SURVIVORS FROM THE WÖBBELIN CONCENTRATION CAMP BEING EVACUATED TO AN AMERICAN FIELD HOSPITAL ON MAY 4, 1945. This camp near the city of Ludwigslust had been established in February 1945 as a subcamp of Neuengamme to accommodate inmates marched under brutal conditions from other camps threatened by the advancing armies of the Allies. The Wöbbelin camp was only in operation for approximately three months, but its inmates suffered horrible conditions. When American forces liberated the camp on May 2, 1945, they found approximately 5,000 dead and dying prisoners, some of whom had been forced to resort to cannibalism in order to survive. US Army officials ordered German citizens of the nearby city of Ludwigslust to visit the camp and assist in the burial of the dead victims. Although many inmates of the camp had been forced to work in the surrounding areas, many locals denied all knowledge of this practice and of the camp itself.

Photo credit: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Arnold Bauer Barach.
Signed only “Carolus,” this map was hand-drawn in late April 1945 by a survivor of Buchenwald in order to illustrate the killing facilities in the camp’s converted horse stables. Although Buchenwald primarily functioned as a detention and concentration site and not a killing center like Majdanek or Belżec, many concentration camps in the Nazi network also contained such industrialized killing operations. This map was drawn a mere ten days after American troops liberated Buchenwald.
The Genickschuss [execution by a shot in the neck] facility of the SS in the horse stables at the Buchenwald Concentration Camp

A corpse a minute

Explanation: After exiting the transport vehicle, the prisoners went into a so-called dressing room to undress and hand over their valuables, papers, and identification badges. Then they were forced individually into the so-called doctors' office by loud music and under the rifle butts of the SS. There SS officers disguised as doctors carried out official examinations. Once declared healthy, the victims' body size was measured. With a knock for a signal, the SS shooters opened the shutter and through the 2 cm slit shot the prisoners in the neck. The corpses were immediately removed and the bloody space cleaned with a hose. In this way, thousands of prisoners were assassinated by the Nazi cowards!
**SUGGESTED APPROACHES TO THIS DOCUMENT**

**QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION:**

- How did camp authorities use deception and illusion to facilitate mass killing?
- Does this document suggest any evidence that the perpetrators attempted to make the site of mass killings more comfortable for themselves?
- What does this document indicate about the connections between Nazi practices of destruction and systematic theft?
- What does this map show about the planning and processes of killing?

**FURTHER RESEARCH TOPICS RELATED TO THIS DOCUMENT:**

- Buchenwald and other prewar Nazi concentration camps
- Nazi practices of mass killing and genocide
- Nazi anti-Jewish persecution and the origins of the so-called *Endlösung* (Final Solution)
- Practices of deception and systematic theft within the context of industrialized killing
SMOKE FROM A PYRE OF BURNING CORPSES RISING OVER MAJDANEK AS SEEN FROM THE NEARBY VILLAGE OF DZIESIĄTA IN OCTOBER 1943. Photographs like this reveal how the Nazi camp system and its genocidal practices were never fully removed from the outside civilian world. Construction of the camp at Majdanek was first begun when German authorities brought 2,000 Soviet prisoners-of-war to the site in October 1941. The camp was first established to provide the Third Reich with a central reservoir of forced laborers for future construction projects needed for projected German settlements in the occupied territories of Poland and the Soviet Union. As genocidal policies developed in 1941, however, the camp became increasingly reoriented toward mass killing operations. The SS constructed gas chambers at Majdanek in October 1942 in order to execute large numbers of mostly Jewish inmates deemed incapable of performing further hard labor. As Soviet forces approached the camp in late July 1944, the German camp authorities fled before they had a chance to destroy evidence of their mass killing operations. Between 95,000 and 130,000 people were killed at Majdanek in less than three years.
SUGGESTED READING pg. 1

ACADEMIC MONOGRAPHS:


MEMOIRS AND OTHER PRIMARY SOURCES:


The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is America’s national institution for the documentation, study, and interpretation of Holocaust history, and serves as its memorial to the millions of people killed during the Holocaust. The Holocaust was the state-sponsored, systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jewry by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945. Jews were the primary victims—six million were murdered; Roma and Sinti (Gypsies), people with mental and physical disabilities, and Poles were also targeted for destruction or decimation for racial, ethnic, or national reasons. Millions more, including homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war, and political dissidents, also suffered grievous oppression and death under Nazi Germany. A living memorial to the Holocaust, the Museum strives to inspire leaders and citizens to confront hatred, prevent genocide, and promote human dignity. Its primary mission is to advance and disseminate knowledge about this unprecedented tragedy, to preserve the memory of those who suffered, and to encourage all people to reflect upon the moral and spiritual questions raised by the events of the Holocaust as well as their own responsibilities as citizens of a democracy.

For more information, visit ushmm.org.

The International Tracing Service (ITS) is a center for documenting National Socialist persecution and the liberated survivors. Former victims of Nazism and their families receive information regarding their incarceration, forced labor, and if available, postwar Allied assistance. The archives provide the foundation for ITS research and education, which are enhanced through collaboration with other international memorials, archives, and research institutions. The ITS commemorates and memorializes the victims of the Holocaust and other Nazi crimes. As of 2013 the original documents in the ITS archives are included on the UNESCO “Memory of the World” Registry.

For more information, visit its-arolsen.org.

The Wiener Library is one of the world’s leading and most extensive archives on the Holocaust and Nazi era. Formed in 1933, the Library’s unique collection of over one million items includes published and unpublished works, press cuttings, photographs and eyewitness testimony. Our mission is to serve scholars, professional researchers, the media and the public as a library of record. We aim to be a living memorial to the evils of the past by ensuring that our wealth of materials is put at the service of the future, and we seek to engage people of all ages and backgrounds in understanding the Holocaust and its historical context through an active educational programme. Finally, we strive to communicate the accessibility, power and contemporary relevance of our collections as a national resource for those wishing to prevent possible future genocides.

For more information, visit wienerlibrary.co.uk.