worked on the unloading ramp was known for being especially cruel ; he grabbed crying toddlers by their feet and smashed their heads against wagons . Behind a second fence , about 100 metres (330 ft) from the track , there were two large barracks used for undressing , with a cashier 's booth which collected money and jewellery , ostensibly for safekeeping . Jews who resisted were taken away or beaten to death by the guards . The area where the women and children were shorn of their hair was on the other side of the path

from the men . All buildings in the lower camp , including the barber barracks , contained the piled up clothing and belongings of the prisoners . Next to the station building , further to the right , there was a Sorting Square where all baggage was first collected by the Lumpenkommando . It was flanked by fake infirmary called " Lazaret " , with the Red Cross sign on it . It was a small barracks surrounded by barbed wire where the sick , old , wounded and " difficult " prisoners were taken . Directly behind the " Lazaret " shack there was an open excavation pit seven metres (23 ft) deep . These prisoners were led to the edge of the pit and shot one at a time by Blockführer Willi Mentz , nicknamed " Frankenstein " by the inmates . Mentz single @-@ handedly executed thousands of Jews , aided by his supervisor , August Miete , who was called the " Angel of Death " by the prisoners . The pit was also used to burn old worn @-@ out clothes and identity papers deposited by new arrivals at the undressing area .

The third section of Treblinka II (Camp 3 , also called the upper camp) was the main killing zone with gas chambers at its centre . It was completely screened from the railway tracks by an earth bank built with the help of a mechanical digger . This mound was elongated in shape , similar to a retaining wall , and can be seen in a sketch produced during the 1967 trial of Treblinka II commandant Franz Stangl . On the other sides , the zone was camouflaged from new arrivals like the rest of the camp , using tree branches woven into barbed wire fences by the Tarnungskommando (the work detail led out to collect them) . From the undressing barracks there was a fenced @-@ off path leading through the forested area into the gas chambers . It was cynically called die Himmelstraße (" the road to heaven ") or der Schlauch (" the tube ") by the SS . For the first eight months of the camp 's operation , the excavator was used to dig burial ditches on both sides of the gas chambers ; these ditches were 50 metres (160 ft) long , 25 metres (82 ft) wide , and 10 metres (33 ft) deep . In early 1943 , they were replaced with cremation pyres up to 30 metres (98 ft) long , with rails laid across the pits on concrete blocks . The 300 prisoners who operated the upper camp lived in separate barracks behind the gas chambers .

= = Killing process = =

Unlike other Nazi concentration camps across German @-@ occupied Europe , in which prisoners were used as forced labour for the German war effort , death camps (Vernichtungslager) like Treblinka , Be??ec , and Sobibór had only one function : to kill those sent there . To prevent incoming victims from realising its nature , Treblinka II was disguised as a transit camp for deportations further east , complete with made @-@ up train schedules , a fake train @-@ station clock with hands painted on it , names of destinations , a fake ticket window , and the sign " Ober Majdan " , a code word for Treblinka commonly used to deceive passengers departing from Western Europe . Majdan was a prewar landed estate 5 kilometres (3 @. @ 1 mi) away from the camp .

= = = Polish Jews = = =

The mass deportation of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto began on 22 July 1942 with the first shipment of 6 @, @ 000 people . The gas chambers started operation the following morning . For the next two months , deportations from Warsaw continued on a daily basis via two shuttle trains (the second one , from 6 August 1942) , each carrying about 4 @, @ 000 to 7 @, @ 000 people crying for water . No other trains were allowed to stop at the Treblinka station . The first daily trains came in the early morning , often after an overnight wait , and the second , in mid @-@ afternoon . All new arrivals were sent immediately to the undressing area by the Sonderkommando squad that managed the arrival platform , and from there to the gas chambers . According to German records , including the official report by SS Brigadeführer Jürgen Stroop , 265 @, @ 000 Jews were transported in freight trains from the Warsaw Ghetto to Treblinka during the period from 22 July to 12 September 1942 .

The rail traffic on Polish railway lines was extremely dense . An average of 420 German military trains were passing through every 24 hours on top of internal traffic already in 1941 . The Holocaust trains were routinely delayed en route ; some transports took many days to arrive . Hundreds of

prisoners died from exhaustion , suffocation and thirst while in transit to the camp in the overcrowded wagons . In extreme cases such as the Bia?a Podlaska transport of 6 @,@ 000 Jews travelling only a 125 @-@ kilometre (78 mi) distance , up to 90 per cent of people were already dead when the sealed doors flew open . From September 1942 on , both Polish and foreign Jews were greeted with a brief verbal announcement . An earlier signboard with directions was removed because it was clearly insufficient . The deportees were told that they had arrived at a transit point on the way to Ukraine and needed to shower and have their clothes disinfected before receiving work uniforms and new orders .

= = = Foreign Jews and Romani people = = =

Treblinka received transports of almost 20 @,@ 000 foreign Jews between October 1942 and March 1943 , including 8 @,@ 000 from the German Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia via Theresienstadt , and over 11 @,@ 000 from Bulgarian @-@ occupied Thrace , Macedonia , and Pirot following an agreement with the Nazi @-@ allied Bulgarian government . They had train tickets and arrived predominantly in passenger carriages with considerable luggage , travel foods and drinks , all of which were taken by the SS to the food storage barracks . The provisions included such items as smoked mutton , speciality breads , wine , cheese , fruit , tea , coffee , and sweets . Unlike Polish Jews arriving in Holocaust trains from nearby ghettos in cities like Warsaw , Radom , and those of Bezirk Bialystok , the foreign Jews received a warm welcome upon arrival from an SS man (either Otto Stadie or Willy Mätzig) , after which they were killed like the others . Treblinka dealt mainly with Polish Jews , Be??ec handled the Jews from Austria and the Sudetenland , and Sobibór was the final destination for Jews from France and the Netherlands . Auschwitz @-@ Birkenau " processed " Jews from almost every other country in Europe . The frequency of arriving transports slowed down in winter .

The decoupled locomotive went back to the Treblinka station or to the layover yard in Ma?kinia for the next load , while the victims were pulled from the carriages onto the platform by Kommando Blau , one of the Jewish work details forced to assist the Germans at the camp . They were led through the gate amidst chaos and screaming . They were separated by gender behind the gate ; women were pushed into the undressing barracks and barber on the left , and men were sent to the right . All were ordered to tie their shoes together and strip . Some kept their own towels . The Jews who resisted were taken to the " Lazaret " , also called the " Red Cross infirmary " , and shot behind it . Women had their hair cut off ; therefore , it took longer to prepare them for the gas chambers than men . The hair was used in the manufacture of socks for U @-@ boat crews and hair @-@ felt footwear for the Deutsche Reichsbahn .

Most of those killed at Treblinka were Jews , but about 2 @,@ 000 Romani people also died there . Like the Jews , the Romani were first rounded up and sent to the ghettos ; at a conference on 30 January 1940 it was decided that all 30 @,@ 000 Romani living in Germany proper were to be deported to former Polish territory . Most of these were sent to Jewish ghettos in the General Government , such as those in Warsaw and ?ód? . As with the Jews , most Romani who went to Treblinka died in the gas chambers , although some were shot . The majority of the Jews living in ghettos were sent to Be??ec , Sobibór , or Treblinka to be executed ; most of the Romani living in the ghettos were shot on the spot . There were no known Romani escapees or survivors from Treblinka .

= = = Gas chambers = = =

After undressing , the newly arrived Jews were beaten with whips to drive them towards the gas chambers ; hesitant men were treated particularly brutally . Rudolf Höss , the commandant at Auschwitz , contrasted the practice at Treblinka of deceiving the victims about the showers with his own camp 's practice of telling them they had to go through a " delousing " process . According to the postwar testimony of some SS officers , men were always gassed first , while women and children waited outside the gas chambers for their turn . During this time , the women and children

could hear the sounds of suffering from inside the chambers , and they became aware of what awaited them , which caused panic , distress , and even involuntary defecation . According to Stangl , a train transport of about 3 @, @ 000 people could be " processed " in three hours . In a 14 @-@ hour workday , 12 @, @ 000 to 15 @, @ 000 people were killed . After the new gas chambers were built , the duration of the killing process was reduced to an hour and a half .

The gassing area was entirely closed off with tall wooden fencing made of vertical boards . Originally , it consisted of three interconnected barracks 8 metres (26 ft) long and 4 metres (13 ft) wide , disguised as showers . They had double walls insulated by earth packed down in between . The interior walls and ceilings were lined with roofing paper . The floors were covered with tin @-@ plated sheet metal , the same material used for the roof . Solid wooden doors were insulated with rubber and bolted from the outside by heavy cross @-@ bars . The victims were gassed with the exhaust fumes from the engine of a Red Army tank captured during Operation Barbarossa ; SS @-@ Scharführer Erich Fuchs was responsible for installing it . The engine was brought in by the SS at the time of the camp 's construction and housed in a room with a generator that supplied the camp with electricity . The tank engine exhaust pipe ran just below the ground and opened into all three gas chambers . The fumes could be seen seeping out . After about 20 minutes the bodies were removed by dozens of Sonderkommandos , placed onto carts and wheeled away . The system was imperfect and required a lot of effort ; trains that arrived later in the day had to wait on layover tracks overnight at Treblinka , Ma?kinia , or Wólka Okr?glik .

Between August and September 1942 , a large new building with a concrete foundation was built from bricks and mortar under the guidance of Action T4 euthanasia expert Erwin Lambert . It contained 8 ? 10 gas chambers , each of which was 8 metres by 4 metres (26 ft by 13 ft) , and it had a corridor in the centre . Stangl supervised its construction and brought in building materials from the nearby village of Ma?kinia by dismantling factory stock . During this time victims continued to arrive daily and were led naked past the building site to the original gas chambers . The new gas chambers became operational after five weeks of construction , equipped with two fume @-@ producing engines instead of one . The metal doors , which had been taken from Soviet military bunkers around Bia?ystok , had portholes through which it was possible to observe the dead before removing them . Stangl said that the old death chambers were capable of killing 3 @, @ 000 people in three hours . The new ones had the highest possible " output " of any gas chambers in the three Reinhard death camps and could kill up to 22 @, @ 000 or 25 @, @ 000 people every day , a fact which Globocnik once boasted about to Kurt Gerstein , a fellow SS officer from Disinfection Services . The new gas chambers were seldom used to their full capacity ; 12 @, @ 000 ? 15 @, @ 000 victims remained the daily average .

The killing process at Treblinka differed significantly from the method used at Auschwitz and Majdanek , where the poison gas Zyklon B (hydrogen cyanide) was used . At Treblinka , Sobibór , and Be??ec , the victims died from suffocation and carbon monoxide poisoning . After visiting Treblinka on a guided tour , Auschwitz commandant Rudolf Höss concluded that using exhaust gas was inferior to the cyanide used at his extermination camp . The chambers became silent after 12 minutes and were closed for 20 minutes or less . According to Jankiel Wiernik , who survived the 1943 prisoner uprising and escaped , when the doors of the gas chambers had been opened , the bodies of the dead were standing and kneeling rather than lying down , due to the severe overcrowding . Dead mothers embraced the bodies of their children . Prisoners who worked in the Sonderkommandos later testified that the dead frequently let out a last gasp of air when they were extracted from the chambers . Some victims showed signs of life during the disposal of the corpses , but the guards routinely refused to react .

= = = Cremation pits = = =

The Germans became aware of the political danger associated with the mass burial of corpses in early 1943 , when they discovered the Polish victims of the Soviet Katyn massacre of 1940 near occupied Smolensk . Those 22 @, @ 000 officers ' bodies were well preserved underground , attesting to the Soviet mass murder . By April 1943 , Nazi propaganda began to draw the attention

of the international community to this war crime using newsfilm . The Germans brought in a group of twelve forensic experts from various European countries to prove their claim . The Katyn Commission examined the bodies in detail , and the summary report on the findings of the commission concluded that the Soviets were solely responsible . The Germans attempted to use the commission 's results to drive a wedge between the Allies . Subsequently , the secret orders to exhume the corpses buried at Treblinka and burn them came directly from the Nazi leadership , possibly from Himmler , who was very concerned about covering up Nazi crimes . The cremations began shortly after his visit to the camp in late February or early March 1943 .

To incinerate bodies , there were large cremation pits constructed at Camp 3 within Treblinka II . The burning pyres were used to cremate the new corpses along with the old ones , which had to be dug up as they had been buried during the first six months of the camp 's operation . Built under the instructions of Herbert Floß , the camp 's cremation expert , the pits consisted of railroad rails laid as grates on blocks of concrete . The bodies were placed on rails over wood , splashed with petrol , and burned . It was a harrowing sight , according to Jankiel Wiernik , with the bellies of pregnant women exploding from boiling amniotic fluid . He wrote that " the heat radiating from the pits was maddening . " The bodies burned for five hours , without the ashing of bones . The pyres operated 24 hours a day . Once the system had been perfected , 10 @, @ 000 ? 12 @, @ 000 bodies at a time could be incinerated .

The open air burn pits were located east of the new gas chambers and refuelled from 4 a.m. (or after 5 a.m. depending on work @-@ load) to 6 p.m. in roughly 5 @-@ hour intervals . The current camp memorial includes a flat grave marker resembling one of them . It is constructed from melted basalt and has a concrete foundation . It is a symbolic grave , as the Nazis spread the actual human ashes , mixed with sand , over 22 @, @ 000 square metres (237 @, @ 000 square feet) .

= = Organization of the camp = =

The camp was operated by 20 ? 25 German and Austrian members of the SS @-@ Totenkopfverbände and 80 ? 120 Wachmänner (" watchmen ") guards who had been trained at a special SS facility in the Trawniki concentration camp near Lublin , Poland ; all Wachmänner guards were trained at Trawniki . The guards were mainly ethnic German Volksdeutsche from the east and Ukrainians , with some Russians , Tatars , Moldovans , Latvians , and Central Asians , all of whom had served in the Red Army . They were enlisted by Karl Streibel , the commander of the Trawniki camp , from the prisoner of war (POW) camps for Soviet soldiers . The degree to which their recruitment was voluntary remains disputed ; while conditions in the Soviet POW camps were dreadful , some Soviet POWs collaborated with the Germans even before cold , hunger , and disease began devastating the POW camps in mid @-@ September 1941 .

The work at Treblinka was carried out under threat of death by Jewish prisoners organised into specialised Sonderkommando squads or work details . At the Camp 2 Auffanglager receiving area each squad had a different coloured triangle . The triangles made it impossible for new arrivals to try to blend in with members of the work details . The blue unit (Kommando Blau) managed the rail ramp and unlocked the freight wagons . They met the new arrivals , carried out people who had died en route , removed bundles , and cleaned the wagon floors . The red unit (Kommando Rot) , which was the largest squad , unpacked and sorted the belongings of victims after they had been " processed " . The red unit delivered these belongings to the storage barracks , which were managed by the yellow unit (Kommando Gelb) , who separated the items by quality , removed the Star of David from all outer garments , and extracted any money sewn into the linings . The yellow unit was followed by the Desinfektionskommando , who disinfected the belongings , including sacks of hair from " processed " women . The Goldjuden unit (" gold Jews ") collected and counted banknotes and evaluated the gold and jewellery .

A different group of about 300 men , called the Totenjuden (" Jews of death ") , lived and worked in Camp 3 across from the gas chambers . For the first six months they took the corpses away for burial after gold teeth had been extracted . Once cremation began in early 1943 they took the corpses to the pits , refuelled the pyres , crushed the remaining bones with mallets , and collected

the ashes for disposal . Each trainload of " deportees " brought to Treblinka consisted of an average of sixty heavily guarded wagons . They were divided into three sets of twenty at the layover yard . Each set was processed within the first two hours of backing onto the ramp , and was then made ready by the Sonderkommandos to be exchanged for the next set of twenty wagons .

Members of all work units were continuously beaten by the guards and often shot or hanged at the gallows . Only the strongest men were selected from new arrivals daily to obtain the necessary replacements . There were other work details which had no contact with the transports : the Holzfällerkommando (" woodcutter unit ") cut and chopped firewood , and the Tarnungskommando (" disguise unit ") camouflaged the structures of the camp . Another work detail was responsible for cleaning the common areas . The Camp 1 Wohnlager residential compound contained barracks for about 700 Sonderkommandos which , when combined with the 300 Totenjuden living across from the gas chambers , brought their grand total to roughly one thousand at a time .

Going to work bloodied and bruised would lead to execution . If a prisoner was beaten and sustained black eyes , open wounds and severe swelling , he was called a klepsydra (Greek for " water clock " , the Polish word klepsydra is a synonym for " obituary ") by the other prisoners and most likely shot that evening at roll call or the next day if the bruised cheeks began to swell up . Many Sonderkommando prisoners hanged themselves at night . Suicides in the Totenjuden barracks occurred at the rate of 15 to 20 per day . The work crews ? usually unable to eat or sleep from fear and anxiety ? were almost entirely replaced every few days ; members of the old work detail were sent to their deaths except for the most resilient .

= = Treblinka prisoner uprising = =

In early 1943 , an underground Jewish resistance organisation was formed at Treblinka with the goal of seizing control of the camp and escaping to freedom . The planned revolt was preceded by a long period of secret preparations . The clandestine unit was first organised by a former Jewish captain of the Polish Army , Dr. Julian Chor??ycki , who was described by fellow plotter Samuel Rajzman as noble and essential to the action . His organising committee included Zelomir Bloch (leadership) , Rudolf Masaryk , Marcelli Galewski , Samuel Rajzman , Dr. Irena Lewkowska (" Irka " , from the sick bay for the Hiwis) , Leon Haberman , Hershl (Henry) Sperling from Cz??stochowa , and several others . Chor??ycki (who treated the German patients) killed himself with poison on 19 April 1943 when faced with imminent capture , so that the Germans could not discover the plot by torturing him . The next leader was another former Polish Army officer , Dr. Berek Lajcher , who arrived on 1 May . Born in Cz??stochowa , he had practised medicine in Wyszaków and was expelled by the Nazis to Wegrów in 1939 .

The initial date of the revolt was set for 15 June 1943 , but it had to be postponed . A fighter smuggled a grenade in one of the early May trains carrying captured rebels from the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising , which had begun on 19 April 1943 . When he detonated it in the undressing area , the SS and guards were thrown into a panic . After the explosion , Treblinka received only about 7 @, @ 000 Jews from the capital for fear of similar incidents ; the remaining 42 @, @ 000 Warsaw Jews were deported to Majdanek , instead . The burning of unearthed corpses continued at full speed until the end of July . The Treblinka II conspirators became increasingly concerned about their future as the amount of work for them began to decline . With fewer transports arriving , they realised " they were next in line for the gas chambers . "

= = Day of the revolt and survivors = =

The uprising was launched on the hot summer day of 2 August 1943 (Monday , a regular day of rest from gassing) , when a group of Germans and 40 Ukrainians drove off to the River Bug to swim . The conspirators silently unlocked the door to the arsenal near the train tracks , with a key that had been duplicated earlier . They had stolen 20 ? 25 rifles , 20 hand grenades , and several pistols , and delivered them in a cart to the gravel work detail . At 3 : 45 p.m. , 700 Jews launched an insurgency that lasted for 30 minutes . They set buildings ablaze , exploded a tank of petrol , and set

fire to the surrounding structures . A group of armed Jews attacked the main gate , and others attempted to climb the fence . Machine @-@ gun fire from about 25 Germans and 60 Ukrainian Trawniki resulted in near @-@ total slaughter . Lajcher was killed along with most of the insurgents . About 200 Jews escaped from the camp . Half of them were killed after a chase in cars and on horses . The Jews did not cut the phone wires , and Stangl called in hundreds of German reinforcements , who arrived from four different towns and set up roadblocks along the way . Partisans of the Armia Krajowa (Polish : Home Army) transported some of the surviving escapees across the river and others like Sperling ran 30 kilometres (19 miles) and were then helped and fed by Polish villagers . Of those who broke through , around 70 are known to have survived until the end of the war , including the future authors of published Treblinka memoirs : Richard Glazar , Chil Rajchman , Jankiel Wiernik , and Samuel Willenberg .

Among the Jewish prisoners who escaped after setting fire to the camp , there were two 19 @-@ year @-@ olds , Samuel Willenberg and Kalman Taigman , who had both arrived in 1942 and had been forced to work there under pain of death . Taigman died in 2012 and Willenberg in 2016 . Taigman stated of his experience , " It was hell , absolutely hell . A normal man cannot imagine how a living person could have lived through it ? killers , natural @-@ born killers , who without a trace of remorse just murdered every little thing . " Willenberg and Taigman emigrated to Israel after the war and devoted their last years to retelling the story of Treblinka . Escapees Hershl Sperling and Richard Glazar both suffered from survivor guilt syndrome and eventually killed themselves .

= = = After the uprising = = =

In spite of the revolt , Treblinka II continued to function and remained a top priority for the SS for another year . Stangl met the head of Operation Reinhard , Odilo Globocnik , and inspector Christian Wirth in Lublin , and decided not to draft a report , as no native Germans had died putting down the revolt . Stangl wanted to rebuild the camp , but Globocnik told him it would be closed down shortly and Stangl would be transferred to Trieste to help fight the partisans there . The Nazi high command may have felt that Stangl , Globocnik , Wirth , and other Reinhard personnel knew too much and wanted to dispose of them by sending them to the front . With almost all the Jews from the German ghettos (established in Poland) killed , there would have been little point in rebuilding the facility . Auschwitz had enough capacity to fulfil the Nazis ' remaining extermination needs , rendering Treblinka redundant .

The camp 's new commandant Kurt Franz , formerly its deputy commandant , took over in August . After the war he testified that gassings had stopped by then . In reality , despite the extensive damage to the camp , the gas chambers were intact , and the killing of Polish Jews continued . Speed was reduced , with only ten wagons rolled onto the ramp at a time , while the others had to wait . The last two rail transports of Jews were brought to the camp for gassing from the Bia?ystok Ghetto on 18 and 19 August 1943 . They consisted of 78 wagons (37 the first day and 39 the second) , according to a communiqué published by the Office of Information of the Armia Krajowa , based on observation of Holocaust trains passing through the village of Treblinka . The 39 wagons that came to Treblinka on 19 August 1943 were carrying at least 7 @,@ 600 survivors of the Bia?ystok Ghetto Uprising .

On 19 October 1943 , Operation Reinhard was terminated by a letter from Odilo Globocnik . The following day , a large group of Jewish Arbeitskommandos who had worked on dismantling the camp structures over the previous few weeks were loaded onto the train and transported , via Siedlce and Che?m , to Sobibór to be gassed on 20 October 1943 . Franz followed Globocnik and Stangl to Trieste in November . Clean @-@ up operations continued over the winter . As part of these operations , Jews from the surviving work detail dismantled the gas chambers brick @-@ by @-@ brick and used them to erect a farmhouse on the site of the camp 's former bakery . Globocnik confirmed its purpose as a secret guard post for a Nazi @-@ Ukrainian agent to remain behind the scenes , in a letter he sent to Himmler from Trieste on 5 January 1944 . A Hiwi guard called Oswald Strebel , a Ukrainian Volksdeutscher (ethnic German) , was given permission to bring his family from Ukraine for " reasons of surveillance " , wrote Globocnik ; Strebel had worked as a guard at

Treblinka II . He was instructed to tell visitors that he had been farming there for decades , but the local Poles were well aware of the existence of the camp .

= = Operational command of Treblinka II = =

= = = Irmfried Eberl = = =

SS @-@ Obersturmführer Irmfried Eberl was appointed the camp 's first commandant on 11 July 1942 . He was a psychiatrist from Bernburg Euthanasia Centre and the only physician @-@ in @-@ chief to command an extermination camp during World War II . According to some , his poor organisational skills caused the operation of Treblinka to turn disastrous ; others point out that the number of transports that were coming in reflected the Nazi high command 's wildly unrealistic expectations of Treblinka 's ability to " process " these prisoners . The early gassing machinery frequently broke down due to overuse , forcing the SS to shoot Jews assembled for suffocation . The workers did not have enough time to bury them , and the mass graves were overflowing . According to the testimony of his colleague Unterscharführer Hans Hingst , Eberl 's ego and thirst for power exceeded his ability : " So many transports arrived that the disembarkation and gassing of the people could no longer be handled . " On incoming Holocaust trains to Treblinka , many of the Jews locked inside correctly guessed what was going to happen to them . The odour of decaying corpses could be smelled up to 10 kilometres (6 @. @ 2 miles) away .

Oskar Berger , a Jewish eyewitness who escaped during the 1943 uprising , told of the camp 's state when he arrived there in August 1942 :

When we were unloaded , we noticed a paralysing view ? all over the place there were hundreds of human bodies . Piles of packages , clothes , suitcases , everything in a mess . German and Ukrainian SS @-@ men stood at the corners of the barracks and were shooting blindly into the crowd .

When Odilo Globocnik made a surprise visit to Treblinka on 26 August 1942 with Christian Wirth and Wirth 's adjutant from Be??ec , Josef Oberhauser , Eberl was dismissed on the spot . Among the reasons for dismissal were : incompetently disposing of the tens of thousands of dead bodies , using inefficient methods of killing , and not properly concealing the mass killing . Eberl was transferred to Berlin , closer to operational headquarters in Hitler 's Chancellery , where the main architect of the Holocaust , Heinrich Himmler , had just stepped up the pace of the programme . Globocnik assigned Wirth to remain in Treblinka temporarily to help clean up the camp . On 28 August 1942 , Globocnik suspended deportations . He chose Franz Stangl , who had previously been the commandant of the Sobibór extermination camp , to assume command of the camp as Eberl 's successor . Stangl had a reputation as a competent administrator with a good understanding of the project 's objectives , and Globocnik trusted that he would be capable of resuming control .

= = = Franz Stangl = = =

Stangl arrived at Treblinka in late August 1942 . He replaced Eberl on 1 September . Years later , he described what he first saw when he came on the scene , in a 1971 interview with Gitta Sereny :

The road ran alongside the railway . When we were about fifteen , twenty minutes ' drive from Treblinka , we began to see corpses by the line , first just two or three , then more , and as we drove into Treblinka station , there were what looked like hundreds of them ? just lying there ? they 'd obviously been there for days , in the heat . In the station was a train full of Jews , some dead , some still alive ... that too , looked as if it had been there for days .

Stangl reorganised the camp , and the transports of Warsaw and Radom Jews began to arrive again on 3 September 1942 . According to Israeli historian Yitzhak Arad , Stangl wanted the camp to look attractive , so he ordered the paths paved in the Wohnlager administrative compound . Flowers were planted along Seidel Straße as well as near the SS living quarters . He ordered that all arriving

prisoners should be greeted by the SS with a verbal announcement translated by the working Jews . The deportees were told that they were at a transit point on the way to Ukraine . Some of their questions were answered by Germans wearing lab coats as tools for deception . At times Stangl carried a whip and wore a white uniform , so he was nicknamed the " White Death " by prisoners . Although he was directly responsible for the camp 's operations , according to his own testimony Stangl limited his contact with Jewish prisoners as much as possible . He claimed that he rarely interfered with the cruel acts perpetrated by his subordinate officers at the camp . He became desensitised to the killings , and came to perceive prisoners not as humans but merely as " cargo " that had to be destroyed , he said .

= = = Treblinka song = = =

According to postwar testimonies , when transports were temporarily halted , then @-@ deputy commandant Kurt Franz wrote lyrics to a song meant to celebrate the Treblinka extermination camp . In reality , prisoner Walter Hirsch wrote them for him . The melody came from something Franz remembered from Buchenwald . The music was upbeat , in the key of D major . The song was taught to the newly arriving Jews assigned to work in the Sonderkommando . They were forced to memorise it by nightfall of their first day at the camp . Survivor Samuel Willenberg remembered the song beginning : " With firm steps we march ... " Years later , Unterscharführer Franz Suchomel recalled the lyrics as follows : " We know only the word of the Commander . / We know only obedience and duty . / We want to keep working , working , / until a bit of luck beckons us some time . Hurray ! "

A musical ensemble was formed , under duress , by Artur Gold , a popular Jewish prewar composer from Warsaw . He arranged the theme to the Treblinka song for the 10 @-@ piece prisoner orchestra which he conducted . Gold arrived in Treblinka in 1942 and played music in the SS mess hall at the Wohnlager on German orders . He died during the uprising .

= = = Kurt Franz = = =

After the Treblinka revolt in August 1943 and termination of Operation Reinhard in October 1943 , Stangl went with Globocnik to Trieste in northern Italy where SS reinforcements were needed . The third and last Treblinka II commandant was Kurt Franz , nicknamed " Lalka " (Polish : the doll) by the prisoners because he had " an innocent face " . According to survivor Hershl Sperling , as deputy commandant Franz beat prisoners to death for minor infractions or had his dog Barry tear them to pieces . He managed Treblinka II until November 1943 . The subsequent clean @-@ up of the Treblinka II perimeter was completed by prisoners of nearby Treblinka I Arbeitslager in the following months . Franz 's deputy was Hauptscharführer Fritz Küttner , who maintained a network of Sonderkommando informers and did the hands @-@ on killings .

Kurt Franz maintained a photo album against orders never to take photographs inside Treblinka . He named it Schöne Zeiten (" Good Times ") . His album is a rare source of images illustrating the mechanised grave digging , brickworks in Ma?kinia and the Treblinka zoo , among others . Franz was careful not to photograph the gas chambers .

The Treblinka I gravel mine functioned at full capacity under the command of Theodor van Eupen until July 1944 , with new forced labourers sent to him by Kreishauptmann Ernst Gramss from Soko?ów . The mass shootings continued into 1944 . With Soviet troops closing in , the last 300 to 700 Sonderkommandos disposing of the incriminating evidence were executed by Trawniki in late July 1944 , long after the camp 's official closure . Strebel , the ethnic German who had been installed in the farmhouse built in place of the camp 's original bakery using bricks from the gas chambers , set fire to the building and fled to avoid capture .

= = Arrival of the Soviets = =

In late July 1944 , Soviet forces began to approach from the east . The departing Germans who

already destroyed most direct evidence of genocidal intent burned surrounding villages to the ground , including 761 buildings in Poniatowo , Prostý , and Gród . Many families were killed . The fields of grain that once fed the SS were burned . On 19 August 1944 , German forces blew up the church in Prostý and its bell tower , the last defensive strongpoint against the Red Army in the area . When the Soviets entered Treblinka on 16 August , the extermination zone had been levelled , ploughed over , and planted with lupins . What remained , wrote visiting Soviet war correspondent Vasily Grossman , were small pieces of bone in the soil , human teeth , scraps of paper and fabric , broken dishes , jars , shaving brushes , rusted pots and pans , cups of all sizes , mangled shoes , and lumps of human hair . The road leading to the camp was pitch black . Until mid - 1944 human ashes (up to 20 carts every day) had been regularly strewn by the remaining prisoners along the road for 2 kilometres (1 @ 2 miles) in the direction of Treblinka I. When the war ended , destitute and starving locals started walking up the Black Road (as they began to call it) in search of man @-@ made nuggets shaped from melted gold in order to buy bread .

= = = Early attempts at preservation = = =

The new Soviet @-@ installed government did not preserve evidence of the camp . The scene was not legally protected at the conclusion of World War II . In September 1947 , 30 students from the local school , led by their teacher Feliks Szturo and priest Józef Ruciński , collected larger bones and skull fragments into farmers ' wicker baskets and buried them in a single mound . The same year the first remembrance committee Komitet Uczczenia Ofiar Treblinki (KUOT ; Committee for the Remembrance of the Victims of Treblinka) formed in Warsaw , and launched a design competition for the memorial .

Stalinist officials allocated no funding for the design competition nor for the memorial , and the committee disbanded in 1948 ; by then many survivors had left the country . In 1949 , the town of Sokołów Podlaski protected the camp with a new fence and gate . A work crew with no archaeological experience was sent in to landscape the grounds . In 1958 , after the end of Stalinism in Poland , the Warsaw provincial council declared Treblinka to be a place of martyrology . Over the next four years , 127 hectares (318 acres) of land that had formed part of the camp was purchased from 192 farmers in the villages of Prostý , Gród , Wólka Okręglika and Nowa Maliszewa .

= = = Construction of the memorial = = =

The construction of a monument 8 metres (26 ft) tall designed by sculptor Franciszek Duszyński was inaugurated on 21 April 1958 with the laying of the cornerstone at the site of the former gas chambers . The sculpture represents the trend toward large avant @-@ garde forms introduced in the 1960s throughout Europe , with a granite tower cracked down the middle and capped by a mushroom @-@ like block carved with abstract reliefs and Jewish symbols . Treblinka was declared a national monument of martyrology on 10 May 1964 during an official ceremony attended by 30 @,@ 000 people . The monument was unveiled by Zenon Kliszko , the Marshal of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland , in the presence of survivors of the Treblinka uprising from Israel , France , Czechoslovakia and Poland . The camp custodian 's house (built nearby in 1960) was turned into an exhibition space following the collapse of communism in Poland in 1989 and the retirement of the custodian ; it opened in 2006 . It was later expanded and made into a branch of the Siedlce Regional Museum .

= = Death count = =

There are many estimates of the total number of people killed at Treblinka ; most scholarly estimates range from 700 @,@ 000 to 900 @,@ 000 , meaning that more Jews died at Treblinka than at any other Nazi extermination camp apart from Auschwitz . The Treblinka museum in Poland states that at least 800 @,@ 000 people died at Treblinka ; Yad Vashem , which is Israel 's

Holocaust museum , puts the number killed at 870 @,@ 000 ; and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum gives a range of 870 @,@ 000 to 925 @,@ 000 .

= = = First estimates = = =

The first estimate of the number of people killed at Treblinka came from Vasily Grossman , a Soviet war reporter who visited Treblinka in July 1944 as the Soviet forces marched westward across Poland . He published an article called " The Hell Called Treblinka " , which appeared in the November 1944 issue of Znamya , a monthly Russian literary magazine . In the article he claimed that 3 million people had been killed at Treblinka . He may not have been aware that the short station platform at Treblinka II greatly reduced the number of wagons that could be unloaded at one time , and may have been adhering to the Soviet trend of exaggerating Nazi crimes for propaganda purposes . In 1947 the Polish historian Zdzisław Łukaszkiewicz estimated the death count as 780 @,@ 000 , based on the accepted record of 156 transports with an average of 5 @,@ 000 prisoners each .

= = = Court exhibits and affidavits = = =

The Treblinka trials of the 1960s took place in Düsseldorf and produced the two official West German estimates . During the 1965 trial of Kurt Franz , the Court of Assize in Düsseldorf concluded that at least 700 @,@ 000 people were killed at Treblinka , following a report by Dr. Helmut Krausnick , director of the Institute for Contemporary History in Munich . During Franz Stangl 's trial in 1969 the same court reassessed the number to be at least 900 @,@ 000 after new evidence from Dr. Wolfgang Scheffler .

A chief witness for the prosecution at Düsseldorf in the 1965 , 1966 , 1968 and 1970 trials was Franciszek Żbecki , who was employed by the Deutsche Reichsbahn as a rail traffic controller at Treblinka village from 22 May 1941 . In 1977 he published his book Old and New Memories , in which he used his own records to estimate that at least 1 @,@ 200 @,@ 000 people died at Treblinka . His estimate was based on the maximum capacity of a trainset during the Grossaktion Warsaw of 1942 rather than its yearly average . The original German waybills in his possession did not have the number of prisoners listed . Żbecki , a Polish member of railway staff before the war , was one of the few non @-@ German witnesses to see most transports that came into the camp ; he was present at the Treblinka station when the first Holocaust train arrived from Warsaw . Żbecki was a member of the Armia Krajowa (Polish : Home Army) , which formed most of the Polish resistance movement in World War II , and kept a daily record of the extermination transports . He also clandestinely photographed the burning Treblinka II perimeter during the uprising in August 1943 . Żbecki witnessed the last set of five enclosed freight wagons carrying Sonderkommandos to the Sobibór gas chambers on 20 October 1943 . In 2013 , his son Piotr Żbecki wrote an article about him for Życie Siedleckie that revised the number to 1 @,@ 297 @,@ 000 . Żbecki 's daily records of transports to the camp , and demographic information regarding the number of people deported from each ghetto to Treblinka , were the two main sources for estimates of the death toll .

In his 1987 book Belzec , Sobibor , Treblinka : The Operation Reinhard Death Camps , Israeli historian Yitzhak Arad stated that at least 763 @,@ 000 people were killed at Treblinka between July 1942 and April 1943 . A considerable number of other estimates followed : see table (below) .

= = = Höfle Telegram = = =

A further source of information became available in 2001 . The Höfle Telegram was an encrypted message sent to Berlin on 31 December 1942 by Operation Reinhard deputy commander Hermann Höfle , detailing the number of Jews deported by DRB to each Reinhard death camp up to that point . Discovered among declassified documents in Britain , it shows that by the official count of the German Transport Authority 713 @,@ 555 Jews were sent to Treblinka in 1942 . The number of deaths was probably higher , according to the Armia Krajowa communiqués . On the basis of the

telegram and additional undated German evidence for 1943 listing 67 @, @ 308 people deported , historian Jacek Andrzej M?ynarczyk calculated that by the official DRB count , 780 @, @ 863 people were brought by Deutsche Reichsbahn to Treblinka .

= = = Table of estimates = = =

The information in the rows with an empty last column comes from Dam im imi? na wieki , page 114 .

= = Treblinka trials = =

The first official trial for war crimes committed at Treblinka was held in Düsseldorf between 12 October 1964 and 24 August 1965 , preceded by the 1951 trial of SS @-@ Scharführer Josef Hirtreiter , which was triggered by charges of war crimes unrelated to his service at the camp . The trial was delayed because the United States and the Soviet Union had lost interest in prosecuting German war crimes with the onset of the Cold War . Many of the more than 90 @, @ 000 Nazi war criminals recorded in German files were serving in positions of prominence under West German chancellor Konrad Adenauer . In 1964 and 1965 eleven former SS camp personnel were brought to trial by West Germany , including commandant Kurt Franz . He was sentenced to life imprisonment , along with Artur Matthes (Totenlager) and Willi Mentz and August Miete (both from Lazaret) . Gustav Münzberger (gas chambers) received 12 years , Franz Suchomel (gold and money) 7 years , Otto Stadie (operation) 6 years , Erwin Lambert (gas chambers) 4 years , and Albert Rum (Totenlager) 3 years . Otto Horn (corpse detail) was acquitted .

The second commandant of Treblinka II , Franz Stangl , escaped with his wife and children from Austria to Brazil in 1951 . Stangl found work at a Volkswagen factory in São Paulo . His role in the mass murder of Jews was known to the Austrian authorities , but Austria did not issue a warrant for his arrest until 1961 . Stangl was registered under his real name at the Austrian consulate in Brazil . It took another six years before the famous Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal tracked him down and triggered his arrest . After his extradition from Brazil to West Germany Stangl was tried for the deaths of around 900 @, @ 000 people . He admitted to the killings but argued : " My conscience is clear . I was simply doing my duty . " Stangl was found guilty on 22 October 1970 , and sentenced to life imprisonment . He died of heart failure in prison in Düsseldorf on 28 June 1971 .

= = = Material gain = = =

The theft of cash and valuables , collected from the victims of gassing , was conducted by the higher @-@ ranking SS men on an enormous scale . It was a common practice among the concentration camps ' top echelon everywhere ; two Majdanek concentration camp commandants , Koch and Florstedt , were tried and executed by the SS for the same offence in April 1945 . When the top @-@ ranking officers went home , they would sometimes request a private locomotive from Klinzman and Emmerich at the Treblinka station to transport their personal " gifts " to Ma?kinia for a connecting train . Then , they would drive out of the camp in cars without any incriminating evidence on their person , and later arrive at Ma?kinia to transfer the goods .

The overall amount of material gain by Nazi Germany is unknown except for the period between 22 August and 21 September 1942 , when there were 243 wagons of goods sent and recorded . Globocnik delivered a written tally to Reinhard headquarters on 15 December 1943 with the SS profit of RM 178 @, @ 745 @, @ 960 @. @ 59 , including 2 @, @ 909 @. @ 68 kilograms of gold (6 @, @ 415 lb) , 18 @, @ 733 @. @ 69 kg of silver (41 @, @ 300 lb) , 1 @, @ 514 kg of platinum (3 @, @ 338 lb) , and 249 @, @ 771 @. @ 50 American dollars , as well as 130 diamond solitaires , 2 @, @ 511 @. @ 87 carats of brilliants , 13 @, @ 458 @. @ 62 carats of diamonds , and 114 kg of pearls (251 lb) . The amount of loot Globocnik stole is unknown ; Suchomel claimed in court to have filled a box with one million Reichsmarks for him .

= = Archaeological studies = =

Neither the Jewish religious leaders in Poland nor the authorities allowed archaeological excavations at the camp out of respect for the dead . Approval for a limited archaeological study was issued for the first time in 2010 to a British team from Staffordshire University using non @-@ invasive technology and Lidar remote sensing . The soil resistance was analysed at the site with ground @-@ penetrating radar . Features that appeared to be structural were found , two of which were thought to be the remains of the gas chambers , and the study was allowed to continue .

The archaeological team performing the search discovered three new mass graves . The remains were reinterred out of respect for the victims . At the second dig the findings included yellow tiles stamped with a pierced mullet star resembling a Star of David , and building foundations with a wall . The star was soon identified as the logo of Polish ceramics factory manufacturing floor tiles , founded by Jan Dziejwski and brothers Józef and Władysław Lange (Dziejwski i Lange ? D ? L since 1886) , nationalised and renamed under communism after the war . As explained by forensic archaeologist Caroline Sturdy Colls , the new evidence was important because the second gas chambers built at Treblinka were housed in the only brick building in the camp ; Colls claimed that this provides the first physical evidence for their existence . In his memoir describing his stay in the camp , survivor Jankiel Wiernik says that the floor in the gas chambers (which he helped build) was made of similar tiles . The discoveries became a subject of the 2014 documentary by the Smithsonian Channel . Colls ' claims regarding the floor tiles are controversial . It has been noted that the imprint of the Star of David is on the back of the tiles , and would have not been visible . More forensic work has been planned .

= = March of the Living = =

Treblinka museum receives most visitors per day during the annual March of the Living educational programme which brings young people from around the world to Poland , to explore the remnants of the Holocaust . The visitors whose primary destination is the march at Auschwitz II @-@ Birkenau , visit Treblinka in the preceding days . In 2009 , 300 Israeli students attended the ceremony led by Eli Shaish from the Ministry of Education . In total 4 @, @ 000 international students visited . In 2013 the number of students who came , ahead of the Auschwitz commemorations , was 3 @, @ 571 . In 2014 , 1 @, @ 500 foreign students visited .

= = Operation Reinhard leadership and Treblinka commandants = =

For a more comprehensive list , see List of individuals responsible for Treblinka extermination camp .