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**THE RESULTS OF THE PRE-  
INVESTMENT COMPLEMENTARY  
ARCHEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION RESEARCH  
CONDUCTED ON THE SITE OF THE FORMER  
NAZI-GERMAN EXTERMINATION CAMP IN  
SOBIBÓR IN THE AUTUMN 2015**



**THE REPORT FROM THE EXCAVATION RESEARCH CONDUCTED ON THE SITE OF THE  
FORMER NAZI-GERMAN EXTERMINATION CAMP IN SOBIBÓR IN THE AUTUMN 2015 IN  
CONNECTION WITH THE NEW CONCEPT OF COMMEMORATING THE VICTIMS**

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**CHEŁM 2016**

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## **1. Introduction.**

The excavation research works started in 2015 were of the pre-investment character and were leading to the implementation of the new concept of commemorating the victims of the former extermination camp in Sobibor. The research is a continuation of the archeological research initiated in 2011 on behalf of the Steering Committee which represents representatives of 4 countries: Netherlands, Israel, Poland and Slovak Republic. The operator of the funds transferred by the Steering Committee is the Foundation for Polish-German Reconciliation. The host of the ongoing work in the area of the former German-Nazi extermination camp of Jews was initially the Leczynsko-Włodawskie Lakeland Museum in Włodawa, and since 2012 the State Museum at Majdanek whose branch is now the Museum of the Former Sobibór Nazi Death Camp of the Jews.

Previous research, conducted in the years 2000-2001 by the Prof. Andrzej Kola and in the years 2004-2013 by the company SUB TERRA Archeological Research under the leadership of Wojciech Mazurek led to the unveiling of numerous structures related to the topography of the former German-Nazi extermination camp of Jews in Sobibor. The conduction of these works conducted in 2015 was entrusted again to the company "SUB TERRA Archeological Research" from Chełm. The research director was the owner of this company- Wojciech Mazurek, who is conducting the research in cooperation with the archeologist from Israel, Yoram Haimi, who represents the Institute "YAD VASHEM" and Dr. Ivar Schute, who represents the Dutch party of the Steering Committee. Prof. Andrzej Kola participated in the research as a consultant of the entire research works.

Rafał Ratajczak participated in the research works as documentarist-drawer and Karlina Ratajczak as author of the photograph documentation. Teresa Mazurek (MA) participated in the field works and prepared the inventory of movable monuments similarly as it was the case during expeditions 2011-2014.

Similar to the research conducted in the years 2011-2014 the basis for the location of the discovered unmovable objects was the state geodetic grid that was laid-out by the company "GEPRO" from Włodawa, which developed a digitalization of archival maps and marked the results of the archaeological research from the years 2000-2014 on the basic map coordinate system 1965. The excavation work was accompanied by the works of the forestry services company ("Zakład Usług Leśnych" Zbigniew Marciniak Sobibór). The company

cleansed the work area from small trees and shrubs. The company cleansed also the area intended for the collection of heaps, which resulted in a much larger cleansing surface than the trench surface.

## **2. The aim and scope of the archaeological works conducted in 2015.**

Wojciech Mazurek (MA) was the research director. The scale and the changing decisions related to the scope of the earthworks resulted in the issuance of conservatory decisions in stages. The decision – permit of the Voivodship Office of Historical Monuments Protection of 8 January 2014, letter No IA.II.5161.48.1.2015.

Initially, during the preparation of the request for the conduction of excavation research in 2015, the Foundation for “Polish-German Reconciliation” in cooperation with designers and the State Museum at Majdanek planned the conduction of complimentary research works in 6 areas of the former extermination camp: in the area of the entrance to the road leading to gas chambers, in the place of alternative location of commemoration wall that is running (according to new idea) at a distance of about 5 meters east from the course of the relics of this road, in the place of the possible location of the barber's barrack, in the area of possible continuation of the course of relics of the escape tunnels from the Sonderkommando barrack in Lager III/camp III as well in the place where burnt human bones in the trench for south-eastern corner of the commemoration wall around the mass graves and in the place of discovery of the human remains (human remains were found in the cribwork wall - object 5681), marked as a grave 17 located north from the traces after Sonderkommando barrack.

The abovementioned decision allowed us to conduct the the excavation research in 2 places: in the area of the alleged entrance to the road leading to gas chambers, adjacent to the east to the south part of the course of Himmelfahrtstrasse of 6 ares and the area of the south-eastern corner of the course of commemoration wall around the mass graves (the surface amounted to 4 ares). By the decision of 1 December 2015, letter No IA.II.5161.51.1.2015 the scope of the research was extended by the area around the place of discovery of human remains (the remains were found in the cribwork wall) – object 5681, marked as a grave 17 located north from the traces after Sonderkommando barrack (of the total surface of 3,45 ares). The discovery of another small crematory grave no 19 allowed us to extend the research works on another 10 quarters of ares located to the east from the mentioned extension of the research plan at the width of 10 meters and the length of 25 meters on the axis north-south of

2,625 ares. The total surface of the researched area examined in the autumn of 2015 amounted 16,95 ares.

### **3. Location and historical context of archaeological excavations research conducted in the autumn of 2015.**

Carrying out the Operation Reinhard, the leaders of Nazi Germany choose the area around the small forestry station at Sobibor located on the route from Chełm-Włodawa and to Brześć Litewski. They choose this place for one of the camps aimed at systematic extermination of the Jews. In the place, where before the outbreak of the Second World War trees had been soughing and where in some places agricultural crops were located, crimes against humanity did take place. Today at the place of former death factory, the trees of the forest district Sobibor rustle again in the background.

The village Sobibór is situated on the river Bug close to the borders with Belarus and Ukraine. The distance to the railway station Sobibór is bigger than to the stations located near the villages Żłobek and Wołczyny (Fig. 1). The railway station was built AT the beginning of the 20th century primarily as a place of export of wood material from the vast forests of Forest District Sobibor. Until the outbreak of World War II this material was exported in two directions: north in the direction of Brześć Litewski and south to the direction of Chełm Lubelski. During the war actions of September Campaign 1939 the bridge on the Bug River in Orchówek was destroyed, so the station at Sobibór became almost an abutment station, the penultimate station on the route from Chełm to Włodawa station in Orchówek. This certainly was important in the selection of a place for extermination camp for thousands of Jews as it was a hidden place, not conspicuous, and according to the German "specialists in Jewish affairs" perfect to implement the plan to murder all the representatives of this nationality, under the jurisdiction of the Third Reich. The camp was built in 1942. The camp was closed down at the end of 1943 after a famous prisoners' uprising in October of that same year. Almost all the camp buildings were destroyed and the area was thoroughly cleansed from the traces after the massacre of the Jewish people (A. Kola 2001, p. 115). After the end of military actions of World War II some exploration took place in order to find valuable items belonging to the victims of the Sobibor camp. Although in the previous research works we did not find traces in the robbery pits; the excavations could also blurred the traces after camp buildings. At the beginning of October, 2000, a research team from the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń went, under the

management of Professor Andrzej Kola, to Sobibór in order to gain some tentative knowledge about the present surface structures, to tentatively identify the camp borders and the location of particular objects, whose location had so far been presented only in a few prisoners' accounts and sketches. Therefore the archaeological research are of so great importance. They can provide new and reliable information on the topography of the camp. Because on the one hand the amount of the traces left in the ground is small, on the other hand it should be remembered that the area of the former extermination camp is of extraordinary and individual character. Therefore all the research works were carried out with due care and accuracy.

#### **4. History of archaeological research.**

After the end of the military operations in the area of Lublin province in the summer of 1944 local population carried out the illegal exploration in the hope of finding valuable items belonging to victims of Nazi criminals. The search became of interest of law enforcement authorities - former co called Citizen Militia. According to reports from elderly residents of Chełm and Włodawa, one of the results of the works of safety authorities were criminal lawsuits against, inter alia, professional soldiers from the military unit in Chełm, but also against residents of nearby Włodawa.

There is no data on the scope of the earthworks, which were conducted in the mid 60-ties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Sobibor, when the place of execution of thousands of people was commemorated with the mound of ashes of the murdered prisoners and the monument by Mieczysław Walter (Gacka-Grzesikiewicz 1983, p. 51). The current asphalt square with two monuments was to be built on the site of the former crematorium (R. Żyła, E. Gacka-Grzesikiewicz 1987, p. 104). However, there is no source indicated which the authors used, giving information about this location.

In 1993, the camp area was handed over as a local branch of the the Museum of Lake District Łęczyńsko-Włodawskie in Włodawa, which until now has custody of this memorial site (M. Bem, W. Mazurek 2012, p. 51). In the same year, for the first time the 50th anniversary of the camp was celebrated. In the 90-ties of 20<sup>th</sup> century the excavation research were carried out after the acquisition of the land by the employees of the Museum of Lake District Łęczyńsko-Włodawskie in Włodawa. In the archives of the Museum of Włodawa and the Conservatory Office in Chełm there is no documentation on these above mentioned research.

Systematic archaeological excavations were started in 2000 and continued in 2001 at the request of Council for the Protection of Remembrance of Struggle and Martyrdom in

Warsaw by the expedition of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun under the direction of Professor Andrzej Kola (2001, p. 115). In 2000, the reconnaissance was carried out, who prepared the basis for archaeological research on a wider scale in 2001 (A. Kola 2000). Archaeological research in 2001 was conducted in two stages. In the spring the survey research was conducted by means of boreholes. For this purpose the geological drills were used in the area of the camp III. During the second stage of the research, in the early autumn, the survey research was continued by means of boreholes and additionally the excavation research were undertaken in the area of the southern border of the camp III. As a result of archaeological works conducted in 2001 seven mass graves were discovered and five unmovable objects, marked with letters from A to E, located south of the mass graves. Object E was, without many doubts, considered as a relic of the gas chambers. In addition numerous movable monuments were acquired from the uncovered unmovable objects and were handed over to the Museum of Lake District Łęczyńsko-Włodawskie in Włodawa and they should become a small part of the collection of the new museum facility, the Museum of the Former German-Nazi Death Camp in Sobibor. The existing knowledge on this subject comes only from the literature (A. Kola 2001, p. 121).

In connection with realization of the documentary film about the camp in Sobibor by "Discovery Channel" in 2004 we undertook non-invasive geophysical surveys in three sites of the former German-Nazi extermination camp: near the object E, belonging then to Lager III/ camp III, in the area of the alleged "Himmelfahrtstrasse", but above all in the place where they the relics of Lager IV/ camp IV should be located (W. Mazurek 2004, 2005). The most interesting results were obtained in the area east of the Lager III/ camp III, where quite extensive landslide with a strong magnetic anomaly was located. The anomaly was interpreted as a relic of the Lager IV/ camp IV. In the area of the object E from the research of 2001 the many disruptions occurred on both sides of the northern part of the building, which, according to the research authors from 2000-2001 could be the remains of the gas chambers, the hypothesis should be verified by further studies of non-burial object (A. Wheels 2001, p. 121). Preliminary geophysical anomalies were identified then as a potential place after so called fryzjerna (east side of the building E) and after a diesel engine used to obtain exhaust that killed people in gas chambers (on the western side of the building E).

After a few years break the excavations research has been re-initiated. This has been possible mainly thanks to the cooperation between the Museum of the Leczynsko-Wlodawskie Lake District in Wlodawa and the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Israel. The main objective of the research was to verify the results of geophysical measurements of

2004 in the area of the border between the camps II and III, in the neighborhood to the west from the object E discovered in 2001, i.e. in the area of alleged engine located by the gas chambers (W. Mazurek 2007). For the first the research team of archaeologists: Yoram Haimi from Israel and Wojciech Mazurek from Poland led the research. The composition of the research team has not changed over the years, also in the fall of 2013. The research team has not changed over next years, also in the autumn of 2013.

During the 2007 research project, an area of about two ares of land (within the hectare XXIV) was explored. Geodesic measuring grid, that was used for the research purposes in 2000-2001 was also used for the location of the excavation works. The successive hectares were marked with roman numeral from I to LXV, and further ares with Arabic numeral 1 to 100 from the north-western corner of the hectare horizontally to the south-eastern corner. In 2007 the exploration covered the ares 35, quarters a,b,d, are 36 entirely, are 45 quarter b and are 46 quarters a and b. Additionally, to complete this excavation project, the researchers partially explored the piece of the western wall of object E which had previously been explored in the years 2000-2001.

In summing up the 2007 excavation work, the researchers concluded that the magnetic anomalies identified in 2004 had been formed as a result of the presence of numerous iron artefacts, for example: pieces of barbed wire, clasps or nails. There were no traces of deeper diggings; and beneath a thin layer of humus, there were no other traces of the camp structure, apart from the relics of object F. Taking into account the results of the research conducted in 2001, 2004 and 2007, we can, with a high degree of certainty, state that object E is not the remain of the gas chambers. The issue was very problematic from the moment object E had been discovered. The researchers accepted another, more plausible, identification. They came to the belief that it either had been a building where prisoners undressed or that it was a sorting area of the items left by the victims. The most probably hypothesis described this object as a barrack, which could be used as a Lazarett, i.e. the place where victims, perhaps ill or infirm, were executed while lying on the floor (A. Kola 2001, s. 120-121). In the conclusions from 2007 it was agreed on using of the object of „cutting hair's barrack”, where women going to death had their hair cut. An object F, which is running sideways towards the north-western direction, documented from the western side of the object E, built with two shallow, parallel to each other rows filled with gray sand without any movable monuments, has been interpreted as a trace of the corridor, which was connecting the alleged hairdresser barrack, so called fryzjernia with Himmelfahrtstrasse. The results of this year's research clearly ruled out such interpretations.



North of building E, the archaeological team carried out some reconnaissance work. In doing this, they made a preliminary cleaning of three quarter-ares 7 (quarters c and d) and 17 (quarters a and b) and covering with their range three drillings from the research of 2001. They found here traces of a mixture of sand with cortical waste (?) and a small number of mobile finds. The linear traces of deep coulter (?) imply that there had been attempts at obliterating these traces. The research produced negative results here – no magnetic or electromagnetic disruptions were registered. As the excavation research conducted in the spring of 2011 shown, there is a negative after a large object no 589. On the basis of the boreholes that were drilled, its length in a western direction is estimated to be 15-20 meters, while its width is about 5–6 meters (T. Mazurek, W. Mazurek 2011, p. 14).

In 2008, due to financial reasons, only non-invasive geophysical research was carried out in the area of the former Nazi-German extermination camp within the area of graves and in the area between object E (partly examined in 2001) and asphalt square, where the monument of victims and stone tower symbolizing the gas chambers are located (W. Mazurek 2008). The field works and the provisional analysis of results were performed by Worley-Parsons Komex, resources & energy, Suite 100, 4500 16 Avenue NW, Calgary, Alberta T3B 0M6 from Canada. Thanks to the cooperation between the Włodawa Museum and the University of Hartford in the United States, this company carried out the research free of charge. Representatives of the University of South Florida also participated as observers.

The main objective of the research was to find location of the remains not only of the gas chambers, but also of the camp infrastructure. Unfortunately, it was not possible to answer the question whether in the researched area of 8 squares measuring 40 x 40 m we interpret the anomalies as the relics after the chambers. The most important results were obtained near the western edge of the asphalt square with the monument and tower. At a depth of 1 x 4 m small, but clear, laying in one line, almost perfectly north-south, located at an equal distance from each other electromagnetic anomalies were discovered. They became the starting point for the formulation of a research program for 2009. Additionally, aerial photographs of the mass grave area were taken from the weather balloon during the geophysical works.

In 2009, because of strongly limited financial resources, the excavation research could be launched. As for the measuring network used in the geophysical research in 2008, base-lines were set up along the south-west - north-east and south-east - north-west directions – within the area of, and surrounding the asphalt paved lot. Along these base-lines, seventeen excavations pits were allocated, 5 x 5 m or 2,5 x 5 m, totally in area, 3,75 ares. This way the magnetic anomalies (documented in 2008) were verified. They were recorded to the West

from the asphalt square and to the West from the objects B and D, discovered in 2001 (A. Kola, p. 119-120). These anomalies were caused by 4 deep pole holes, located on one line and distant from each other by about 3,75 to 4,75 meters. There is still no reliable interpretation of 4 clear traces after the poles. But from the eastern side, parallel to those 4 pole holes it was possible to uncover two lines of shallower pole holes running on the north-south axis at a distance of about 1,75 to 2,00 meters from each other. Most of the uncovered relics of pole holes was dug out in the regular distance of about 3 meters one from another creating probably the fence which range both to the south and to the north was in 2009 unknown.

The verification of the course of this fence (?) was carried out during the excavation works in 2010 (T. Mazurek, W. Mazurek 2010). While preparing the research program, the decision on the measuring method was made. The research results in 2010 showed that the double fence has its continuation to the north on the section of 15 meters and to the south on the section of 45 meters. It was also concluded that the extreme pole holes should have their continuation in both directions. The above mentioned fence ran parallel to the western edge of the asphalt square where the monument commemorating the Sobibor victims and the granite stone tower are located.

Apart from the building relics, during the research in the years 2009 and 2010 numerous movable monuments were discovered. There were mainly personal belongings of the Sobibor victims: combs, hair clips, glasses and eyewear frames, small number of jewelry, Polish, German, French, Dutch and Czechoslovak coins, broken artificial dentures made with plastic or colorful metals, shells and bullets, numerous objects made of iron, copper, silver, rubber and glass, barbed wire and iron nails. Movable monuments were located mainly in the north-western corner of the asphalt square. Among all these, an exceptional finding was that of a perfectly-preserved round silver pendant. It bears the name *Hanna* on one side, and the word *God* in Hebrew on the other.

During the excavation research planned for the spring of 2011 excellent results were obtained. They were carried out at the request of the Steering Committee, whose aims is to design a new project meant to commemorate the Holocaust victims of Sobibór. Four countries constitute the Committee: Holland, Israel, Poland and Slovakia. The excavation program scheduled for 2011 was aimed at the reconstruction of the topography of Lager III/camp III. The field research was divided into two stages, i.e. the Spring expedition, which ended in the middle of June 2011) and the Autumn expedition, which lasted from the middle of September to the end of October 2011. The results of the spring research should have be the basis for the

preparation of the autumn research program and the entire work should help to identify the conditions of the competition for the new commemoration of the Sobibor's victims.

During the field research in the Spring of 2011, the central and southern part of Lager III (Camp III) was identified. This is originally where the gas chambers was located. In this work, an area over 1 hectare (about 10, 175 square meters), was scrutinized. The total area of the open excavation pits was 31,5 ares. The area identified by means of geological drill sampling was about 7 ares. The field excavation works were carried out from 15 April to 15 June 2011.

As a result of this field work, the ceilings of 710 immobile archaeological objects were uncovered. The vast majority of these were relics of post-holes and the traces of old tree roots. Most pole-hole relics form linear patterns. These were interpreted as the camp inner fences. The excavation work uncovered a continuation of 2 rows of post-holes (discovered between 2008-2010). These are the remnants of two parallel lines of fence, which run along a north-south axis, beside the western edge of the asphalt paved lot where the Monument and the Obelisk are located. Their range in a northerly direction was not identified. The outermost pot-holes were situated at a distance of 20 meters south of the Memorial Mound. Here, both ditches, together with the accompanying post-holes, turn south (objects no 250 and 266). This pattern of two rows, together with the accompanying post-holes are interpreted as being the remains of the final section of the *“Himmelfahrtstrasse/Schlauch/Ascension Road”*, which should have led straight to the gas chambers. Additionally, right next to the south-east corner of the asphalt paved lot surmounted with the Monument and the stone tower, three rows of small hollows were found. These could be the relics of the wooden steps leading up to the gas chambers.

In the area located south of the continuation of alleged *“Himmelfahrtstrasse/Schlauch/Ascension Road”* a few rows of smaller post-holes were found. Tentatively, one might assume that these are remnants of the barber's barrack which might have been built on a pile foundation structure (?).

North of the asphalt paved lot, not many immobile objects were found, but east of this, the excavation uncovered a collection of a few larger post-holes, whose bottom reaches even 1 m of depth. The line of the poles intersects diagonally several times the above mentioned line of pole holes running from Himmelfahrtstrasse/Schlauch/Ascension Road towards the Memorial Mound. Range to the north and south has not been determined.

In the southern-eastern corner of hectare XVIII, in the area to the south from the clearing with the mass graves, three larger unmovable objects (objects 568-570), in the

fillings where numerous movable findings were found. The objects may represent the remains of the pitting constructions (cellars?, half-dugouts) belonging to Lager III/camp III, where Sonderkommando, who were employed by the gas chambers, were accommodated.

Verification excavations from 2001 as well as geophysical research from 2004 confirmed the continuation of object E to be about 75 meters, in total. Its width is always 6 meters. Moreover, the side walls are sloping, with visible signs of wood boarding at times. At a distance of about 50 meters from the northern border of object E, from its western border up to its half-width, excavators found a 2-metre-wide sand embankment. It is possible to hypothesize that object E was a shooting range.

The outermost trenches and the dense borehole drilling raised a question about the correctness of the interpretation of the grave 2 as a grave object. Around the grave, in the trenches and drillings there were no traces of human bones.

South of grave No 7, in the trenches and by means of the boreholes that were drilled, the excavators discovered and identified the range of mass grave No 8 (object 882). It is rectangular, about 25 m by 5 m in size. Its longer axis lies west-east. The object is about 190-210 cm deep. In its foot-wall, the excavators found 3 layers of burnt bones, with the bone thickness of 10-15 cm, interlaced with layers of clear, light grey sand.

All of the excavation works conducted in the spring of 2011 provided a lot of new artifacts, the largest concentration occurred in a sizable dump located in the fill of the object no. 568. Among movable diggings the vast majority constitute woman combs and hair-slides, broken bottle glass, fragments of razor wire, iron nails, iron connectors and other iron objects. Among the artifacts are also those of the individual characteristics such as jeweler, cigarette cases, quite numerous coins minted in Poland, Holland, France, Czechoslovakia, Germany.

The main task of the further season of excavation research conducted in the autumn of 2011 by the same research team, led by Yoram Haimi from Israel and Wojciech Mazurek from Poland, was the reconnoitering of the course of the road leading to the gas chambers (so called *Himmelfahrtstrasse/Schlauch/Ascension Road*) from the extreme southern site, uncovered during the spring expedition in 2011 to the junction with Lager II/camp II.

A supplementary aim was to determine the full outline of object E/2001, i.e. its range to the south of the research results in the Spring of 2011, as well as to understand its function. This has so far remained quite unclear, though the most plausible hypothesis forwarded by Andrzej Kola, and formulated in 2011, defined the object as the barrack which might have been used as the so-called Lazaret, i.e. the place where SS shot the sick and the infirm (pages 120-121). A. Kola did not rule out the use of the object E as a gas chamber, which was the

basis for the reconstruction of the building in the camp area (e.g. plan of the camp on the information boards, currently used for visitors). In the course of this work the youngest hypothesis spring of 2011 should be verify, that indicates the interpretation of this object as a shooting range.

In total, an area of 18 ares was investigated. Most immobile objects were partly explored and mostly sieved to get the smallest artifacts. Altogether in this investigation, 290 immobile objects were uncovered, most of which were the post-holes aligning the two ditches (objects 250 and 266). It is assumed that these are probably traces of the high fence erected on both sides of the “Himmelfahrtstrasse”. Other objects, i.e. elements of the object E in the west and the first objects of so-called camp II had been documented both in the plan and in the profile. Most of movable objects are from the outside course of Himmelfahrstrasse, they come mainly from the filling of object E and the first buildings of camp II.

If all these lengths are added up, the total sum equals to about a 240-metre distance. At the eastern end of the „Himmelfahrtstrasse”, the southern ditch (object 250) had two post-holes from the inner side. Moreover, at a distance of about 17 meters east of the east end of the “Himmelfahrtstrasse”, the excavators found a regularly rectangular hollow, about 6 m by 2 m in size and 0,5 m deep. This could be the relic of the so-called “Cash Office” (object 1124), where the SS staff made the prisoners leave their valuables as a false deposit. South of this “Cash Office”, at least 8 post-holes were found. These run in two rows at a distance of about 2 m parallel to each other. However, understanding the relationship between the end of the “Himmelfahrtstrasse” and the fence-line, as well as the infrastructure of Camp II, required further excavation research. It was also the initial section of research conducted in the area of the former camp II in the summer of 2012.

In the eastern end of the „Himmelfahrtstrasse” (object 266), about 10-12 m before the last turning, within the are 13d, hectare XXXII, there is a 4 meter-wide gap, similar to the one in the final section of this road in the are 84d, hectare XXV. This breach is directed towards a few rows of small post-holes running parallel to this road at a width of about 5 meters. This area, with two gaps in the “Himmelfahrtstrasse” fence, might have had something in common with the so-called “Barbers’ Barracks”.

At the crossroads of the „Himmelfahrstrasse” with the presently-existing „Remembrance Lane”, on the western side of the „Himmelfahrtstrasse”, the excavators found the remnants of a dirt road ditch, running from the south, turns at this point towards object E. Some traces of vehicles that had got bogged down in this area, during the time when this death camp existed, are evident. The road runs from that point in a north –westerly direction.

It was there that a tiny piece of bigger object was found (which is implied by the bores from 2001). It is about 1,5-1,6 meters deep and has 10 x 5 meters in size.

The investigation of object E/2001 uncovered another 25 meters of its continuity. This amounts to 100 meters in total. This object is exactly 6 meters wide along its entire length. Its walls are slanted, in some parts they are boarded by the rotted wood. In its south-west corner the excavators found the remains of wooden stairs (dark brown streaks left over from the decayed stair-steps are clearly evident in the western profile of the object). At the primary utility level, the excavators found in this part of the object, numerous brass cartridge cases. In the eastern part, there were mainly rifle cartridge cases, while in the western part, the researchers found for the most part, machine gun cartridge cases. Most of these cases were strongly corroded, or rather were surrounded by ferruginous hardpan. From the north, the wider part of object E is bordered, almost for its entire width, by a natural sand embankment, 1 m wide, with a passage of about 1 m width from the eastern side. Similar embankments, regularly quadrangular, 3 m wide, up to the half mark of object E, were identified in the 50<sup>th</sup> meter (about 2 m wide) and in about the 25<sup>th</sup> meter on the western side of object E. It is possible to define, with high probability, that the function of object E was a shooting range.

During excavation works in the autumn of 2011, a collection of many new artifacts, whose total number is more than 4 400 units has been acquired mainly from the forest litter layer (layer 1) and the humus layer of the camp (layer 2). Among them, in terms of raw material (similar to movable monuments of spring 2011), dominate iron objects (in the number of 1500) and a little less numerous glass monuments mainly in the form of fragments of broken bottles in the number of more than 1 100 artifacts.

As an undoubted success of the research conducted in the autumn of 2011 can be considered its breakthrough significance for the determination of the range and course of two, so far the biggest unmovable objects of linear character: Himmelfahrtstrasse/Ascension Road and object E/2001. The function of object E/2001 considered as a shooting range still needs to be verified. Both objects are excellent reference points for the continuation of the research works, which aim is to reproduce the topography of the former German-Nazi extermination camp of Jews in Sobibor.

The object of the archaeological excavation pre-investment research in the area of the former German-Nazi extermination camp in Sobibor conducted in 2012 was to recognize the area around the existing museum building in terms of site for the new, small sized museum object - visitor center – with the necessary infrastructure. The initial plan to the research program was to identify the optimal location for this object, i.e. in the site that have minimum

impact on the topography of the former extermination camp and have the connection with the beginning of the course of so called Himmelfahrtstrasse/Schlauch/Ascension Road from the south of its range, determined during the research in the autumn of 2011. Wojciech Mazurek (MA) from Poland was the research director, Prof. Andrzej Kola participated in the research as a consultant from Poland and Dr. Yoram Haimi participated as a consultant from Israel.

The field works were conducted from 19 July 2012 to 24 August 2012. During the field works the area of 50 ares of the former German-Nazi extermination camp of Jews between the railway ramp and camp II and the area between camp II and the beginning of so called Himmelfahrtstrasse was discovered.

798 unmovable objects have been uncovered and documented. Many of them are traces of the camp buildings. These are mainly pole holes, but also relics of a larger building, such as basements, the remains of ground buildings, barracks. Part of these objects probably dates from the period after the Second World War, when the area after the former extermination camp became a place to search the victims' valuables. Finally, apart from older relics also today's garbage dump and objects related to the functioning of the current museum building (adapted for this purpose from the object, previously occupied by the kindergarten children of employees of State Forests) have been uncovered.

In the area between the railway ramp and the current museum building the relics of the camp buildings connected with so called Vorlager (foreground camp) have been discovered. The foreground camp was occupied by the Nazi-German crew and the guard service. Among these stationary objects two cellars have been separated. The first one was a brick cellar with preserved staircase (object 1552). The second one – underground cellar, where the traces after poles were found (object 1548).

From the east to the two cellars a regular rectangle measuring approximately 10 x 20 meters is adjacent. It was created by tiny pole holes positioned 1 m from each other with irregular trashing floor built of brick and sand mortar in the southern part. This rectangle is probably a relics of a barrack occupied by the camp guards. During the cleansing of the above mentioned trashing floor a collection of interesting movable monuments were found. To the north and south from the alleged barrack and cellars several rectangular holes of indeterminate function are located. There is a big collection of movable relics, mostly remains of iron cans, cutlery, glass jars and animal bones.

From the west of these cellars at a distance of about 15 m, behind the fence whose pole holes are running along the north-south axis, a ground residential building (?) no 1434

measuring about 9 x 6 m was discovered. On the plan of the camp from 1951 its outline is clear (it also includes facilities no 1393, 1441, 1498, 1511 and 1514).

From the results of research conducted in front of the old museum building, it can be concluded that the passage for the victims coming from the transports arriving to Sobibór was located between the ramp and camp II, where another group of victims had to undress before entering the gas chambers. Most likely this road run under the current parking area and the museum building. Also the lack of traces of buildings in the area to the north from the asphalt parking lot indicates the above mentioned location of the road where the victims went to gas chambers.

In the area between the western border of the museum's lot no 316/1 and the current museum building regular rows of pole holes forming probably the fence of Lager II/ camp II were discovered. The rectangular square where no relics of poles were discovered, is limited from the south with a row of regular pole holes being exactly 3 m apart. The range of this line of the poles could not be determined both in the east direction and in the west direction. Currently this land is occupied by State Forests. The eastern line clear only in the north-eastern corner and affected by the sandbox 2 x 3 m, built probably for kindergarten (object no 1345). Apart from a few pole holes this line was underlined by the shallow groove with a width of 30 cm. The northern border of this square is drawn through the pole holes, running on the northern side of the similar, more readable groove on this section.

To the south of the alleged southern fence of Lager II/camp II a large object no 1430 is located. It is built with two twin rectangular pits measuring 12 x 10 m (in total 24 x 10 m) dredged about 2 m below the current ground level. The western rectangle (object no 1430 A), has a concrete slab, floor and fallen relics of the eastern walls, the object 1430 B is built with rotten boards. In the time of the research it was a depression, overgrown with "bird's cherry" trees. In the mid of 70s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century this depression was used for the construction of a sanitary sewage system of the current museum building, where the impurities were dropping off to the brick septic tank at the western end (object 1430 A). The eastern depression (object 1430 B) was used recently over 30 years as a place to deposit all sorts of rubbish in the period after the World War II. The youngest date back to the 90s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and are probably associated with the adaptation of the former kindergarten (!) for the museum before handing the building in 1993.

On the plan of the former German-Nazi extermination camp, drawn in 1951 by Eng. Marian Cudny outside at the location or near of the object no 1430 a rectangle- architectural object described as "stable" was marked. It is quite unlikely that the stable was dredged for



about 2 m into the ground, so more likely is its interpretation as a temporary place (within Lager II/camp II) to deposit items after the victims that they left before going to the gas chambers.

In the north-western and northern area of excavation research, between the beginning of the Himmelfahrtstrasse and asphalt alley leading to the commemoration site of the victims of Sobibor, north of the current museum building apart from the alleged northern fence of the empty square belonging to Lager II /camp II, few medium-sized objects with a small content of lime were found. Moreover a grid of deeper and shallower hollows filled with gray sand, containing numerous items belonging to the victims was found (object 1317). Numerous hollows, located north of the examined area suggest that within the forest, towards Lager III/camp III and towards the chapel there is a continuation of similar cavities, to a large extent created after the war.

East from the area of the garbage dump and from the square of Lager II/camp II two rows of the deep pole holes are running parallel to each other on the north-south axis. The distance between them is about 3,5-4 m. At the southern end of the two rows of both rows of pole holes 4 pole holes with a depth of 1,5 m, distant from each other by about 3.5 m were uncovered on square plan. It can be interpreted as a relic after the watchtower.

At a distance of about 5 meters east from the above mentioned pole holes two rows of small and shallow poles (probably after pickets) spaced about 1 meter from each other are running. Both rows of pole holes have the same continuation both to the north and to the south. The function of the rows of the poles in this part of the area is still difficult to determine.

From the humus layer and fillings of the unmovable objects discovered during the summer expedition of 2012 numerous artifacts related to the functioning of camp were uncovered. The greatest concentration of the findings were discovered mainly in the area of the vast rubbish pits located north of the examined area, mainly in the filling of the object no 1317. Among the monuments numerous remains of penknife, metal cans, cutlery, bowls, cups, prams were found. Apart from the findings from the camp time also bottles, metal cans from the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century, i.e. from the period of the functioning of kindergarten, were found.

Equally large concentration of artifacts was recorded north from two cellars, located near the railway ramp (objects 1556-1563). Among several thousands of objects discovered during this expedition, the identification plate belonged to Lea Judith de la Penha, born on 11 May 1937 in Amsterdam was found. Lea Judith died in a gas chamber on 9 July 1943 together

with her parents. The plate hung around her neck as an identifier made by her parents in fear of being lost during the travel to Eastern Europe.

Our research expedition began in the autumn of 2012 and was continued in the spring of 2013. Its main objective was to verify the function of mass graves 1, 2 and 7 located on the boarder of Lager III/camp III.

Despite having the results of the survey research made with geological drill, only excavation work could resolve doubts about the function of the graves. These doubts have already appeared in 2011, after finding the separation of graves 1 and 2 of graves 3-8 through the double line of pole holes, running from the final distance of Himmelfahrtstrasse to the north. The analysis of drilling survey indicated the ambiguous nature of fillings of graves no 1 and 2. In addition, the research works responded to doubts and demands of Professor Andrzej Kola about the burial nature of the grave no 7, which were contained in the report from the research of 2001 (A. Kola 2001, p. 117).

Summing up the following three hypotheses can emerge from the research work on the grave no. 1. The first, the object could be excavated as the next mass grave which due at the end of the "Reinhardt" was "filled", only to a small extent, with human remains and after a successful uprising of prisoners on 14<sup>th</sup> October, 1943 was buried. The second hypothesis would indicate that the this huge pit was used as crematorium similar to those used in the camp in Chelmno on the Ner. (Ł. Pawlicka-Nowak 2004, p. 18-20). Third, at present very difficult to prove, suggest that that grave no. 1 originally had been completely or in large part filled with cremated human remains and emptied due to the *Sonderaktion 1005*. The human remains originally placed in the grave no. 1 were exported in an unknown direction or scattered around the camp or outside its area (A. Rybak 2012, p. 31-32).

In the case of grave no. 2 research works have already confirmed the presence of small fragments of cremated human bones in the ceiling layers i.e. at the depth of about 20-30 cm. They are present in small stained concentrations as white, blue or black stains on a background of a more or less extensive stains of ashen gray sand always in smaller amount in proportion to the quantity of sand, which suggests that the clear layers of cremated human bones are present at ceiling of the grave no. 2 at secondary layer, i.e. they occur there as a result of flatwork in the grave area during the construction period of Memorial Mound. However the grey sand lying beneath the thin strictly burial layer contained only a small admixture of small fragments of cremated human bones. Most probably also the lower parts of the sandy fill of grave core measuring about 15 x 15 meters, outlined by 15 boreholes, in the profile 9 had a similar structure. Among them human bones, burnt from the level just

about the turf's layer down to the bottom at the depth of about 4 m. This fact is undoubtedly indicative of the burial character of the mass grave no.2, however the distinct mixture of human bone fragments with the predominating in volume grey sand requires consideration.

Within the excavations, located west of the proper burial fill of the mass grave no. 2 western and south-western range of the outer excavation has been obtained, which has been acknowledged in the 2001 excavation conclusions of the mass grave no.2, which in boreholes from 2001 as well as in deep verification excavation in 2013 was devoid of human bones. Both the south-western edge and the western border of the mass grave no.2 known previously as its excavation, are a regular straight line (Fig4). Almost regularly horizontal preserved bottom is at a depth of 2 meters reaching the place where the deep excavation works have been stopped and the place related to the edge of deeper core of the mass grave. At the present stage of reconnoitering of this grave the following interpretation of his section as a logistics access from the west (e.g., putting cremated human remains mixed with gray sand into the deeper parts of the grave core?). Further works carried out in this area to the west of the external range of the mass grave no. 2 excavation should explain the reason for such an extensive range of this light gray mixed sand.

In the area of the mass the grave no. 7, 10 quarters were identified which almost completely reconnoitered the eastern part of the former grave. The result of excavation works is primarily the verification of function of the grave. The doubts of Professor Andrzej Kola concerning its burial character have been confirmed. The excavation discovered 2 stands of former ground crematoria (objects 2119 and 2120). There is no other explanation of such a strong permeation and burning-out of the natural sand, as in the case of both crematories. It is difficult to say whether they were functioning at the same time or if that was the consequence of the time in their use. Due to the presence of the younger stationary objects, the place under the south crematorium appears to be older (object 2119). At the level of discovery, which is at a depth of about 40 cm from the ground, it has the shape of a brown strip with the width of about 3-4 meters and the length so far uncovered over 15 meters to the east-west axis. The continuation of the researches in both east and west direction can result in determining the full length of former crematoria area. Brown discoloration of natural loamy sand with plenty of horizontal hardpan lamination, which intensively changed its color into dark brown, almost black and underwent the process of intense condensation reaching the depth of 2,30 meters from the level of the uncovering, which is about 2,80 m from the present ground surface.

The site where the southern crematorium was located (object 2119) was disturbed by the younger immovable objects. Especially in the western part it was disturbed by the trench

on the small crematory grave (object 2118). Because of the fact, that the range of this grave overlaps partially with the range of the core of mass grave no 7, is renumbered as this grave.

Probably a little subsequent place with very similar characteristics and parallel position (object 2120) was located about 7 meters to north of the above mentioned south crematory place of the Sobibor's victims. In the case of this second place its eastern range was discovered and its western range remains still unknown. In the deepest part of these body fluids have reached a level of about 3,30 m above the today ground level. In both places after the cremation on the field stakes the dripping body fluids discolored natural sand up to the toughest hardpan lamination, where they were concentrated in a visible up today greenish fat sticky substance that secretes an unpleasant sweetish odor that hovered over the excavations at even the slightest breath of wind. The place was preserved undamaged until the mid-90's of the 20th century when according to oral information of the Museum of Lake District Łęczyńsko-Włodawskie in Włodawa employees, it was affected in many places by the excavator's bucket searching for the rails used in the construction of the field crematoria. There is lack of documentation of this prospecting but the material traces of the non-professional excavations are clearly visible on the background of intense signs of sand discoloration caused by the human body fluids.

South-east from the grave 7 another crematory mass grave (no 15) was uncovered. Its range has not been determined. That is why it was of interest for the autumn excavation campaign. Its apron is located about 3 m from the current graves area.

The first phase of the excavations conducted in the autumn of 2012 (and continued in the spring of 2013) was focused on the possible future course of the dual-line of pole holes, that begin from the northern line of the fence **Himmelfahrtstrasse/Schlauch/Ascension Road** and run along the western corner of the asphalt square with memorial to the memorial mound. It turned out that the two lines of poles have their continuation on the north side of the mound – but only in a distance of 10 m, as behind the mound the western line turns at right angles to the west and the eastern line- to the east. However, on the north side of the changed course of two lines of poles, the third line appeared, that is parallel to the two previously discovered lines, after the change of their direction to the east and west. In conclusion, the course of these three lines of pole holes constitute the fence relic. On the one hand the pole holes separated the objects named as mass graves 1 and 2 from the graves 3-8, on the other hand they closed the access to both, separated in such way grave groups from the north and they constituted probably the northern border of Lager III, which course has been confirmed to the west direction of length about 40 m, and in the east direction of length of about 10 m. In

the extreme western edge of the trench the end of the course in the west had not been obtained. The end has probably its continuation, but next branch of the line of pole holes, extending to the south. Both lines run parallel to each other in the distance of about 2 m, while the distance between the poles in a line amounts to about 3 m. In the south direction their course more or less to the half of the western wall of the mass grave 1, has been recorded. Further to the south the pits after poles were not preserved, they were probably removed during the backfilling of the burial pits with the sand from the dune located on the western side of the former extermination camp.

In the corner determined by the final section of the dual-line of pole holes of the fence, that separates mass graves 1 and 2 from mass graves 3-8 and the beginning of the continuation of a similar dual-line of pole holes running eastwards two skeleton graves no 12 (object 2031) and no 13 (objects no 2032 and 2033) have been located. To the east of the grave 7, violating the place after the ground crematorium (building 2119), the third grave no 14 was discovered, in which one person was buried. In grave 12 six skeletons were discovered. Some of them were killed by shots in the back of the head (individual no 2, 5, 6) or in the temple (individual no 4). The presence of the bullets within the gravel pit 12, indicates the execution of the other people and intentional burial of the victims in the burial part of the former German Nazi extermination camp in Sobibor. The bones from the grave no 13 have no traces of bullets. The person that is buried in this grave may have died from shot to heart like person from grave no 14 in whose case the bullet from Mauser stucked in the metacarpus of the left hand.

The horrifying positions of the corpses, the presence of the textiles and shoes remains indicate the haste of murderers and allowed to formulate two hypotheses about the circumstances of the death of the buried people. The first hypothesis would connect the described circumstances with the execution of the prisoners arrived from Treblinka in order to liquidate the remains of the camp and to erase the traces of its existence. The liquidation was carried out after the uprising of prisoners on 14th October 1943. The second hypothesis would connect the haste by the execution of those people and hiding the corpses with the activities of the Soviet Security Service or Polish Security Service after the end of World War II. Recently there was a report about the activity of the NKVD after war in the area of the former camp. It was mainly about shots, heard by the inhabitants of the surrounding villages Osowa and Żłobek (report of Ms. Olszewska's grandfather from Kulczyn). The Heritage Monuments Protection Office, the police and the Regional Prosecutor's office in Włodawa, that launched an investigation into this matter, were notified of the discovery of the graves 12

and 13. At the time of writing this report the investigation was taken over by the Institute of National Remembrance (branch in Lublin). The ongoing actions aim to clarify the circumstances of the crimes.

In the area to the east from the asphalt square where the monument “Woman prisoner with a child” and the stone pole (symbolizing probably the gas chambers) are located, the continuation of Himmelfahrtstrasse/Ascension Road was not been found. But the place where the Sonderkommando barrack was standing was discovered. The southern part of this barrack, and in fact the traces was documented. The other part of the barrack extends to the north. From the western, southern and probably eastern side the above mentioned barrack was surrounded by a triple barbed wire, two trenches with barbed wire and double rows of poles. Next to the western wall of this barrack a trace after the excavation was uncovered. It served as escape possibility for the prisoners. Only further excavation works can confirm the validation of the hypothesis for the S-shaped object 2199. These excavation works should be conducted from the edges of the trenches made in the spring of 2013 towards the railway line.

The aim of the research works conducted in autumn 2013 was to verify the function of mass graves 3-8 and the full reconnoitering the incidence of human remains dispersed from the mass graves as well as to complete the reconnoitering of the course of the outside fence of the mass graves from the north and east. The answer to the question whether we have to do with another skeletal graves, located to the east of the skeletal grave no. 12 and 13 and to the east of the similar grave no. 14, was not less important objective of the research. Another goal of the autumn campaign 2013 was to reconnoiter the dimensions of two post ground crematoria sites (discovered in spring 2013), located in the area of the mass grave no. 7. Similar problem has been encountered in relation to the crematory skeletal mass grave no. 15 where the eastern and southern boundaries have not been reached yet. The research conducted in the site of traces of the current excavation trenches (discovered in the spring of 2013 and made probably in the mid-90s of 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was about providing evidences that would clarify the period when the trenches were made and the scale of destruction.

Excavation research in the area of the mass graves no. 3-8, located within the borders of so called Lager III/camp III of the former Nazi German extermination camp in Sobibor were conducted between 28 October and 5 December 2013. During this time, area of 34,875 ares located in the eastern and north-eastern part of Lager III/ camp III (where the relics of the mass graves have been discovered) have been examined in total.

One of the main aims of the excavation research conducted in autumn 2013 was the verification of the functions of mass graves 3-8 and the reconnoitering the incidence of human

remains dispersed from the mass graves, located on the marginal deposit also beyond their range. Excavation research covered only boundary area of mass graves and only to the extent specified by the representative of the Chief Rabbi of Poland, Mr. Alex Schwarz; that is to say they were conducted until buried or unburied human remains were encountered in large quantities or in situ, i.e. until there were no obvious traces, confirming their grave nature.

Excavation works conducted in the area to the north from the memorial mound, moved slightly to the north the northern edge of the mass grave no. 3 in relation to the arrangements from the survey drillings carried out in 2001, while the same edge of the mass grave no. 4 has been moved to the north, in places even more than 10 meters. Excavations works also confirmed the lack of a clear border between graves no. 3 and 4, at least in the subsurface layers. The shape of the eastern edge of the grave no.4 proved to be more regular straight line, without extension to the east in the southern part, which has been determined on the basis of the survey conducted in 2001 by the mean of geological drillings. The southern border of the grave no. 4 was strongly damaged by the exploration works carried out in the mid 90's of 20<sup>th</sup> century by the Łęczyńsko-Włodawskie Lakeland Museum in Włodawa. It seems that the shape of the above mentioned border was close to the straight line. The western edge was covered to the least extent by research, but on the basis of the surveys carried out in two places, it can be assumed that the edge differs slightly from the edge determined in 2001.

Fully credible answer to the question about why we find so many unburnt human remains and hair of Sobibor's victims in the subsurface layer of mass graves no. 3 and 4 is extremely difficult. Most probably, the majority of them were placed in the ceiling's edge of the mass graves, as a result of pulling out the corpses of victims (murdered in the first phase of existing of this factory of death) from the pits by an excavator. The corpses putrefied in the large „death pits” poisoning the ground waters at that time and caused a terrible odor lingering around the camp. That is why the Nazi murders changed the method of hiding the evidences of crimes burning the victim's bodies. Probably in the course of pulling already partly putrefied corpses out by an excavator disintegration of the corpses occurred effects of which, can be seen on the edges of the mass graves no. 3 and 4. Further fragmentation of corpses occurred probably during postwar cleaning works accompanying the first commemoration ceremony in 1965), and mainly during the searches of artifacts by means of excavator (conducted in the mid 90's of the 20th century) by the Łęczyńsko-Włodawskie Lakeland Museum in Włodawa. The traces after the excavations are characterized by a sharp edge and distinctive backfill of light gray or mixed with ash gray of negative's filling after an excavator bucket (marking traces as the object 2117 and 2117A to 2117E, 2148/2360, 2400, 2405, 2470,

2532-2536). The scale of those exploratory works must have been significant as evident traces of these works destroyed almost entirely the southern range of the biggest mass grave no.4. The number of these exploration excavations is probably much higher and they include probably the entire south-western part of mass grave no. 4. Therefore, the possibility of moving research excavations at 5 or 10 meters to the north from the southern border of the mass grave no.4 (the border was determined on the basis of survey boreholes) should be considered.

On the eastern edge of the mass grave no.4, for the purpose of documentation of its profile, a trim at the junction of the object 2403 has been made. The object proved to be undetermined post-war trim. In the above mentioned grave, at the depth of about 160 cm, numerous unburnt dark tawny human bones without anatomical order have been encountered. They were buried with the spotted grey reddish brown sand, in which no burnt human remains have been found. The presence of the unburnt human remains in this depth indicate their deposition not only in deeper profundal layers (where they preserved in adiopocere formation) but also from the depth of about 150 cm (A. Kola 2001).

The eastern and western range of the mass grave no. 6, which is known from the survey research conducted in 2001, has been confirmed. From the ceiling its crematory nature has been clearly confirmed, as from the depth of about 10 cm, in the backfill consisting of grey sand, numerous, mainly white or blue burnt small human bones have been discovered.

The situation is similar in the case of mass grave no. 5. It has been reconnoitered only from the eastern side. The range in this direction is slightly smaller from the grave's range, which was determined with drillings carried out in 2001. No burnt human bones have been found in the subsurface layers. At a depth of about 2 m a great number of not burnt human bones covered by the clear, almost white sand, has been found. After reaching the level where human bones were found, the works stopped and were documented. Probably it is a skeletal mass grave.

The crematory graves no. 8 and no. 15, discovered during the excavation campaign in the springs of 2011 and 2013, located within the hectare XVIII, on the ares 78b and d, 79 a and c and 88 b, merged into one, L-shaped crematory grave, defined as grave 8/15. The northern part of this merged grave (former grave no. 15) is much deeper from its southern part (former crematory grave no. 8). Its depth amounts to over 2,5 m and in its backfill no traces of burnt human bones are present. Trace amounts of burn human bones preserved in the northern wall. Their presence in the deeper parts of the grave cannot be excluded. In the grave no. 8, at a



depth of 1,80-2,00 m, burnt human bones were present in 3 layers, interspersed with light grey sand partially mixed with small, white burnt human bones.

As mentioned at the end of the description of the research results in the area of the mass graves, the largest concentration of places after ground crematoria occurs between mass graves no. 4 and no. 8/15. In the spring of 2013 two the largest of them objects no. 2119 and 2120 were discovered. To the south of mass grave no. 4 the western border of the ground crematorium (discovered in the spring of 2013, object no. 2120) was determined. It was significantly disturbed by the exploratory works from the mid 90's of 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In its proximity a numerous, fine hollows, filled with the ash grey sand with charcoal have been discovered. They are probably traces after digged shovels or rather spades which were used by the prisoners cleaning the grates in the crematoria (these objects have been marked as a one object no. 2572).

To the north-east from the already known place after crematorium pile (object no. 2120), the traces of the third object (site after ground crematorium object no. 2598) parallel to the objects 2119 and 2120 has been discovered. The object has been probably disturbed by the southern part of the mass grave no. 4, which range in the southern direction remains unknown.

To the west of the alleged, southern-western corner of the mass grave no 4, the ceiling of the another place after ground crematorium (object 2597) has been uncovered. Its northern range has not been yet determined. The subsequent five surface crematories have been located in the area to the south from the grave no. 7 (Photo 9). They are partially destroyed i.e. by the crematory graves no. 8 and 15 (objects no. 2469, 2486, 2517, 2520, 2535).

The alleged similar sites after the ground crematoria were discovered at the western edge of grave 4, at the junction with the mass grave 3 (Hectare XVIII, ares 5a and 5c, objects 2591 and 2599). In view of the fact that the relics of these objects were found just at the edge of the excavation trench, it will be necessary to undertake further research works in a westerly direction. During the research works (completed in the spring of 2013) behind the Memorial Mound two skeletal burials were uncovered in which 7 persons were buried (6 persons in the grave 12 and one person in the grave 13).

Another single burial (grave no. 14) was localized to the east from the crematory graves no. 7 and 8/15. The excavation research conducted in the autumn of 2013 did not bring any discovery of new skeletal graves to the east from the graves no. 12 and 13. Therefore, it can be assumed that the two graves, located near to each other, indicate a single execution of 6 people, that were brutally murdered by shots in the back of head and thrown into one pit

(grave no. 12). Most likely, the last victim must have buried the victims, then the murderers murdered the seventh person and buried him/her shallowly under the ground and in hurry in the grave no. 14.

On 28 November 2013, approximately 15 meters in the north area (almost in the straight line) of the skeletal grave no. 14, in the south-west corner of the quarter 49c, hectare XVIII, the ceiling of the another skeletal grave no.16 has been discovered.

Two persons were buried in the grave. The first one in the upright position, the second one – in the tuck position, both with their heads facing east. A few personal belongings, like penknife, scraps of fabrics, indeterminate iron object were discovered. So far no traces of bullets or cartridges were found in the fill of the grave or in its close proximity. The burial chamber is quite shallow, its bottom is at a depth of about 60 cm from the ground surface. The method of burial, i.e. in the clothes, the presence of personal belongings near the corpses and the slightly thickened backfill of the grave indicate the execution of these people in the period after World War II (similar to the previously discovered graves no. 12, 13 and 14).

To the north of so called Memorial Mound the field works discovered the continuation of relics of the northern fence of Lager III/camp III which was discovered in the spring of 2013 (W. Mazurek 2013). The fence's line was determined by two rows of pole holes separated from one another by about 175 cm at the same time the poles in each of these lines were not located together in the same line. The distance between the poles in each of these lines was the same - exactly 3 meters. A fence corner was discovered within are 57d, hectare XI. From this point, the pole holes are running to the south. Parallel to them, on the east side a groove of about 20 cm width filled with ash grey sand was discovered (object 2290).

The groove at the north-eastern corner of the fence mentioned above,, is located just by the outer line of pole holes. To the south, the distance from the lines of fence holes is gradually increasing. The length of the groove from the north-eastern corner of the fence to the break point at a right angle to the east direction (are 19c, hectare XVIII) amounts to 70 meters.. Given the lack of traces after the poles supporting the alleged fence, the function of the above mentioned groove has to remain undefined at the moment. Most probably it is a trace of dug wooden covers protecting the extermination area from unwanted witnesses of murdering. It is possible that it is the negative of the trench after cable power line (?). The answer to the question about the groove's function must remain open until the next research works between the area of mass graves and the railway line as well to the north from the north-eastern fence of Lager III/camp III.

The double-line of pole holes which is probably the eastern fence of the mass graves runs without any changes from the break point of the above mentioned groove in the straight line to the south direction. Its continuation has been documented among others about 5 meters to the east from the place after south crematorium (object 2119). However, just at the height of the crematorium we note an anomaly in the layout of both double lines of pole holes. In the space of about 10 meters, within the quarters of are 59d and 69b, hectare XVIII, the pole holes of both lines do not have a shift to each other, they are located exactly in front of each other. It is difficult to clearly state whether it has any relation with for example the location of this part of the fence at the height of the ground crematorium or whether the reason was different.

The eastern fence of the mass grave area has been discovered at the length of about 25 meters from the ground crematorium – object 2119 – to the south direction. The relation between pole holes of both lines of poles are identical in this section as in the biggest part of its course, i.e. further poles were shifted approximately in the middle of about 3 meters distance between poles of the parallel line. A clear southern border of the eastern fence of mass graves' area has not been determined. The continuation of this fence in the straight line to the eastern line of the third row of barbed wire surrounding the barrack of Sonderkommando (discovered in spring 2013) is suggested (W. Mazurek 2013). However, to verify this hypothesis, further excavation works will be necessary.

In the area of ares 27-29 and 37-39, hectare XVIII (the area located to the east from the middle part of mass grave no. 4), between eastern edge of mass grave no 4 and above mentioned double-line of pole holes, a double-line of small, round pole holes has been discovered. Two lines of pole holes (5 pole holes in each line), located about 2 m from each other, were discovered in the north-eastern corner of the fence of Lager III/camp III. Similarly preserved set of pole holes was discovered at the high of the groove's break point (object 2290), it was also discovered between them, where the number of preserved relics of the pole holes varied between 4 and 2. It is very likely that originally the pole holes made a footing for the wooden platform of 8x80 (!) m, which from the east adjoined to the edge of the mass grave no. 4 (?). The connection of this platform-bridge with the area, so called Lazarett (the site of execution of the elderly, infirm people that could delay the march of Jews led to gas chambers) cannot be excluded. However this is rather unlikely, given the lack of density of cartridges in the area of these pole holes.

Apart from a single-line of bigger pole holes (separated from one another by about 5 m) which runs to the east direction on the axis east-west from the grave no.4 (objects no.

2432, 2435, 2436, 2441, 2459). This line of the deep pole holes (their apron was located about 1,50 from the current area – Photo 15) may be associated with the line of deep pole holes, discovered in 2011 between graves 2 and 6 (objects no. 194, 202, 215, 232, 540, 553, 561). Without further excavation works it will be difficult, even impossible to verify the connection between two lines of pole holes. Moreover it will be impossible to answer the question about what function this one line of pole holes had fulfilled.

A small number of movable relics was collected during the excavation works in the spring of 2013 to the north and east from the memorial mound. A full preserved jar with a capacity of 37 cl, made in the Netherlands clearly stands out from the rest movable relics. Among few other relics that found in this part of Lager III/camp III also the 15 kopeck Soviet coin from 1938 and small brooch presenting a boy playing the saxophone deserve attention.

In the area of the southern border of the mass grave no. 4 and graves no. 7 and no. 8/15 as well as discovered in this area crematoria piles a great number of movable relics, like fragments of combs, elements of clothes like buttons, cufflinks, small jewelry, rifle and handgun cartridges were found. Within the layers of grey sand with numerous burnt human bones covering the south-eastern border of the mass grave no. 4, near the northern edge of the place after crematorium (discovered during the spring works 2013, object 2120), the third identification plate belonging to the victim murdered during the mass execution in Sobibor was encountered. The plate belonged to Annie Kapper from Amsterdam, arrived to Sobibor together with the closest family in the transport from 30 March 1943.

Quite exceptional importance has the round plate of policing service from Sanok. It may indicate one more direction of the transports of Jews arriving to Sobibor.

During the excavations conducted in the autumn of 2013 between graves 2 and 5 two flint monuments were found within the layer 3. They are dating back to the declining Paleolithic. They were made by reindeer hunters from Swiderian culture. These are: bifacial leaf-shaped point and regular cylindrical core blade. These findings are quite numerous in the area of Polesie Lubelskie, among others in the sites in nearby Zawołocze at the Lake Pereszpa (Z. Sulgostowska 1989, p. 126). Such findings suggest the possibility of occurrence of similar findings in the area of the entire former German-Nazi extermination camp of Jews in Sobibor.

The excavation research works started in 2014 were of the pre-investment character and were closely related to the implementation of the new concept of commemorating the victims on the site of the former Nazi-German extermination camp in Sobibór. The excavation works covered the area of 102,16 ares. In the area north-west of the mass grave No 1 the north-

western corner of the fence Lager III /camp III has been located. This discovery allowed us to determine the course of the commemoration wall between the mass graves and the fence.

In the discovered corner there are no traces of the watchtower, according to the testimony of former prisoners and camp crew members should be placed on corners of fences of Lager III/camp III.

The excavation trenches in the area of the northern and western border of camp III did not uncover any unmovable objects or fragments of burnt human bones. The continuation to the west direction of mass graves 1 and 2 has been discovered. On the south-western section of the excavation at the site of the planned wall around the mass graves relatively small number of pole holes were discovered. They form not so regular fence line along the grave 2, which could be relics of western and south-western fence of camp III.

However, in the south-eastern corner of the planned course of the commemoration wall around the mass graves a small concentration of small white burnt fragments of human bones occurred. It is highly possible that in this area another ground crematorium was located.

Human remains occurred both in the eastern profile and in the western profile of the excavation, which implied that there is a need to recognize in 2015 especially to the east a range of their occurrence, so that the commemoration wall could take the mass graves and their leveling edges in the ceiling parts under the full protection.

In the area of the asphalt square the foundation outlines of 8 rooms used as the foundation for the older walls of the gas chambers. Three rooms on the south have dimensions of 4,00 x 5,30, the extreme northern room had the dimensions of 4,00x3,40 m. In the area east of the monument 4 outlines of brick foundations have been uncovered (dimensions: 5,05m on the axis north-south and 6,80 m on the axis east-west). From the eastern side the rooms were closed with the semicircular formed foundation benches with a width of about 30 cm, similar semicircle closes the extreme southern room. Between the relics of western and eastern there was a space of about 3 meters, a row of pole holes (spaced at a distance of 2 to 3 m) is running North from this corridor adjacent a wider space with dimensions of 5,05 x 3,50 m, where probably a petrol engine was located, whose exhaust fumes killed hundreds of thousands people. From the south to the corridor separating older and younger gas chambers a room measuring approximately 3,00 x 1,00 m is adjacent. Probably it is a kind of staircase, through which Jews went on the way to the rooms where they waited for death. From the east, the rows of small pole holes were documented. They are arranged in a semicircle, which was probably supported by wooden stairs leading to the gas chambers. Perhaps here the woman came in after the hair-cut.

In the area to the north-west of the preserved stone tower almost no archeological objects have been found, but during the purging of unmovable objects in the area of stone tower symbolizing the crematorium chimney, a few, small items of jewelry were discovered. It is very likely that in this area the process of „cleansing” of the gassed corpses of victims from the valuable items, which remained with them until their death in the gas chambers.

On the eastern edge of the brick foundations of the gas chambers characteristic profiles of semicircular walls were discovered. In this part an additional research area (between gas chambers and traces after the barrack of Sonderkommando) has been designated. In the southern space between gas chambers and barrack of Sonderkommando numerous small pole holes have been discovered which are closing from the north-east are the rows of identical holes which were discovered in the spring of 2011 (still interpreted as the remains after so-called “hairdresser” barrack. In the south-eastern corner of this extended scope of research the ceilings of two large objects (No. 5411 and 5550) were uncovered. In their backfill there were numerous traces of lime (Fig. 19C, D). Similar object was discovered on the other side of the asphalt road during the spring campaign of 2011 (object 670). The lime was used probably for building purposes and for pouring of human bodies which were placed in mass graves without prior burning. Around the traces of the barracks of the Sonderkommando there were rows of pole from the south and west in 3 lines, as well as from the north in 2 lines. They appoint an extremely carefully planned fence, lying close to the barracks, occupied by prisoners. On the axis of the west wall of the barrack of the Sonderkommando, in the northern wall of the research trench a well was encountered, which was probably used by the members of Sonderkommando (object No 5681). Inside the well at a depth of about 70-80 cm a layer of burnt bones was discovered and it can be recognized as a crematory grave No 17.

North from the gas chambers two deep pole holes were discovered (objects no 5660 and 5661), which are probably relics of the poles of the watchtower which aim was to control the Sonderkommando crew.

In the excavations located within the course of the Himmelfahrstrasse no other unmovable objects have been discovered. Only ceilings of the filled trenches after the poles, which are supporting from inside the coonstruction of the fence (protected with additional barbed wire grid) have been discovered. It is very likely that the brick foundation (object No 5176) may be a relic of one (probably southern) pole supporting the gateway. South from the area of the entrance to Himmelfahrtstrasse the southern edge of two, long objects with the fill of gray, uniform sand have been discovered (objects no 5106 and 5119). The object no 5106

is an uncovered depth along the northern profile of about 18 m length. It is also difficult to determine the function of this object. On the eastern edge of the excavation under the path along the Himmelfahrtstrasse, among other things, a large object filled with the garbage (object no 4585, 4587) has been unveiled. Next to this object there is a ceiling of the round camp object (no 4588). This is the relic of the camp well.

The most important discoveries have been made along the existing district asphalt road that is running along the ramp siding where the traces after the ramp, where the Jews got off the trains and went to death, have been discovered. Parallel to the ramp, from the west side, a row of the holes (remained after the fence separating Vorlager/camp foreground from the ramp) is running. To the west direction, parallel to the ramp also runs a narrow gauge railway line of the length of 120 cm and spaced about 85 cm from each other. It can be concluded that the railway worked in the initial phase of the camp, or rather even been used during the construction period of the camp

Near the asphalt road a complex of several large objects which are of ground character was discovered (objects 3697, 3701, 3702, 3712, 3713), or brick ground objects (object 3725), which were probably used as cellars (Fig. 28-31, 34). Numerous artifacts were uncovered in the area of the above mentioned objects. The objects contained numerous rubbish artifacts such as damaged iron cans, iron waste, sheets, enameled utensils (object 3701). In connection with the discovery of the L-shaped trench running towards the object 3725 which contains fragments of clay sanitary pipe, it may be suspected that this object, as well as other ground objects could be the septic tank. It cannot be excluded that there were several sewages which may be used by people arriving in transports.

Just outside the entrance to the asphalt alley which is leading towards the old asphalt square (under which the foundations of the gas chambers were uncovered) the traces of the narrow gauge railway was discovered. It comes out from the brick ramp covered by the current asphalt surface of the county road and disappears below the asphalt roads to the Memorial Mound.

In the northern part from the former parking lot the relics of 3 barracks were discovered. There was a presence of the small pole holes approximately 1 meter as from one another. They may be the relics of 3 sorting barracks. The row of big and deep poles, that is running from the end of the ramp siding, is closing the southern tops of these barracks. It is probably the fence of the road running from the ramp to Lager II/camp II, described during the Operation Reinhardt as "Schlauch".

In the part of Lager I/camp I, where the hypothetical site of outbreak of the uprising on 14 October 1943 has been designated, the relics of the well have been uncovered. In the western part of uncovered area the relics of fence pole holes and small pole holes (which area probably relics of a wooden building – workshop have been discovered. Besides the damaged burnt barrack's beams (Photo 32), numerous enameled utensils, buckets, bowls, also numerous glass containers were found. They were used in the camp's pharmacy.

## 5. Report from the archaeological research.

### 5.1. Area of the entrance to Himmelfahrtstrasse.

The first aim of the research works conducted in the autumn of 2015 was to reconnoiter the area of the entrance to the gas chambers (so called Himmelfahrtstrasse or Schlauch/Ascension Road) which led from Lager II/camp II to the gas chambers.

These works were carried out on 5-23 November 2015. In total, an area of around 6,9 ares has been investigated. **In the researched area of the entrance to the gas chambers 126 new unmovable objects have been discovered in total (from no. 5805 to 6020 and 6032 – 6041).**

In the course of the conducted research the hypothesis on the object 5176 has been negatively verified. Certainly it was not a relic of a brick foundation for the gate leaf to Himmelfahrtstrasse. It turned out that this object is a plastered from the inside water tank with dimensions of about 1x1x1m (Photo 1).



Photo 1 Sobibór, area of the former German-Nazi extermination camp of Jews, area of the entrance to the Road leading to gas chambers, view from the northeast on the construction of the object 5176, water-tank (brick construction), from north adjacent to "Kasa" or cloakroom for women). Photo Al. Mazurek



Relatively careful finishing of the edge of the object indicates that this brick object was used as a water tank (perhaps rainwater) in order to immerse prisoners in water. The mentioned object went in the course of destroying evidences of the crime after the uprising of October to the backfill of the object (Photo 2).



Photo 2 Sobibór, area of the former German-Nazi extermination camp of Jews, concrete finishing of the brick edge of the object 5176, alleged water tank. Relics of the plastering were found in the backfill of the object.  
Photo T. Mazurek.

The building adjoined with the southern wall the object 5827 which is the alleged ground building built on the weak brick foundation (Photo 3). At the present stage of the research it is interpreted as so called “Kasa” – the place where the valuable and personal things were deposited by the persons entering the Himmelfahrtstrasse (Photo 4). At this point the hypothesis from the autumn 2011 that the object 1124 could have similar function, becomes less reliable. Another possible function of the object 5827 says that it can be a barrack (adjacent from north the brick construction – probably it is a water tank) where women had to undress before entering the gas chambers.



Photo 3 Sobibór, area of the former German-Nazi extermination camp of Jews, area of the entrance to the road leading to gas chambers; north-eastern view on the first plan of the object 5827 (alleged “Kasa” or undressing room for women) with the adjacent (from north) the object 5176 – water tank of brick construction. Photo Al. Mazurek.



Photo 4 Sobibór, area of the former German-Nazi extermination camp of Jews, area of the entrance to the Road leading to gas chambers, glass beads in the shape of pearls (?), found in the backfill of the object 5900, located below the utility level next to the southern wall of the object 5827 – the alleged „Kasa” or undressing room for women. Photo Al. Mazurek.

As a result of the research works the location of the entrance gate to the gas chambers could not be determined. On basis of the excavation research results, with regard to the research works results conducted in the autumn of 2011, as well as the results obtained during pre investment works (conducted in the years 2014 and 2015) we can conclude that the fences in the form of filled trenches (objects 250 and 266) that outline the road to gas chambers, have their origin on ares 26d and 36b of hectare XL. In summarizing the results achieved in the last research works, two hypothesis can be formulated: either the place after the entrance gate to the gas chambers did not leave clear archaeogological traces or it the scope of excavation research should be extended in this area to the north and south. This would help to find the location of the relics of this gate (Photo 5).



Photo 5 Sobibór, area of the former German-Nazi extermination camp of Jews, aerial view on the final stage of the research works. In the central part of the object 5827 (alleged „Kasa” or undressing room for women) with the object 5176 adjacent from north the water tank of the brick construction. Photo P. Bakun.

**Taking into account the changes in the project in the area of the commemoration wall that is running along the Himmelfahrtstrasse, we can imagine “the making clear process” of the discovery of the barracks’ foundations (object 5827) and the brick object (small water tank - 5176) that was added to the above mentioned barrack. The inclusion of this brick object to the future educational path (after conducting the conservatory works) can be considered.**

Despite the lack of the place after the entrance gate to Himmelfahrtstrasse, in the course of the currently conducted research, we have succeeded in determining clearly the beginning of objects 250 and 266 that are probably traces after the fences dug into the ground, which could prevent the observation of what happened on the road leading to gas chambers. South from the object 250, at the same height, two rows of undefined function (objects no. 5106 and 5883) have their beginning. In some parts they are deeper, as for example object no. 5883 within the quarters 35 c and d, and from their backfills we can observe relatively moremovable monuments, mainly personal items as for example glasses or combs. Between objects 250 and 5883 shallow depressions occurred. They contained in their backfills not Only grey humus sand, but also organic layers (peat layers?). They are located at similar distances (about 3,5-4,5 meters). Perhaps we will never be able to explain the origin of these objects, but the presence of such objects as ditches as well above mentioned round or oval depressions with a diameter of about 2 meters, clearly excludes the possibility of location of the entrance to the road leading to gas chambers in this part of the researched area.

On eastern edge of the objects 250 and 266 regular pole holes occurred. They are running linearly on the axis north-south but they are also a continuation of the alleged poles supporting the fence of Himmelfahrtstrasse on the axis east-west. Interestingly, on the east side of the alleged “Kasa” a concentration of deep poles has been discovered. They could exclude this site as an entrance area to the road leading to gas chambers. It is possible that two objects 5827 and 5176 constituted a covered entrance to Himmelfahrtstrasse? It cannot be ruled out, but in order to verify such hypothesis, it will be advisable to reconnoiter the area to the north and south from the currently presented research results. As a part of these works it will be also appropriate to examine the fragment of the quarter no. 39a hectare XL, as within this quarter the courses of pole holes (that are running on the axis north-south, for example objects no. 5155, 5814, 5819) are crossing, as well as concentration of deep pole holes adjacent from east the object 5827.

## 5.2. Area of the south-eastern corner of the commemoration wall around the mass graves.

After changes to the original plan of the research works (supposed to be implemented in 2015) have been made, the only place in the area of Lager III/camp III which required the verification in respect of occurrence of burnt human bones, was the area to the east and south from the south-eastern corner of the original course of the commemoration wall around the located mass graves. Due to the lack of clear decision on the new location of commemoration wall along the Himmelfahrtstrasse, the State Museum at Majdanek has agreed to undertake the research works between grave 17 (object 5681) and planned course of the commemoration wall around the mass graves, and in the future also complimentary research of the area located to the east from this place. The researched area located on the border of two hectares XVIII and XXV amounted to about 10,05 ares in total. 314 unmovable relics have been uncovered. The mentioned works were conducted from 21 November until 21 December 2015.

The representative of the Chief Rabbi of Poland, Mr. Alex Schwarz took part in the works of the second stage of the research, which aim was to determine the range of the occurrence of burnt human bones on the area of the south-eastern corner of the clearing with mass graves.

To the south, the range of the occurrence of burnt human bones covers with the southern border of are 9a hectare XXV. Within it, in the spring 2011 the object no. 568 – garbage pit with numerous artifacts (personal items of the victims) and the burnt fragments of human bones have been uncovered. **Due to the fact that the place of the secondary deposition of large amount of human bones (mostly burnt) was previously determined as Graves, also object 568 should be identified as another grave no. 18 (Photo 6).**



Photo 6 Sobibór, area of the former German-Nazi extermination camp of Jews, the area of the south-eastern corner of the clearing with the mass Graves, plan of the object 568 discovered in the spring 2011 and determined during the current excavation research as a grave no. 18 because of the large amount of burnt human bones located in the backfill. Photo W. Mazurek



To to east direction, burnt human bones occurred in the backfills of two unmovable objects: no. 6094 and 6095. **Between the object no. 6095 and the eastern part of the research excavation no burnt human bones occurred. Experience from the previous results of the archaeological research has shown that burnt human bones occur generally to the hight of the eastern fence of Lager III/camp III. Therefore, it can be concluded that the commemoration wall should be built on the outside of the relics of the fence of Lager III/camp III. Much more difficult is to find the right location for the southern section of the wall, both in its eastern, and in the western part. The aim of the research of the current season was only its eastern part.**

In the area between the clearing with mass graves and the barrack of the Sonderkommando in the season 2014, the grave no. 17 has been discovered, where the upper part of the filled camp well was used for deposition of burnt human remains. As mentioned above, the object 568 has been defined in 2011 as a grave no. 18, which was used as a garbage place of the undefined function. From its bacfill came numerous personal items of the victims, which have been collected from two quarters of the object. In the course of screening the contents of the object, at the southern edge of the quarter of are 9a hectare XXV burnt human bones have been uncovered. They define currently the southern range of grave no. 18. East from the grave no. 17, during currently conducted excavation works, another two small crematory graves (no. 19 and no. 20) have been uncovered. Grave no. 19 is a small, shallow in the profile and oval in the plan depression (20x25 cm), filled in the top part with burnt human remains mixed with yellow sand (Photo 7).



Photo 7 Sobibór, area of the former German-Nazi extermination camp of Jews. Area to the east from the grave no. 17 (object 5861). Plan of the ceiling of the grave no. 19 (object no. 6135). Photo W. Mazurek.

Close to the southern line of pole holes, a linear object (deeply dug in the ground, to the depth of 1 m) – 6242 has been uncovered. In its ceiling and partly in the backfill burnt human remains were deposited. The object has been marked as **grave no. 20** (unmovable object no. 6241 – Photo 8). White burnt human bones are mixed with grey sand and occur in this grave on two levels: around small oval “bowl” made of soft material (paraffin?) and extremely fragmented burnt human remains occurred also in the form of shallow layer located in the upper layer of the backfill of the object 6242, at a depth of about 30 cm.



Photo 8 Sobibór, area of the former German-Nazi extermination camp of Jews. On the left side – ceiling of the grave no. 20 (object 6241), dug in the backfill of the object 6242 – ditch running to the east. On the plan – grave no. 20 is a layer of grey sand with burnt human bones, deposited around oval “bowl” made of paraffin (?). Photo W. Mazurek

**Location of grave no. 20 at the eastern edge of research and digging it into the object (ditch) of the function that is difficult to determine (cloacal ditch?), speak for further reconnoitering of the area of Lager III / camp III to the east, before taking decision on the course of the new wall around the mass graves with the function of commemorating the victims of Nazi death machine in Sobibór.**

Between graves no. 17 and 18 the object 6043 has been uncovered. It has a rectangular outline with dimensions of 6x4 meters and contains especially within the north-western quarter the traces of lime (Photo 9). In the south-eastern part the numerous barbed wire rolls have been discovered.



Photo 9 Sobibór , area of the former German-Nazi extermination camp of the Jews. Southern and eastern profile of the north-western quarter of object 6043 with lime traces in the bottom. Photo W. Mazurek

Quite mysteriously appear double fences surrounding from north, south and west the well (marked currently as grave no. 17) at Sonderkommando – object 5681 – used as a burial place of the burnt remains of the Sobibór victims. It is difficult to answer the question whether the fence on one side were the barbed wire, closing the north area around the barracks of the Sonderkommando, on the other, prevented the free access of members of the Sonderkommando to the water from the well (?). During the research works, scheduled for the spring of 2016, it would be advisable to extend the excavation in the eastern direction, which would allow to check how the fences were closed from the eastern side.

Between the southern border of the complimentary excavations and the northern line of pole holes a layer of light grey sand with relatively bigger amount of movable monuments (fragments of glass, barbed wire or iron nails) has been discovered – Photo 10.



Photo 10 Sobibór, area of the former German-Nazi extermination camp of the Jews. Layer of light gray sand that contains numerous movable monuments: mainly glass fragments, barbed wire, iron nails. Photo W. Mazurek.



Mainly from the present humus layer and the above mentioned alleged utility layer, formed at barrack of Sonderkommando, come relatively numerous movable monuments. The objects contained numerous rubbish artifacts such as damaged iron cans, iron waste, sheets, enameled utensils (Photo 11).



Photo 11 Sobibór, area of the former German-Nazi extermination camp of the Jews, silver-plated brown utensil grip. Photo W. Maurek.

Apart from them also the personal items of the victims have been discovered, such as for example silver pendant in the shape of David Star (Photo 12) or brass badge in the shape of menorah (Photo 13).



Photo 12 Sobibór, area of the former German-Nazi extermination camp of the Jews. Silver pendant in the shape of David Star. Photo W. Mazurek.





Photo 13 Sobibór, area of the former German-Nazi extermination camp of the Jews. Brass badge in the shape of menorah from the layer 2. Photo W. Mazurek.

### **5.3. Complimentary research in the area of mass graves.**

In connection with the adoption of conservation works at the relics of gas chambers by conducted by the State Museum at Majdanek, it was possible to prepare the complimentary documentation on the most important places. The director of the conservation work – Mr. Michał Pytka, allowed to participate in the field works in the places indicated the director of archaeological research (Fig. 51-55). The main objective of the archaeological works was to get acquainted with the profiles and foundation pits and to prepare documentation of several most important profiles of pole holes.

The most interesting discovery was made by conservators at the wall VIII, which is probably the western wall of the room for the petrol engine used to obtain exhaust that killed the victims of Holocaust in gas chambers in Sobibór (Fig. 51). Both brick wall faces of falling in the north foot were plastered. The extreme northern part of the wall did not preserve, and was later destroyed by the trench (object 3741), was probably connected with the well, discovered in 2001 and marked as object C (Fig. 13). The question of the purpose of plaster work, remain unanswered. The wall located on the extreme eastern pole of the same room was not plastered (Fig. 51C).

The answer to the question whether the trenches under the semi-circular foundation were parallel to them was very important for the construction of the eastern walls of gas

chambers. In the course of field works Dr. Ivar Schute suggested that their appearance could arise as a result of explosions in the places where walls were added. It turned out that the excavations under the foundations were also semicircular. This atypical course is probably related to the fact that they might be used as negatives for some devices with such a course, originally added from east to younger gas chambers. It is quite logical if one considers the experience acquired in the "technology of extermination", which the Nazi murders acquired by utilizing the so called old gas chambers (Fig. 53). Another argument are affected by the explosion fragments of walls that have not been moved arched, but maintained its straightforward course (Fig. 52B).

The answer to the question of what role had pole holes, adjacent from the east in three rows to the arched foundations of the walls of the gas chambers, is extremely difficult. They are not particularly special from other holes, they have trapezoidal, regular profile (Fig. 51D; 54A, B). It will be difficult to find the answer to this question. We can only count on the fact that the excavations at Treblinka (the youngest from three extermination camps of Operation Reinhardt), expected with great hope for their implementation, where the "experiences" of the camp in Sobibór could be used, will bring new evidences to explain the mystery of semicircular walls of the gas chambers.

## 6. Conservatory conclusions.

Summing up the results of archaeological conducted in the autumn of 2015 on the site of the former Nazi-German extermination camp of Jews the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. As a result of the research works it could not be determined the location of the entrance to the road leading to gas chambers. Based on the results of this year's excavation research and with regard to the results of research conducted in the autumn of 2011 and the results obtained during the pre-investment works (conducted at the turn of 2014 and 2015) in the place where was originally the commemoration wall, we can only conclude that the fences of the road leading to gas chambers begin on areas 26d and 36b hectare XL. In order to clarify the position of the entrance gate to Himmelfahrtstrasse it will be recommended to recognize the area north and south from the currently presented research results. Within these works it will be also necessary to examine the fragment of the quarter 39a of the hectare XL, because within this quarter intersect the pole holes are crossing and running on the north-south axis (objects no 5155, 5814, 5819) and the concentration of deep pole holes, on its eastern side adjacent to the object 5827.
2. It would be recommended to make amendments in the project in the area of the beginning of the commemoration wall with regard to the discovery of the barracks foundations (object 5827) and annexed to it (from north) a brick object (something like water reservoir – object 5176).
3. In the region of south-eastern corner of the designed commemoration wall, between the object 6095 and the eastern wall of the excavation trench no burnt human remains were found. According to the archaeological research from the year 2015, burnt human remains occur generally up to the eastern fence of Lager III/camp III. With reference to the research results from the year 2014, in other places of the planned location of the commemoration wall, no burnt human remains around the mass graves were found.
4. The location of the grave 20 at the eastern site of the conducted research and trenching it into the object which function is difficult to determine (cesspit?), speak for further recognition of the area of Lager III/camp III to the east before the decision concerning

the course of the commemoration wall in the area south from the mass graves will be taken.

5. It is difficult to provide a clear answer to the question whether the rows of pole holes which have been discovered between the southern range of the mass graves and the barrack of Sonderkommando, are the remains of entanglements that are closing from the north the area around the barracks of Sonderkommando and prevented from the free access of Sonderkommandos members to the well-water. It will be recommended to make a widening to the east direction in order to check how the fences were closed on the east side.

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## **8. Inventory of movable monuments.**

**9. Illustrative documentation: maps, plans, profiles, photographs  
(Fig. 1-55).**